

Comment: HYMN OF HOPE (New Year Hymn)

This hymn is particularly appropriate for the New Year (the 'Prince of Peace' and 'God is with us' are deliberate echoes of Christmas) but it is so worded that it may be used at any time. There is an alternative wording in verse 2 'this year/each year' as printed below.

New Year needs a note of hope, but in writing it I wanted to be realistic. No false optimism or just lifting spirits with a good sing!

Instead, I based it upon my very deep conviction that in Christian worship we can, at best, get **a demonstration of how God can heal society.**

In Christian worship, folk of all ages, backgrounds and abilities experience their unity as God's children, and their individual worth. Their sins can find forgiveness, freedom from bondage is possible, and deep reconciliation can be a reality!

People in worship experience a common basis, direction and aim for living.

There is freedom from the manipulating powers at work in the world; there is guidance and encouragement. Destructive powers give way to the transforming power of divine love. In Christian fellowship the healing of society is experienced at first hand, and its members commissioned and empowered to extend these aspects of God's Kingdom in the world, as 'light' and 'salt'.

The hymn ends with my conviction that the benefits we experience in worship are the benefits God offers to the **world** through Jesus Christ. We Christians are the only people in the position of being able to export them!

If the world seems to be in a sorry state as it faces another year, a fair measure of guilt lies, therefore, with us Christians for our disobedience – in former years and now – in failing to pass on what we can experience at least every week!

ALTERNATIVE TUNES

The best tune is probably Sullivan's fine *Lux Eoi*.

Tunes bring with them associations, and its strong links with the words 'Alleluia, sing to Jesus' are an added bonus for a hymn of hope.

A version of *Lux Eoi* in the key of C is best for congregational singing – a hit top E is better than a missed top F sharp!

(Musicians note: the final bar of this melody *descends*, but the hymn's punch-line, i.e. the final words of the final verse, aims to uplift! Tune and words, in this instance, come more in line if the hymn ends with the final bar sung an octave higher than written.)

Alternative tunes include *Abbot's Leigh*, or the less punchy *Blaenwern*, *Austria* or *Hyfrydol* can be used. Other tunes in the same metre are *Alleluia*, *Deerhurst*, *Everton*, and *Rex Gloriam*.

If you wish, you may split the hymn into eight 4-line verses for which any of a number of well-known tunes are usable, e.g. *Cross of Jesus*, *Love Divine*, *Marching*, *Laus Deo*, *Merton*, *St. Andrew*, *St. Oswald*, and *Stuttgart*. [8.7.8.7.(Trochaic)]

If sung as a New Year hymn, do not let the phrase in verse 3 escape your notice: 'fill with presence'. If children near you think you are singing 'fill with presents!' so much the better! It creates a happy link with Christmas – and God's generosity is far far greater than both meanings combined!

The hymn shifts between coming (vv. 1-3) and going (v.4).

Verse 4 could, therefore, be split-off and sung separately more towards the end of the service – even with a different tune, perhaps as a two-verse 4-liner.

HYMN OF HOPE

Tune: *Lux Eoi* : 8.7.8.7. D

1

**As we view the world around us
torn apart by human sin,
is the 'Prince of Peace' still active
to give grounds for hope within?
You, Lord Christ, we call our 'Saviour',
can you play a saving part,
bringing rescue from dark forces,
and transform the human heart?**

2.

Can we glimpse some hope, some foretaste, (quietly)
of your saving work this/each year?
Yes indeed! Your Spirit with us! (louder)
Yes indeed! You, Lord, are here!
**'God is with us' when we Christians
meet together in your name;**
**Jesus! Fully present with us:
yesterday, today, - the same!**

3.

**Lord, you come to save your people
from their sins and hurts of life;
empty lives you fill with presence;
leave your 'Peace' instead of strife.
Here and now you bring deliverance,
freedom, pardon, healing too!
Jesus, Saviour, here you feed us,
and equip for serving you.**

4.

**Here, in worship, you show fully
what the world most needs to know.
But to rescue it from darkness
you command your church to go.
Send us, therefore, by your Spirit,
lives renewed, so they make clear
that, through Christ, the Father offers
love, joy, peace,
- so Hope is here!** (loud!)