

Week 7: Long Meter

Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life

Text: Frank Mason North (1850–1935), 1903

- Born in New York City, raised in the Methodist Episcopal Church
- Studied at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, then ordained a Methodist minister in 1872
- In addition to pastoral work, served in administrative positions for the New York Church Extension and Missionary Society, the Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Church, the Methodist National City Evangelical Union, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, and others
- Also served as editor for *The Christian City*, a missions-focused journal
- Caleb Winchester, on the Methodist hymnal editorial committee at the time, asked North to write a hymn text focused on urban mission work
- North published the result first in *The Christian City* in 1903, then in the 1905 *Methodist Hymnal*

Tune: William Gardiner (1770–1853), 1815

- Born in working-class Leicester, England, showed early musical talent as a child, playing piano and viola
 - Composed a march as a teenager to be played for soldiers returning from the Revolutionary War in America
 - Much admiring the works of Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn, adapted many of their tunes in collections like “Sacred Melodies from Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and other composers, adapted to the best English poets and appropriated for the use of the British Church”, from which this tune is taken
 - Though later derided as “barbarous compilations”, these adaptations saw reasonable success in their day
 - The tune name GERMANY makes sense in light of his fondness for German composers
 - Later in life, he seriously studied acoustics and traveled to advise on the construction of new concert halls
1. How well do you think North’s text meets its goal of encouraging urban missions (consider both the early 1900’s and today)? Are there any parts of the hymn that are more broadly applicable outside of a city environment?

Just As I Am

Text: Charlotte Elliott (1789–1871), 1840

- Born in a Clapham, England, suffered a debilitating illness at age 32, followed by depression
- Friendship with Swiss evangelist Henri Malan helped her through her spiritual crisis and prompted her to begin writing poetry as an outlet
- Published a collection of her poems in the bluntly-named *Invalid’s Hymn Book* in 1834
- This particular text was written when her brother was attempting to fund the creation of a school for children of low-income clergymen
- Because of her health, Elliott was unable to assist except for writing this text, copies of which were sold and eventually raised more money than any other single source
- Despite her health, lived to age 82 and wrote over 150 different hymn texts
- Following her death, over a thousand letters were found among her possessions from people touched this hymn, and her brother later said:

In the course of a long ministry, I hope I have been permitted to see some fruit of my labours; but I feel far more has been done by a single hymn of my sister’s.

Tune: George Job Elvey (1816–1893), 1862

- Studied at the Royal College of Music, became a prominent British organist and composer in his time, eventually being knighted in 1871
 - This tune was written specifically for Elliott’s text, although the earlier tune WOODWORTH has become the usual choice
 - The name ST. CRISPIN honors the patron saint of leather workers who preached in Gaul (now France) in the 3rd century A.D.
 - Also known for his tune DIADEMATA used for “Crown Him With Many Crowns”
1. Compared to the deeply personal hymns of Anne Steele and William Cowper, who also led troubled lives, this text seems almost impersonal and generic. Why do you think this hymn has remained so popular when many others have faded? What insights or lessons does it teach?

Exercises

1. Consider what coming to Christ “just as you are” means when applied to your own spiritual journey (this may differ from Elliott’s perspective). As a group, use these ideas to write an additional verse for “Just As I Am”, following the existing pattern of the text.