

Peninsula Post 10

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Young people today!

Each successive historical age has ardently believed that an unprecedented “crisis” in youth behaviour is taking place. We are not unique; our fears do not differ significantly from those of our predecessors. But beyond the simple are we able to notice a significant shift in the spirituality of young people? With the wonderful Summer Anthems in Orwell Place this year, the Rev. Kirsty Emerson again drew young people from the High School to perform and again to describe what lay behind their choice of music. It makes moving and important reading. These are our young people talking about how they feel and think spiritually. The piece of music is mentioned first and then their rationale for choosing it.

1. **Spaceman** – Feeling like an outsider can mirror the believer's experience of living in the world but belonging ultimately to God and heaven.
2. **Falling from the Moon** – Can symbolise humanity's fall from perfection and our need for God's grace to restore us.
3. **Take Me Away** – Reflects a desire for God to lift us out of suffering, anxiety, or earthly struggles and draw us closer to Him.
4. **Song 2** – While often known for its energy and excitement, *Song 2* can be viewed spiritually as a moment of breakthrough, joy, or awakening. The famous "woo-hoo!" can be seen as a simple expression of gratitude and delight in the life God has given.
5. **Dance With Me** – This song can be connected to the idea of God inviting us into a close, joyful relationship with Him. Dancing often symbolises trust, surrender, and moving in step with another person. Spiritually, it can represent learning to follow God's guidance, allowing Him to lead through life's joys and challenges. Rather than striving alone, the image of dancing suggests partnership, delight, and the freedom that comes from walking closely with God.
6. **Somewhere Only We Know** – Suggests a sacred place of intimacy with God, where we can meet Him in prayer and trust.
7. **Village in May (Piano Piece)** – The gentle, reflective atmosphere can evoke the peace and beauty of God's creation. It may symbolise moments of quiet communion with God, gratitude for the changing seasons, or the simple joy found in slowing down and appreciating the world He has made. The music's calmness can also reflect the peace that comes from trusting God.
8. **Shape of You** – Can be reimagined as being formed and shaped by God, who moulds our character and purpose.
9. **Deception** – Highlights deception and falsehood, reminding us of the importance of seeking God's truth amid confusion.
10. **Cups** – The theme of leaving and trusting others to remember us can connect to surrendering our journey to God's care and provision.
11. **Holiday** – Represents rest and renewal, echoing God's gift of Sabbath and spiritual refreshment.

12. **Bound for the Floor** – The struggle with despair and weakness points to our need for God's strength when we feel spiritually or emotionally overwhelmed.
13. **Hate to Say I Told You So** – Can serve as a reminder that God's wisdom and guidance often prove true even when we resist listening.
14. **Believer** – Suffering and trials shaping faith closely reflect how God can use hardships to strengthen and refine us.
15. **Hallelujah** – Though complex and not strictly a worship song, it centres on praise, brokenness, and finding God amid life's imperfections.
16. **This Is Me** – Connects to the truth that our identity is found in God, who loves and accepts us as His creation.
17. **Down Under** – The journey and searching themes can symbolise humanity's quest to find meaning and ultimately discover God. Liam Palmer
18. **Sweet child O' Mine** – The song's admiration, love, and sense of wonder can be connected to how God sees His children. It can remind us that we are cherished by God, who delights in us and knows us intimately. The song's focus on innocence and beauty can also point to the value and dignity God places on every person.
19. **Boys Don't Cry** – The struggle to express vulnerability contrasts with God's invitation to bring our honest emotions and hurts before Him.
20. **Once Upon a December** – The longing for home and remembered belonging can point to our deeper longing for our heavenly home with God.
21. **His Eye on the Sparrow** – Directly reflects God's loving care, reminding us that if He watches over the sparrow, He watches over us as well.

Together, these songs can form a spiritual narrative: feeling lost or distant; searching for meaning; facing struggles and deception; discovering identity and faith and, ultimately finding hope, belonging and God's faithful presence.

Knockin' on Heaven's Door – Can symbolise standing at the threshold of eternity, recognising our need for God's mercy and the hope of entering His presence.

Rockin' in the Free World – Highlights the brokenness and struggles of society, pointing to humanity's need for God's justice, compassion, and redemption.

Up the Junction – The story of choices, relationships, and consequences can reflect how life experiences shape us and how God remains present even through loss and regret.

Waterloo Sunset – The peaceful observation of everyday life can remind us of God's presence in ordinary moments and the beauty He places in creation and human connection.

Hey Hey, My My (Into the Black) – The themes of legacy, purpose, and mortality can lead to reflection on what truly lasts and the eternal significance of a life lived for God.

The Times They Are A-Changin' – Echoes the biblical theme that seasons change, yet God remains constant and calls people to respond to His work in the world.

Seventeen Going Under – The struggles of growing up, fear, and uncertainty can connect to God's faithfulness through difficult transitions and personal challenges.

Spirit of You – Can be seen as a longing to carry the qualities of someone deeply loved, similar to how believers seek to reflect God's Spirit in their lives.

Happy Hour – Beneath its surface themes of escape and temporary relief lies a reminder that lasting joy and peace are ultimately found in God rather than fleeting distractions.

Taken together with your other songs, they tell a compelling spiritual story:

- **Searching and longing**
- **Struggle and brokenness**
- **Truth and Transformation**
- **Identity and purpose**
- **Hope and eternity**
- **Joy and freedom**

Viewed this way, the playlist becomes a journey from feeling lost and searching for meaning, through struggle and growth, toward faith, belonging, and hope in God.

From the archives – St Nicholas papers

I am very grateful to Sharon Elmer, a member of St Michael's, for the time she has donated to help me go through paperwork dating a century found in St Nicholas vestry and never sorted. Much of it could go straight into recycling and the rest is being grouped and then stored. But some gems have emerged and some mysteries.

In 1936 a faculty was issued allowing the introduction of a 200 hundred year old painting of the crucifixion into the church. If anyone knows where it went in the years that followed or if it ever arrived it would be good to know.

We have figures for the Egg Service in Lent from 1925 to 1950. Members and the Girls Club collected eggs – I assuming not chocolate ones but may be wrong. In 1925 a total of 263 were collected but a record 343 in 1936 and 1939. Whatever was this?

The Rev. James (Jim) Chelton, who was Vicar in 1978, was concerned and said to the Standing Committee that St Nicholas regular members were 'too inward thinking' and he wished 'to see more encouragement given to people who were not at present members of the church'. The benefice was suspended, meaning no permanent appointment could be made and the papers of the time refer regularly to the exploration of a peninsula approach to the ministry, a team and the viability of St Nicholas. The team ministry was eventually launched in 2004 nearly a quarter century after the discussions commenced. The then Archdeacon of Colchester, Derek Bond, doubted it was time to consider a radical solution but the notes of a meeting in 1976 considered if St Nicholas were needed for the mission to the town and if it were not a surplus building. Could the interior be developed? Was there a real and tangible feeling in the district for St Nicholas?

It has been a shock to read these papers but there are also lighter moments that reflect some issues still with us; in 1979 the cleaner said she could not operate the hoover with the lights on in the church of the fuses blew. We continue to look at the fuse blowing but think we have a solution this time!

The process of going through boxes of papers continues and is sure to unearth more gems and also some chaff. It is perhaps an encouragement to us all to go through our paperwork regularly and dispose of what is no longer relevant and file in a consistent way the rest.

I'd be a rich man if ...

I had a pound for every time I've been told in after a service that 'we don't/didn't know that hymn'. Of course the correct reply to this is something like; well there was a time when you knew no hymns and every one you know now you learnt at some point, you were not born knowing Amazing grace or The Lord's my shepherd. But people do hold (and share freely) their views about hymns so here are a few thoughts from the Rectory.

First, singing in worship has been integral to the worship since the Temple that Solomon built. He directed that there be a double choir – perhaps operating like a call and response. Hymns appear to have been present in the church from the start and some academics trace them in Paul's letters. There were certainly hymns in the early church and they were designed to impart and make memorable points of the faith, especially more controversial or significant points. A few still lurk in the hymn books of today; at Christmas, 'Of the Father's love begotten', about 405 AD; 'Be Thou my vision' about 700 AD.

Hymns certainly go out of favour; 'O perfect love' was a regular at weddings but now almost forgotten and 'The Lord's my shepherd' moved from being a wedding hymn to more regularly a funeral one. It is a paraphrase from Scotland where in some churches only psalms were sung and hymns considered unacceptable.

Second the choice of hymns in a service functions at many levels. The opening hymn sets the tone of worship. For me the appropriate way to begin is to announce the hymn, sing it, then formally greet the people in God's name. That opening hymn may praise God for who he is or what he does; it may be a personal expression of faith sung by the whole congregation, combining their individuality as the body of Christ. Assuming it is a communion service the next hymn is called a gradual. As a young Christian I assumed that meant it got louder each verse however the name derives from where the Gospel is read, for this hymn is sung before the reading of the Gospel and it was read from a step (gradus) where the reader could be better seen and heard in the building. I like the gradual to be short, quieter than the opening hymn and related to the reading when possible or calling us to be attentive.

The offertory follows the creed and prayers and should be long enough to cover any collection of money and the preparation of the holy table without rush. I like this to be stately or uplifting, where possible related to the readings and the communion where Christ's death is our focus. At communion some hymns may be sung and these I'm sure should be quieter and reflective as we recall what Jesus has done for us and as we seek to respond.

The closing hymn links us from the meal to the mission – having fed we are sent and so it can be positive and uplifting.

There are a great many factors to consider in hymn singing; what season the Christian year are we in? What tone or theme do the readings have? Each music edition of the hymn books will usually have a thematic index, a scripture index and a tune index. The latter can enable you to sing new words to old tunes if they will scan and the melody go with the stress of the words.

Lastly, we have a wonderful opportunity to learn new hymns and songs. We are realising so many themes are hardly covered and many of bless people like John Bell for writing hymns tackling the issues of today in the language of today. Variety is usually good for the soul. So if you feel like telling me that 'I/we didn't/don't know that hymn', remember I'm quietly slipping another pound into my already substantial account.