I feel deeply privileged to have been invited to spend this evening with you. When people worship and listen and are moved by the music in St Giles', they may not realise that beneath and beyond the sounds made in their presence is a strong support structure, this group of Friends who not only help resource the music but are part of the inspiration for what is achieved.

Many people have a favourite passage or verse of Scripture. It may be chosen for its beauty, or because it brings comfort or encouragement. The 23rd or 121st psalms, 1 Corinthians13 'There is nothing love cannot face'. Isaiah 'They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles'. Or, in some extremity, the simple affirmation: 'My grace is sufficient for you'.

One of my favourite bible verses is not mellifluous or beautiful or comforting. Rather it is peremptory, it is demanding, a barked order from a crusty prophet. Elisha has been summoned by the king in a crisis over water for his army and animals. His first step is to issue the order: 'Get me a musician!' Not a hydrologist, nor a vet, nor a climate scientist, or their equivalents; nor does the sage convoke that other SAGE, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies.[1] But, 'Get me a *musician*!' (2 Kings 3:15). Music is a necessary component for a good outcome.

My subtitle is 'music that makes worship', not music that *embellishes* worship, that *adds variety* to worship, that *comments on* worship, or that *gives one a break* from worship, or even that *allows people to participate* in worship, the so-called 'people's part'. 'Music that <u>makes</u> worship' is chosen to suggest that music is integral. It suggests that music is not dropped in at key points, but that it is endemic, that it spills out of the whole of worship. Consider: worship takes place over many registers, not just musical but registers of speech and other sounds also. Think of all the *pitches* of the voice: in prayer of petition, as adoration, in preaching, in the interaction of spoken dialogue, and the contrasts and echoes of versicle and response, not to mention the silences around, in, and through speech, song, and instrument. I came across an old recording of the centenary celebrations of the Church Service Society (a Scottish society for the study and renewal of worship). This extract is from a service in Greyfriars in 1965. Listen to the way the presiding minister uses his voice, listen to the mix and contrast of voices, and to the way music is part of the sequence:

Recording 1: Greyfriars Church CSS centenary service 1965

All these registers have a musicality even if it is not notated. Fr Gelineau of the Gelineau psalms has a famous diagram, at one end the spoken word, then rising through proclamation, meditation (he means the psalms partnered with chant to assist the memory and shape the words), then the hymn (the words and music now equally balanced), acclamation (think 'Vivat' in 'I was glad'), and finally jubilus (pure vocalisation, like singing in tongues). Music surges through and round the liturgy but it is also the art form more than any other that binds it together. For as St Augustine memorably said: Words cannot communicate the song of the heart.

We can put this another way. We usually think of worship as made up of an 'order', as in *Common Order*, the Church of Scotland book of services, or a 'liturgy', as in the *Scottish Liturgy 1982* (of the Scottish Episcopal Church). Both mean the same, a sequence of items each of which leads naturally to the next. They could be prepared by the presiding minister, or

[1] The body advising the Government during the Covid crisis.

uttered extempore, or taken from the authorised book, crafted and re-crafted over the centuries and valuable to us because of that. Yet worship is so much more than the words on the page, or the words carefully composed in the study. Something we tend to take for granted is that worship is written and then spoken. Yet this would be to overlook the rubrics ('red' type or italics) that scatter the pages – telling us, 'do this', 'now go there'. It would also be failing to notice what we are experiencing as we worship, not just around us but through our senses. It requires a whole range of, shall we call them, 'media' to shape an act of worship.

There is the ***visual***, the impact of our surroundings (how lucky we are in St Giles'), the curve of a roof beam, the beauty of embroidered pulpit fall or table frontal; the well-crafted furnishings and how they symbolise stages and events in the course of worship; the colours that spill on the ground from intricate window glass; the beautiful choir vestments, priestly stoles, and people's Sunday best which dignify the moment. In some traditions there are icons – paintings which are frozen prayer and which, when contemplated, draw out the people's own prayer; or statues which bring to mind stories from Scripture and the saints, and which place our own attempts at prayer and service in a strengthening mould.

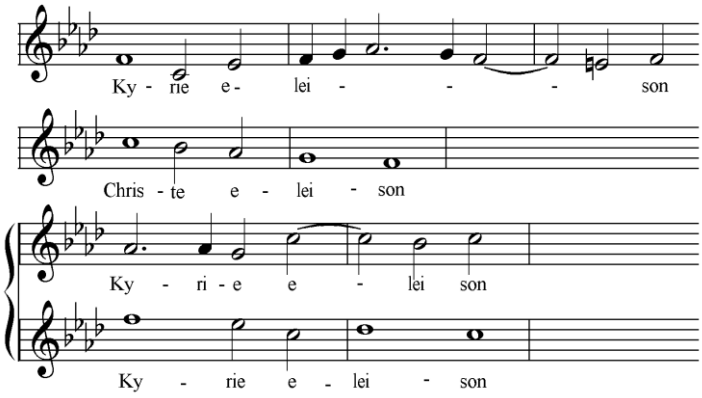
There is ***movement,*** at the entry of the choir, the presentation of the offering, the going forward to the table or altar at Communion or assembling at the font, processing on Palm Sunday or at thanksgiving for harvest; ***gesture*** in the raised hand for benediction or the clasping of hands in petition, the sign of the cross, or simply as we greet fellow worshippers; ***posture*** as we stand to sing, kneel or bow in prayer; ***touch*** as we exchange the Peace, receive the bread from a neighbour, or take the wafer on the tongue. There are ***olfactory*** experiences, the homely smell of the loaf, the tang of wine, the wafting incense (which I learned the other day was used with acceptance in a Church of Scotland congregation in rural Aberdeenshire), all these tangs and savours, and even the musty 'odour of sanctity' that for so many defines the church building. And of course there is the important place given to the ***hearing*** as the Word of God is read, directly from Scripture but also married with our own experiences and situations in sermon or homily.

You might call it a *palette*, like painters work from, but the palette is not the picture. Something has to take these things, these *media*, these *channels*, and relate them to each other, change their chemistry and transform them into a living liturgy. Shall we say? - rather than being a sequence of events, or a sum of rites – an order or liturgy is a *surround*, an *environment* in which something else takes place: that is, the divine encounter, the event which is expressed in Jesus' saying: Where two or three are gathered together, I am in the midst of them. An environment, then, and one which embraces us within it – yet it is a carefully crafted environment, with words chosen advisedly, rituals which can speak at different levels, all the senses invited to bring their riches, many artistic languages summoned for the purpose of leading us into a mystery, the silence beyond, where spontaneity is released and encounter takes place. Worship is really an *aesthetic* experience, using the word with its basic meaning: seeing into, perceiving, or – round the other way – as in the Old Church Slavonic language *javiti* meaning 'to reveal'. It is perception, revelation which uses our senses as channels. A paper at a conference on liturgy last summer put it this way: liturgy is 'an action which invites the senses, all the senses, to its banquet. … It is through the senses that we touch into the [Divine] Presence at the heart of worship. … The liturgy stands in its entirety as a threshold, like a ford

toward regions beyond. … The liturgy summons all these languages, in-spires them and makes them con-spire with each other'.[2]

We might put this another way. That every word, every ritual, every cadence, every pulpit fall, has to work in two directions. They must have a certain transparency to allow us to speak and tell but simultaneously to hear and listen. For example: the line of a hymn suddenly hits us with a truth, or a gesture warms us as we feel loved and accepted, or a striking stained glass window uncovers for us beauty in ourselves that we have suppressed, or a memory of another act of worship is awakened in well-known prayer words or musical cadence and re-sets our wavering discipleship – each a divine whisper.

So how is it that music unifies the components of a liturgy and conducts us to the heart of worship? The next example is from the Communion setting used here this last Sunday, and is the Kyrie from Byrd's Mass for Four Voices. The Kyrie entered the Western liturgy in the 5th century, imported from the East; it served the penitential beginning of worship but also was used in the later litanies, intercessions and petitions. Its shape is Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison. In this short movement, variety is given by using a different theme for each.



The first section begins in the second top voice, a sombre theme in F minor, where *e-lei (son)* 'mercy' is drawn out like hands squeezed together. [Sing.] The main theme for the Christe is a resigned falling phrase. [Sing.] The final section is more complex, with two working themes. The first, in the topmost voice, by introducing a rhythm that persists till the final cadence, brings a new depth of passion, an outburst. [Sing.] But simultaneously the third voice enters and accompanies this beginning high on a descending phrase, starting with a cry and ending with a sob. [Sing.] It is sung here by the choir of Christ Church, Oxford.

Recording 2: Byrd Mass for Four Voices: Kyrie

How does this help us understand how music can pervade and unify that mixture of events that make up worship? The first answer is that this is, of course, part of a whole Communion setting, the 'ordinary' of the Mass, that part which is always present, as opposed to the 'proper' – being those aspects that change according to place and time. Thus Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Benedictus, Agnus Dei are linked by a unified setting, gathering up the whole action. (In St Giles' of course, we have only three of these 'movements', keeping the Sanctus to be said by all together.) As the drama of worship unfolds, the memory of that movement is renewed in the

[2] Francois Cassingena-Trévedy, translated (from the French) by Robert Kelly, 'Liturgy as essentially poietic', paper delivered at 2021 Congress of Societas Liturgica.

next. But there is also this music's power to draw us directly into the act of worship so that, as well as musical memory, the engagement of our feelings, individually or collectively, helps to engage in the whole, simply because music lengthens the moment, enabling us to dwell on a thought or a mood.

Music can do this in many ways. This composition happens to be in counterpoint, pulling us in by the way the voices fall over themselves, renewing the cry with each entry, drawing from us emotions as they clash and resolve with each other, all adding up to an almost physical intensity in this appeal for mercy. Again, measured music it may be, but the freedom from its lingering plainchant ancestors pulls at the measured four minims in the bar, so that you find a theme re-entering before its time, across a bar, like a choke in the voice. True, this was a musical idiom of the time but each new era and style brings new opportunities of expression. Nor is our emotional response the automatic result of the mechanics of the music. Just ask any music student who is tasked to write a counterpoint exercise who will tell you that it is one thing being correct, but quite another to write something which hits you between the eyes!

Anglican chant

Now we look at another genre. Time has precluded us from discussing plainchant, more's the pity, but it must be mentioned in passing since several musical forms grew from the harmonised embellishment of plainsong psalm-tones ('faburden'), one of these being the form we know as Anglican chant. With its built-in flexibility it enables the singing of the psalms in their original prose form, with all the beauty and power that this allows. Central to Evensong is the chanting of psalms prior to the Old Testament reading. Each chant is a minimalist composition in its own right and has its full quota of harmonic incident, yet it does not entirely rely on this for its interest. How it is sung is crucial, and indeed how it is accompanied, and a skilful organist can enhance the whole by bringing out the import of the words by imaginative registration, which can range from the dramatic and terrible to the serene. Although the chant may be repeated many times, it is never the same twice, not least because every verse is a different length. This is music that does not draw attention to itself but is bedded in the act of worship. It surprises people, when you show them, how easy it is to sing, with pointing that precisely attaches the words to the music, yet it feels as natural as speaking. Here is:

Recording 3: Psalm 130 'Out of the depths', Walford Davies, Eb minor, Choir of King's College Cambridge

A psalm of lament, and you'll have noticed the subtle suggestions in the music of the desolation of the words, the cry left in the air at the end of the first line, a minor 6th, the wersh harmonies, the sighing slurs.

One of the best things about the Church Times is Canon Angela Tilby's weekly column. Writing about Evensong, which she sees as attracting a large constituency who have given up on other forms of church life, she suggests that people's appreciation of this unique form goes beyond the music alone. 'The music is important, of course, but so is what the rhythm of speech and music does for them: that slowing of the heart rate and breathing, the quietening of the mind, the sense of space and mystery and presence.' She quotes with approval the twitter message she received, and forwarded – 'Evensong should be available on prescription'.[3] Many in the Church of Scotland are surprised to learn that, in the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, all three main Presbyterian denominations published their books of

[3] Angela Tilby, *Church Times*, 2.11.18.

prose psalms and canticles pointed and set to Anglican chant. As recently as 1927 a minute of the General Assembly's Psalmody Committee called for the repertoire for Choir Festivals to contain canticles from the Revised Church Hymnary 'to secure a place for chanting in the programme', while a minute from the following year records that work on the revision of the Prose Psalter is in progress.

Anthems and introits

The word 'anthem' is thought to come from 'antiphon', the sung response to psalm or canticle which put this particular act of worship into its context, a feast day, a season, the gospel for the day, and was invariably scriptural. Sally Beamish's 'Gaudent in coelis', Sunday's anthem, sets a text whose original position was either side of the canticle of the Magnificat at Sunday Vespers (or Evensong) on the day when a martyr of the church was being commemorated, with its vivid picture of the saints rejoicing in heaven after giving their lives for Christ. It is suitable too in Lent[4] which shows Jesus setting his face to go to Jerusalem and all that followed, the pattern for later martyrs of the faith. It is unaccompanied, a dramatic setting, with a scatter of sound, turning the text into fragments, making us look at segments of the sentence then how they make sense together. 'Gaudent' is both shout and music (remember Gelineau's graph). 'Sanctorum' keeps emerging, using the long vowels in the word, emphasising the saints. This very vigorous opening gives way to a more devotional take on the idea of the nature of their sacrifice, before the lower parts word paint the rising of the endless exultation of their voices; it then repeats the opening of the piece.

Recording 4: Gaudent in coelis, Sally Beamish, sung by the Choir of St Giles'

I remember this being sung on August 30 2015, the Sunday during the Edinburgh Festival. You may think I have a remarkable memory but I was preaching at the 11.30 service and made reference to this setting. For me, this work made another connection, and one of the utmost importance for this talk, namely the lodging of an act of worship in the world beyond the walls. In this case it was the whole output of this composer I was thinking of. Recently Beamish's piece *Equal Voices* had been premiered, based on a poem by Andrew Motion, whose work incorporated quotations from soldiers who had returned from war and were psychologically damaged. His message was that, while we hear from doctors and generals in war, soldiers are not so easily heard. I was preaching on a passage from the Song of Solomon, from which book Beamish had taken several verses and dispersed them through Motion's text. When composers write both for church and concert hall inevitably there is a cross-over of ideas, values, hopes, which helps worship linger into the life of society. In a way, the introit this Sunday offered another example, one of your commissions from the Edinburgh musician, conductor, and composer Stuart Murray Mitchell.

Recording 5: 'Hear me, O God', Stuart Murray Mitchell, St Giles' Choir

The text was v.13 of Psalm 69: Hear me, O God, in the multitude of thy mercy, even in the truth of thy salvation: this last phrase now re-translated to read 'with your faithful help'. It is another psalm of lament, those stark and often disturbing psalms which tell it how it is without any trigger warnings. It has a Lenten ring, but at the same time it is a cry which we also have been hearing from the people of Ukraine in recent days. For a presiding minister or preacher, here is an example of the music offering to link with the prayer or the sermon, thus enriching the words of the service and spreading their flavour through the whole. But also that other link

[4] The previous Sunday was the Second in Lent.

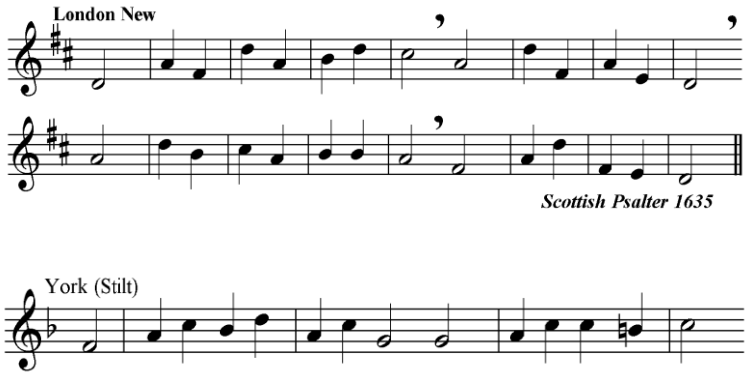
already referred to – a liturgy is always performed in the face of the world and its need – reflected in the traditional Scottish use of the term 'public worship'.

Metrical psalms and hymns

So far we have been thinking of music we listen to and we need now to redress the balance. The metrical psalm originated, strangely, in a craze at Court, and by co-incidence, in both England and France where, again by co-incidence, the grooms of the kings' bedchambers began singing psalms around the place using popular song shapes and tunes. The motive seems to have been to stop courtiers singing the bawdy and the immoral but when persecution drove people with Protestant leanings from both countries to the continent the new metrical psalms, seized on as a godsend for the new styles of worship, shed their popular tunes and, for example in Geneva, attracted tunes of great dignity and moment from such as Louis Bourgeois. In Scotland the new worship books contained the psalms in metre and, amazingly, with the tunes, which as edition followed edition, became notated in parts. For the Reformers, a way of expressing the rediscovered idea of the 'priesthood of all believers' was to have everyone sing, but for this a predictable shape was necessary. Sternhold, the English Court official referred to, had used the headlong ballad meter, the fourteener, 14 syllables a line; that became 8686 in four lines, our 'common metre', to be joined by many others, 12 in the English psalter, over 30 in the Scottish. One Scottish approach was the 'psalm in reports', using staggered entries at the beginning or during the verse. Here is ('O come and let us to the Lord in songs our voices raise')

Recording 6: Psalm 95 Bon Accord, Scottish Festival Singers, conductor Ian McCrorie

Psalm melodies were in styles which provided a template thereafter for good hymn tunes, strong to hold people together, phrasing that lay in the path of the voice, a range to capture all registers, and for all their straightforwardness there were some breath-taking compositions, like the striding London New[5] perfectly using its main idea through to the end, or York,[6] also called (maybe nicknamed) 'Stilt' because it totters over a succession of intervals,



and of course Old Hundredth and French[7], all these in the earliest books. But there was a problem, for with Old Testament psalms as sole diet,[8] people more and more felt cheated by

[5] *Church Hymnary 4* (CH4) no. 28.

[6] *Scottish Psalter* 1615, CH4 no. 79.

[7] CH4 nos. 63 and 81 respectively.

[8] There has not been room to discuss the Scottish Paraphrases (1781) which added to the psalm repertoire some 67 new items, from both Testaments, but like the psalms keeping to the exact words of the passages, and not 'intruding' a writer's experience of living the faith. Many of these are still sung.

not being able to sing of their call to discipleship in Christ. By the 19th century things reached a crisis and, the hymn still out of reach, Assembly committees tried to invest the psalms with a greater depth of commitment such as was characteristic of the Christian faith. One strategy was to get people to sing properly and to read music, and typically psalters began to be published with the opening pages setting out musical grammar – you could almost sit Grade V Theory from them! The other was to invest the singing with sense, passion and conviction. It became common to classify words under themes, and to attach to each tune one of six emotional categories: grand, triumphant, cheerful, didactic, pathetic (no – not what we think but: petition, resignation, pity, desire), and, sixthly, mournful. One curious experiment underlines this desire to achieve 'expressive singing'. In 1868, *The Scottish Psalmody* was republished by an interdenominational committee, this time with the texts of every psalm rendered in a variety of type-faces to draw singers' attention to what was actually going on in the words: normal type for medium force, capitals to indicate loud and full, and italics for soft and subdued, thus making for 'intelligent singing'. Typical are verses 4-5 of Psalm 55 where all three moods occur within the same stanza:

Sore pain'd within me is my heart:
death's terrors on me fall.
On me comes trembling, fear and dread
O'ERWHELMED ME WITHAL.

The hymn

Psalms came from the Bible, while hymns – well, we usually say from individual authors and their faith experience, but it is more accurate to say they are written by, even forced out of, the church. While committees argue strategies, preachers deliver eloquent sermons, marchers take to the streets, new community projects are launched, and individual Christians undertake costly acts of service, some people are already writing hymns. That is their response. They are responding to the church's own searching, of which they are a part. However, there is another very important part of this dynamic. As well as growing hymns, the church grows into the hymns that result. For hymn writers do not just record what they have heard. As persons of prayer, compassion and insight, and with an open Bible, these writers are creating new statements of faith and praise that invite the church to take a step forward in faith and witness, to pray with more urgency, serve more single-mindedly, be made ready to cross boundaries and overstep margins, to embrace the unloved, to move heaven and earth. The hymn accompanies the church as it stumbles into each new landscape. Consider this:

vv. 1 and 2 of CH4 238 'Lord, bring the day to pass' are read

Lord, bring the day to pass / when forest, rock, and hill /
the beasts, the birds, the grass, / will know your finished will:
when we attain our destiny and nature lives in harmony.

Forgive our careless use / of water, ore, and soil – /
the plenty we abuse / supplied by others' toil: /
save us from making self our creed, / turn us towards each other's need.

Climate change is on everyone's lips at the moment, but here is a hymn written in the 1960s by a Church of Scotland minister, Ian Fraser, when such things were no more than a whisper.

Could it perhaps have influenced the strengthening awareness of these issues, and be one of the hymns the church has 'grown into'?

I have had to omit so much: plainchant, music from the organ, Contemporary Worship Music, Taizé music, the category known as shorter songs and chants, Catholic responsorial psalms now also spreading to other branches of the church, and world church songs – not to mention the theological criteria one can apply to help winnow out what sells worship short, all of which I have included in the book. But here we must conclude. We have explored how music pervades and unifies an act of worship, and how it parts the curtain into the holy of holies. But one last thought. Worship is made, and liturgies are brought to life, by us who gather. We receive and savour the crafts of composer, singers and players ('makars' in Scots) but the worshippers also are the makars, with an obligation to develop and cultivate our skills and tastes so that we open ourselves to new sounds and hear fresh nuances in the old as we come to discern more and more the beauty and truth and Presence at the divine heart of worship.

Douglas Galbraith
is a former President and Secretary of the Church Service Society. The book referred to in the text is *Assist our Song: Music Ministries in the Local Church* (St Andrew Press, October 2021).