

LCT Service 20120723

CohenLeonard If It Be Your Will [3:45]
Boyfriend Medley [8:40]

The music you heard up to the service included a medley that I put together on my computer from the essential bits from the musical The Boyfriend. We'll leave with another from Me and My Girl.

[Note: the following was replaced by switching on an "appropriate" spinning globe, and the words were changed 'live' to the sound of electricity and its dispersal not containing and constraining]

Now it is time to take the flame
And illuminate the darkness;

But the flame action as pure energy -
Light and heat -
Includes the crackle of the material fuel,
As what was becomes anew;

And the sound this makes
Is affected by the bowl,
Which contains and constrains
And focuses
And sends out.

[HL 033 Foundation choir: 1:40] The theme of the annual service is God is a DJ. And so our first hymn, backed by a choir, is number 33, Do You Hear? It is saying, really, just listen around you, from where you are, and hear the ordinary things, and also the dreams, dares and sighs of ourselves and others. I suppose we hear music and lyrics too, on records, CDs and MP3 players, full of hopes and dreams and desires. Number 33.

In our prayers we turn from our old ways and intend the new, confessing in penitence and faith. We are sorry, and seek forgiveness; and we give forgiveness when it is needed:

For what we have done, but should not have done;

LCT Service 20120723

For what we should have done, but did not do.
For what we needed, but did not receive;
For things we received, but did not actually need.
For those who offered us love when we could not accept it;
For those who did not receive the love we could have given.
For friends and family we let down, and who let us down.
For miracles that went unnoticed.
For the truth of the situation presented but which went unheeded.
For all these we have our apologies that we can freely give, and
forgivenesses greatly received, one to the other.

[After Peter Friedrichs]

Once our apologies are done,
It is time to be happy and thankful:
Thankful for the people we know and have helped us-
And let's include Avril in this and welcome Alison,
And so a thanks to the Leonard Chamberlain Trust;
Thankful for somewhere to live that is secure;
Thankful for neighbours we can know and surely trust;
Thankful for a village in a city we can call our own;
Thankful for community;
Thankful for being ourselves: for doing and, even more simply, for being.
Amen.

Yesterday mention was made at the Unitarian church of the Vineyard Church in Beverley Road, where an attractive-looking young person stood outside central doors welcoming everyone in. The piece of music that follows is perhaps more their thing than anyone else's; it is, I presume, not meditational to our ears. It is an example of the kind of music young people in a number of churches hear, but this goes even beyond the rock music worship format that is popular. It's an electronic music creation that through its beat and form becomes something absorbed into a whole sensation, a music, pulse and vibration experience. Now I want to spare us the length of this, and just to present it as an example, and so I have used my computer to edit the original piece down to essential parts that include the lyrics, and I will go through the lyrics now at first.

LCT Service 20120723

The group is Faithless and the track is called God Is A DJ

This is my church
This is where I heal my hurt
It's a natural grace
Of watching young life shape
It's in minor keys
Solutions and remedies
Enemies becoming friends
When bitterness ends
This is my church

This is my church
This is my church

This is my church
This is where I heal my hurt
It's in the world I become
Content in the hum
Between voice and drum
It's in change
The poetic justice of cause and effect
Respect, love, compassion
This is my church
This is where I heal my hurt
For tonight
God is a DJ

God is a DJ
God is a DJ

This is my church
This is my church
This is my church

As you listen, imagine a situation of a large, dark, media church with people involved in dance and flashing lights and a large screen flashing up those lyrics.

[Play Faithless God is a DJ extracts: 3:37]

LCT Service 20120723

[Repeat these lines afterwards]

This is where I heal my hurt
It's a natural grace
Of watching young life shape
It's in minor keys
Solutions and remedies
Enemies becoming friends
When bitterness ends

This is where I heal my hurt
It's in the world I become
Content in the hum
Between voice and drum
It's in change
The poetic justice of cause and effect
Respect, love, compassion
This is my church
This is where I heal my hurt
For tonight
God is a DJ

[HL 052 Manchester College choir tape: 2:22] Something more standard for us older folk now - a hymn, and again it is choir backed. It is number 52 expressing the idea that divinity is all around us and in ordinary things, in what has evolved around us, in love, in self-respect and honesty. Number 52.

So the theme for this year's Leonard Chamberlain Sutton Feast Service is God is a DJ. The suggestion of God is a DJ could be that God plays the records, and the world is like his records. Such a God intervenes, or alternatively the records God plays are the natural world as we see it. God is the DJ, putting on the records, or making the world.

The lyrics are more specific, however, that God is the DJ of the church, and so the records are put on in the church, and it is in the church where hurt is healed, young lives are shaped, where solutions are

LCT Service 20120723

shaped and enemies become friends, where is practised a poetic justice of cause and effect, and so where exists respect, love, compassion. So it's not about the world but the sacred body.

Except it says, in the lyrics, "For tonight God is a DJ", and so one turns from perhaps a ridiculous optimism about churches and how they behave into an ideal: put the music on, for tonight God is a DJ. It is a wish list for the kind of church that would be my church. Indeed it says this is my church, and there might not be any real church actually like it. So let's hold that thought.

Where I live I haven't put up net curtains, so unless the main ones are shut I am inevitably going to be seen sat at the computer and some might wonder what I am doing all of that time. Well, for part of the time I am being a church DJ.

I am not God, just a human DJ, but some of the music chosen by the preacher or me is to assist solutions and remedies, enemies becoming friends, when bitterness ends, the poetic justice of cause and effect and for respect, love, and compassion. Music is very important to the service, including singing and meditation.

With no organist at the Unitarian church, the solution is DJ-like, with a player of two CDs and a mixing desk pushing the signal through to the speakers of a very good sound system. But it all needs preparation and the preparation is to source the music, edit and prepare, and play. You can play music without needing a performing licence for copyright so long as it is within divine worship or at closed and therefore private gatherings.

Some of my time at the home computer is finding and downloading hymn tunes. There is a fantastic Australian website where one organ player has made public domain and some royalty payment hymn tunes available. He also expects that you might want to slow down and lower the note of some tunes. Indeed I do this, but because Unitarians sing different words and fewer verses, I also edit the number of verses.

Wherever a tune comes from, I save each tune according to the hymn book number and tune name, and then add any features. For example, if a choir sings along then I add choir. If I have had to heavily edit the

piece, to improve its sound, I might add process. I assume an organ, but will add piano to the name if that is so. I keep these hymns on a large hard drive, and in order with all this naming as a system.

A denomination Unitarian choirmaster made four CDs singing ninety six hymns from the main green hymn book and also four CDs singing a hundred hymns from a recent purple supplement book. The first CD produced in 2000 was a shocker: in mono, it had a very strong hiss throughout the singing. One thing I do is edit such pieces, as process, and using sound software have (after several attempts) made those hymns virtually hiss free and in stereo. These days home computers can do what used to be the reserve of large music recording studios. What is more, the software is free - it costs nothing. There are also other recorded choirs singing Unitarian hymns: the one just sung was recorded on to a cassette in Oxford.

I mess about with two types of software, both of which are time-consuming. Most audio music is of a wave kind, either compressed like an MP3 or uncompressed, as an actual wave. I always uncompress at the earliest opportunity, because then the sound doesn't degrade over continuous editing. Despite being a wave, it is still digital, not analogue, and can be edited with no loss of quality and no increase in hiss. But an important point is that a .WAV or MP3 sound contains no inherent information and only we humans recognise it as music.

But there is another kind of music file from the olden days of computing, where the highest single unit is the note and the note is of a certain length and of a computer-generated sound like a musical instrument. This information means that you can have a tune and the computer can write the tune to a score and allocate an instrument. And so, as well as audio editing software, you can have music editing software where you can change the notes and change the instrument.

These old unit music files called MIDI are very small, unlike audio files that must be large to give the complexity of natural sound. Well, when a piece of music for a hymn cannot be found you can sometimes find a computer sample of a tune.

With a simple computer generated file you can load it into music composing software and there is the tune laid out in front of you. You

LCT Service 20120723

can read the musical score too. You can thus add to it and edit. You then turn the finished result into an audio file, and that file becomes the sort that can go on to an audio CD.

Audio sounds are also present in video files, and software easily strips the sound from the pictures. Thus you can go to a website like You Tube, find a video of some music, extract the audio, edit it and add it to your collection.

If there is no music available at all well then you can simply look at the hymn book, copy it yourself to music composing software and when done you end up with a full tune and even a beautifully presented musical score. You can also have the simple, music generated file and some of the original pieces in the hymn book that had no sample tunes anywhere in the world now have sample tunes on my website.

So I build up lots of tunes as preparation, but each week I use a little of the music stored to burn to CDs and produce the music for a service, and I push the buttons at the service so that for the Sunday I am a DJ.

[HL 049 Truro: 1:30] Final hymn now, which will be number 49. We don't just listen, do we, but look. My life as a church DJ has been made so much easier by two gifts for which I can be thankful. The first gift is the communication tool of the World Wide Web, invented by a Unitarian Tim Berners Lee at the same place the Higgs Boson evidence was confirmed recently, at Cern in Switzerland. The second gift is the decision and effort of the expert organist Clyde McLennan in Australia, who decided to play and make available very many hymn tunes, so that through the World Wide Web he has made them a gift to the world. So I am not using the tune in the book, but his playing of a tune called Truro. The hymn itself is called Leisure - so even at a computer screen we can just stop and take some time to look out of our big windows and stare. Number 49.

Time now to extinguish sight and sound.
But, if you keep the flame burning,
It can be lit once more
In tomorrow land.