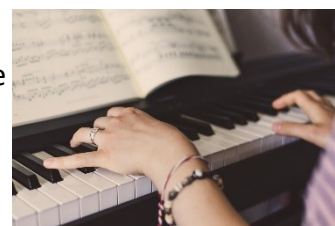


Shortly after starting senior school I began to have piano lessons. A few weeks later I awoke on Christmas morning to the usual stocking at the bottom of the bed and also a lovely music case.

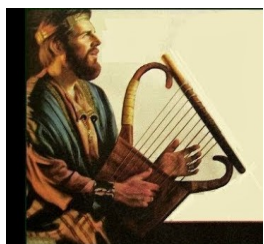


Inside the music case were ten sheets of music of songs that were popular at that time. Now I feel sure that having the music, my parents were expecting me to be able to sit down at the piano and play the songs. Little did they realize that the music was way beyond my musical capabilities as I was still struggling to make both hands play at the same time! I wanted to please them because of the effort they had made to provide me with the music so I chose what looked like the easiest one and decided to concentrate on that one song. It was the song 'Galway Bay'. As I played I had to keep stopping to work out the chords and then sometimes having to have several goes at it before getting it right. The first line was, 'If you ever go across the sea to Ireland.' My Dad used to whistle the songs, so as I played he would be expecting to hear beautiful musical chords floating through the open window, but I am afraid all that he got was, 'If you.....ever, ever, ever.....go.....across.....the sea, the sea, the sea.....to Ireland.' Poor Dad!



I have been thinking about music that is mentioned in the Bible. They seemed to sing and play music on many occasions – When worshipping, going into battle, victory times, mourning and funerals. David wrote many of the Psalms and I have been quite interested in some of the words that are written over the top of them. 'With stringed instruments.' 'For the flutes.' Quite a number of them say, 'To the choirmaster.' They were obviously meant to be

sung. I wonder how David conveyed the tunes to the choirmaster as I would not have thought that he would have been there on all of those occasions.



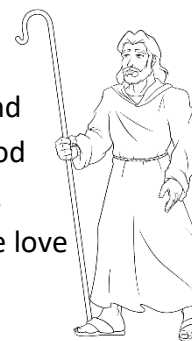
David was obviously a skilled player. The instrument that he would have been most likely to have played would have been a lyre. The strings would have either have been played with fingers or using a piece of stick. When King Saul was having bad head days he wanted someone to play music to him and it was David who was chosen for that purpose. What a transition – From playing to the sheep to playing for the king!

David wrote a wide variety of Psalms. Some of them are full of praise for all the things that God has created. In **Psalm 104** he writes, '*I will sing to the Lord as long as I live.*' One thing that I like about the Psalms is that David is a normal human being who takes all of his thoughts and problems to God. Mind you, some of them were rather strong and are not the sort of prayers that we are encouraged to say. In **Psalm 58** he is asking God to sort out those who are ruling unjustly and asks God to break their teeth and to let the people dissolve in slime like a snail. Those are not very nice prayers at all are they.



David constantly prayed to God for help to overcome his enemies. Sometimes he is very down-hearted. In **Psalm 35** he really seems to be struggling and yet can still say, ***'Great is the Lord. My tongue shall tell of His righteousness and of His praise all the day long.'***

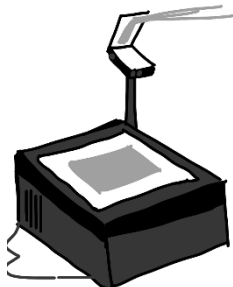
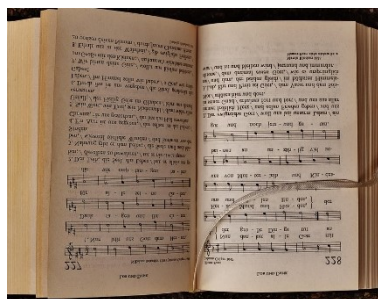
The best well-known Psalm is **Psalm 23**. It is one in which thousands of people have found comfort at a time of bereavement. It asks for the protection, guidance and comfort of God our Shepherd, in the same way as a shepherd would use his rod and staff with his sheep. Through it all he says, ***'I fear no evil for Thou art with me.'*** He is absolutely certain of the love of God no matter what circumstances he is facing.



My favourite Psalm is **Psalm 139** where David talks about God always being with us – Omnipresent. He is with us at all times, wherever we are and whatever we are doing. He knows our thoughts before we even speak. In fact, the Psalm tells us that God knew all about us before we were even born. Now that is a thought that is difficult for us to get our heads round. There are times when we might wonder how long we are going to live, yet God knows exactly how many days we are going to have in our lives. I suppose it is a good thing that He does not give us that bit of information!

I particularly like the last verse of that Psalm. ***'Search me O God and know my heart. Try me and see if there be any wicked way in me. Lead me in the way everlasting.'*** The fact that God knows our hearts means that He can draw us closer to Himself. He wants us to get rid of any thoughts or actions that do not please Him. Of course, the result of being in a close relationship with God here on earth means that that relationship will continue into everlasting life and is not something that will end with our numbered days on earth.

## Psalms



Today we have computers to show the words of hymns and songs. Before that it was overhead projectors. Prior to that it was hymn books. Before that it was the Psalms. For many, many years they formed the basis of praise and worship in all manner of church services. I would think that David never envisaged that his writing and music would have such an impact on millions of people throughout the ages.

### Suggestion for you to try

Psalms are meant to be sung. How about choosing one of them (Not Psalm 23 because you will already know a tune to that) and sing it as you read it. Make up a tune as you go along. You do not have to be able to play the lyre or any other instrument or even have the most wonderful singing voice of all time.

**Have a go. Sing a Psalm!**

