### An Easter Hymn

### (verses 1,2 Clifford Owen, verses 3, 4 June Boyce-Tillman)

Tune: ***Londonderry Air***

#### At Easter dawn the world lay quietly sleeping.

#### There was no thought that history was to change.

#### Towards His tomb went Mary sad and weeping,

But found the sealing stone now rolled away

And then behold her Jesus stood beside her;

#### The gardener was none other than her Lord.

Her sowing tears had reaped their joyful harvest.

Her future now could never be the same.

So lift our faith, as we come to your table Lord.

Your sacrament reminds us of the cost.

We need your grace of death to resurrection

that we might know that transformation too.

Despair to hope we seek to know within ourselves,

And feel that love your Holy Spirit brings

That we might shine to reach out to our neighbours

And sow the seeds of hope in many a longing heart

So we’ll go out with hope of resurrection

We shall go out, from strength to strength go on

We shall go out and tell our stories boldly,

Tales of a love that will not let us go.

We’ll sing our song of wrongs that can be righted.

We’ll dream our dream of hurts that can be healed.

We’ll weave a cloth of all the world united

Within the vision of a Christ that sets us free.

We’ll give a voice to those who have not spoken

We’ll find the words for those whose lips are sealed.

We’ll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,

Vibrating love alive in every heart.

We’ll share our joy with those who are still weeping,

Chant hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief.

We’ll leap and dance the Resurrection story

Including all within the circles of our love.

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**The Story Behind the Hymn:**

At Easter 2015 I was preparing to take the Easter morning Holy Communion service at Grafham, Cambridgeshire. The churchwardens had asked me to choose the hymns. Normally one is spoilt for choice at Easter, but as I browsed through the Easter section of one hymn book I came across the verses 3 and 4 above which were marked ‘source unknown’. I thought what appropriate words they were to end Easter morning service, and I decided that I wanted to use them.

However Avis, who was playing the organ, opted for ‘Thine be the glory’ but I felt that I still wanted to include the words of v 3, 4. Clearly as they stood they would follow the sermon, so I put them in for the offertory slot, but felt that to make full sense they needed more words added in front. In fact I had searched through the hymn book to see if there were any missing verses. So I doodled around on my notepad and out came verses one and two! I managed to make a good welding joint between the two halves and thus we track tested the four verses. It went off well.

So at Easter 2016 I used the hymn at Great Stukeley Church and once again it seemed to run well. In 2018 I put it into the service I was taking at Berkeley Street Methodist Church in St. Neots. Once again it worked without a snag.

Fast forward to August 2020 when I was doing the online preaching by Zoom for St. Marc Grenoble. For some reason the Easter hymn fitted the theme and I put it forward to the organist in Grenoble to play it through and make a recording. We used it online and as on previous occasions the authorship of verses 3. 4 were acknowledged as ‘unknown’.

Three days later the Revd. Dr. Alan Golton sent me an e mail to say that he had discovered the author of v 3 & 4 as Revd. Professor June Boyce-Tillman. June had been head of musicology at the University of Winchester (formerly King Alfred’s College) and had quite a repertoire of things she had written for various occasions!

So using Crockfords initially I tried to contact her (same age as me!) but without success. Then Stainer and Bell came to my rescue as they knew her whereabouts. They explained my conundrum to her and asked about what to do with this hymn which had already been used on five occasions. In the event she was happy to let the version stand as I had it, provided authorship was duly acknowledged. Had she refused then I may have written a third verse myself.

So please feel free to use this hymn in Easter services, provided that your church is covered by CCLI or ONE LICENCE. If not , you need permission from Stainer and Bell. It is set to *Londonderry Air.* It may work with four line tunes but I have not explored that yet. Do give me any feedback and I may write something else one day for another occasion.

**Clifford Owen, January 2021**