

## **A pause for thought**

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Congregational singing has long been recognised as an integral part of Christian worship but, as Brian Hoare's hymn title 'Born in song' suggests, it reaches back even further than this.

If you read through the books of Chronicles you will find that the Levitical choir held a very important position, both within the community and in the temple worship.

Although the layout of the temple indicates that the further you were allowed in the more important or holier you were, the choirs stood on steps in the very centre of the temple so that all, no matter their station, could be caught up in the music of worship.

Of course for Methodists this importance still remains. Charles Wesley was so convinced of the importance of learning God's truths through song that he wrote an incredible amount of hymns offering "better words to sing" to the popular tunes of the day.

Naturally, we have inherited John and Charles' passion for hymnody, but the stronger the tradition, the more resistant it can be to change. It is right for us to be aware of our hymn and song choices because it is important that we believe what we sing, but ultimately whatever songs we sing be they brand new or ancient, they should lead us into a deeper relationship with God.

There are many reasons why we sing and likewise corporate singing fulfils many functions within our worship.

Throughout the Bible we can read encouragements to sing together, from the early temple worship and the Psalms of the Old Testament, to Paul's encouragement to edify each other through singing to God in Colossians (3:16), to the recognition in Revelation that singing is also a heavenly activity.

So not only can singing raise our spirits, encourage and edify us, teach us more about God and his love and grace, and develop our sense of community, but in singing we can find ourselves in a 'thin place', where the veil between heaven and earth is almost invisible, as we join with the angels in singing praises to our Creator God.