Fear Not, Little Flock

Hymns of Rae E. Whitney

Volume I
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Introduction

From the five hundred hymn texts I have written, David Schaap has chosen about seventy different texts to publish in two books, with settings from over thirty contemporary composers. More of my texts can be found in With Joy Our Spirits Sing (1995, Selah Publishing Co.).

The texts in Fear Not, Little Flock I & II have been chosen by the Editor for their variety and for the response made to them by various musicians. Why certain texts attract different composers, I don’t know, but Al Fedak says that, for him, “it was simply a matter of my being drawn to your words, being moved by them in some way, and hearing music in them.”

Although always a lover of hymns, I never set out to be a hymn poet. A few texts were written in my younger days, but I didn’t really start writing until the late 1970’s when I found such an activity to be a way of praying. Then friends and critics, such as my husband, Clyde, and Marian Barnett (AGO), convinced me to share my texts with others. About this time I was introduced to the Hymn Societies of the U.K. and North America, became a member of both, and have continued to value their publications, conferences and workshops. It is always a joy to meet fellow lovers of hymns, and the warm friendships made through the Hymn Societies are priceless.

This two-book collection is called Fear Not, Little Flock, because those words of Christ have had great significance for Clyde and me. Our marriage was both trans-generational and trans-national, Clyde having being born in the United States 26 years before my own birth in England. We met in Italy in 1960. He proposed at Assisi a few days later. I said, “Nonsense!” He grinned. “I’ll give you another week.” By the time we got back to England, I was pretty sure I was in love too, and accepted his ring.

The next month we boarded an Atlantic liner with the idea of my visiting his home in Western Nebraska. We had both been somewhat apprehensive as to whether we would be doing the right thing. Clyde had been rector of St Andrew’s Episcopal parish, Scottsbluff, for the past 17 years, and I was aware there would be 200 future mothers-in-law to meet! But, one day, on deck, as we were reading Morning Prayer, it happened that the appointed lesson was Luke 12. Suddenly out of the pages, verse 32 leapt as confirmation of our decision: “Fear not, little flock; it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” It was a verse neither of us had ever consciously seen before! From that moment on, we had no doubt about our future life together. I was received most warmly in Nebraska, and returned a month later to England to complete my teaching commitment, and to prepare for our New Year’s Eve wedding in my home town of Chippenham. Some 20 years later, I wrote the song, “Fear Not, Little Flock,” which appears in Book II.
A few months before Clyde died in 1992, we made our funeral arrangements, choosing a plot in a little cemetery near Scotts Bluff National Monument. We even ordered the tombstone, and had those special “Fear not” words inscribed on it! So when, about three weeks after his death, the tombstone was put in place, and an informal dedication service was held, we played a tape of Clyde singing my “Fear not, little flock.” A bird in the nearest tree joined in as soon as Clyde’s voice was heard, and it sang all the way through, ending only when the music stopped!

I want to thank all the composers who have seen a song within my words, many of whom I have grown to appreciate as friends through The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada. I am also grateful to David Schaap of Selah Publishing Co. for his encouragement over the years, and for his efforts now in gathering these texts and tunes together, so that individuals and parishes can also sing from Fear not, Little Flock.

Rae E. Whitney

Dedication

“A faithful friend is a sure shelter, whoever finds one has found a rare treasure. A faithful friend is something beyond price, there is no measuring his worth.”
Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 6:14-15 Jerusalem Bible

Dedicated to the many friends who have blessed my life and two “rare treasures” in particular:

Eva-Maria Carne of Ellensburg, Washington, whose loyal friendship since our student days at the University of Bristol, England has proved to be a priceless and constantly-renewing gift,

and Edward Doemland of West Allis, Wisconsin, who, since our first meeting in 1993 at a St Olaf’s Hymn Society workshop, has given me invaluable support, practical help, and invigorating companionship.
In the 1960’s a phenomenon, later called *The Hymn Explosion*, hit England and out of it came the wonderful texts of Fred Pratt Green, Brian Wren and, somewhat later, the texts of Timothy Dudley-Smith and others. A decade or so later, when churches in the United States began what has been a twenty-five year period of hymnal revision, a similar *Hymnal Explosion* hit America. This *Explosion* is ongoing in the United States and Canada; from it we have a continuing output from truly fine women poets. Among them is Rae E. Whitney some of whose works constitute the two volumes of this publication. British by birth and education, Rae came to the States in 1961 as the bride of the late Rev. Clyde Whitney. A devoted wife committed to the life and work of the Episcopal Church, Rae began to write hymn texts in the 1970s. One of her earliest and finest texts, which I believe has now reached the status of being a *classic*, is a paraphrase of the Song of Simeon, *Nunc Dimittis*, “Lord God, you now have set your servant free.” First published in 1981 this text is now included in *The Hymnal 1982* (1985), *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990), *Voices United* (Canada 1996), and *Together in Song* (Australia 1999). Other texts by this gifted and prolific writer appear in *The Baptist Hymnal* (1991), *A New Hymnal for Colleges and Schools* (1992), *New Century Hymnal* (1995), *Voices Found* (2004) and various supplements. I feel sure that in future editions of denominational hymnals and supplements the name of Rae Whitney will continue to be listed as a contributor.

In the two volumes of this publication we have a select number of texts from the five hundred that have come from Rae Whitney’s pen. These texts are matched with tunes, arrangements and harmonizations by a rich variety of contemporary American composers. Rae’s texts included here are rich in Biblical imagery, many are liturgically oriented; all reflect the deep faith of this very committed Christian woman. Because they arise from the diversity of this poet’s life experiences, they will resonate with many privileged to sing them. I consider it an honor to have been invited to write this foreword. To Rae E. Whitney and the composers whose works accompany her texts I extend a deep expression of gratitude and respect.

**Raymond. F. Glover**  
General Editor of *The Hymnal 1982* and General Editor of *The Hymnal 1982 Companion*, and a founder of the Association of Anglican Musicians.
Fear Not, Little Flock
1 Young Mary Lived in Nazareth

1 Young Ma - ry lived in Naz - a - reth, drew wa - ter
2 So Ma - ry went a - cross the hills, far, far from
3 When Ma - ry went a - cross the hills, far, far from
4 So Jo - seph mar - ried Ma - ry then, a preg - nant
5 Those eigh - ty burn - ing miles they walked; be - neath the

from the well, where once an an - gel came to her, full
Naz - a - reth, to share the ti - dings bit - ter - sweet, with
lost its song, a - fraid that Jo - seph, whom she loved, would
vir - gin song; to keep her safe from slan - derous tongues, he
stars they slept; and Ma - ry, in new free - dom, laughed, and

won - drous news to tell. But Ma - ry said, “How
old E - liz - a - beth, who said, “That self - same
think she had done wrong; at first he did, but
kept her at his side; and when the child was
then, re - mem - ber - ing, wept; and when at last they

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Though many artists have portrayed the Annunciation happening inside a house in Nazareth, there is a strong tradition, told me on my visit there in 1964, that the angel Gabriel appeared to her at the village’s only water source, now known as St Mary’s Well.
Eternity Touched Hands with Time

1 Eternity touched hands with time when Mary
2 The angels shared in earth's delight, a star begins
3 Time still can touch eternity, when we reach

said, "God's will be done," and commonplace became the magi's sign, and shepherds met, on
out to God in prayer; rejoice that Christ will

came sublime when that young woman bore a son.
Christmas night, a child, both human and divine.
ev er be re born in hearts that want him there!