

West Berlin Presbyterian Church

The MESSENGER August 2026



The mission of West Berlin Presbyterian Church is to follow God's law and act in true faith by being a welcoming place where community members come to learn, take part in worship, find fellowship, and serve those in need, for the glory of God.

The Small Strong Church with a Big Heart



From the Pulpit

Following is a summary of a document developed by the recent General Assembly of the PC(USA). This fall we will have an Adult Study series that will address Presbyterian viewpoints on this topic. I hope this summary will encourage you to participate.

STANDING AGAINST WHITE CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM PC(USA)

The document argues that white Christian nationalism (WCN) represents a serious distortion of both the Christian faith and the democratic principles of the United States. Prepared for consideration by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), it responds to a directive from the 226th General Assembly (2024) to provide a theological and policy statement addressing the growing influence of WCN. The report defines WCN as a political ideology that fuses Christianity, American national identity, and white racial identity in ways that seek to privilege one religious and ethnic group over all others. It distinguishes WCN from healthy patriotism, emphasizing that Christians may love and serve their country without elevating it to an object of ultimate loyalty.

The report traces the historical roots of WCN to colonial America. It acknowledges that Presbyterians were at times complicit in these injustices through support for slavery, segregation, assimilation of Native peoples, and other discriminatory practices. At the same time, it recognizes later Presbyterian efforts to oppose racism, expand civil rights, and strengthen democratic institutions.

The document identifies key characteristics of WCN, including the belief that the United States was divinely established as a Christian nation, that government should actively promote Christianity, and that Christianity—particularly conservative forms associated with white European heritage—should enjoy privileged status in public life. It argues that these beliefs are often accompanied by racial superiority, xenophobia, and hostility towards religious and cultural diversity.



Several contemporary manifestations are examined. The report also discusses educational initiatives that seek to reshape public school curricula, immigration policies rooted in fear of demographic change, and actions that undermine democratic participation through voter suppression and challenges to election integrity.

The theological section grounds the church's rejection of WCN in core Reformed convictions.

The report concludes that white Christian nationalism is incompatible with the gospel of Jesus Christ and with historic Reformed theology. It urges Presbyterians to repent of past complicity in racism and exclusion, defend constitutional religious freedom for all people, oppose discrimination and authoritarianism, and witness to a Christian faith centered on God's sovereignty, justice, reconciliation, and love for all humanity.

If you would like a copy of the full document, just let me know.

Pastor Bob

Community Ice Cream Social

Despite the weather, we had a wonderful Ice Cream Social on Friday, July 31. It was great to see so many old friends and neighbors. All enjoyed the evening.

Thanks to all those who helped make our summer community Ice Cream Social a wonderful success. Special thanks to volunteers from the Berlin 4-H Club who did a great job of assisting folks and bussing tables. We raised \$810.



Important Dates!!! August 2026

August 2

Sesquicentennial Service
of Hymns w
Communion*
10:30 AM

August 9

Hybrid Worship*
10:30 AM

August 11

Session Meeting
7:00 PM

August 12

Deacon & Mission Bd
Noon

August 16

Worship*
10:30 AM

August 23

Worship*
10:30 AM

August 25

Worship & Outreach
Comm.
Noon

August 30

Worship*
10:30 AM

*

***Worship is**
Hybrid
10:30 a.m.

See email invite for
Zoom link and
bulletin. Mailed
copies of bulletin
and sermons are
available upon
request from Pastor
Bob

Project Regeneration

Session reconfirmed its commitment to go ahead with the planning exercise offered by the Presbyterian Foundation (PC(USA)) called "Project Regeneration." The result will be a plan intended to help write our church's next chapter.

The process guides the congregation through prayerful discernment to help discern a strategic approach for the church's future. We are forming a committee made up of Session members and a limited number of other key stakeholders.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating in this group effort. More information is at <https://www.presbyterianfoundation.org/services/project-regeneration/>

This committee will begin work in September.

August Birthdays:

6 – Tom Roll
7 – Doug Cottrill
8 – Catlin Clark Taylor
12 – Jerianne Gooding,
Yvonne Gustafson
15 – Jayden Parrish
18 - David Howell
20 – Beth McDonnell



Anniversaries:

9 – Jason & Shelly Glenn
25 – Ruth and John Cogar

PRAYER LIST:

Rodger Glenn, John & Debbie Rucker, William Nierman, Linda Fields, Krista George, Alice Coy, Michael Jordan, Eloise Eschbaugh, Debbie & Carl Gustafson, Joyce Harmen, Greer Family, Tiffani, Arlene Thompson, Terry Bischoff, Dana Carmack, Pam Evener, Michael & Jeanie Jordan, Ray Bob Foster Family, David Thompson, Colton Applegate and Family, Kent Brooks, Becky Donovan

From the Administration Committee - Mid-year Fiscal Review

One of the responsibilities of the Administrative Committee and Session is a review of the Income and Expenses of the Church throughout the church fiscal year. At the July Session meeting, the first six months of income and expenses were shared.

Income was \$60,434 or 74% of budgeted revenue. This includes some once-per-year donations and \$5,000 from our reserve fund. This does not include the County Right of Way payment of \$28,202.80 which Session decided to move directly into our investment account. This will be used for special larger projects when needed (roof and furnace replacements).

Expenses were \$46,578 or 56% of this year's budgeted expenses which are on target.

Overall, WBPC is in a sound financial position and should end the year in a positive position.

If you have questions, feel free to contact me or Tom Roll, Chair, Administrative Committee.



Donation Options

You are encouraged to prayerfully consider what you are able and what you are called to contribute to the support of the church. West Berlin PC does not participate in an annual pledging system. Instead, we rely on people's generosity in their giving and other financial support. The tradition of contributing on Sunday morning continues.

WBPC also has an on-line giving option. See the **GIVE NOW** button on the church website (WestBerlinPC.info). You can give an electronic one-time gift or continuous gifts to the church.

Contributions to West Berlin PC may be mailed C/O Ed Cox, Treasurer, 257 Pennsylvania Ave., Delaware, OH 43015

If the contribution is to be directed for a specific purpose (i.e., a memorial or special offerings *Like One Great Hour of Sharing* coming up soon). Please indicate this on the memo section of your check or with a note designating the purpose and/or use of the special contribution.

From the Treasurer

July 2026 Stats

Attendance:

July 5 – 26
(20 Onsite, 6 On-line)

July 12 - 29
(21 Onsite, 8 On-line)

July 19 - 26
(16 Onsite, 10 On-line)

July 26 - 31
(21 Onsite, 10 On-line)

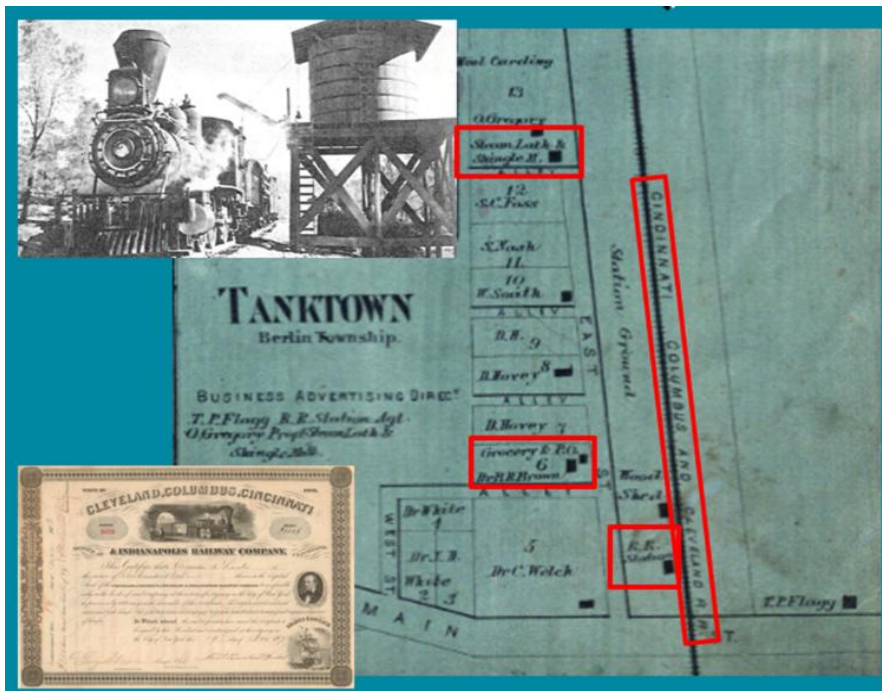
Contributions:

July 5 \$1,905
July 12 \$1,466
July 19 \$ 611
July 26 \$ 801
\$4,783

Please make your contributions via mail to Church Treasurer Edmund Cox, 257 Pennsylvania Av, Delaware, OH 43015. On-line giving through westberlinpc.info

Storybook Walk Now Displayed in the Annex

Graphics used for the Storybook Walk that cover history of WBPC and Berlin Township are now displayed on the west wall of the Annex. Those who are not up for a walk in our woods are invited to view them there.



Notebooks – Back to School Special

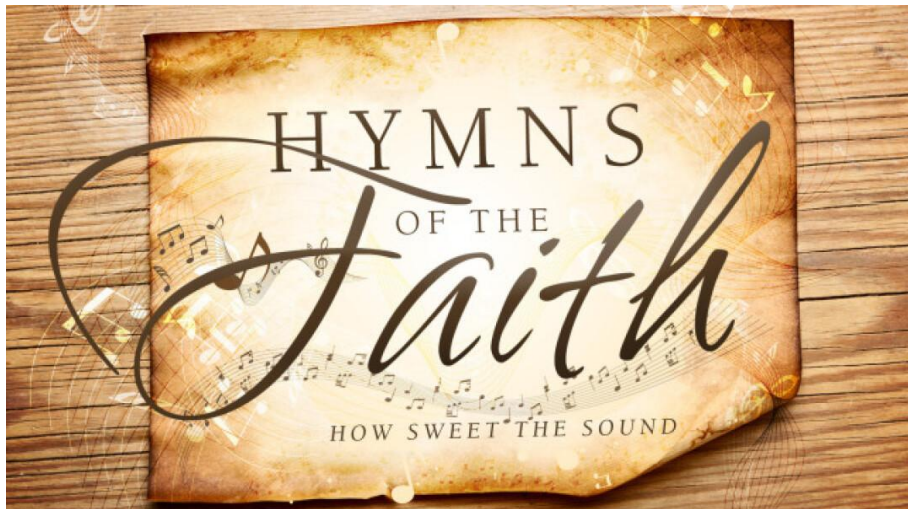
For several years now, the Deacon and Mission Board has been supplying Composition Notebooks for a Franklin County corrections program in which Yvonne Gustafson teaches parenting classes. We usually try to collect enough soft bound (no metal spirals) Composition Books (9.75" x 7.5") during the summer back to school sales (when they are marked down dramatically) to supply the year.

If you would like to help support this program, now seems to be the time. (Walmart has 6 packs for \$2.28, Staples for \$.50 each.) They can use 400 to 500 of the booklets.



Sesquicentennial Celebration Continued – A Service of Familiar Hymns with Communion – August 2, 2026

Attached to this newsletter is a history of all the hymns frequently sung on Sunday mornings. I hope you find this of interest as we continue our journey of faith in the coming years!



History of Church Hymns

"The Church in the Wildwood"

"The Church in the Wildwood" was written in 1857 by **Dr. William Savage Pitts**, a physician from Wisconsin with a love for music. While traveling through northeastern Iowa, Pitts stopped near the small community of Bradford (now Nashua). Looking across a wooded valley, he was shown the site where a church was planned, although no building yet stood there. Inspired by the peaceful setting and the promise of a future congregation, he wrote the hymn beginning, "There's a church in the valley by the wildwood."

Five years later, in 1862, the church was completed on that very site. Over time it became known as **The Little Brown Church**, a name inspired by the weathered color of its wooden exterior and forever linked to Pitts's hymn.

Although the song was written before the Civil War, it did not become widely popular until the late nineteenth century. Gospel singers, evangelists, and hymnals carried it across America, where its simple melody and heartfelt words resonated with people living in rural communities and with families who had moved away from their hometown churches. The hymn celebrated more than a building; it expressed gratitude for the fellowship, faith, and hope found in the local church.

Today, the Little Brown Church in Nashua, Iowa, remains an active place of worship and a cherished historical landmark. Thousands of visitors and wedding parties come each year to see the church that inspired one of America's best-loved gospel hymns. More than 165 years after it was written, "The Church in the Wildwood" continues to remind Christians of the enduring importance of gathering together in worship, finding community in Christ, and treasuring the simple beauty of the local church.

The History of "Just As I Am"

"Just As I Am" is one of the best-known invitation hymns in the Christian church. The text was written in 1835 by **Charlotte Elliott** (1789–1871), an English poet and hymn writer. As a young woman, Elliott suffered from chronic illness and periods of deep discouragement, often wondering how she could be useful to God despite her physical limitations.

Years earlier, the Swiss evangelist **Dr. César Malan** had counseled her not to rely on her own strength or worthiness but simply to come to Christ in faith. That conversation remained with her. When her family was preparing to raise funds for a charitable school, Elliott felt unable to contribute because of her illness. Instead, she expressed her faith through poetry, writing the words that begin, "Just as I am, without one plea."

The hymn emphasizes the biblical truth that salvation is received by God's grace, not by human merit or personal achievement. Each verse invites believers to come to Christ honestly, bringing their sins, doubts, fears, and weaknesses, trusting in Christ's atoning sacrifice alone.

The tune most associated with the hymn, "**Woodworth**," was composed in 1849 by American musician **William B. Bradbury**, helping the hymn gain widespread popularity in both Britain and the United States.

During the twentieth century, "Just As I Am" became especially associated with the evangelistic crusades of **Billy Graham**. As the choir sang the hymn during the invitation, thousands responded to the call to place their faith in Christ. Through those crusades, the hymn became recognized around the world as a powerful expression of God's gracious invitation.

Today, "Just As I Am" continues to be sung in churches of many denominations. Its enduring message reminds Christians that no one must first become worthy before coming to Christ; we are welcomed by God's grace, just as we are.

"Amazing Grace"

"Amazing Grace" is one of the most beloved and recognizable Christian hymns in the world. Its words were written in 1772 by **John Newton** (1725–1807), an Anglican pastor in England. Newton's life was marked by dramatic transformation. As a young man, he worked as a sailor and later became involved in the transatlantic slave trade. During a violent storm at sea in 1748, believing death was imminent, he cried out to God for mercy. Although his spiritual growth took many years, Newton eventually left the slave trade, became a minister, and later spoke publicly against slavery.

Newton wrote "Amazing Grace" to accompany a New Year's Day sermon based on **1 Chronicles 17**, reflecting on God's undeserved mercy. The hymn first appeared in the 1779 collection *Olney Hymns*, compiled by Newton and fellow hymn writer **William Cowper**.

While the words became popular in Britain, the hymn's greatest influence came in America during the nineteenth century. It was paired with the familiar tune "**New Britain**," a traditional American folk melody first published in 1835. This simple yet powerful melody helped make the hymn accessible to congregations across many denominations.

The hymn's message of forgiveness, redemption, and God's transforming grace has given it enduring appeal. It has been sung in churches, revival meetings, military services, funerals, and times of national remembrance. During the Civil Rights Movement, it became a song of hope and reconciliation, and it continues to offer comfort in times of grief and inspiration in times of joy.

More than 250 years after it was written, "Amazing Grace" remains a timeless testimony that no one is beyond the reach of God's mercy. Its simple confession—"I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see"—continues to proclaim the life-changing power of God's amazing grace.

"Tell Me the Old, Old Story"

"Tell Me the Old, Old Story" is a cherished gospel hymn that celebrates the timeless message of God's love revealed through Jesus Christ. The words were written in 1866 by **Katherine Hankey** (1834–1911), an English missionary and Bible teacher. While recovering from a serious illness, Hankey composed a lengthy poem of more than one hundred verses entitled *The Old, Old Story*. It was divided into two parts: *The Story Wanted* and *The Story Told*. The familiar hymn text comes from the first section.

The poem quickly gained attention when it was shared at an international meeting of the **Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)** in Montreal in 1867. There, American musician **William H. Doane** heard the words and was deeply moved. He composed the tune that is most sung today, helping the hymn spread rapidly throughout English-speaking churches.

The hymn expresses a simple but profound truth: Christians never outgrow the need to hear the gospel. Its opening lines—"Tell me the old, old story of unseen things above"—reflect the believer's desire to hear again the story of Jesus' love, death, and resurrection. The hymn reminds worshipers that the gospel remains fresh and life-giving regardless of age or spiritual maturity.

During the late nineteenth century, "Tell Me the Old, Old Story" became a favorite in revival meetings, Sunday schools, and evangelistic services. Its memorable melody and straightforward message made it accessible to children and adults alike.

Today, the hymn continues to be sung across many Christian traditions. More than 150 years after it was written, it remains a gentle reminder that the message of Christ's saving love is never outdated. Every generation still needs to hear—and tell—the "old, old story" of God's redeeming grace in Jesus Christ.

"Jesus Loves Me"

"Jesus Loves Me" is one of the most beloved Christian hymns in the world, especially cherished as a song of faith for children. The words were written in 1859 by **Anna Bartlett Warner** (1820–1915), an American writer and poet. The hymn first appeared as part of a novel she co-authored with her sister, **Susan Warner**, titled *Say and Seal*. In the story, a character comforts a dying child by singing the simple words, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

The message of the hymn reflects the central Christian belief that God's love is revealed through Jesus Christ and that faith in Christ is not limited by age, education, or social status. Its simple language and repetition made it especially meaningful for children, while its message of assurance has spoken to believers of all ages.

The tune most associated with the hymn was composed in 1862 by **William Batchelder Bradbury**, an American composer, organist, and publisher of Sunday school music. Bradbury added the familiar refrain, "Yes, Jesus loves me," and included the hymn in his collection *The Hymn and Tune Book for the Sunday School*. Through Sunday schools and children's ministries, the hymn quickly spread throughout churches in America and around the world.

"Jesus Loves Me" became especially important during the growth of the Sunday school movement in the nineteenth century, when churches emphasized teaching children the basics of Christian faith through Scripture, prayer, and music. Its gentle melody and reassuring words made it easy to learn and remember.

More than 160 years after it was written, "Jesus Loves Me" remains a treasured hymn of the Christian faith. Its enduring appeal comes from its simple yet profound declaration: God's love is certain, personal, and revealed to us through Jesus Christ.

"In the Garden"

"In the Garden" is a beloved gospel hymn that reflects the personal and intimate relationship between the believer and Jesus Christ. The words and music were written in 1912 by **C. Austin Miles** (1868–1946), an American pharmacist, photographer, and hymn writer.

According to Miles, the inspiration for the hymn came while he was reading the account of the resurrection of Jesus in **John 20**, where Mary Magdalene encounters the risen Christ in the garden. He described having a vivid spiritual impression of the scene, imagining himself present as Mary heard Jesus call her name. From that experience, he wrote the familiar words, "I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses."

Miles originally intended the hymn to capture the joy and comfort of a personal encounter with Christ rather than simply retell the resurrection story. The hymn emphasizes quiet communion with God, expressing the assurance that Christ walks with believers and speaks to them in the ordinary moments of life. Its refrain, "And He walks with me, and He talks with me," became one of the most memorable lines in twentieth-century gospel music.

"In the Garden" was first published in 1912 in the collection *Gospel Songs No. 1*, edited by Miles and his colleagues. It quickly became popular in revival meetings, churches, and devotional gatherings. Its gentle melody and reflective words made it especially meaningful during times of grief, prayer, and personal devotion.

Over the years, the hymn has been recorded by numerous Christian musicians and sung by congregations across many denominations. Though sometimes viewed as a hymn of personal rather than corporate faith, its message continues to comfort generations of Christians with the reminder that the risen Christ is present, near, and ready to walk with those who seek him.

"I Need Thee Every Hour"

"I Need Thee Every Hour" is one of the most beloved devotional hymns of the nineteenth century, expressing a simple yet profound prayer for God's constant presence and guidance. The words were written in 1872 by **Annie Sherwood Hawks** (1835–1918), an American poet and hymn writer from New York.

Hawks wrote the hymn during a time of ordinary daily life, while reflecting on her dependence upon Christ. She later explained that the words came to her as she went about her household responsibilities and became deeply aware of Christ's presence in every moment. The hymn was not written during a time of crisis but from the realization that believers need God's help not only in difficult circumstances but also in everyday life.

The hymn was first published in 1872 with music composed by **Robert Lowry** (1826–1899), a Baptist minister, professor, and one of America's most influential gospel hymn composers. Lowry added the familiar refrain, "I need Thee, oh, I need Thee; every hour I need Thee," which helped give the hymn its memorable and prayerful character.

The hymn quickly became popular in churches, revival meetings, and devotional gatherings. Its message resonated with Christians who recognized their dependence upon God's grace, strength, and comfort. The hymn's gentle melody and repeated appeal to Christ made it especially meaningful for personal prayer and worship.

Although Annie Hawks wrote many hymns, "I Need Thee Every Hour" remains her most enduring contribution to Christian song. More than 150 years after it was written, it continues to be sung around the world, reminding believers that God's presence is not needed only in moments of trouble but in every hour, every day, and every season of life.

"The Old Rugged Cross"

"The Old Rugged Cross" is one of the most beloved gospel hymns of the twentieth century, known for its powerful message of Christ's sacrifice and the believer's devotion to the cross. The words and music were written in 1912 by **George Bennard** (1873–1958), an American Methodist evangelist and hymn writer.

Bennard was born in Ohio and spent much of his early life in Iowa and Michigan. During a time of personal struggle and reflection, he focused deeply on the meaning of the cross and the suffering of Jesus. He later described being inspired by the words of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 6:14: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." From this meditation came the hymn's opening image: "On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross."

Bennard completed the hymn in 1912, and it was first performed that same year at a Methodist church in Pokagon, Michigan. The hymn was published in 1913 and gradually spread through evangelistic meetings, churches, and revival services. Its simple melody and heartfelt lyrics are instantly connected with worshipers who found comfort in its message of forgiveness, redemption, and hope.

During the twentieth century, "The Old Rugged Cross" became especially popular through recordings by gospel and country musicians. It has been sung at countless worship services, funerals, and memorial gatherings, becoming a treasured expression of Christian faith across denominational lines.

More than a century after it was written, "The Old Rugged Cross" remains a reminder of the central message of the Christian gospel: that God's love is revealed through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Its enduring appeal comes from its invitation to cherish the cross not merely as a symbol of suffering, but as a sign of grace, salvation, and eternal hope.

"Dwelling in Beulah Land"

"Dwelling in Beulah Land" is a beloved gospel hymn that celebrates the joy, peace, and spiritual security found in a close relationship with God. The words were written in 1911 by **Charles Austin Miles** (1868–1946), an American hymn writer best known for writing "In the Garden."

The hymn draws its inspiration from the biblical image of **Beulah Land** found in **Isaiah 62:4**, where God promises that his people will no longer be called "Forsaken" but will be called "My Delight Is in Her." The word *Beulah* comes from the Hebrew word meaning "married" or "claimed," and in Christian hymnody it came to represent a place or experience of spiritual blessing, peace, and fellowship with God.

Miles wrote "Dwelling in Beulah Land" during a period when gospel hymns were becoming an important part of American church life, particularly in revival meetings, Sunday schools, and evangelistic services. The hymn uses the imagery of standing on a spiritual mountaintop, looking beyond life's struggles, and trusting in God's protection and promises. Its refrain, "Dwelling in Beulah Land," expresses the joy of living in the assurance of God's presence.

The hymn was published in 1911 in the collection *Gospel Songs No. 1*, compiled by Charles Austin Miles and his associates. It quickly became popular among evangelical and rural churches because of its energetic melody, memorable refrain, and message of confident faith.

"Dwelling in Beulah Land" remains a favorite among many congregations, especially those who appreciate the traditional gospel hymn style. Its enduring message reminds believers that, even amid the difficulties of life, faith in God offers a place of spiritual refuge, hope, and peace—a "Beulah Land" experience of God's unfailing care.

Please give me 300 or less word history of the hymn "Dwelling in Beulah Land"

"Let Us Break Bread Together"

"Let Us Break Bread Together" is a cherished African American spiritual that celebrates Christian fellowship, humility, and the unity found in worship. Like many spirituals, its exact author and date of composition are unknown. The hymn emerged from the faith experience of enslaved African Americans in the nineteenth century, whose songs expressed deep trust in God, hope amid suffering, and longing for freedom and community.

The hymn reflects the biblical practice of breaking bread as a sign of fellowship and remembrance of Christ. The phrase "Let us break bread together" points especially to the Lord's Supper, where Christians gather at Christ's table as one body. The repeated image of kneeling in prayer expresses humility, dependence upon God, and a shared devotion that transcends social divisions.

The melody and words were preserved through the oral tradition of African American communities before being collected and published in hymnals during the early twentieth century. It became increasingly known through the work of musicians and scholars who sought to preserve African American spirituals and share them with wider audiences.

During the Civil Rights era, "Let Us Break Bread Together" took on additional meaning as a song of reconciliation, equality, and shared humanity. Its message of gathering before God offered a powerful reminder that all people are welcomed at the table of Christ.

Today, the hymn is sung by churches across many denominations and cultures, especially during Communion services and occasions emphasizing Christian unity. Its enduring message remains simple and profound: in Christ, believers are called to come together in humility, prayer, and fellowship, remembering the love and grace of God made known through Jesus Christ.

"I'll Fly Away"

"I'll Fly Away" is one of the most widely known and beloved gospel songs of the twentieth century. The words and music were written in 1929 by **Albert E. Brumley** (1905–1977), an American gospel songwriter from Oklahoma. Brumley grew up in a poor farming family and was deeply influenced by the hymns and spiritual songs he heard in church.

Brumley wrote "I'll Fly Away" while working in the cotton fields as a young man. He was inspired by the hope of heaven expressed in traditional hymns and by the biblical promise of eternal life. The song reflects the Christian belief that death is not the end but a transition into the presence of God. Its simple and joyful refrain—"I'll fly away, O glory"—expresses the hope and freedom believers find in God's promise of resurrection.

The song was first published in 1932 in *Wonderful Message*, a collection of gospel songs compiled by Brumley. It quickly became popular among rural churches, revival meetings, and gospel music groups because of its memorable melody, uplifting message, and easy congregational style.

Over the decades, "I'll Fly Away" crossed many musical boundaries. It became a favorite in Southern gospel, bluegrass, country, and folk music. Numerous artists have recorded the song, introducing it to new generations and audiences around the world.

More than ninety years after it was written, "I'll Fly Away" continues to be sung in churches, funerals, and celebrations of faith. Its enduring appeal comes from its hopeful message: for Christians, death is not the final word. The hymn points beyond the struggles of this life toward the joy, freedom, and eternal life promised.