

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today—April’s Hymn of the Month 2022

By

Bill Dagle

Charles Wesley wrote hymns morning, noon and night. He wrote them at home, in carriages and on horseback. He even wrote hymns on his wedding day. His total output exceeds sixty-five hundred, and he is remembered as being one of the first English hymn writers.

Some say that the title, *methodists*, began as a criticism of John and Charles Wesley’s methodical ways at Oxford University where they led an organization called the “Holy Club,” and was actually the beginning of the Methodist denomination. Others give credit to Susanna Wesley, their mother, for starting the movement by praying for and teaching her sons scripture. Whatever the case, by 1738, the brothers started changing the religious world because of a Moravian mission on London’s Aldersgate Street. It was at this mission that both of their hearts were turned to the Lord. Religious history was in the making.

John Wesley would preach over forty thousand sermons in his lifetime and, along the way, publish collections of his brother’s hymns. In the preface of his collections, John pleaded that editors not “tinker” with nor alter any of his brother’s poems, as they could neither “mend the sense or the verse.” But John Wesley might have served his cause better had he employed an editor, for he himself discarded *Jesus, Lover of My Soul* and *Hymn for Easter Day* which later proved to be a mistake.

The *Hymn for Easter Day* was written for the first service at the Foundry Meeting House, a deserted iron foundry, just one year after Charles’ dramatic Aldersgate conversion experience in 1738. The hymn was first published in the *Foundry’s Collection* and used at the meetinghouse, which became known as the first Wesleyan Chapel in London.

In 1830, an editor rediscovered the *Hymn for Easter Day* and included it in the Wesleyan hymnbook, but with a few changes. A “tinkering” editor had added the word, *alleluia*, at the end of each line to make the verses better fit an old Easter tune. Also, another editor changed the title from *Hymn for Easter Day* to *Christ the Lord is Risen Today*, thus preserving the hymn for us. I sure hope John Wesley doesn’t mind, for otherwise, the world would have been denied one of Charles’ finest hymns. Thank God for the tinkers!