

Online hymn database sees spike as Christians worship at home

by [Emily McFarlan Miller](#) in the [January 27, 2021](#) issue



(Photo by Michael Maasen on Unsplash)

In 2020, we celebrated holidays at home amid the COVID-19 pandemic. We worked at home, attended school at home, even attended worship services at home.

Many Christians also turned to hymns for comfort at home, according to Hymnary.org. Users of the online database doubled as the coronavirus closed many church buildings this spring.

“I do think that this time we’re in, when everything is turned upside down, makes everybody search for meaning, opens them up to the presence of God, looking for ways to express their spirituality—so there are more people searching for such things,” said Harry Plantinga, a professor of computer science at Calvin University and founder of Hymnary.org.

“There are also just the people who aren’t going to church to worship. They’re worshipping at home and they need the resources.”

Hymnary.org is an online hymn and worship music database for worship leaders, hymnologists, and music lovers, featuring more than 1 million hymns.

Plantinga founded the website in 2007. It is currently funded through the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Last year, Hymnary.org saw a jump in users in March and April as many churches moved online to slow the spread of COVID-19. They expected to hit 7.8 million users by the end of December, up 20 percent from the year before, according to the website.

Donations to the website have nearly doubled as well, according to Plantinga.

“In this time of uncertainty and fear, Christians around the globe turn to scripture and turn to song for comfort. We remember that our help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth,” says the website.

Hymnary.org also offered resources for churches and home worshipers during the pandemic. Among them is a list of ten hymns with testimonies of comfort for times of trouble, including “Precious Lord, Take My Hand,” written by Thomas Dorsey, considered the father of Black gospel music, after the death of his wife and newborn.

It’s not on the list, but the most popular hymn on the site in 2020 was “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty,” an 1826 song by Reginald Heber that defiantly proclaims God’s holiness “though the darkness hide thee.” —Religion News Service