

God, With Joy We Look Around Us

REGENT SQUARE "Angels, from the Realms of Glory"

God, with joy we look around us
At your world's diversity.
Folk of every kind surround us
And you call your church to see:
All are made in your own image!
All are people whom you love!

In the times we've hurt each other,
Lord, we've hurt the ones you bless.
Hating sister, cursing brother,
We've denied what you express:
All are made in your own image!
All are people whom you love!

God, you sent a Savior to us,
Breaking walls that would divide.
By your Spirit, now work through us
As we witness side by side:
All are made in your own image!
All are people whom you love!

Reflection on "God, With Joy We Look Around Us"

A seminary classmate, Richard Lanford, was serving as the pastor at St. Peter's United Church of Christ in Skokie, Illinois, when the Ku Klux Klan announced they were going to have a rally in front of a Cook County Courthouse a few days before Christmas. Richard asked that a new hymn be written that the churches in the community could sing to counter the hate group's rally. The hymn tune is a traditional Christmas tune, reflecting the season of year when it was first sung. The hymn has since been used by many churches as part of their annual celebrations of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday.

When this hymn was first sung by churches struggling to respond to a Klan rally in their community, they had a creative response beyond the hymn. In addition to inviting people of faith to attend services in their houses of worship, they also encouraged them to pledge money for a group working to end racism, the Southern Poverty Law Center based on how long the Klan leaders spoke (the longer their hate speeches, the more money was raised for SPLC that seeks to monitor and counter hate groups). So, even as the Klan rally was going on outside, people of faith were responding with acts of worship, peace and justice.

Adapted from *Songs of Grace: New Hymns for God and Neighbor* by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (Discipleship Resources).

Tune: Henry Thomas Smart, 1867

Biblical References: Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 133; John 17:20-23; I Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:27-29; Ephesians 2:14-22

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