

***It Is Well With My Soul* Horatio Spafford**

Horatio Spafford was rich in money – until he lost a fortune in the great Chicago fire of 1871. He was rich in love as well until he lost his four year old son to scarlet fever around the same time and his four daughters in a ship collision as they and his wife were traveling to England. His wife survived and wrote, “Saved alone. What shall I do?” On his way to England to join her, the captain, aware of the tragedy, told Horatio when the ship was passing over where the shipwreck had happened. As he thought about his daughters, the words of this hymn, words of comfort and hope, came to his heart and mind.

***Standing on the Promises* Russell Kelso Carter**

Russell Carter was a Renaissance man in the late 1800’s – professor of chemistry, civil engineering and mathematics. He published textbooks and wrote novels – interests included sheep raising and practicing medicine. He was an ordained Methodist minister and medical doctor as well as musician and songwriter. *Standing on the Promises* took on new meaning for him when he developed a heart condition which confounded doctors. The hymn he had written several years earlier became his battle cry. He lived another 49 years.

***Great is Your Faithfulness* Thomas Obediah Chisholm**

Thomas Chisholm was educated in a country schoolhouse. With no college or seminary training he was ordained a Methodist minister at 36, but had to resign due to ill health a year later. He opened an insurance office in New Jersey, and continued in his faith, writing poems and, inspired by Lamentations 3:22-23, he wrote the text for *Great is Your Faithfulness*. He was ill most of his adult life and still wrote, “God has given me many wonderful displays of his providing care, which have filled me with astonishing gratefulness.”

***Blessed Assurance* Fanny Crosby**

Fanny Crosby wrote 8,000 gospel songs and hymns, 1,000 non-religious songs, four books of poetry and two best-selling autobiographies during her 95 years. She was also blind, having lost her sight at six weeks old. She was visiting a friend one day in 1873 who played something she’d composed on the piano. She asked Fanny what the tune said to her and she replied, “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine”. She dictated the verses on the spot.

***In The Bulb There is a Flower* Natalie Sleeth**

Natalie Sleeth wrote *Canon of Praise* in 1969, which was the highest selling anthem in the history of the Choristers Guild. She went on to write more than 200 choral works. When she wrote *In the Bulb There is a Flower* in 1986 she was thinking about life, death, the seasons and the reawakening of the world that happens every spring. It was inspired by a line from T.S. Eliot, “In my end is my beginning.” At her funeral a colleague said of her music, “She expressed how life moves into death, death gives way to eternity, and ultimate victory comes for those whose doubt has evolved into belief.”

***How Can I Keep From Singing?* Anna Bartlett Warner**

Most famous for the words to *Jesus Loves Me*, this hymn by Anna Warner is often misattributed as anonymous. She led Bible classes at West Point Military Academy (where her uncle had been a chaplain) for a number of years in the 1800’s. She was an author and a poet. Folk singer Pete Seeger recorded his own version of it, as did Irish singer Enya.