

Opening Hymn: Praise to the Lord (SDAH 1, CH 12)

Both the words and the music for this great hymn of praise are more than 300 years old and still have strong appeal. As a young man Joachim Neander, the author of the words, had been scornful of a Pietistic pastor, but he was convicted and converted under that man's preaching. Neander went on to distinguish himself as a scholar but never lost the devotion of his life to God. He died of tuberculosis at age 30, in 1680. That year he wrote the words to "Praise to the Lord," basing the hymn mainly on Psalm 103:1-6 and Psalm 150. It was written in German, of course, and bears the title "Lobe den Herren." The translation into English is by 19th-century hymnodist Catherine Winkworth, who translated many fine German hymns. Neander also is responsible for the tune we sing, having adapted it for this hymn from a songbook printed in 1665. His memory is preserved in the hymns he wrote (there are four in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*) and in the beautiful Neanderthal Valley of Germany, which was named in his honor. It is said that some of his hymns were written in a cave in that valley.

Closing Hymn: Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah (SDAH 538, CH 409 [uses alternate tune])

William Williams (1717-1791), the author of this much-loved hymn, became known as the "sweet singer of Wales" for his efforts to raise the standards of hymns among the Welsh people. As a later contemporary of Isaac Watts, who contributed so much to English hymnody, Williams has also been called the "Welsh Watts." This hymn, first published in Welsh in 1745, was published in English in 1771.

Williams, the son of a wealthy farmer, intended to study medicine, but changed his mind after hearing the preaching of Howell Harris, one of George Whitefield's preachers, in an open-air meeting. Williams entered the ministry of the Established Church, but he became a Calvinistic Methodist and a traveling preacher throughout Wales. In his 45 years of ministry he wrote more than 800 hymns in Welsh and more than 100 in English.

The usual tune to which these words are sung today is Cwm Rhondda, one of the great Welsh tunes. It was written by John Hughes for a Baptist hymn festival in 1905. Hughes had no formal training in music that we know of, but his natural gift for music resulted in his writing several hymn tunes, anthems, and other religious songs.

Adapted from Wayne Hooper and Edward E. White, *Companion to the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988).

SDAH = *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*
CH = *Church Hymnal*