

Westminster College

IMAGINE

Singing

VOICES

Into the silence

Amongst lovers

Where anger burns

As laughter rings

As hopes fly

Where tears flow

God's words
seek out our
voices

IMAGINE

... a regular reflection from me as I journey with you in this adventure that is our life together at Westminster.

NEIL

The odd thing is that I never seem to sit back, stare at my bookcase, and stop myself from twitching over Amazon's delights. Even better, of course, is the glorious serendipity of a packed bookshop in which things I think I might want snuggle up to things I never imagined I would ever be interested in - and which somehow in ways beyond me become alluring. I now own a book about trees. I never knew I was interested. It just happened. I may need help.

But I also think I am blessed as I receive the gift a book can be. And one that is a new treasure has recently come out from a friend and colleague. John Campbell has had several URC ministries. He was, for a while, Principal of Northern College in Manchester. He's now in London, in Tottenham. Many of you

Abundance

There's a force at work upon us, I experience at least, that urges towards timidity and retreat. Certainly we are a much smaller church in a host of ways than we were when 1972 saw the birth of the URC. Plenty in that story hurts and feels a loss and a lack. But I hear another voice. It rings

know him, or will meet him, through the week of encounters in June he arranges for us in the capital.

John gives us a new hymn book: *Songs to Shake Us Up*. His particular skill is in taking existing tunes, mostly very well known and some not originally for hymns, and writing new words. He writes with wit and passion. He tackles the heights and depths of our experience in a constant conversation with scripture and with theology. He takes traditional themes and weaves new perspectives. He challenges and he affirms. The hymn-writing started in 1993 as he shaped hymns that responded to the wrestling with the Bible he was sharing in his sermons. Now over 200 are published for the first time. They are rich.

Whilst I love visual art I am not

through scripture, reverberates across the Church catholic and shines through experience and encounters. It's the voice that tells of God's abundance in grace and blessing. It speaks of the mission of God that unfolds constantly and of which we are always, in every place, servants:



musical. I delight in the gifts that others have, that so many of you have, in your playing and singing. What John blesses me with is the beautiful collision of the familiar and the unfamiliar. With tunes I know I can sing a bit more bravely. So the fresh words can flow with life even from me.

I think it's not just a hymn book. It's a parable: worship renewed as inherited music finds a new voice. Faith made song for now.

"...the water I give them will become in them a spring welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14). God's abundance reshapes everything.

