

As the Waters Rise around Us

Meter: 8 7 8 7 with refrain

As the waters rise around us
and the winds rage overhead;
as destruction's wake confounds us
with its mounting toll of dead:

REFRAIN:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Hear your people's yearning cry.

Hear your people's yearning cry.

Homes and city streets are ravaged,
many lost beyond repair.
Brooding Spirit, help us salvage
signs of life from such despair. *Refrain*

Gracious God, your strong compassion
stilled the storm and parted seas.
Free and lead us till we fashion
worlds of justice, hope, and peace. *Refrain*

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Numb with grief, our hearts are heavy,
seeking courage to endure,
as the harshest cost is levied
on the poorest of the poor. *Refrain*

In August of 2005, Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast of the United States. Scenes on the nightly news showed waters rising to unimaginable heights, flooding cities, destroying lives and livelihoods. The “dirty secret” of poverty in our country of affluence emerged in stark relief, as the “poorest of the poor” had no way to escape the wake of destruction. The weekend after Katrina, I had been supposed to lead a retreat at Montreat Conference Center for Central Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, but church members were cautioned not to attempt the trip because gasoline was in such short supply. They elected to stay home instead and ready their shelter to receive refugees from the storm. I wrote this text and sent it to them to use in church on the Sunday when we would have been worshiping together.

The musical score is written for a four-part setting (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in G major and 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of music. The first system covers the first line of text, and the second system covers the second line. The lyrics are: 1. As the wa - ters rise a - round us and the; 2. Numb with grief, our hearts are heav - y, seek - ing; 3. Homes and cit - y streets are rav - aged, man - y; 4. Gra - cious God, your strong com - pas - sion stilled the.

winds rage o - ver - head; as de - struc - tion's wake con -
 cour - age to en - dure, as the harsh - est cost is
 lost be - yond re - pair. Brood - ing Spir - it, help us
 storm and part - ed seas. Free and lead us till we

founds us with its mount - ing toll of dead:
 lev - ied on the poor - est of the poor.
 sal - vage signs of life from such de - spair.
 fash - ion worlds of jus - tice, hope, and peace.

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

Hear your peo - ple's yearn - ing cry. Hear your peo - ple's yearn - ing cry.

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 Tune: BRYN CALFARIA; William Owen, 1814–1893

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