

"Seven Hundred Years" –

A Hymn Celebrating the Legacy of St Peter and St Paul

"*Seven Hundred Years*" is a specially commissioned hymn marking the 700th anniversary of the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Olney. Steeped in a rich musical tradition—from the celebrated *Olney Hymns* and the childhood home of legendary organist Henry John Gauntlett, to the chiming of the five-minute bell for the famous Pancake Race and the pealing of the church's ten bells—this church has long been a centre of musical and community life.

This new hymn, written and composed by Bethany and Jonathan Heron (aged 28 and 24), who grew up in the church, draws inspiration from Olney's distinctive musical and historical heritage. The lyrics reference cherished local traditions such as the Pancake Race and the local market, alongside notable figures from the town's past. Biblical imagery is woven throughout, with particular emphasis on the church's patron saints—St Peter and St Paul.



The music, composed by Jonathan Heron—a local composer and former Olney organ scholar—is called "Septenary" and is a bespoke pseudo-Victorian hymn tune, evoking the style and spirit of traditional Anglican hymnody while offering something fresh for this historic occasion.

If you would like to hear this hymn tune, played by the Assistant Director of Music at Rochester Cathedral Robbie Carroll, visit the 700th anniversary page on the church website.

olneyparish.org/700years/

Seven Hundred Years



1. Bread shared for seven centuries
in our beloved town.
Seven hundred years we've gathered here,
God's praises still resound!
Through changing seasons, years and times
our spire has stood above.
Peter and Paul, the key and sword
will join us in our song.

2. Our little town of Olney
is different than before.
From lace to boots to market fruits,
community's still strong.
One thing in commonality,
we all have shared throughout.
The chiming of the bells, in spire,
God's worship's not in doubt.

3. Through all the years these doors have
seen famous faces in.
From Cowper, Newton, Gauntlett, Binns
they all have played their part.
But young or old or rich or poor
there is a common theme.
Where two or three praise joyfully,
Christ Jesus joins within.

4. The people brought together,
in these our long lived walls.
Through Baptisms and wedding days
this church has been our home.
In our dark hours she stands there tall,
a place that all can go.
We hope that seven centuries on,
our church will stand here strong!

Words: Bethany Heron
Tune: Jonathan Heron (Septenary)