

PLEASINGTON CREMATORIUM
BB2 5LE

Saturday 14 March 2026, 1.30 pm

John Bertalot
15 September 1931 – 21 February 2026



Photo of JB by Phil Hunwick 2019

The service is led by Revd Philip Chew

At the entrance: (please stand)

William Fielding plays

Vor deinen Thron tret ich hiermit BWV 668
(Before thy throne I now appear)

J.S. Bach

Dictated by Bach as he lay dying. It is full of Bach's number symbolism (A=1, B=2 etc, in the 24-letters alphabet, with I & J being the same letter; similarly U & V.) Therefore B+A+C+H = 14, and J+S+B+A+C+H = 41 (which is appropriate for a musician who could compose music backwards as well as forwards), This chorale prelude is full of 14s and 41s, and the final cadence, with 9, 18 and 2 notes, spells JSB.

Hymn: Abide with me

Recorded by Blackburn Cathedral Choir
September 2011
for JB's 80th birthday
with James Davy, organ
arranged and conducted by JB



St. Mary's, Shoreham, Sussex, where JB was a chorister

1. Abide with me, fast falls the eventide,
The darkness deepens **Lord, with** me abide;
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.
2. Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day,
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see,
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.
3. I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.
4. Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee,
In life **and** death, O Lord, abide with me. AMEN.

Be seated for a few thoughts from former JB chorister, Revd Philip Chew

All say the Prayer for Church Musicians, from the American Book of Common Prayer:

**O God, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven:
Be ever present with your servants who seek through art and music
to perfect the praises offered by your people on earth;
and grant to us, even now, glimpses of your beauty,
and make us worthy at length to behold it unveiled for evermore;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven... for ever and ever, Amen.



Trinity Church, Princeton, NJ, USA
where JB was organist 1983-1998

**All remain seated for
two anthems**



The organ at Fence Parish Church
where JB was organist 2001-2012

God be in my head by Jonathan Willcocks (son of Sir David Willcocks)
(This was the last anthem JB conducted at his final Choral Evensong in Princeton, June 1998)



God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at mine end, and at my departing. Amen.



St Matthew's, Northampton
where JB was organist 1958-1964

There follows a recording of Blackburn Cathedral's girl choristers,
singing JB's arrangement of

Steal away to Jesus which was broadcast live on BBC Radio 4
10th September 2001 (the day before 9/11)
with **Philippa Hyde** (soprano), **Anthony Thompson** (trumpet),
Greg Morris (organ), conducted by **Richard Tanner**

*Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus;
Steal away, steal away home, I ain't got long to stay here.*
My Lord, He calls me, He calls me by the thunder;
The trumpet sounds within-a my soul, I ain't got long to stay here.

Refrain

Green trees a-bending, Poor sinners stand a-trembling;
The trumpet sounds within-a my soul, I ain't got long to stay here.

Refrain

St James the Less, North Lancing, Sussex
JB's first church as organist 1951-1953



All stand

Priest:

Into thy hands, O merciful Saviour, we commend thy servant, John.
Acknowledge, we humbly beseech thee, a sheep of thine own pasture,
a lamb of thine own flock, a sinner of thine own redeeming.
Receive him into the arms of thy mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace,
and into the glorious company of the saints in light.

All: Amen (From the American Book of Common Prayer)

The Priest says:

Go forth, O Christian soul, from this world,
in the name of God Father Almighty, who created thee;
in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who suffered for thee;
in the name of the Holy Spirit, who was poured forth upon thee;
may thy place be this day in peace, and thine abode in holy Sion.
Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The Blessing:

The Priest says

On our hands and on our houses
the blessing of God;
on our coming and going,
the peace of God;

on our life and believing,
the love of God;
at our end and a new beginning,
the arms of God to welcome us
and bring us home. (All) Amen.

(John L. Bull, from A Thousand Prayers compiled by Angela Ashwin)

All sit, but stand for the Gloria.

Nunc Dimittis by Herbert Howells, for the choir of King's College, Cambridge. Recorded by the choirs of **Trinity Church, Princeton**, and **Blackburn Cathedral** (two of JB's former choirs) during Trinity Choir's visit to Blackburn in June 2007. With **Derek Crompton**, tenor soloist, bidding farewell to his long-time friend and whom JB has known since the age of 10.

THIS SERVICE IS BEING LIVE STREAMED and is also available to view later:

<https://watch.obitus.com> (username maki6445, password 757127)

THANK YOU for being with us today.

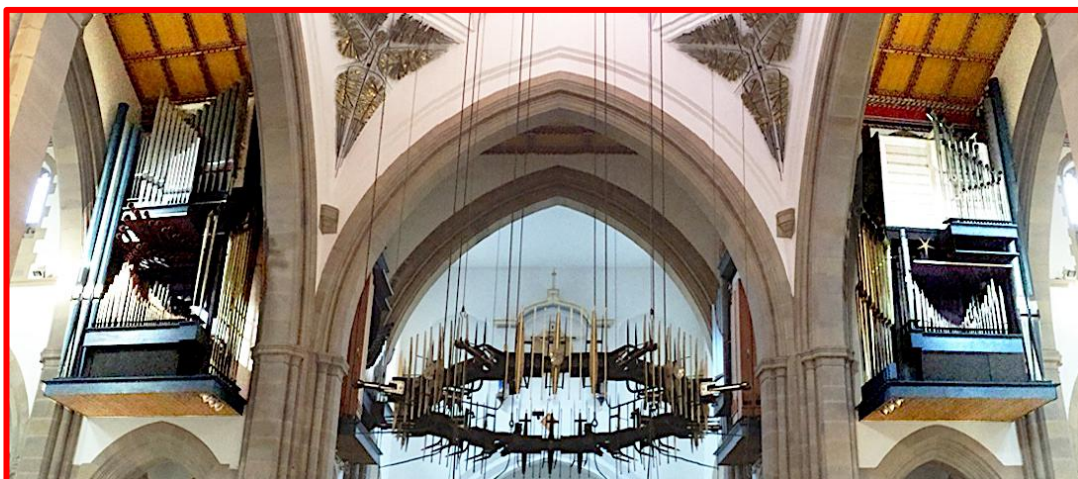
A reception at the cathedral continues and some food has been reserved for those attending this commital, should you wish to make your way there.

More can be found of JB's passion for number symbolism in Bach's music at:
<https://bertalot.org/bach-symbolism>

If you would like to make a donation in memory of John Bertalot, please use the QR code to donate to The Lantern Music Trust, which has been set up to provide valuable support for the tradition of musical excellence at Blackburn Cathedral.



**Cathedral Music Office,
Cathedral Close,
Blackburn BB1 5AA**



Blackburn Cathedral, where JB was Organist 1964-82, and Organist Emeritus 1998-2026