



ZAC | ROGER JONES

Roger Jones shares the vision behind his new musical

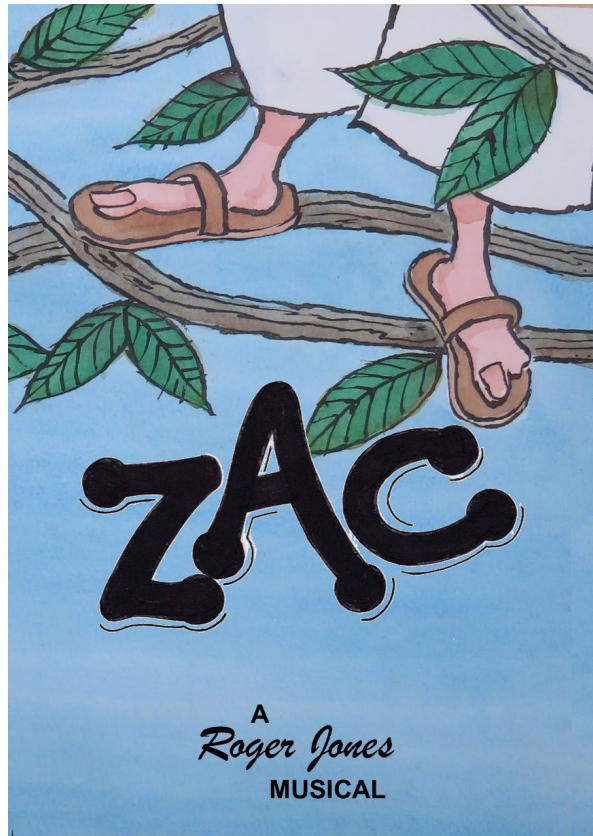
I'd been thinking of a Zacchaeus musical for some time, and particularly drawn to Jesus' comments at the end of the story: 'For the son of man came to seek and save the lost' (Luke 19:10). I set these words as a chorus to "Amazing Grace" in my *Songs of Easter* collection, and it's this song that concludes the musical.

The Zacchaeus story, unique to Luke's Gospel, has many ingredients of the Christian message. Here's an outcast of society, rejected not by poverty or sickness but by his occupation. He goes out of his way and climbs up a tree to find out more about Jesus. Jesus encounters him, addresses him by name and calls him down from the tree. Luke is silent about what happened when Jesus went to Zacchaeus' house, but we see a result of repentance and restitution, way beyond expectations and calculations - a rather unexpected tax rebate?

I've attempted to create a musical for all ages and abilities. Although there are parts for SATB (four part harmony), they can easily be sung by a two-part choir, with freedom to allocate soloists, and of course you do need someone to sing the part of Zacchaeus. Jesus' words can be sung by the choir. I've used two storytellers: Matthew the former tax collector now disciple of Jesus, obviously with inside knowledge of how the Roman tax system worked, and Rachel a resident of Jericho and relation of Zacchaeus.

A musical can have great outreach and 'inreach' benefits. We know of many who came to watch or even

join in a production, regular church goers or not, who later came to faith in Jesus. The benefit for a church community may be immense, in fellowship, team building and discovery of gifts, creative and practical.



Jesus' final words are a wonderful summary of the gospel message (Luke 19:9-10):

Salvation has come to this house - the presence of the Saviour, whose Spirit brings healing and new life to all who will come down the tree of resistance and independence, to welcome his presence.

This man also is a son of Abraham - inclusion where there had been rejection and scorn. Tax collectors, alongside shepherds and tanners, were most unpopular in the Jewish Society of Jesus day.

What got Zacchaeus up the tree? Most likely it was the news of what Jesus had been doing and saying. See Jesus'

journey to Jericho (Luke 18:35-43). This is a big lesson for the church. We must demonstrate the teaching and presence of Jesus if the world is to be attracted to him, a sure need for the fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit. My prayer is that in using this musical we begin to be more like the church of power and love that the world needs!

ROGER JONES

Roger and his wife Mary have been in full-time Christian music ministry since 1984 and together with a small team, run Christian Music Ministries. Formerly a music teacher in inner-city Birmingham, Roger is well-known throughout the UK and abroad for his Christian musicals and has written 25 to date. Roger's latest musical 'ZAC' premiered at Bromsgrove Baptist Church, Worcestershire, in September this year.