



## The Church's One Foundation

**Text: Samuel J. Stone (1839-1900)**

**Tune: Samuel S. Wesley (1810-1876)**

The Church has one Foundation: Jesus Christ. Mid the toils and tribulations of this world, though here we know the Church as the Church Militant and await the Church Triumphant, Jesus Christ watches His Bride, the Church. He guides and keeps her and will until the Church Victorious may be the Church at rest.



Samuel J. Stone

“The Church’s One Foundation” was written by Samuel John Stone. He was born April 25, 1839 in Whitmore, Staffordshire. His father was the Rev. William Stone. Samuel attended schools at Charterhouse and Pembroke College in Oxford, England. He graduated with his Bachelor’s Degree in 1862. In the same year he was ordained and became Curate of Windsor, a position he held until he joined his father at St. Paul’s in Haggerston, London, in 1870. In 1874 he became Vicar (travelling pastor) of Haggerston, and remained there until 1890. From 1890 until his death he served All-Hallow-on-the-Wall in London, which was a haven for working girls and women who had no other means of support.

Stone was a prolific writer of Christian poetry. He had three publications of his poetry, which were *Sonnets of the Christian Year* (1875), *Hymns* (1886), and *Iona* (1898). He also served as a preparer for the committee which eventually published *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in 1909. His family published *Collected Hymns and Poems* after his death, a complete collection of all his writings. His hymns always reflected a great hope and were well constructed.

“The Church’s One Foundation” was published with the tune AURELIA, which was written by Samuel S. Wesley for the hymn “Jerusalem the Golden.” However, since the two were published together, aurelia has become known almost exclusively with “The Church’s One Foundation” and another tune has taken its place.

Samuel Sebastian Wesley, an English organist and composer, was born in London, the oldest child of his father, also Samuel Wesley. Samuel Sebastian was the grandson of Charles Wesley, one of the leaders of the Methodists in England. Samuel was given the middle name Sebastian because of his father’s admiration of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.

As a boy, Samuel Sebastian sang in the choir of the Chapel Royal, and later became organist at the Hereford Cathedral in 1832. He held several notable appointments as organist in Leeds, Winchester Cathedral, and Gloucester Cathedral. He was one of England’s leading organists and choirmasters, and was also an extensive composer for the Church of England. His compositions for choir and organ are still widely used in English churches today.

The hymn, “The Church’s One Foundation,” arose from a theological controversy in the mid-nineteenth century. John W. Colenso, Anglican Bishop of Natal, South Africa, wrote a book which was highly critical of Scripture and the Christian faith. Samuel Stone became one of the more notable people to defend the Faith against Colenso and those who agreed with him. Part of Stone’s defense of the faith was writing *Lyra Fidelium: Twelve Hymns on the Apostles’ Creed*. “The Church’s One Foundation” was written on the Third Article of the Creed, specifically the confession of “the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints.”

The text portrays the Christian church as rooted in the Savior, Jesus Christ, through the water of baptism and the Word of God (st. 1). In accord with the Third Article of the Creed, we confess through this text that the church is Christian (the ancient text reads, catholic, or, universal) and united by “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). As we sing, we lament the heresies that distress the church (st. 4), but know that soon these too shall pass away. The final stanza ends on a hopeful tone: the Church will finally be at peace and at rest.