

Faith, Worship, and Ministry

REPORT OF THE HYMN BOOK SUPPLEMENT TASK FORCE

Background

The Hymn Book Supplement Working Group (HBSWG) was mandated by FWM early in its 2010-2013 triennium in response to a proposal brought by one of its members. As a project not emerging from a clear mandate from General Synod, and not factored into the budget for that triennium, FWM made it clear that there could only be very minimal staffing (if any) and budget.

The membership of the working group was established in consultation with FWM and with other Canadian church musicians. For budgetary reasons, membership had to be restricted to a particular geographical area if the work was to be done in face to face meetings. To mitigate the local character of the working group, FWM instructed the Task Force to arrange for consultations in every diocese in Canada to help to determine the shape and contents of the collection. The task force also made good use of *The Anglican Journal*, www.anglican.ca, and *The Community* to reach out and to invite submissions, feedback on the project, and to offer constructive thinking to help to shape the project.

Membership

David Buley, Diocese of Algoma
John Campbell, Diocese of Toronto (to 2013)
Michael Capon, Diocese of Ontario
Douglas Cowling, Diocese of Toronto (to 2013)
Kenneth Hull, Diocese of Huron; Convenor
Martha Tatarnic, Diocese of Toronto [now Niagara]
Becca Whitlaw, Diocese of Toronto
Deirdre Piper, Diocese of Ottawa (from 2013)

Consultations

As part of the Hymn Book Supplement Working Group's mandate, FWM requested that the task force arrange consultations in every diocese with musicians, clergy, and others to determine current repertoire needs, what resources are currently in use, and to receive suggestions of specific material for inclusion in the collection. The task force endeavoured to identify individuals in each diocese who would have an informed interest in the project, and would be willing to convene and facilitate the consultations.

From the letter of invitation for consultations:

As part of this process, the task force would like to hear from every diocese in the country about its current singing practices. We are asking a representative in each diocese to convene a meeting of interested clergy, musicians and lay people to gather information about what the church's liturgical musical needs are and what material

beyond Common Praise is being sung.

The working group has formulated several questions to help guide these conversations:

- *What published (print or electronic) resources for hymns, songs, and service music—other than Common Praise—are you currently using?*
- *What congregational hymns, songs and service music are currently in use in your diocese that you think might be of interest to the wider Canadian Church?*
- *What type of musical resources do you currently lack that you would like to see included in a supplemental collection?*
- *How do you currently provide music information to your congregation (published book, printed parish collection, bulletin, screen projection)?*
- *What format for a supplement would be most useful to you (print, online, electronic)?*

Feedback was received from over half of the dioceses. A second round of consultation took the form of the questionnaire being sent to all diocesan bishops. This increased participation to around 70% of the dioceses. These pointed to trends, common concerns and affirmations. These include:

- There is a need for an ‘authorized’ or otherwise commended hymn book supplement. A significant number of parishes are looking for guidance to the available material from a Canadian Anglican perspective.
- We need to produce both a print and electronic resource.
- The following areas are emerging as particular needs:
 - liturgical music: mass settings, acclamations, etc.
 - hymns and songs for communion (i.e., distribution of the elements)
 - hymns and songs for Lent and Advent
 - music in 4-part harmony
 - We need to include some ‘praise music’ items with guitar chords and melody, especially for the use of congregations with a ‘blended’ style of worship.
 - Congregations want both recorded and education resources to help them in both learning new repertoire and in learning how to approach music in less familiar styles.

The project has been shaped by the high value placed on *congregational song*, Anglican Communion connections, and hymns and choruses that are *easily teachable* to those who do not read music, and with a *wide range of accompaniment* possibilities, including guitar chords.

Congregational song is about music that engages the whole congregation in singing. These can be hymns from the ancient church as much as they can be from the modern church, and from our contemporary church. Not all contemporary music used in worship is congregational song. There is a large number of contemporary Canadian hymn writers, whose music is known across our church. There are exceptionally beautiful compositions that are used in worship with worship bands and singers that invite congregational participation, but require more musical leadership by the band than is possible for many congregations. These creative developments are to be encouraged, celebrated, and enjoyed, and they are being shared across the church. The need to which this task force is responding is for hymnody that does not depend upon strong musical leadership and performance, though they can be beautifully augmented by such. It could be that a parallel collection of such music may be compiled.

Process

The task force began its work by reviewing the contents of hymn and song collections published since the mid-1990s. Pairs of task force members undertook this preliminary examination of several thousand items in about 20 different published collections. Items selected by means of this process were then considered by the task force as a whole.

The Task Force also received submissions of mostly unpublished material from across Canada, as well as some from the US. All of these were considered by the task force as a whole.

Every item considered by the task force was read and sung through, often more than once, and given a preliminary grading. Approximately 500 items were considered by the task force as a whole. Once this process was complete, the several hundred items selected for possible inclusion were reviewed again, and final decisions made about what to include.

The criteria used in making our decisions included filling a perceived liturgical need, theological integrity, diversity of musical styles, ease of use in congregations without a professional music leader, immediacy of appeal, and durability

[From a large collection of submissions, and from the recommendations of task force members from people and resources known to the members,]—delete

A draft collection was completed in June 2015. Assessments of the collection by clergy and musicians not involved in the work of the task force were then solicited and the contents of the collection considered once again by the task force in light of comments received.

[As submissions continued to come in, and, as the task force examined categories that were under-represented, further collection and analysis continued in the autumn of 2015.]--delete

The Hymn Book Supplement Task Force has reported regularly to the Faith, Worship, and Ministry Standing Committee and then Coordinating Committee. They have worked on a minimal budget and with no staff support. This is an example of what can happen when there is passion and skill and motivation to take on particular projects, and the General Synod coordinating committee and staff are able to offer some support and encouragement to highly skilled volunteers to create a resource that is a gift to the church.

Present Status of the Work, and Next Steps

As of March 2016, the collection has been completed. Work continues on indices and other reference pieces.

The set up of the collection follows the same categories as those in *Common Praise*.

FWM is now working with Communications to explore publishing options that will include both web-based and print versions. The General Synod no longer has the capacity to do the work involved in the next steps (copyright permissions, layout, design).

About two years ago, a group of dedicated Anglican church musicians and clergy gathered together to begin the process of mapping out possibilities for a hymnal supplement to Common Praise. Our volunteer committee has embarked on this project and continues to follow through with dedication and perseverance because we feel deeply called to lead the church in its singing. For us, this calling is an act of hope that embodies the love that is at the heart of the Gospel. Mandated by Faith, Worship and Ministry, the group sought direction from dioceses and parishes across the country, intentionally inquiring about current practices and perceived needs. We began the arduous task of surveying a large body of material from hymnals, other sources, and submitted materials. Here are some of the things we discovered.

Congregations are looking for new, accessible resources to animate congregational singing in very diverse contexts. We realize we need something that would be usable in small congregations where music leadership resources are stretched or non-existent so most of the material is accessible; easy to learn and lead; and represents a diversity of musical styles. We also hope that the supplement will provide exciting new congregational singing resources for bigger thriving communities as well.

In our early work, when we were discerning our collective vocation in this task, we recognized the difference between a supplement and a denominational hymnbook. The hymnbook has the responsibility to be both what Karen Westerfield Tucker calls a “repository of the Church’s witness through the ages” as well “as witness to the present age and the age to come,” whereas a supplement points towards the latter.¹ A supplement has the delightful responsibility of suggesting future possibilities without being charged with the task of representing a denominational canon. Rather our job is to listen to the singing needs of local parishes and respond with: a substantial service music section; songs and hymns that draw on recent material in traditional and contemporary styles; and a growing body of enlivening music from around the world. We are especially excited by the diversity of styles we intend to include in this unique Canadian Anglican collection. If and when we choose to create another hymnal, the congregational experience of this supplement will be an invaluable tool for discerning future directions.

Of course our committee has debated how to best produce a supplement. In this day and age, does it still make sense to produce a book or should we create an exclusively on-line resource? What would be most useful for congregations across the country? What will stretched financial resources allow us to do? There are almost as many answers as there are communities! Though the details have yet to be fully determined, our group has come to the conclusion that a mixed resource would be most useful – a book, with an accompanying on-line resource. We hope that such a resource will be an opportunity for General Synod to dip its toes into the dizzying pool of present day publishing possibilities.

Some of you may be wondering why we (and General Synod) would still consider publishing such a resource as local congregations close, dioceses are burdened with enormous debts and General Synod wonders if it will still be here in a few years. Our work is a passionately pastoral response to the need of the church we love. For us, this calling is of fundamental importance; it is the lifeblood of our worship and our life together as communities in Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit. In this confusing and threatening time, local churches and denominations are tempted to worry about their own survival rather than the gospel at the heart of our faith. We see the work of animating congregational song as an antidote to this fear. We believe that we can become, in our singing, a sign of life and hope for the church. A hymnal supplement is a tool to help with this holy task; it is a hopeful investment in the future

of the church and can be expression of who we are and who we want to become in relationship with each other. After all, by singing each other's songs, we grow in our communities and into the world.

Karen Westerfield Tucker, in her article, "Have Hymnals Become Dinosaurs?" argues that hymnals "must have a place in the church's future, whether in print, digitized, or in some other form." For her, "the extinction of hymnals may unwittingly contribute to an additional fracturing of an already broken church." She further notes that hymnals preserve the fullness of Christian identity and locate communities in the "ongoing narrative of the Christian story."² This hymnal supplement is a courageous expression of hope for the future life, work and witness of the Anglican Church of Canada. Please pray for our work.

Becca Whitla, for the Hymn Book Supplement Task Force