

Report of the Psalm & Hymn Selection Committee

Dear brothers in Christ,

Mandate

The Synod of 2002 appointed a Study Committee to prepare our (RCNZ) "*own selection of psalms and hymns for worship in our churches.*" (Art.83), the mandate being more closely specified as follows (Art.93):

1. *Select Psalm versions that are as faithful as possible in content and form of expression to Scripture, granting proper room for poetical necessity.*
2. *Psalm and Bible song selections are to be evaluated for the soundness of their paraphrasing against the relevant sections in the synodically approved Bible versions (NIV and NASB).*
3. *Provide a reasonably large selection of hymns and songs to take into account the various preferences in our churches, namely, those resulting from our cultural mix, age differences, etc. In this regard, the committee should note the following:*
 - a. *Where Genevan tunes are presented, the committee is to consider providing a non-Genevan alternative.*
 - b. *The committee is to solicit contributions from a wide cross-section of our membership. (This is to help the committee in its selection task and to gain a better feel for the preferences of our members. However, while all contributions will receive due consideration, the committee is not bound by the act of contribution.)*
 - c. *In respect of updating language, the committee is to leave well alone by and large and change only when necessary for meaning.*
 - d. *The committee will not attempt any writing of its own.*
 - e. *As far as possible, Psalm, hymn and song selections are to be taken from our present approved and provisionally approved sources.*

The committee has power to co-opt other personnel for specific tasks.

In 2005, Synod charged the Psalm & Hymn Selection Committee to continue its work as mandated by Synod 2002 (Art.54) and further;

Synod decided:

1. *To affirm that the ultimate goal of the committee is to produce a book of Psalms and hymns with musical scores and lyrics along the lines of the committee's work so far.*

Note: This is a statement of synod's intention. The committee is not being mandated at this time to produce a book.
2. *That computer CDs for use in the churches be produced including:*
 - a. *Musical scores with words in a format suitable for photocopying.*
 - b. *Words without scores in a format suitable for public projection or photocopying.*

Note: this may incur additional copyright fees.
3. *That computer CDs for use in homes be produced including:*
 - a. *Musical scores with words in a format suitable for printing or displaying on a computer screen.*
 - b. *Files (e.g. midi files) playable on the computer to accompany singing in the home.*
4. *That copyright permissions be obtained and paid for by the Synodical Treasurer (for the above uses and/or for the first print run, whichever is best).*

Note 1: A rough estimate of copyright costs for the complete printed book of Psalms and hymns is \$1 to \$1.50 per copy.

Note 2: In order to use the Psalms and hymns in the interim, the best way to pay for copyright costs may be to pay these for the first print run up front. If we assume a first print run of 3000 at \$1 per copy, this will be \$3000.

5. *To approve the use of the committee's Psalm selection for provisional use in the churches for evaluation.*
6. *To adopt Statement of Principle (cf. Report 12, Appendix) for inclusion in the proposed new Psalter-Hymnal.*

The committee was very gratified by the reception our work up to the 2005 Synod. It was a real encouragement to us and we can only say that we hope and we pray that the project will be finished in reasonable time and be a blessing and help to us all in our worship in years ahead.

Personnel

As of September, 2005, the committee was as follows: Revs. J. Rogers (c), J Haverland, J Goris, Mrs L. Brooks, Mrs A. Benfell. Very sadly, in 2006 we had to farewell Andrea Benfell as she was obliged to move to Australia. We want to record our thanks to Andrea for the excellent contribution she made to the committee for four years. John Haverland also dropped off the committee in early 2007 as the selection process for the Psalms was completed, and for his valuable contribution, we also want to record our thanks. We are very thankful that Mrs Lois Hoyt was willing to join us on the committee. She had already done a lot of very careful proof-reading work – but in doing so, also entered many other areas with suggestions on wording and music. Again, as convener/reporter, I must acknowledge the enormous work that my fellow committee members continue to do on this project and perhaps especially Lieda Brooks and Berwyn Hoyt, who have both been with us from the beginning. They are trojans and we are very privileged to have someone like Lieda, who is so gifted musically, and Berwyn who, with his computer skills, keeps 1001 ends together. We all ought to be very thankful to these people for their commitment, remembering too that it is all completely voluntary. The committee has always worked harmoniously, for which we are very thankful. It makes the work a pleasure.

Comments on our Work

We described our procedure in the 2005 report and it doesn't seem necessary to give details of that again. I think it would be fair to say that, as a committee, we are disappointed the work has not proceeded more quickly. It has not been for lack of trying on our part. The Psalm selection process is well and truly completed. For a time the transcription process almost took literally to flight when Mrs Lydia Nugteren found herself able to come on board to manage the proof-reading process. She also did a lot of original transcribing herself. For that we are very thankful. We had to purchase another Sibelius musical score computer program to make this possible. And at this point also, I wish to mention Lois Hoyt again. Before we brought her on to the committee and since, she also has done an enormous amount of proof-reading in every aspect of our work for which we are very grateful.

At this writing the final stages of proof-reading are being completed and copyrights sought. All 150 Psalms may now be downloaded from the internet except for fourteen (plus four 'b' versions) which are withheld from internet presentation for copyright reasons. A start has been made on the hymns. It is very hard to quantify that. We wish we could give you an indication of when our selection might be available but this reporter is acutely aware of his gross under-estimation of an ETA for the Psalms made to the last Synod. We can only ask for your prayers that the work proceed speedily.

Recommendations

1. *Synod charges the Psalm & Hymn Selection Committee to continue its work as mandated by Synods 2002 & 2005 with a view to:*
 - i) *final approval of Psalm and hymn selections in 2011; and*
 - ii) *authorization of publication in 2011.*

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2. Synod requests the Churches to use and study the provisional Psalm selection and give feedback with any suggestions and/or criticisms to help the committee improve the selection where thought possible or necessary.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs L. Brooks
Rev. J. Goris
Mr B. Hoyt
Mrs L. Hoyt
Rev. J. Rogers (reporter).