

# The New Century Hymnal



# The New Century Hymnal



*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

*Hebrews 13:8*

The Pilgrim Press

*Cleveland, Ohio*

# The New Century Hymnal

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## FOREWORD

The praise of God proclaimed through music begins in scripture with the song of Miriam and Moses at the Exodus and culminates in a reprise of their anthem by an apocalyptic choir of the saints at the close of history. For Jews and Christians the faithful people of God at worship are preeminently a community of song.

The psalmist calls us to celebrate our living faith not only in hymns from the past but in every “new song” inspired by the marvelous deeds of God across all time. The Christian story itself was sung by Mary, by the angelic choir at Bethlehem, at the gathering in the Upper Room, and throughout the churches of the New Testament. Hymns that touched the hearts of the faithful in enduring ways became part of the memory of the church. Today we sing the poetry of Ambrose of Milan and Hildegard of Bingen with fresh language made possible by new understandings of their words. We also sing the testimony of contemporary hymnwriters who remind us that God is not without witnesses in any age.

In the metaphor of centuries of hymnody, ancient and modern, we discern that God is always more than our human words are able to express. Our reverence for the mystery of God’s being invites humility as we seek language that opens human hearts to the good news of God’s love for all creation. We acknowledge the limitations of our words while we confess that in Jesus Christ the Word of God became flesh and lived within history.

Where language fails us, we live with confidence that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. Our hymns are a testimony to this ministry of the Holy Spirit. Hymns are more than the sum of their parts. They become for us a language that transcends human speech. They are the poetry of eternity within time. They are signs of grace that comes from beyond ourselves.

*The New Century Hymnal* does not claim to reach the heights of this vision of hymnody. It is, at best, the contribution of the United Church of Christ to the larger quest of the universal church to praise God faithfully in each generation. It is, however, a hymnal boldly committed to a spirit of inclusiveness. It welcomes and celebrates the diversity of all the people of God as surely as it confesses the mystery of diversity within God the Holy Trinity.

Thousands of people have participated in the preparation of this hymnal. One among them, however, with indefatigable courage and conviction, inspired the vision that has resulted in the pages that follow. We are indebted to Ansley Coe Throckmorton for her deep faith, scholarly gifts, and pastoral heart, without which this hymnal would not have been possible.

Thomas E. Dipko  
*Executive Vice President*  
*United Church Board for Homeland Ministries*

## PREFACE

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” *The New Century Hymnal* is rooted in that conviction, in the conviction that the unchanging Jesus Christ, whose story is told through the centuries, in many images and languages, is the same Jesus Christ of the gospels and epistles. Seers and saints, poets and prophets of many ages have told of the unchanging Jesus Christ in their own ways. This hymnbook, following the common lectionary, also tells that same story in many ways.

Believers know that images of Christ have always preceded Christology, and that those images of Christ lie behind the confessions and creeds of the church. This book retains not only the images of other periods of history—images of shepherd, sovereign, healer, teacher, liberator, and so on—but it also contains the images of poets, prophets, and saints of our time who sing of the changeless Jesus Christ in images of our own age and for the new century now upon us.

Bernard of Clairvaux once observed that we must drink from our own wells. And the South American pastor and theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez brought that observation to bear on the lives of his people. So likewise Hildegard of Bingen, Martin Luther, Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts, Sarah Flower Adams, Madeleine Marshall, and Brian Wren—and each of us does the same. To drink from one’s own well in this matter is to live, sing, and pray in the spirit of the unchanging Jesus Christ, as each of us has encountered Christ, to discern the mysterious connection between that life and our lives.

One of the great gifts to our time is the spirit now moving among us calling us to affirm the fullness of God, the goodness of creation, and the value of every person. The search for language and metaphor to express that breadth and richness marks this book.

In doing these things this hymnbook preserves much of the best hymnody of the past, and of the present, and it leads to a future we begin dimly to see. We have shaped a book that expresses the faith of the church in the unchanging Jesus Christ in words and images of our time. In whatsoever way it is faithful to these high standards, it is offered *Deo Gloria*.

Ansley Coe Throckmorton  
*General Secretary for Education and Publication*  
*United Church Board for Homeland Ministries*

## INTRODUCTION

In 1977, General Synod XI of the United Church of Christ directed the Executive Council to create a new official hymnal using language that is inclusive. In October 1989 the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries set aside resources to develop the hymnal. The project was completed in three phases. First, the Board of Directors of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries appointed an advisory Hymnal Committee of thirteen



members to function within its Division of Education and Publication, which provided appropriate staffing, research tools, and logistical support. The committee consisted of men and women from various geographical regions and traditions within the United Church of Christ. Each member brought liturgical sensibility, professional skill, cultural perspective, theological acumen, and particular musical erudition. As a result, the committee proved far greater than the sum of its parts.

The committee met between February 1990 and January 1993 in churches all across the continental United States, in Hawaii, and at the national offices in Cleveland. At its meetings and at thirty-five public forums the committee, in conversation with United Church of Christ local church members, considered hymns celebrating a diversity of liturgical, mission-oriented, and topical emphases. They invited and tested hymns from communities of Asian Americans, Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinos/Latinas. A significant portion of this hymnal can be credited to the probing questions and insightful observations of United Church of Christ members and others.

As a corollary to the hymnal forums, a churchwide research project that ran from the summer of 1990 through the summer of 1991 sought information from every local church in the denomination: "What do you sing? What do you want to sing? In a new hymnal, what might be a help or a hindrance?" From thousands of responses, two major findings surfaced: the majority of congregations that would buy hymnals in the next decade seek, first, new music, and second, inclusive metaphors for God and the human community. These findings confirmed the vision of General Synod in 1977 for an inclusive-language hymnal, and they were the foundation for the work of the advisory Hymnal Committee as it sought to design a hymnal for current and future worshipers in the United Church of Christ. In April 1993 the committee completed the first phase of the development process. It had reviewed more than ten thousand hymns, designed the contents, selected the repertory, and wrestled with every imaginable nuance, subtlety, and challenge of the language of love, justice, and worship of God.

For the second phase, the Hymnal Committee was succeeded by an Editorial Panel appointed by the Board of Directors of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries. The board charged the panel with refining and completing the vast work submitted by the Hymnal Committee. The panel set about the delicate work of balancing hymnal components, texts and tunes included, and reviewing the language of all texts. The panel's work concluded in the fall of 1994.

In the final phase, the editors and the hymnal office staff prepared the hymnal layout, edited the manuscript, garnered the copyrights, monitored the typesetting, and pursued everything necessary to produce a hymn collection suited for the ecumenical church.

Within the historic Protestant traditions that shape the United Church of Christ, the hymnbook serves as a primary vehicle to nurture the faith of church members. All who worked on this project were guided by the affirmation that *The New Century Hymnal* should provide rich, varied

metaphors for singing about God, and language to sing about people that excludes no one—words that all people can sing.

This work was done amid what can only be called a new reformation. It recognized that its task was to do more than select six hundred historic and familiar hymns. It was also asked to consider hundreds of submitted manuscripts and new hymns that emerged from a wide variety of global traditions. The committee also reviewed newly published hymnals within the ecumenical community that presented even more possibilities. Each religious and cultural tradition presented its own treasured core hymnody. The Board for Homeland Ministries, the Hymnal Committee, and the Editorial Panel, in concert with the stated convictions of General Synod, believe the fullness of God is greater than exclusively masculine words and images. Thus the Hymnal Committee sought to broaden the traditional divine references so that they included the feminine. It searched for hymns containing similes, parables, analogies, and metaphors that point to the fullness of God.

In addition to this broad process of selection, every text underwent careful scrutiny of its metaphors and pronouns that refer to God, Christ, and the Spirit. Why the scrutiny? Because for nearly two millennia these words have tended toward exclusively masculine characterization, bearing painful consequences, especially for women. Every effort was made to ensure that all hymns spoke to and for all God's people, equally. This resulted in the examination of language from racial, ethnic, and sociocultural perspectives, and the review of language that could be diminishing to people with physical disabilities. Consideration was also given to imagery to assure that it relate to the scientific understandings of a coming generation.

For the required text revisions, contemporary poets and hymn lyricists explored the scriptures, the prophets, mystics, and seers to forge fresh forms to address the living God and describe our world. Just as translators have rendered scriptures in present-day language, the poets were asked to revise language, yet maintain the nuance and intent of the original. In fact, numerous Latin and German hymns were newly translated for this hymnal. As a result, in the next century, as in preceding centuries, the church will be able to worship in the common language of the day.

It is the hope of all who labored on *The New Century Hymnal* that the church will discover a language that stretches the dimensions of justice and helps reveal the unfathomable depths of the God of biblical faith. It represents an attempt to embody a faith and joyous hope to sustain the church in a new millennium. May it serve as a transforming witness to the church of Jesus Christ as it celebrates public worship and sings gratefully—buoyantly—with the psalmist, “Praise God! Praise God from the heavens; Praise God in the heights; Praise God all the angels; Praise God, all you Host! Let everything that breathes, praise the living God! Praise God.”

James W. Crawford  
*Chair, Hymnal Committee*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## Hymnal Committee

Janet Satre Ahrend, James W. Crawford (Chair), Daniel L. Johnson, Joyce Finch Johnson, Dorothy Lester (*ex officio*, *Office of Church Life and Leadership*), Luis Olivieri, Jeffrey Radford, Linda Jambor Robinson, A. Knighton Stanley, Catherine Thiedt, and Stephen Wayles

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(\*members *ex officio* of the Hymnal Committee)  
(+members *ex officio* of the Editorial Panel)

## Grateful Appreciation to

Gene Paul Strayer, *who was succeeded on the committee by Stephen Wayles.*

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

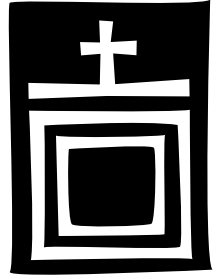
As worshipers begin to use the hymn section of this book, they will find a pattern throughout the pages. Preceding each hymn are the first line, scriptural references, and source(s) of the text. As is customary, *alt.* indicates that the original text has been altered; *adapt.* indicates more extensive revision. There are three noteworthy elements of style. First, in many instances, a non-English text precedes the English translation in recognition of the culture of origin. Second, poetic capitalization has been dealt with uniformly by using capitals at musical cadence points to achieve consistency in appearance. Third, in verses outside the music score, hyphens have been added for singing ease.

The historical notes following the hymns provide background, however brief, on the circumstances of origin. The composer, tune name, meter, and other information pertaining to the music also follow the hymn, making a clear distinction between music and text information. Dates appearing in the citations indicate, for the most part, the year of creation or first publication. Birth and death dates are located in the index. Users will find extensive indexes to aid in selecting hymns for the lectionary year. In addition, traditional topical and scriptural indexing have been provided.

Much care has been taken to present music that most congregations will find within their abilities. At the same time, the hymnal provides an occasional challenge that may require some practice and effort. The majority of settings are harmonized to allow for part singing. When unison settings appear, it is often because they were conceived that way, and usually it indicates a strong, vigorous melody. Performance directives are few, since worship tradition, occasion, architecture, instrumentation, and other factors can greatly alter the choice of tempo or dynamic. The collection allows for experimentation, and enthusiastic participation will sometimes be preferred to absolute “correctness” of style. All are encouraged to try the many languages and styles that have been included in the book to gain a sense of the church’s diversity. This can provide opportunities to invite those who know this music to introduce it.

*The New Century Hymnal* was compiled with anticipation of the joy it will bring. It was also prepared with the hope that its musical and poetic offerings will be true both to past traditions and to the desire of the church to renew its worship. As in every age, texts have been changed to provide for worship in the vernacular. The wisdom of using skilled hymnwriters to perform this task should be evident as the hymns are sung. Many classic texts are reclaimed through new translations, which in some instances restore verses that had fallen into disuse. Throughout, the goal has been not to achieve the perfect or ultimate version, but to make the hymns live in our own time to be passed into the hands of coming generations, for their use and adaptations.

Arthur G. Clyde  
*Editor, The New Century Hymnal*



## ORDERS FOR WORSHIP

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*In the Orders for Worship that follow, the word “Sovereign” may be said instead of the word “Lord.”*