

Common Praise at the Cathedral

by Michael Capon

Last Fall, with the support of the Dean and myself, Bishop and Chapter recommended that *Common Praise*, the new hymn book of the Anglican Church of Canada, be purchased for use at the Cathedral. I would like to discuss why we need *Common Praise*, and to introduce you to some of the content.

First, I'd like to start by looking at our current hymnbook, the so-called "red book". When it was introduced 30 years ago, the compilers sought to provide a representative selection of what was considered to be the best of our existing hymn tradition, and to introduce new hymns into that tradition.

Many new hymns from the red book have found their way into our repertoire including:

All My Hope on God Is Founded
All Poor Men and Humble
God Who Hast Caused To Be Written
Let There Be Light
Lift High The Cross
and Tell Out My Soul

There were also many new hymns introduced that are not in use today, such as:

A Workman in A Village Home
God of Concrete
King Of the Martyrs Noble Band
Stars Of Ice
and Thank You, O Lord, For the Time That Is Now

For us, these hymns have not stood the test of time, and are no longer needed.

Having spent 30 years familiarizing ourselves with the material in the red book, it is now time to reexamine the content. It is time to do what the red book did 30 years ago: keep the hymns we love, let go of the ones that have not stood the test of time, and introduce the best new hymns and songs that have been written in the meantime.

The periodic publication of an updated hymnbook is part of the continuing renewal of our worship. In the Anglican Church of Canada, the pattern has been that a new hymnbook is introduced every 30 years or so - 1908, 1938, 1971, and now 1998. In the same way that we restore our physical structures, as we have been doing with our Cathedral building lately, our hymn tradition is in need of restoration from time to time. It is this renewal that keeps our hymn singing a living tradition. For us, this is also a renewal of our uniquely Canadian Anglican tradition.

First and foremost, *Common Praise* contains a wide selection of familiar hymns. For example:

Alleluia, Sing To Jesus
Be Thou My Vision
For All the Saints
Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
Holy, Holy, Holy
Jerusalem The Golden
O God, Our Help In Ages Past
Onward Christian Soldiers
and Praise, My Soul, The King of Heaven

to name just a few. In total, I count approximately 205 familiar hymns in *Common Praise*.

There are a few hymns that have not been included, which I think will be missed:

Hail Thee, Festival Day
Lead On O King Eternal
Lord Of the Dance
This Is My Father's World
Welcome Happy Morning
and Who Would True Valour See

On the other hand, there are also a few well-known hymns not in the Red book that have been included in *Common Praise*, such as:

Amazing Grace
Angel Voices Ever Singing
Christ the Lord Is Risen Again
The God of Abraham Praise
and When Morning Gilds the Skies

As with the red book, there has been a certain amount of text revision. In fact, all of our previous hymnbooks have updated archaic language in certain cases, and *Common Praise* is no exception. Most of the revisions have to do with inclusive language for terms that we use to refer to each other, such as “brothers”, “sons”, “men”, etc. Here are three examples:

The line “though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see” has been changed to “though our sinful human gaze thy glory may not see”

“praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth” has been changed to “praises sing to God the King, and peace to all the earth”

“name him, brothers, name him” has been changed to “name him, Christians, name him”

For some of you, this may be good news, for others it may not be. However, in my opinion, the

compilers of this book have generally done a good job of making discreet alterations that blend well with their surroundings. I anticipate that, over time, these changes will come to feel quite natural for all of us.

A few references to our images of God have been modified, but most traditional terms such as “Father”, “King”, “Son”, etc., have been left intact. Most archaic terms, such as “Thee”, “Thy”, etc., have also been left intact. By my count, there are approximately 110 familiar hymns unaltered, 85 slightly altered, and 10 significantly altered.

Of course, the selection of old favourites is not the whole story. There is a lot of new material to be explored in this book over the next 30 years. As with past hymnbooks, some of the new material will take root, and some will not. New songs with strong potential include:

Alleluia, Give Thanks
Lord You Give the Great Commission
Praise the Lord with the Sound Of Trumpet
Seek Ye First
Sing A New Song Unto the Lord
and Will You Come And Follow Me

Many of these have already been sung here, both at the 10 o’clock and 11:45 services. So far, I have found at least 70 good new hymns and songs in *Common Praise*.

For the 11:45 service, the presence of *Common Praise* in the pews will not change the current practice of printing the songs in the bulletin. It will, however, expand our resources by allowing us to legally reprint material in *Common Praise* that is not covered by our copyright licenses.

I have only had time to give you a very brief introduction to *Common Praise*. There are copies of the book at the back of the church for you to explore further if you wish. I have also prepared a select, categorized inventory of the contents to give you an overview - please help yourself to a copy, also at the back of the church. The inventory is, of course, subjective, but I hope it will serve as a starting point for you.

I invite you to participate in the acquisition of *Common Praise* for the Cathedral by donating one or more copies. If you have not yet received a pledge form, extra ones are available in the church or at the church office. Donations in memory of loved ones will be acknowledged with bookplates on the inside front cover.

If you have any questions or comments about the book, please feel free to speak to the Dean, Kathleen Snow, or myself, either in person or through the Cathedral Office.

May we continue to praise God with beautiful music.