

The Presbytery of New Hope – Stated meeting of July 20, 2010
1:30 Docket: Announcement / New Presbyterian Hymnal – Karl Zinsmeister,
WMPC/Raleigh

(My name is Karl Zinsmeister, I am the Director of Music at White Memorial Presbyterian Church, Raleigh.)

Thank you for this opportunity to share with the presbytery about the ongoing work of the “peacocks” that is the Presbyterian Committee on Congregational Song or PCOCS. You may be aware that in the first few months of their formation the group chose this name over “the hymnal committee” to represent that they defined their task to create not just a new hymnal, but a much broader worship resource.

I am not a member of the committee but I have been following their work and have asked to report to you simply to get the word out. You can still go to any of the following to track their progress yourselves (your comments, observations, and suggestions are still welcome):

[internet] www.presbyterianhymnal.org

[Facebook] www.facebook.com/PCOCS

[twitter] www.twitter.com/pcocs

I had the opportunity to visit with a few colleagues at the recent Conference on Worship and Music at Montreat, and have had a phone conversation with Charlie Frost of Beaufort, SC, one of the 15 committee members. Here is some information about their present work:

The open submissions period of 18 months came to a conclusion in June. The committee is presently reviewing in sub-committees the thousands of submissions received. Each subcommittee brings their recommendations to the larger committee for a vote. The lectionary is being used as one guide in their selection process. For example, they want to avoid having 15 hymns relating to one lectionary text and zero songs on another.

The final book will likely contain in the range of 600 to 1,000 selections representing diverse musical styles. We are all probably quite familiar with hymnals that are organized by liturgical season. The organization of this book will follow the overarching theme of salvation history. Here is a brief excerpt from the committee’s Theological Vision Statement:

To inspire and embolden a church facing [these] formidable challenges, the overarching theme of the collection will be God’s powerful acts of creation, redemption, and final transformation. It will also bespeak the human responses that God’s gracious acts make possible. In other words, the framework for this collection of congregational song will be the history of salvation.

There is still ongoing conversation about electronic format for all or part of the new resource.

There will be accompanying resources also. We currently have a hymnal companion to the 1990 collection of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs. Noted hymnologist, Carl Daw, has been selected to compile the next worship resource companion and he has already begun work. The

PCOCS have provided him a list of hymns that they have determined thus far to retain from the 1955 and 1990 hymnals.

Churches across the country were given the opportunity to participate as test sites. These congregations have already received their first packet of samples and will continue to receive them every few months. Reading an excerpt from a letter from my colleague Mike Morgan at FPC, Washington, NC,

We “are very excited about being part of this very important task. ... we are one of 115 congregations that are in the ‘testing program’ for reviewing some of the new material that might be included in the new hymnal.” After reviewing the songs for each packet “I will go online and fill out a survey pertaining to the pieces. ... We have used one of the pieces already and are going to use the remaining pieces in the next couple of weeks.”

PPC has begun their efforts to inform congregations about the new resource—you can download two different bulletin inserts from the project website.

The committee made a presentation to GA this month, which was well received, I understand. And if you are planning to attend The Big Tent Meeting next summer in 2011 you will have the opportunity to hear another update then.

What’s next for the committee: they will meet again in Louisville August 30-September 2. And as always, they covet your prayers for their work.

The plan is to bring the proposed resource to GA in 2012 for approval and to move ahead with publication by 2014.

In an article from *Call to Worship* by Mary Louise or Mel Bringle, chair of the Presbyterian Committee on Congregational Song and professor of philosophy and religion at Brevard College, she writes:

“The small print in a hymnal hints at story after story of what our distant cousins and aunts and uncles and great-great-great grandparents did and sang about on their journeys of faith ... A hymnal is a sort of musically embellished family album for the people of God.

Thank you for your time and consideration. This concludes my report.

*Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Karl Zinsmeister
Director of Music
White Memorial Presbyterian Church
Raleigh, NC
7/20/2010*