

## **Hymnal Selection Committee Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why do we need a new hymnal? Why can't we just keep going with the one we are using?**

We currently use a relatively small number of hymns from our existing hymnal and often supplement with hymns from other hymnals. Many of the hymns in our existing hymnal are no longer a good fit for our worship context and additionally, some of the language is very exclusive of genders and races/ethnicities (i.e. referring to natives as “savages”, hierarchical gender language).

As a congregation that places deep value on hymn singing, we feel strongly that a new hymnal would help steward and embolden our hymn singing in future years.

### **Why can't we just keep printing supplements in the bulletin?**

Much of the value of the hymnal lies in the comprehensive work that teams of subject matter experts apply to thoughtfully curating a set of hymns to meaningfully support congregations in their worship of God. We feel that there is still a deep benefit to Bethany to have one common “cannon” in the form of a hymnal in the pew. Yes, there will always be supplemental hymns, but we feel that there is purposeful continuity for Bethany's worship to have a common hymnal in the pew that we use intentionally and consistently in worship.

### **How about language? Does this use more inclusive language?**

Yes – there is more inclusive language in some cases (mostly for human-centered language). But also, intention to best honor the context within which the hymns were originally written. As a committee, we spent a lot of time comparing how language was used in specific hymns and evaluating how effectively that was done – both in terms of expanding inclusivity across races and genders while also honoring the original hymn.

### **Did you give any thought to how we use hymns in worship?**

This was a key discussion topic for our committee there were many comments related to this that surfaced via the affirmative inquiry process. We feel strongly that a new hymnal must be supported by intention as to how it is used meaningfully in worship including:

- (1.) Balance of old and new hymns – making sure we are thoughtful in introducing new hymns while also balancing intentional use of a core set of familiar hymns so that new generations gain with solid familiarity of core hymns
- (2.) Sharing personal stories from the congregation on how hymns have touched people's lives in different seasons.
- (3.) Share context for why hymns were written – including context for how language was used at the time it was used (i.e. “thee” and “thou” feel formal now but at the time the hymns were written, these pronouns were actually informal language to intended to convey closeness with God)

### **How is this being funded?**

Largely through worship budget funds from last year that were underspent due to:

- Unanticipated savings that were found in copying expenses (which makes up a big bulk of the worship budget)
- Budget that was intentionally unspent from last year (due to individuals covering expenses out of pocket) so that it could be applied towards hymnals

### **Did you give thought to inviting individuals in the congregation (as a way of raising funds) to pay a small sum to dedicate individual hymnals to loved one?**

We did discuss this but felt that this may un-intentionally seem exclusionary--as if it could convey there are “insiders” with names in books and “outsiders” who didn't donate. Given that we had unexpected copy expenses that could be applied to this without our having to raise additional funds, we decided to recommend funding through our worship budget from last year.

### **Is this a good use of our budget?**

We feel convicted that a new hymnal will be important to the worshipping life of Bethany and is a good use of funds. Additionally, there are expenses with printing hymns in bulletins which would not be incurred regularly if we have a hymnal that is used more consistently.

### **Is buying a hymnal good environmental stewardship?**

We recognize this concern and spent time deliberating this as a committee. We feel that there is also an environmental cost to printing hymns every week (and there has been concern raised by the congregation that we should try to streamline the bulletin for environmental stewardship reasons as well). Our hope is that having a hymnal that is used more regularly would allow us to re-use a book for years vs. printing paper every week that just gets recycled on the way out of worship. In addition, we will explore ways to recycle the old hymns to minimize the environmental impact.

### **How did you assemble the list of hymnals?**

Our committee reached out many subject matter experts on hymnody to assemble a broad list of hymnals to start which we ultimately narrowed down to the two hymnals (*Glory to God* and *Lift Up Your Hearts*) that we all felt strongly would be the best fit for Bethany.

After completing the affirmative inquiry process with the congregation, much of our time was spent deliberating between these two hymnals to discern which we felt would be best for Bethany.

### **What were the primary reason that you decided on the hymnal(s) you are recommending for Bethany? Why do you want digital rights to a second hymnal?**

At the beginning of our discernment process, we laid out a set of criteria that we would use to evaluate the hymnals against. These criteria included:

- Theological Perspective: Do the selection and editing of materials match Bethany's theology?
- Biblical correlation: To what extent and in what ways do the contents make biblical content and biblical expression available?
- Sermon Support: How effectively does the hymnal support topics addressed in preaching?
- Function in Worship:
  - Does the hymnal provide the materials needed for the acts and themes of worship, both week to week and in the yearly cycle?
  - How well does the hymnal support how Bethany does work (DNA, worship style, hymn usage etc.)?
  - Balance of God directed vs. individual response hymns
- Language
  - Traditional vs. inclusive language
  - Where inclusive language is used – evaluate how it is incorporated
- Supplementary Materials: are there materials beyond hymns such as liturgical texts that would support integrated worship at Bethany?
- Usefulness: how usable is the hymnal from a format perspective (practical considerations) such as legibility, type, availability of large print hymns, guitar chords etc.?

After completing the affirmative inquiry process and coming up with themes to capture the feedback of the congregation, each member of the committee individually evaluated the two hymnals under consideration against these criteria. We then collaborated as a group together to jointly evaluate.

We loved both of the hymnals—*Glory to God* and *Lift Up Your Hearts* and felt both would be wonderful for Bethany's worship context. We ultimately decided that *Glory to God* would be a better fit for Bethany as the hymnal in the pew. That said, there were some aspects of *Lift Up Your Hearts* – particularly many beautiful liturgies – that we thought would be meaningful to Bethany, so we are recommending purchasing the digital rights to that hymnal also.

### **How do you plan to introduce the hymnal in worship?**

We are still finalizing the specifics on how we plan to introduce the new hymnal in worship once approved. This plan will include a combination of:

- Commissioning in a Sunday worship service (including de-commissioning of old hymnals in a meaningful way)
- Intentionally orienting the congregation to the hymnal in coming weeks/months – including inviting members of the congregation to share stories of how individual hymns have met them
- Congregational hymn sing(s) outside of worship
- Partnering with youth and children's ministry to identify 10-15 core hymns we want to intentionally teach to younger generations in our congregation

### **What will we do with the old hymnals?**

We will offer members of the congregation to take an old hymnal for their personal use should they desire.

For the remaining books, we will explore donating them first (by posting an announcement in the Hymn Society newsletter). If we do not find an organization to donate them too, there is guidance on how to explore recycling them provided on the site for *Lift Up Your Hearts*.