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**No. 9153****REPORT CONCERNING DEVELOPMENT OF A HYMNAL****RECEIVED by the General Assembly****Background Information**

The 1987 General Assembly adopted Resolution 8737 requesting establishment of a "hymnal revision committee" to compile a new hymnbook for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Hymnals published in 1941 and 1970, *Christian Worship: A Hymnal* and *Hymnbook for Christian Worship*, respectively, were outdated and, as the 1987 resolution put it, the church needs "hymns and other worship resources which express the hopes, love, concerns and beliefs of people of all ages who are seeking to live as Christians" now and into the 21st century. The resolution specifically asked that care be taken to involve various constituencies so that the proposed hymnbook can reflect "the faith and religious experience of the diverse membership of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)" and that the Disciples committee "make every effort to produce a common hymnal with the United Church of Christ."

Responsibility for forming the hymnal revision committee and initiating its work was lodged in the Office of the General Minister and President. Although efforts to establish a committee suitable to the General Board started soon after the 1987 General Assembly, it was not until 1989 that the committee finally was appointed. Hampered by lack of funds (the Division of Homeland Ministries secured and appropriated special funds for early meetings), the committee met only twice (October 22-24, 1989 and March 1-3, 1990) prior to its only joint meeting with the counterpart hymnal committee of the United Church of Christ on November 26 and 27, 1990. The committee started several parts of its assignment (criteria for selecting hymn texts, guidelines for choosing music, thoughts on language and textual revision, and so on), but under the circumstances, progress was slow.

Although the possibility of developing a hymnal jointly with the United Church of Christ was discussed within the committee, it was not pursued in a vigorous or timely manner, despite a pointed directive from the Administrative Committee of the General Board not to move forward with the creation of an "exclusively Disciples" hymnbook until the effort for joint publication had been "fully exhausted" (AC-90-1176). Inclusion of a member of the United Church of Christ on the Disciples committee was appropriate in light of the "partnership" between the churches, but did not lead to significant communication between the two hymnal committees. Lack of clarity about administrative and financial responsibility on the Disciples side also frustrated communication.

In July 1990, the General Board placed the hymnal project "under the responsibility of the Christian Board of Publication and the Division of Homeland Ministries jointly" (GB-90-1169).

Wanting to advance the work in the direction pointed by the General Assembly initially and the General Board later, the presidents of Christian Board of Publication and Division of Homeland Ministries, involving the chairperson of the hymnal development committee, sought additional consideration of the possibility of producing a common hymnal with the United Church of Christ. A joint meeting of the denominational committees was held in November 1990. The conclusion, determined largely by progress made (and not made) and commitments made (and not made) prior to that first face-to-face discussion of the matter, was that joint publication of a hymnal would not be possible, though purposeful communication and some peripheral collaboration might occur.

**Development Phase**

Early in 1991, administrators of DHM and CBP charted a course for moving through development of a new Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) hymnal as rapidly as possible with late 1994 or early 1995 as the target for publication. Principal features of that plan, which has been followed, include:

- Secure major funding of pre-publication work, including committee meetings, resource materials and other expenses from CBP and limited supplemental funding for specified purposes from DHM.
- Reconstitute the committee to strengthen it with particular expertise for the intense development phase and to make it as representative as possible.
- Structure the committee with subcommittees for specialized tasks.
- Use the name "Hymnal Development Committee" to more accurately depict the group's work.
- Schedule frequent meetings, beginning in the spring of 1991, so the committee and its subcommittees can make steady progress.

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- Consult Disciples widely, initially through a questionnaire sent to all congregations to gather information and preferences, and provide for continuous communication.
- Utilize the existing staffs of CBP and DHM to the extent possible in order to limit costs.
- Maintain the highest standards in all aspects of development so that the hymnal will serve the church well for at least two decades.

On February 28, 1991, the CBP Board of Directors approved the underwriting of annual budgets during the pre-publication (development) period, thus enabling progress on other parts of the plan.

As the first step in reconstituting the committee during the spring of 1991, Daniel B. Merrick, chairperson of the hymnal revision committee since its formation, was invited to become hymnal editor, moving out of the chair into a key ex-officio position, and he accepted that appointment.

Gale Schoepf, also a member of the original committee, was appointed chairperson of the Hymnal Development Committee, formed with twelve appointed and three ex-officio members:

APPOINTED: Susan L. Adams, New Albany, IN; Ronald J. Allen, Indianapolis, IN; Luis Ferrer, Indianapolis, IN; Colbert S. Cartwright, Fort Worth, TX; Ruth C. Duck, Evanston, IL; David L. Edwards, Lynchburg, VA; Gertrude Fujii, Los Angeles, CA; Ola Irene Harrison, Downey, CA; Floyd Knight Jr., Chicago, IL; Gale Schoepf, Fullerton, CA; Larry B. Sivils, Henderson, KY; and Brent Stratton, Wichita Falls, TX.

EX-OFFICIO: Daniel B. Merrick, Peoria, IL; Peter M. Morgan, director of worship and renewal, DHM; and David P. Polk, editor of Chalice Press, CBP.

The committee held two meetings, May 6-8, 1991, and July 22-26, 1991, prior to the 1991 Tulsa General Assembly, and others were scheduled for November 15-18, 1991; February 28 - March 2, 1992; July 22-24, 1992; and October 1992 (date not set).

The involvement and support of Disciples will be needed as this capable committee strives to develop a resource that will enrich worship, and express the deepest feelings and beliefs of Christians far into the next century.