

Psalter Hymnal Committee Report
March, 2013

The Psalter Hymnal Committee of the URCNA has been making encouraging progress, namely in completing a provisional Psalm Proposal together with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's Psalter Hymnal Special Committee at their most recent meeting. This meeting took place March 5-6 at the facilities of Faith United Reformed Church in West Olive, Michigan.

As of this March meeting, the committees have completed a provisional "Psalm Proposal." This proposal includes at least one full metrical version of each of the 150 Psalms. The sole exception is Psalm 119, which contains 22 selections that correspond to each section of this lengthy acrostic Psalm. There are also many other "B" or even "C" versions of complete metrical Psalms included in the proposal. These additional metrical versions are especially selected for often-used, well-known, or liturgically-applicable psalms, like Psalm 51, 98, 103, 121, among others. As instructed by our respective Synods and General Assemblies, one of our committees' priorities has been to choose complete Psalm texts which are faithful to the words of Scripture and set to singable, appropriate, and beautiful music.

In all, there are about 235 complete metrical Psalm songs included in the proposal. In addition to these metrical versions, there are about 40 partial or paraphrase Psalm songs that have been agreed upon. Most of these partial or paraphrased Psalms are from the blue *Psalter Hymnal* (PH), as a fair percentage of selections in the PH are either partial or paraphrased Psalms.

Sensitive to issues of continuity and familiarity, our committees have retained many full metrical or partial/paraphrase selections from the PH in several ways: either as is, or with updated words (e.g. "thee" to "you"), or with fuller or more scripturally accurate texts (e.g. a partial text in the PH has been converted into a complete metrical version). There are also some tunes from the PH that have been retained and moved to other places in the Psalm proposal. Here are a few quick examples of *Psalter Hymnal* tunes that have been retained in one of these fashions. Note that these examples are not representative of every selection made for each respective Psalm.

- RUTHERFORD for Psalm 32
- EIN FESTE BURG for Psalm 46
- ILLA for Psalm 127
- CREATION for Psalm 135 (a good example of a partial in the PH that has been made complete in the proposal)
- RIPLEY for Psalm 146

Some examples of brand new metrical texts and tunes in the Psalm Proposal include the following (see note above):

- KINGSFOLD for Psalm 22
- O MEIN JESU for Psalm 81
- LYNGHAM for Psalm 98

By retaining many well-known tunes as well as adding some excellent new ones, we hope that our churches will be able to robustly sing *all* of the Psalms in the collection.

Most of our committees' work in the last two years has been on completing the Psalm Proposal. We intend to start more work on the hymns in earnest this summer.

The committees continue to have an ambitious goal to begin printing the songbook in the Fall of 2016. To this end, we are planning to release the Psalm Proposal digitally this summer after the OPC's General Assembly in early June. There will be an online system for churches from both of our communions to submit feedback. After considering this feedback, we hope to have the Psalm Proposal ready for recommendation in 2014 to both the URCNA Synod and the OPC General Assembly. In late 2014 or early 2015, we hope to release a new and improved joint Hymn Proposal, with the goal of recommending its approval to Synod and General Assembly in 2016. Upon approval, the final editing, publishing, and printing of the entire songbook would then commence in the Fall of 2016.

After four years of serving as committee chair, Rev. Rand Lankheet has moved to vice-chair, and Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen has assumed the role of chair. Please look for more updates soon, and more importantly, please keep each of our committees in your earnest prayers.

Respectfully submitted by the URCNA Psalter Hymnal Committee, March 2013:

Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen, Chair (Classis Southwest U.S.)
Rev. Randal Lankheet, Vice-Chair (Classis Southwest Ontario)
Mrs. Angeline Vanderboom, Secretary (member-at-large)
Mr. David Buursma (Classis Central U.S.)
Dr. Scott Finch (Classis Western Canada)
Rev. Christopher Folkerts (Classis Pacific Northwest)
Mrs. Denise Marcusse (Classis Michigan)
Mr. Joel Pearce (Classis Eastern U.S.)
Rev. Harry Zekveld (Classis Ontario East)