New United Methodist Worship Resources Collection Planned

Nashville, June 2019 - The United Methodist Publishing House (UMPH) and Discipleship Ministries (DM) are working to expand the array of options, ease in accessing, and utility of high-quality worship resources used by a wide array of UM congregations.

A new *United Methodist Worship Resources Collection* (*UMWRC*) will combine all currently approved UMC official hymnody and liturgies and will be supplemented with a curated assortment of additional products that are of high quality, sound theology, and practical use for congregations to enrich, enliven, and expand options for vital UMC worship. The new collection will be available in multiple digital (including downloadable) and print formats.

The *UMWRC* will be available as early as Fall 2020. Meanwhile, work on a new version of the General Conference approved *UM Hymnal* will be deferred. The two agencies recognize that the official denominational hymnal embodies historically representative elements as well as curated new materials reflecting diversity of people, worship styles, musical genres, and contributors of hymns, tunes, and liturgical resources. Approved hymnals encapsulate a point-in-time consensus by the connectional Church about what is essential and most useful for all to adopt and use.

The dynamic state of UMC life, with current debates about its future, polity, and organization in annual conferences and constituency groups across the connection, demonstrates that The United Methodist Church is not ready to coalesce with strong consensus about a fixed collection of worship and musical resources. As a result, the agencies’ ability to forecast levels of receptivity and financial capacity in UMC congregations to purchase and use a new official hymnal are too tenuous in light of the major investments of time, talent, and money required to research, assemble, produce, and launch a new General Conference endorsed collection of UMC worship resources.

The DM and UMPH boards of directors have determined that while it is prudent to postpone the exceptionally expensive work on the Hymnal Revision Project at this time, the two agencies will
collaborate to compile a new, vibrant, and practical United Methodist Worship Resources Collection (working title).

In announcing the decision, UMPH President and Publisher, Rev. Brian K. Milford noted, “Both UMPH and DM have high commitments to expand the array of options, ease in accessing, and utility of high-quality resources used by a wide array of UM congregations.”

Rev. Junius Dotson, DM General Secretary, said “UM congregations regularly supplement music and worship resources with materials beyond what is currently available in the UM Hymnal. Congregations will benefit from and value expertly curated, adeptly sorted, and easily accessed music and liturgical aids from which to select and use with confidence.” The two agencies stated that quick and easy access to the collection will make for lower costs and faster planning, searching, sorting, and distribution for congregations of all sizes, including small churches with limited budgets.

“The work of curating the collection will continue with representatives of both agencies and members of the current Hymnal Revision Committee, showing care in making selections that reflect and amplify UMC theology, values, affections, affirmations, and missional aims,” said Rev. Milford.

Rev. Dotson noted that “the review and curation team will honor the commitment to persons who responded to our calls for new resources, and we will continue to accept submissions of new materials, including hymns, songs, and liturgies.”

UMPH and DM will also conduct congregational engagement programs, including listening sessions, demonstration events, experiments, and training sessions in local settings over the course of the development and promotion of the new collection. The agencies will conduct research and foster collaborative relationships with annual conferences, local churches, and others such as local pastor training program leaders, as well as The Fellowship (FUMMWA), Hymn Society, and North American Academy of Liturgy (NAAL).

Both UMPH and DM pledge to continue to utilize multiple methods to develop and deliver stellar worship materials and training aids to UMC congregations and their leaders, employing both online and print formats.

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