

53. New Resources for “Singing The Faith”: Interim Progress Report

Background

The 2007 Conference adopted proposals for a new authorised “core” collection of hymns and songs. This would be supplemented by a rolling resource of additional items that would be updated on a regular basis. In addition there would be a constantly updated collection of topical and contemporary material. The Music Resources Group has been working to determine the contents – hymns, songs and music – of the resource.

The 2007 Conference agreed that the constantly updated topical collection and the rolling resource would primarily be published in some form of electronic format. It did not, however, prescribe in what medium (printed, electronic, or both) the core collection should be published. The Methodist Publishing House was directed to bring costed proposals about the various options to the Conference of 2008. The *mph* Board has established a project with the help of a consultant, Jonathan Bailey, to fulfil this requirement.

Contents of the various resources

The contents of a constantly updated topical collection and the rolling resource are being identified by the Music Resources Group. The contents of the core collection will be proposed by the Music Resources Group. The Group will send out its preliminary recommendations for consultation in the autumn of 2008, and will bring its final proposals to the Conference of 2009 in the light of the responses. The Group will recommend the number of hymns to be included and both the music and the words for each hymn. It will also propose appropriate inclusive language for the hymns. It will seek approval from Faith and Order Committee for the theology of the words. One possibility being considered is that, since much traditional material will still be available through *Hymns & Psalms*, there will be circa 800 hymns and songs of which circa 75% to 80% will be relatively modern and, importantly for the exercise of estimating the costs of production, still within copyright.

Means of publication and costings

The *mph* Board’s project has issued a questionnaire to churches through ministers (asking ministers to pass it on to an appropriate person or body where necessary). The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information about the present and likely future use of hymn collections and other music resources in Methodist churches. There has been a rapid and good response. Preliminary analysis of the results available at the time of the May meeting of the Board suggest that, whilst *Hymns & Psalms* was the most widely used primary source of hymns, there was a wide variety of supplementary material in use. There did not appear to be strong evidence that a new “core” collection would be taken up quickly.

Although it was difficult to draw hard and fast conclusions about the likely future use of electronic media from the results already to hand, the Board believe that serious consideration should be given to producing an electronic version of the

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core collection (supported by some printed music copies for musicians) in the first instance, with a printed version as a supplementary resource should a demand for it be generated. The Board recognised, however, that this approach might result in the contents of the collection becoming too restricted because of copyright issues related to electronic media, and so might need to be reviewed in order to produce a balanced and comprehensive collection.

The Board is aware that publishing electronic versions of material in CDROM, Download or Remote Access formats raises a series of issues which vary depending on which of those formats is being considered. These issues include matters of copyright, the ability to integrate material easily and legally with other resources, and standards of compatibility. The Board is grateful for a paper from Professor Peter Brophy about these matters.

The Board has also recognised that, in addition to the above, the uncertainty over its own future has meant that it has not been able to complete the costings requested by the Conference. It therefore begs leave of the Conference **to bring detailed costings to the Conference of 2009.**

*****RESOLUTION**

53/1. The Conference adopts the Report.