

## Press Release

### Press release from the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*

As all the other synodically appointed committees, the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* is preparing its report for the upcoming General Synod Burlington to be held, Lord willing, in May 2010. As the report must be sent out to the churches six months before synod, we are working towards November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, as the date for our report to be complete.

In this press release, we wish to update the churches on the work we have been doing and are planning.

The committee has, recently, undergone a change in membership. This past February, Prof. N. H. Gootjes stepped down from the committee. We are very grateful for the work Prof. Gootjes could do for the *Book of Praise* during the past eight years. His advice on matters relating to the confessions, the liturgical forms, the forms of subscription, as well as the Psalms and hymns, was always highly valued by the rest of the committee. May the Lord crown with His blessing all the faithful work this brother has done for our *Book of Praise*. We are thankful that we may continue to call on Prof. Gootjes as a special advisor on matters concerning the creeds and confessions.

Since we now had two vacancies on the committee, Dr. John Smith having left us for Australia some time ago, we decided to exercise the option committees have to appoint new members between synods (see Acts GS 1989, Art 167). The committee appointed Prof. A.J. de Visser. Our brother has both theological and musical abilities which will be great assets for the work.

The main items in the report will relate to the Psalms and the hymns.

For some time now, all 150 revised Psalms have been available for viewing and use at [www.bookofpraise.ca](http://www.bookofpraise.ca). We thank the churches who met the March 1<sup>st</sup> deadline and have sent us their very valuable comments. This Spring the committee will be going through all the Psalms a second time, taking into account the comments of the churches and Dr. W. Helder's responses to the comments generated by the first time through. The revised Psalter will be included in the report. At that time, the online version will be co-ordinated with the proposal sent to synod.

When one compares the present (1984) version of the Psalter with the proposed revision, he will see that the revision can be divided into thirds: One-third of the Psalms are unchanged or slightly changed; one-third have been corrected or improved to a greater extent; one-third have been reworked. The aim is always to bring the Psalms we sing into closer harmony with the actual text of the biblical Book of Psalms and to present them in the most stylistically beautiful and pleasing form possible. The Psalms were well done, but there were some (especially the ones written in the 1930s) that were crying out to be reworked.

Another major component of the report will be the proposal regarding the "*Augment*." For some two years now the churches have been testing and using the little booklet of 28 hymns the committee published by order of Synod Smithers 2007. We have received much feedback from the churches and we thank them for their insight and advice. Since the committee wanted an unbiased review of the input for the churches, an *ad hoc* committee of several brothers and sisters of Winnipeg was struck to assess the comments of the churches in light of the synodically adopted principles and guidelines (see pages 2 & 3 of *Augment*). The *ad hoc* committee's report will be attached to the main report and will serve as the basis for the committee's proposal as to which, if any, of the 28 hymns to include.

The committee also has a mandate to work together with the Psalter Hymnal Committee of the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) to produce a common songbook for a future federation of merged churches. Synod 2007 of the URCNA instructed its committee to focus more on a distinctively United Reformed songbook than a common songbook; hence, our work together as the Joint Songbook Committee has slowed significantly.

We thank the churches for their involvement in the work of furthering and improving the church's song. We ask for continued prayer for the work of the committee.

Committee  
March 5, 2009