

Telling the Bible: an animated and emotional tradition

Dancing in the Church—Liturgical Dance in Public Worship

Enthusiasm

Answering the Question

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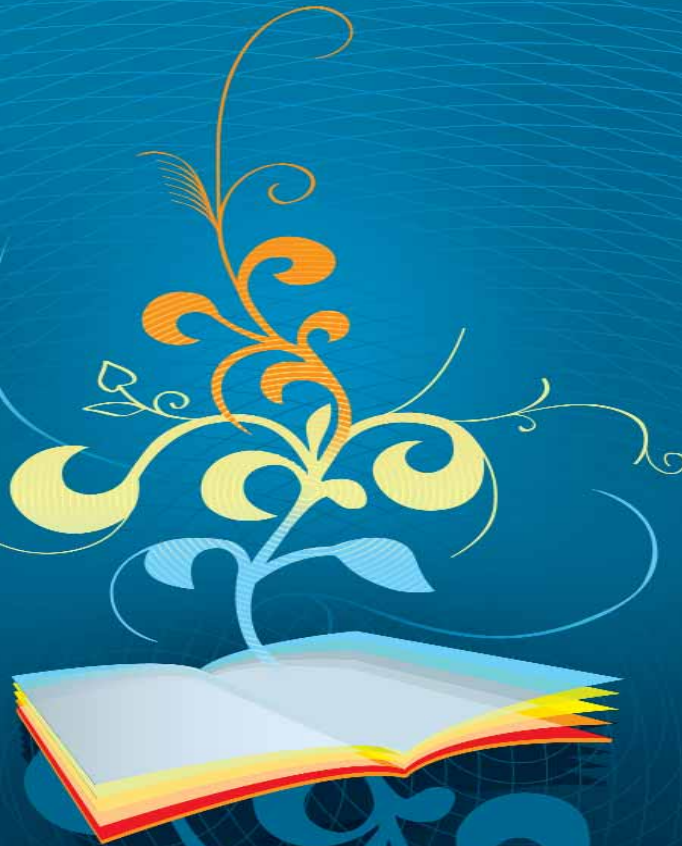
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Telling the Bible: an animated and emotional tradition

The Rev. Dr. Emily Bisset

A Report from the Calvin Symposium on Worship

At the Calvin Symposium on Worship at Calvin College, we were gathered for worship in a large auditorium. The person reading the scriptures for that morning did not have a Bible in front of him and he did not stand at a podium. He did not read at all, but spoke to us as if he was telling a story. He spoke the words to us as if they were meant for us to hear, rather than just overhear.



EQUIPPING FOR . . . Worship

At first, I was dismayed. I was taught that when reading from the Bible in worship, the focus should be on the Bible and not the reader. In fact, at one point I was told by a well-respected professor that it was okay if the reader did not even look up from the text. But as I listened, I found myself being drawn in and even surprised by the freshness of the words. They didn't seem ancient or distant. The scripture reader was not using a modern paraphrase, like *The Message*. He was using a literal translation, as I would in worship. But the words sounded different to me somehow, and I heard the word of God in a new way.

Later that day, I attended an all-day seminar led by our scripture reader, Dennis Dewey. He is an ordained minister in the PC(USA) and part of the Network of Biblical Storytellers International (www.NOBS.org). Mr. Dewey reminded us that the word from God we find in the scriptures is always a spoken word. He suggested that one way of handling the scriptures with great care and with reverence is to engage in the art of biblical storytelling. To tell the story of the Bible, rather than read it, entails lively interpretation, expression and even animation. The goal is to convey the intensity, relevance and vitality of the word of God, which first came to us in an oral rather than a literate culture.

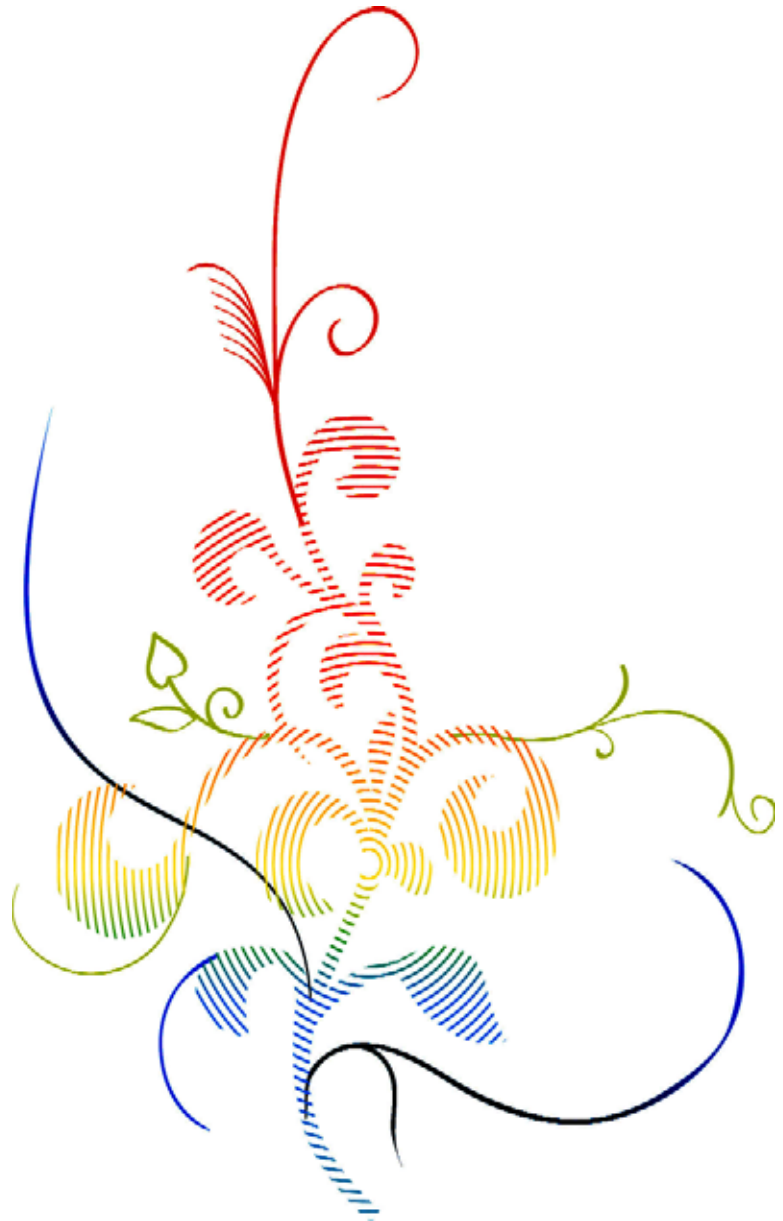
We have all had experiences where the reading of the word of God in church is about as engaging as waiting for a pot of water to boil or listening to a clock tick. Sometimes the text is read as one long sentence or with strange pauses between words just because those words happen to be at the end of a line of text. Sometimes the text is read without any detectable emotion or with nary an inflection of voice or tone. As Mr. Dewey said - it is not our job to make the word of God come alive in worship. It is already alive. We just have to try not to kill it!

Some of us might get nervous about the notion of biblical storytelling. The goal, however, is not to memorize it and spit it back out. It is not in any way to add something to the story that isn't there. The purpose of telling the Bible rather than reading it is to let what is in the story come out. Every reading of scripture is an interpretation of it. When we offer a well-told, faithful and personal expression of a biblical story to the congregation, we have a much better chance of coming close to the way God intends us to hear it. After all, a flat, expressionless reading of the scripture is an interpretation - one that is greatly contradictory to the high-

ly animated, highly emotional storytelling tradition of Jesus' time and the Rabbinic period.

I learned many valuable things at the Calvin Symposium on Worship. I experienced refreshing worship, heard inspiring preaching, met new colleagues and renewed old friendships. I returned better equipped to build up the saints and do ministry in my own context. And I was reminded that it is not my job to make the word of God relevant or bring it to life. Instead, it is my job to be faithful in conveying it to others, so as not to mute or diminish the life that already abounds within it.

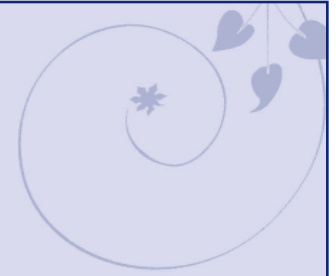
The Rev. Dr. Emily Bisset is minister at Knox Presbyterian Church in Oshawa, Ontario.



Dancing in the Church

Liturgical Dance in Public Worship

by Sharon Geigl



Dance in the church? Church responses to dance have included delight, anger and indifference. It might not be something we do very often, but the scriptures talk about how to praise God with body movement. Psalm 149 declares, “Let them praise God’s name with dancing and music,” and Psalm 150 implores Israel to “praise God with tambourine and dancing.” Miriam led the women of Israel in a dance of celebration and gratitude when they had been brought safely through the Red Sea. King David danced in honour of God’s return to Jerusalem.

People danced because it was part of their culture, or to help them celebrate or mourn. In some traditions, priests led congregational dancing. Belief was conveyed with dance too, as in the circle dance. Worshippers danced together around a circle, showing a community centred on God, where no one was first or last.

Today, the procession, standing to sing, and playing instruments are ways in which we worship God with body movement.

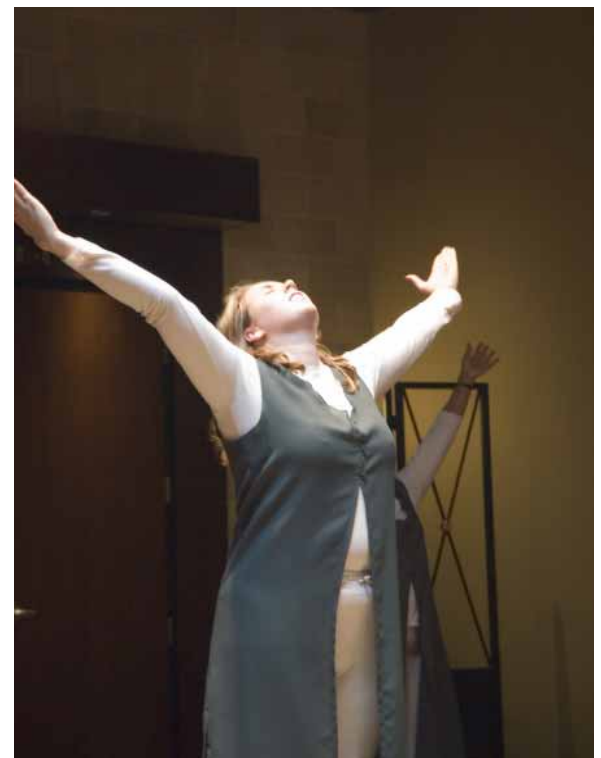
Today, dance has reappeared in some congregations. Liturgical dance offers one more way to respond to God, focusing both the dancer and the congregation on God’s goodness.

Dancing as praise

Most dancers will say that it feels natural to use dance to worship God. As I dance to a favourite worship song in the privacy of my home, I enter a sacred moment. I sense a new awareness of God as I praise with movement the one who loves and waits for us. Taking that dance into public worship, as any creative endeavour does, risks personal exposure. We do it so that others can also experience an encounter with Christ through the art form.

Patricia Browne, one of the dancers from our senior group, explains contemporary liturgical dance as “a physical expression of our desire to worship God... The movements of the dance interpret a message conveyed in the music. We have danced to express celebration, good news, praise and even sorrow or mourning, but always as an offering of praise to God.”

Liturgical dance differs from secular dance. It begins as a spiritual response from a dancer whose heart has been personally touched by God. This humble attitude allows liturgical dance to be a worshipful offering of praise, expressing responses to God’s work in our lives. As we see God at work in and around us, we want to show our gratitude.



What does it look like?

Some dance styles, such as ballet or jazz, are defined by a particular set of movements. The fact that liturgical dance movements need not be restricted in the same way has both good and cautionary aspects. The dancer can use his or her own interpretive movements to tell a story. It also means that all dancers may be included, regardless of skill, by adapting difficult movements to suit the dancers' abilities. However, we also need to be careful not to use movements which might offend if misinterpreted. A guiding question might be, "To whom are our movements drawing attention?"

Dance is an art form. As with other art forms used in worship, like music or banners, a dance must be studied and practised before being offered. At its best, we are performing for God, while helping others encounter Christ. If the goal of entertainment is to temporarily remove one from the rigors of daily living, nothing in worship can be entertainment. Similarly, liturgical dance in worship is an effort to engage others with God through praising with movement.

I've found it most helpful to choreograph a dance in advance, designing it around a piece of music. Most of our music is drawn from the contemporary Christian worship genre, including many with clear scripture references. Once the music is selected, I look for ways to convey the song's message using body movement. The setting of the dance is also important. Will the worship take place in a church or a hospital? Will the service feel reflective or energetic?

The liturgical dancer should wear garments that cover the body, but still show movement. There's no need for a flashy outfit. For example, close fitting shirts and pants in a single colour, to the ankles and wrists, can be worn under a semi-transparent overlay, such as a long, flowing tunic, in a contrasting colour. Attention is then drawn to the movements, rather than the dancer's body. Other props can be added, including dowel rods and flags. These extend the dancers' arms, allowing their movements to be highlighted in artistic and dramatic ways.

Context is important, and we create one for each dance. While the team members take their places, one of us stands at the lectern to share some of the lyrics of the piece, how we've interpreted it and how we connected it with the scriptures. We have also occasionally projected the lyrics for the chorus when it seemed appropriate.

Liturgical dance has been offered by our teams in both reflective and celebratory worship services, in hospitals and long-term care facilities. It's flexibility in communication and power as an art form has proven to be an effective way for some of our parishioners to get involved. As they use their gifts of movement to express praise to God, they also inspire the same in others.

Sharon Geigl is trained in ballet, folk and modern dance. She has led the dance teams at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Whitby, Ontario, for almost 10 years, including teams for intergenerational and elementary age dancers. Sharon has also facilitated many workshops and helped a number of congregations start liturgical dance teams.

For more information, visit www.presbyterian.ca/liturgicaldance.

This web page includes the history of the St. Andrew's, Whitby, dance teams, and practical advice on starting and leading a team, and offering dance in worship.



A Liturgical Dance group from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Whitby. Photo Credit: Alex Luyckx

Enthusiasm

by Rev. Alex Bisset

A Report from the Calvin Symposium on Worship
In January 2009, I had the opportunity to attend the annual Symposium on Worship at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. There are many things I could say about this experience. I could describe some of the workshops that I attended. One in particular contained so much information that a fellow participant said that keeping up to the flow of thoughts was like trying to drink from a fire hydrant. But since I have only a small space to fill, I am instead going to comment on something I noticed during the conference worship services.

As the minister of a single-staff two-point charge, I spend a lot of time leading worship, but have very little chance to experience worship from the pew. For me, one of the attractions of going away to a conference is the opportunity to sit back and participate in worship that is led by someone else. The organizers of the Calvin Symposium provide many times for this to happen, with morning worship, evening worship and afternoon vespers every day. These services are led by a variety of people and take many formats. And as I worshipped God in these settings, I noticed that the congregation responded in very different ways from one service to another. In one, people would sing and participate in worship with great gusto, while in another, the same group of people would sit listlessly and hardly sing at all.

Now, I know what you are thinking. This is hardly surprising. It is only natural that people participate more enthusiastically when they are doing something that is familiar, and less enthusiastically when they are out of their comfort zone. We have all seen this in our congregations. But that was not the case. Yes, the congregation belted out the old favourites, those hymns that cross denominational boundaries, like "Praise, my soul, the King of heaven" and "Praise to the Lord, the almighty." But they also sang with all their might as the Princeton Seminary Choir led us in a paraphrase of Psalm 150, sung in Korean to a Korean melody that did not follow any of our familiar Western music rules. On the other hand, when we gathered later in the week for a service led by Calvin College students that

featured only contemporary music, with guitars and drums and an electric bass, no one sang at all. It would have been easy to draw the conclusion that the assembled group did not like contemporary Christian music, but this is not the case. Contemporary praise songs were sung at other services and met with a good response. So what was going on?

The only conclusion I can draw is that it all came down to the emotion and energy of those leading the service. The Princeton Choir, and their soloist, beamed widely as they led us in praising God in Korean. They clearly loved what they were singing, and that love was contagious. Their energy and enthusiasm spread throughout the room. The Calvin students, on the other hand, sang every song as if they were in their rooms praying alone: they closed their eyes and stood very still, hands clasped in front of them. It felt as though we were watching private, personal devotions, and I and the others gathered in the room responded by keeping quiet. I almost felt that to join in would be intrusive.

There is a lesson here, I think, for those of us who lead worship regularly. If we look like we are enjoying what we are doing, then our enthusiasm for worship will take hold in our congregations. If we appear contemplative (and there is a time for this), then our congregations will respond contemplatively. If we look bored, our congregations will be bored too. If we introduce a new hymn or song and sing it as though we love it, the congregation will likely love it too. If we close our eyes and pretend that there is no one else in the world but us and God, then our congregation will pick up on that, and fade into the background.

For good or ill, worship leaders have more power than we might think. What tone do we want to set for worship, I wonder?

The Rev. Alex Bisset ministers to the two-point charge of Riverdale Presbyterian Church and Westminster Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ontario.

Answering the question: Is it against the law to copy or project works from *The Book of Praise* and *The book of Psalms*?

Don Anderson & Grace-ann McIntyre

Answering the question:

Is it against the law to copy or project works from *The Book of Praise* and *The Book of Psalms*?

Staff at The Vine in The Presbyterian Church in Canada have been asked by several congregations if it would be possible to produce electronic versions of *The Book of Praise* and *The Book of Psalms*. An electronic version would make it possible to project hymns and Psalms on screen in the sanctuary or copy them for bulletin inserts.

We looked into the possibility of producing electronic versions, and discovered that it would be far more expensive for congregations than the current book. The costs of the project would be huge, in terms of contacting and negotiating additional fees and agreements with every copyright holder, in ongoing fees, and in administrative costs.

Churches would have to buy a license for every congregant. It is much less expensive for a congregation to use a licensing service to reproduce copyrighted material.

Copyright

Copyright refers to the legal right to make printed copies of words or music. When material is under copyright, you must get permission from its creator in order to use it. It also means that the creator has the right to be paid for its use.

This helps to ensure that authors are paid for the use of their works of art, literature, criticism, or music. It also helps the author to control the conditions under which the work is reproduced. The owner of the copyright (the author or the entity to which the author has assigned the copyright) may go to court to seek damages if a work is copied without permission.

The author or composer also retains a moral right to prevent, for example, a work from being defaced, abridged, simplified or modified even if the copyright has been sold. The author or composer can seek damages for misuse of the work.

Even if you purchased both *The Book of Praise* and *The Book of Psalms*, you must obtain permission from the copyright holder to project or copy the lyrics or music for your congregation.

Getting permission to copy or project material

There are a number of companies that provide blanket permission for some - but not all - hymns and songs in our *Book of Praise*. The clearing houses listed below, however, state that they don't provide lists of the music they cover because there are too many titles. Churches that currently project or copy lyrics or music on a regular basis usually find that they need licenses from three clearing houses - usually the first three clearing houses listed below. They also must contact the copyright holders for hymns which are not covered by a clearing house.

Copyright Clearing Houses

How copyright clearing houses work

Clearing houses may have different regulations, so it is important to read your agreement carefully. Some require the licensee to report on a periodic basis what items they actually used. Some ask for weekly reports that are submitted on a quarterly or other basis. Some allow you to log into a website.

The cost of a license

License costs generally depend on the size of a congregation. Most companies provide an annual fee. Churches that use these companies find that this annual fee is not much more expensive than obtaining permission to use one or two pieces for a few weeks. You pay in advance for your subscription, which expires after a set time, or you can pay for the single use of an item, also in advance.

These are some of the main copyright clearing houses:

- Licensingonline.org
www.woodlakebooks.com; 800-663-2775
- Onelicense.net
www.onelicense.net; 800-ONE-1501
- CCLI-Christian Copyright Licensing International
www.ccli.com; 800-234-2446

In addition, major publishers such as GIA Publications and Hope Publishing Company offer easy access to non-commercial reprint permission. GIA Publications has programs for non-commercial use of much of the material under its control, for example, the hymns of

John Bell and the Iona Community; and songs of the Taizé Community in France. With a few exceptions, a fee will apply.

- GIA
phone 1-800-442-1358 or 708- 496-3800
fax: 708- 496-3828
email: reprints@giamusic.com.
- Hope Publishing
phone: 1-800-323-1049
fax: 708-665-2552
email: hope@hopepublishing.com for information on reprinting items under their control.

BOOK OF PRAISE (1997) HYMNS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Hymn	154	Silent night	238	Beneath the cross of Jesus
1	How blest are they who, fearing	156	The angel Gabriel from heaven	239
	God	157	The snow lay on the ground	240
5	Lord, our Lord, your glorious	161	What child is this	245
	name	165	O little town of Bethlehem	253
9	God's law is perfect	171	The people that in darkness	257
15	The Lord's my light	173	We three kings	265
19	High in the heavens, eternal God	174	Worship the Lord in the beauty	270
26	As pants the hart		of holiness	275
29	Oh send thy light forth	176	Songs of thankfulness and praise	277
32	Within your temple, Lord	177	Christ, whose glory fills the skies	293
34	God be merciful to me	180	How brightly beams the morning	297
37	O God, thou art my God alone		star	308
39	God of mercy, God of grace	181	All praise to you, O Lord	318
47	Remember not, O God	189	As when the Hebrew prophet	320
51	There where the judges gather		raised	323
54	My song forever shall record	193	Out of my bondage, sorrow and	
55	God moves in a mysterious way		night	325
58	To render thanks unto the Lord	194	Come, let us to the Lord our God	326
61	Oh come and sing unto the Lord	195	Come, ye disconsolate	330
64	Be still and know that I am God	197	Forty days and forty nights	331
65	All people that on earth do dwell	198	I hunger and I thirst	336
77	From all that dwell below the	200	Lord Jesus, who through forty	344
	skies		days	347
78	This is the day	204	Thou didst leave thy throne	349
81	Unto the hills around	207	Lord Jesus, think on me	352
82	I to the hills will lift my eyes	208	In the cross of Christ I glory	357
99	By the waters, the waters of	209	O Love that wilt not let me go	
	Babylon	210	Man of sorrows, wondrous name	359
113	Comfort, comfort you my people	211	Take up your cross	360
115	Hail to the Lord's anointed	217	Ride on, ride on in majesty	364
116	Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding	221	O dearest Lord	seat
118	Hark the glad sound	228	Drop, drop, slow tears	367
126	On Jordan's bank	231	When I survey the wondrous	368
141	Good Christians, all rejoice		cross	369
146	Angels from the realms of glory	235	Alas, and did my Saviour bleed	371
148	It came upon the midnight clear	236	At the cross her vigil keeping	372
150	Jesus, our brother, kind and good	237	Oh come and mourn with me	380
151	Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming		awhile	382
				382
				Jesus, the very thought of thee
				Let Christian faith and hope dispel
				Blessing and honour and glory
				Love divine, all loves excelling
				Praise him, praise him,
				Spirit, come, dispel our sadness
				Spirit of God, descend upon my

heart	517	See Israel's gentle Shepherd stand	690	Fight the good fight
389 Breathe on me, breath of God	533	Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness	694	This is my commandment
390 Spirit divine, attend our prayers	537	Twas on that night	698	Saviour, teach me day by day
393 I'm not ashamed to own my Lord	542	Let all mortal flesh keep silence	699	All the way my Saviour leads me
394 Holy Spirit, truth divine	543	Here, O my Lord, I see thee	701	Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost
396 As comes the breath of spring	549	For the bread which you have	703	Happy the home when God is
397 From the cowardice that dares		broken		there
not face new truth	551	Bread of the world	706	Come, let us sing
401 O Spirit of the living God	554	Now to Christ who loved us	708	When Israel was in Egypt's land
404 O Spirit come, our hearts inspire	568	I sought the Lord, and afterward I	725	Oh, freedom, freedom is coming
405 Lord, we pray not for tranquility		knew	733	O God of love, true source of peace
407 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven	570	I have decided to follow Jesus	737	Dona nobis pacem
411 Stand up and bless the Lord	571	Lord, I want to be a Christian	738	God the omnipotent
413 Come let us join our cheerful	575	Lead me, Lord,	742	Lead on, O King eternal
songs	576	I bind unto myself today	746	What a friend we have in Jesus
415 Children of Jerusalem	579	Oh, I know the Lord's laid his	747	There is a balm in Gilead
416 Blessed Jesus, at your word		hands on me	755	Go ye, go ye into the world
419 You are medicine for me	581	Pour out your Spirit from on high	760	Where cross the crowded ways of
425 We praise you, O God	584	Give me the faith		life
428 We love your house, O God	591	Hallelujah	765	We've a story to tell to the
431 Jesus, where'er thy people meet	594	Glory be to the Father		nations
432 O Lord of heaven and earth and	598	O perfect Love	767	Lord, speak to me
sea	606	Ye holy angels bright	773	Jesus bids us shine
442 Speak, Lord, in the stillness	608	Oh what their joy and their glory	779	Amen (Dresden)
443 When all thy mercies, O my God		must be	780	Amen (Danish)
444 Sweet is the solemn voice	610	Light's abode, celestial Salem	781	Amen (Smith)
450 Great Shepherd of your people,	615	Let saints on earth in concert sing	784	Thy kingdom come—on bended
hear	619	The Lord bless you / Aaronic		knee
451 Dear Father, Lord of humankind		Blessing	790	Where is death's sting
452 Jesus, stand among us	623	Holy, holy, holy	795	Christ is coming
454 Blest be the everlasting God	629	Salvation and immortal praise	797	Shall we gather at the river
456 Be present at our table	637	Take my life, and let it be conse	801	From ocean unto ocean
457 Now thank we all our God		crated	806	To bless the earth
458 God, of your goodness give me	638	Take time to be holy	807	We plough the fields and scatter
yourself	640	Softly and tenderly	811	Standing at the portal
459 O servants of God	642	O Master, let me walk with thee	815	New every morning is the love
460 Teach us, good Lord, to serve you	645	Follow me, the Master said	816	Now that the daylight fills
463 O burning mountain, O chosen	647	Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us	819	Awake, arise, Oh sing a new song
sun	650	He leadeth me	820	Holy God, holy and mighty
465 The things, good Lord, that we	651	Guide me, O thou great Redeemer	822	All praise to thee, my God, this
pray for	652	Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go		night
468 Lord, dismiss us with your blessing	654	O God of Bethel, by whose hand	824	At evening, when the sun had set
476 Amigos de Cristo / Friends of the	659	King of glory, King of peace	830	Praise God from whom all
Lord	660	Prayer is the soul's sincere desire		blessings flow
479 The church's one foundation	661	We give thee but thine own	831	Our Father who art in heaven
487 Onward, Christian soldiers	670	Amazing grace	833	O Canada, our home and native
489 Help us to help each other, Lord	672	Jesus calls us, o'er the tumult		land
494 Lord, be thy word	676	Jesus, lover of my soul	834	God save our gracious Queen
495 The heavens declare your glory,	678	I greet thee, who my sure	835	Musical Amens in Various Keys
Lord		Redeemer art		
498 Sing them over again to me	680	Christ, of all my hopes the		
499 Tell me the old, old story		ground		
500 Open my eyes, that I may see	681	We have heard a joyful sound		
502 Lord, thy word abideth	682	Just as I am, without one plea		
505 O Christ, the Word, incarnate	683	I know not why such wondrous		
506 The Spirit breathes upon the		grace		
word	685	How firm a foundation		
511 Lamp of our feet	686	How firm a foundation		
513 Now there is no male or female	687	Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine		
516 A little child the Saviour came	689	Simply trusting every day		