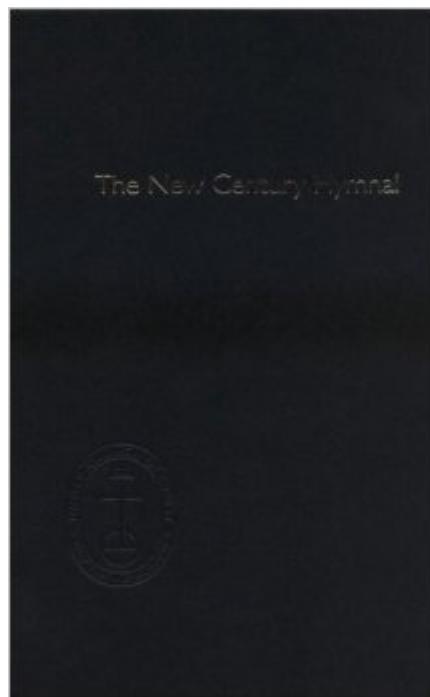


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The New Century Hymnal: Ucc Pew Edition



Synopsis

This is a hymnal that invites us into a new century. The best hymns of the past are combined with exciting new hymnody from some of the finest contemporary poets and composers, reflecting the pluralistic church in which we worship today. The New Century Hymnal has been created with a high level of musical and theological scholarship -- including remarkable new translations of original texts. Its texts honor tradition while at the same time using inclusive language that will welcome and affirm all as members of Christ's church.-- a full 934 pages containing more than 600 hymns-- many new translations to bring freshness and clarity to older texts-- more than 100 psalms, fully set to music-- arrangements and harmonizations carefully selected for congregational singing-- includes orders for worship, with services for morning and evening prayer

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

People had been waiting a long time for the United Church of Christ's 1995 NEW CENTURY HYMNAL. Many of that denomination's churches had quite understandably skipped the mediocre, 300-hymn denominational hymnal from 1974, which seemed mostly an exercise in even-Steven hymn choice from the two groups that merged to form the U.C.C. in 1962, the Congregationalists and the Evangelical & Reformed churches. Then the NEW CENTURY HYMNAL came out in 1995. It is impressive. It is bulky, black, solid, and looks and feels like everything a "millennial" hymnal ought to be; but for most of us it is a severe disappointment. It's as though the professionals got shoved aside in favor of the "Original Amateur Hour" in the compiling of this hymnal. References that

automatically defer to the masculine gender had to be removed--fair enough; after all, it seems weird that only 15 years or so ago we were singing "Good Christian *Men*, Rejoice." But this passion for purity further morphed into a kind of cultural Jacobinism, so out went not only masculine terminology, but any tiniest trace of 17th Century pronouns or nouns (Thee, Thine, Blest); also metaphors of royalty, hierarchy, militarism, individuality ("I" becomes "We") and so on. That's why "Onward Christian Soldiers" has to go, and just imagine the embarrassment caused by "God, the Omnipotent, King Who Ordainest." As someone once said, figures of speech must serve a purpose, or what's a meta for? The complaint has been made for years that the people who administer the "oldline" Protestant denominations are insufficient in economists but superfluous in poets. Are they condescending to us poor pew-sitters?

My family joined a UCC church just as they were transitioning into using the New Century Hymnal. Since that time I have been very pleased with the hymnal as a whole. Not a season goes by that I am not surprised by something I find within its pages. A big issue within the UCC as well as the Christian community as a whole is the issue of inclusive language. I believe the intentions of political correctness are good. In the case of this hymnal this good-natured attempt often goes just a bit too far. In the case of new hymns set to poems by such authors as Brian Wren this hymnal stands out far beyond any others. My philosophy regarding inclusive language is that, rather than change the old standard hymns, we should write new ones with a more enlightened approach to equality. The new additions to the standard repertoire within this book are second to none. On the other hand, many of the old standards in this book have been sent through the blender and come out resembling nothing closer than a distant cousin of their original ancestors. More times than I can remember I would turn to a hymn I was sure I had never heard of to find it to be an old favorite in disguise. Occasionally a stroke of genius finds its way into the inclusified "translation" such as "Good Christian Men" becoming "Good Christian Friends". This is an example of a very tasteful change that holds true to the feel and spirit of the original so well that the change goes by unnoticed. In other cases, such as "O Come let us adore him" becoming "O come in adoration" the term "inclusive" is really inappropriate for what has been done to our favorite hymns. "Mutually Exclusive" would be a better name for it. Seriously, is it really necessary to deny the gender of Jesus Christ?

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