

An Historical Overview of the Macalester Plymouth United Church Hymn Contest

The Macalester Plymouth United Church Hymn Contest began in 1996 as part of a continuing memorial to A. A. (“Al”) Heckman, a church member who was widely known as Minnesota’s “Dean of Philanthropy.” He was one of the first men in the nation to earn a graduate degree in social work and went on to create many private and public partnerships to help the needy. He was a pioneer in the establishment of integrated social services at the city, county and state level, and served on the boards of many philanthropic foundations. His life was an inspiration to those seeking to integrate Christian faith and social action.

Pastor Roger Grussing and music director Curt Oliver conceived the contest as a way of continuing Mr. Heckman’s legacy by encouraging the writing of hymns which call the church and its people to greater awareness of social issues and concerns.

The first year’s contest focused simply and directly on calling the church to work for social justice. As the contest continued and participation grew, the topics requested of hymn writers became more specific, such as the care of children, the environment, gay/lesbian rights, religious toleration and peace-making.

From its inception the contest has carried an annual prize of \$500 for the winning hymn. Occasionally the prize may be divided among several equal winners, and the judges have also frequently awarded “Honorable Mentions.”

The church is grateful to all who have entered our contest and to all who choose to sing these hymns. The church does not hold the copyrights to the hymns, however, and permission for wider use must be obtained from the authors or copyright holders.

1996 - Theme: Hymns that call the church to work for social justice

1996 Winning hymn - *Who Will Speak a Word of Warning*

by Richard Leach, Torrington, CT

(Suggested tunes: EBENEZER or TON-Y-BOTEL)

Meter - 8.7.8.7. D

Who will speak a word of warning
to a world whose wealth expands,
as the growing wealth is gathered
into ever fewer hands?

Christ, you speak a word of warning
for the church to know and tell:
greed is death and life is giving;
hands that give receive as well.

Who will speak a word of warning
to a world where truth gives way,
as the claims of pow'r and priv-'lege
shift and shape the truth each day?

Christ, you speak a word of warning
for the church to heed and share:
Truth is not the claims of power!
Truth is hurt and hope and prayer.

Who will speak a word of welcome
to the greatest and the least,
calling those with pow'r to service,
calling all to share the feast?

Christ, you speak a word of welcome,
for the church to tell and live:
All who hunger, come, be seated;
Take what Christ is here to give.

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1997 - Theme: Hymns that call the church to nurture and care for children everywhere

1997 Winning hymn - *Gentle Jesus, Loving Shepherd*
by Lurline DuPre, Denton, TX

(suggested tune – NETTLETON)
Meter - 8.7.8.7. D

Gentle Jesus, loving Shepherd,
you have told us “Follow me!”
You have made a pathway for us,
may we walk it faithfully.
Let us guide your children forward
in the ways which you have shown:
seeking, caring, feeding, teaching,
giving bread and not a stone.

Smiling Jesus, older Brother,
you took children on your knee.
Following your kind example,
may we hold them tenderly.
In a world where we, your servants,
are your living feet and hands,
ev’ry place we reach your least ones,
we respond to your commands.

Patient Jesus, loving Teacher,
may we learn from children’s ways:
playing, laughing, loving, growing,
singing, asking, freed by praise.
Help us tell your timeless story
to your children ev’rywhere,
so the world may know your justice,
and your peace beyond compare.

Healing Jesus, you transform us,
heart and body, mind and soul.
Where we love as you have loved us,
then our lives are glad and whole.
Sharing cup and loaf and water,
by your life we are set free
to fulfill your simple mandate:
“Let the children come to me.”

1997 Honorable mention - *The Children We Hold Dear*

by David A. Robb, Dalton, GA

(Suggested tune - TERRA BEATA)

Meter - SMD

The children we hold dear
were precious first to you.
Lord, may they know we welcome them
and keep their needs in view.
You loan them to our care
to challenge and protect,
to nurture body, mind and soul
with patience and respect.

The lone or hungry child,
the dispossessed and poor,
all look with hope for help from us
to make their lives secure.
When children are distressed,
disabled or withdrawn,
help us to guide them through their night
and lead them into dawn.

To bless the war-scarred child
whose eyes have seen too much,
help us invest in mercy's cost,
kind words, and gentle touch.
Where children are abused
and trust has been betrayed,
bring healing through relationships
that faithful love has made.

Your give a glimpse of heav'n
through each child born on earth,
and bid us all to be like them,
with innocence and mirth.
We vow to share your love
with ev'ry girl and boy,
and shape a safe and peaceful world
where childhood rings with joy.

1997 Honorable mention - *The People Came from Everywhere*
by Mary Nelson Keithahn, Belle Fourche, SD

(Suggested tune - CHILD'S PLAY, by John D. Horman)
Meter - CMD

The people came from everywhere
to hear the Teacher's news.
The blind, the lame, the poor were there,
encouraged by his views.
But those who brought the children near
were quickly sent away:
"The Teacher's far too busy now.
Don't bother him today."

When Jesus saw the children turn,
their faces long and glum,
he told his friends, "When will you learn
that little ones must come?"
He chided them indignantly,
"God's love can't be denied!
Let all the children come to me
and sit here at my side."

"The holy realm of God belongs
to children such as these,
who trust that God will right all wrongs,
forgive, and bring us peace.
If you would also now receive
the love that never ends,
come as a trusting child, believe
in all that God intends.

As once you took your hands and blessed
the children on their way,
now bless us, Jesus, in our quest
to find your love, we pray,
We long to feel your warm embrace,
and hear your kindly word,
that in the presence of your grace
our faith might be assured.

1998 - Theme: Hymns that speak to the role and ministry of the church in addressing social concerns faced by our communities, our nation and our world as we enter a new century

1998 Winning hymn - *How Long Ago the World Was Taught*
by Richard Leach, Torrington, CT

(Suggested tune - O WALY WALY)

How long ago the world was taught
the justice God would have us do;
the kindness we are told to love;
the humble walk God calls us to.

For long before the Savior's birth,
the law and prophets made it clear
what love of God and neighbor are:
an easy yoke for us to wear.

And now two thousand years and more
have come and gone since Jesus' birth.
He made the law and prophets his,
and passed them on with added worth.

How long a time! how long a time!
How very clear the truth we find:
No page turned on a calendar
can make us humble, just or kind.

Have mercy on us, gracious God,
and turn the pages of our hearts,
to find the days and weeks and years
where living long-known teaching starts!

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1998 Honorable mention - *Companion of the Poor*
by Dan Damon, Point Richmond, CA

Meter - SM (6.6.8.6)

Companion of the poor,
God with us in our need:
you know the pain of poverty,
the cry that has no creed.

Companion of the poor:
you do as love commands;
your turn the tables of our greed
with strong, determined hands.

Companion of the poor:
by grace we change our ways,
till justice rises from our lives,
and mercy fills our days.

Companion of the poor:
we learn to care and bless,
and so, with you, we take to task
the systems that oppress.

Companion of the poor:
set every heart ablaze,
until compassion fills the earth,
and every song is praise.

1998 Honorable mention - *God Has Asked "Whom Shall I Send Forth?"*
by Michael Morgan, Atlanta, GA

(Suggested tunes - ABBOT'S LEIGH, BEACH SPRING of HYFRYDOL)
Meter - 8.7.8.7. D.

God has asked, "Whom shall I send forth
to declare my rightful Name?
Who with steadfast faith my promise
of redemption shall proclaim?
Saints in heav'n sing 'Holy, holy,
Lord of hosts, we all adore!
Who in earth shall sing my glory,
praise resound forevermore?"

God has whispered, "Who in conflict
will intone my song of peace?
Who will plead all hate to vanish,
tears of desperation cease?
Who will sing of my compassion,
spread my grace among the crowd?
Who with hope will light the darkness,
trace a rainbow in the cloud?"

God has cried, "Who will cry with me
for a world fraught with despair?
In the face of cold injustice,
who will speak warm words of care?
City streets are home to many,
poor, yet still humanity;
Who will lay my gifts before them,
set imprisoned people free?"

God has called, "In tribulation,
who will speak for righteousness?
Who will share my gentle favor
in an age so slow to bless?
Through the blare of sound and silence,
who my still, small voice will be?"
With conviction, hear me answer,
"Here am I, O Lord, send me."

- © Michael Morgan
Central Presbyterian Church
201 Washington Street, S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30303

1998 Honorable mention - *O Hear My Voice, My People*
by Robert Gardiner, Southampton, MA

(Suggested tune - FINLANDIA)

Meter 11.10.11.10.11.10

O hear my voice, my people, says your God –
my voice that comes from spaces deep within:
no more consent when evil voices prod
to deeds of selfishness and sin.
But let compassion down as waters roll,
and justice leap in every human soul.

How shall we come before your holy altar?
What shall we bring, your summons to fulfill?
If kindness lags, and good intentions falter,
then seize and shake us with your holy will.
O let compassion down as waters roll,
and justice leap in every human soul.

O God, forgive, if we in our believing
should give our last obeisance to the creeds.
Our faith and praise are only self-deceiving
unless they find us doing kindly deeds.
Then let compassion down as waters roll,
and justice leap in every human soul.

Take us, O God, our hearts are yours to nourish.
Give us your strength in spaces deep within.
In every place where sin and evil flourish,
help us, we pray, your healing to begin.
And Let compassion down as waters roll,
and justice leap in every human soul.

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First Congregational Church
P.O. Box 145 College Highway
Southampton, MA 01073

1999 - Theme: Hymns which address environmental stewardship at a time of conflicting national/tribal interests

1999 Winning hymn - *The Garden Needs Our Tending Now*
by Mary Louis Bringle, Laurinberg, NC

(Suggested tune - UNE JEUNE PUCELLE)

8.6.8.6.8.8 with Refrain

The garden needs our tending now –
The water, soil, and air –
The very rocks and stones cry out
For stewardship and care.
Creation groans, awaiting still
The consummation of God's will:
 Earth shall be green and new,
 Eden restored.
 Terra viridissima.

Where air and waters, crystal bright,
have now grown choked and foul,
The sparrow's Maker mourns the loss
of eagle, falcon, owl...
Creation groans, its creatures yearn
for wilderness and peace returned.
 Earth shall be green and new,
 Eden restored.
 Terra viridissima.

Where human tribes and nations vie
to own its fertile yield,
the Psalmist knows the earth is God's,
its fullness, grace revealed.
Creation groans, and pleads for hands
to bring God's healing to its lands:
 Earth shall be green and new,
 Eden restored.
 Terra viridissima.

Where peoples die in poverty,
some lives are thick with waste.
The Prophets warn us: "Simplify!"
Their challenge must be faced.
Creation groans, awaiting still
a church responsive to God's will:
 Earth shall be green and new,
 Eden restored.
 Terra viridissima.

2000 - Theme: Hymns based on the Hebrew prophets' calls for justice

2000 Winning hymn - *As the Bear That Roams the Timber*

by John Core, Morgantown, WV

(Suggested tune - BEACH SPRING)

Meter - 8.7.8.7. D

*(Isaiah 59:11 - We all growl like bears; like doves we moan mournfully.
We wait for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us.)*

As the bear that roams the timber
makes the hills and hollows ring
with the roar of thirst and hunger
as it wakens in the spring,
so the soul that craves for justice,
not the promise, but the deed,
in the avenues and alleys
cries with deep and urgent need.

As the dove that moans in mourning
from the deep of dappled woods
makes the air grow sad at evening
through the silent neighborhood,
so the quiet desperation
of a longing for the right
finds the depth of its expression
in the people of the night.

Still the hungry and the homeless
let the roar go up, "How long?"
Still the mourning moan for justice
in a modern prophet's song.
And how many generations
must yet rise or pass away,
while these urgent admonitions
meet deferral and delay?

As your bounty has provided
for the hunger of the beasts,
and the bear and dove, delighted,
share the joy of nature's feasts,
God, let us be made the agents
by which needful souls are fed,
give in action and forbearance
social justice, grace, and bread.

2001 - Theme: Hymns which call the church to greater inclusivity

2001 Winning hymn - *O God, By Whose Guidance*

by Robert Gardiner, Southampton, MA

(Suggested tune - ST. DENIO)

Meter - 11.11.11.11

Based on Luke 14:15-24

O God, by whose guidance your people are led,
we gather before you, uplifted and fed.
In praise and rejoicing, we gratefully claim
the grace that you offer to all in Christ's name.

All thanks for the gift of a purpose to serve,
for dreams that enliven each muscle and nerve,
a Presence persuading the spirit to soar,
and gracious forgiveness, to heal and restore.

O grant that this people will never refuse
the love that commands, or the grace that renews;
but soften their spirits, and speak to their need,
and say: I am with you, to strengthen and feed.

Invite every people; the table is set,
where I am presiding, their need shall be met.
And those who would serve shall be ever renewed.
Their hearts shall be open; they none shall exclude.

Let every ethnicity, culture, and race
be loved and affirmed in this circle of grace.
A motley assemblage, a colorful throng;
they all are my people – the notes in my song.

Go seek out the victims of suffering and sin,
the needy, the wretched, and make them come in.
And say to the people who hunger and thirst,
the poor shall be rich, and the last shall be first.

The stranger, the outcast, the broken, the odd,
are welcomed and fed in the kingdom of God.
So tell all the people – the greatest, the least –
that all is in readiness; come to the feast!

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P.O. Box 145, College Highway
Southampton, MA 01073

2002 - Theme: Hymns which call the church to affirm gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons and to celebrate their gifts and ministries

2002 Co-winning hymn - *Faces and Facets*

by Alan J. Hommerding, Chicago, IL

(Suggested tunes – NETTLETON or BEACH SPRING)

Meter - 8.7.8.7. D

God-among-us in the faces of your children everywhere,
Lovely, jewel-like, sparkling facets, shining with your dazzling care:
You have made us in your image: woman, man, with gender graced;
Let us find in all our unions your creative, tender trace.

O, how myriad are the myst'ries of your holy, loving ways,
How life-giving is the witness when our bonds glow with your praise;
When you join us – woman/woman, man and woman, man with man –
May we see the brilliant facets of your wise and sacred plan.

As we search your countless faces, help our hearts, in prayer, discern
How our spirits, in each other, guide your world to grow and learn.
When one body, in your likeness, where two gender-natures dwell
Seeks your nurture, let us be, then, God-with-them, Emmanuel.

Send the Day when peaceful justice mirrors covenants fulfilled,
End our days of fearful bias, hearts transformed by heaven's will.
Bring those days in us, Great Lover, when your reign shall set us free;
Sing that Day when all your people live as one, with dignity.

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2002 Co-winning hymn - *In the Desert Where They'd Wandered*

by Richard Spalding, Williamstown, MA

(suggested tunes – BEACH SPRING or RAQUEL)

Meter – 8.7.8.7.D

In the desert where they'd wandered (Gen. 15:1-6)
with a billion stars in view,
Abraham and Sarah pondered
how the promise could be true.
Though at first to hope seemed folly,
in the night they heard God say,
“Every star's a child of promise
I will never turn away.”

With a majesty that stunned her (Luke 1:26-38)
as she prayed for grace to share
Came a word on wings of wonder
as an answer to a prayer.
Mary magnified the message:
“Let it be just as you say –
From the birth of Love Incarnate
I will never turn away.”

In a time of strife and blindness (John 1:10-13)
to the welter of the world
Came a man whose Godly kindness
bore the pain of curses hurled (Isaiah 53:3-5)
Love unbowed raised up the loveless,
as each one heard Jesus say,
“All who come to me believing (John 6:37)
I will never turn away.”

To the bearer of Christ's mission - (John 21:15-17)
“Feed my sheep in every place” –
Was entrusted a revision (Acts 10:9-16)
of the breadth of God's embrace.
Though at first such grace seemed reckless,
Peter heard the Spirit say,
“Every life made clean by loving
I will never turn away.”

With a flagrant faith, impassioned
by a still more noble way (I Cor.12:31)
An apostle's pen refashioned
the devotion of his day.
“Hearts of faith contain this treasure
(though it's held in jars of clay):
Every soul whose joy is Jesus (Phil.4:4-7)
He will never turn away.”

To the fragile, fateful beauty
of the fractious human race
Comes a church whose joyful duty
is to wield this word of grace:
Male and female, poor and wealthy, (Gal.3:28)
Every color, straight or gay.
All who seek to find this Kingdom (Matt. 6:33)
Christ will never turn away!

And the gentiles, and the lowly (Eph. 2:11-13)
those ignored and those in chains,
Those reviled or thought unholy
trust the Love that lives and reigns.
Even now we hear their voices
sighing with us as we pray – (Rom. 8:26-28)
“Jesus, *we* are those you promised
You would never turn away.”

2002 Co-winning hymn - *The Love That Goes Unspoken*
by Mary Louise Bringle, Etowah, NC

(Suggested tunes - WEDLOCK or LLANGLOFFAN)

The love that goes unspoken,
that fears would force to hide,
still blooms in desert spaces,
too strong to be denied.

The Spirit's wind blows freely
to open bolted doors,
and beckon into daylight
a love that hate deplores.

As poets and musicians,
in *Pietàs* of grace,
the outcast of our churches
cast light on Mystery's face.

They translate for our witness
the gifts the gospel brings,
and celebrate God's grandeur
in rare and dappled things.

In varied forms of family,
in unions yet unblessed,
as sisters and as brothers
and kin with earth's oppressed,
all dwell within God's household,
yet some bear insults hurled
to chide the so-called "barren"
whose children are the world's.

Christ loves without distinction,
both joys and sorrows borne,
and welcomes open-hearted
the ones whom others scorn.

We shall not then be shackled
with needless guilt or shame.
In Christ, the love unspoken
now dares to speak its name.

2002 Co-winning hymn - *Though the Spirit's Gifts are Many*
by David Gambrell, Austin, Texas

(Suggested tune - HYFRYDOL)

Though the Spirit's gifts are many
there is one embracing call;
many visions, many talents
in the One who loves us all.
Faith and wisdom, hope and promise,
who we are and how we love –
these are gifts from our Creator,
these are blessings from above.

Let no mortal stand in judgment
when the Spirit calls to serve;
Let no power seek to silence
God's eternal, living Word.
We are children of the promise,
living in the light of grace,
working for a new creation
where all people have a place.

Call the young and old together,
put the partners hand in hand,
speak with liberating power,
tell the truth to all the land:
Christ is risen! Christ is risen!
Earth and heaven now rejoice;
sing a song of love and welcome
with your Spirit-given voice.

2003 - Theme: Hymns which call the church and its people to work for peace

2003 Winning hymn - *O God of Peace, Who Gave Us Breath and Birth*

by Timothy Dudley-Smith, Salisbury, UK

(Suggested tune: UNDE ET MEMORES)

Meter: 10.10.10.10.10.10.

O God of peace, who gave us breath and birth,
our life, our powers, and all good gifts beside,
look down in mercy on this troubled earth
where want and war and hatred still divide.
So move our hearts, O Lord, to work and pray
that peace may yet prevail in this our day.

O Saviour Christ, as Prince of Peace you came,
draw near in power to those who hear your call,
who, making peace, bring honor to your Name,
and on their labours let your blessing fall.
As to your friends you chose your peace to leave,
so may our world your life and peace receive.

O Spirit blest, the gift of God above,
your holy influence on our hearts increase;
bring forth in us your fruit of joy and love,
unite your people in the bond of peace.
Give strength to build afresh, to right the wrongs,
and seek that peace for which creation longs.

God grant us wisdom, peaceable and pure,
lift up on us your countenance, O Lord;
so may the strong be just, the weak secure,
and nations learn at last to sheathe the sword.
Bestow through Christ the peace of sins forgiven,
that all the earth may be at peace with heaven.

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Britain and Ireland) and of Africa

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the rest of the world

2003 Honorable mention - *God Is Still Speaking*

by Barbara Hamm, Martinez, CA

Meter - 11.12.12.12. (Original tune by the author)

God is still speaking when children beg for bread,
roaming through city streets, their innocence long dead.
How can we close our eyes, complacent in our greed?
God, move our hearts of stone to serve a world in need.

God is still speaking when people cry in pain,
forced from their homelands or enslaved for others' gain.
How can we leave them to endure the wounds of hate?
God, use our broken hearts, a new world to create.

God is still speaking when prophets pray for peace,
seeing, through eyes of faith, the day when war will cease.
How can we cling to hate as God's name we confess?
God, let our hearts be changed by love, the world to bless.

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Martinez, CA 94553

2004 - Theme: Hymns which celebrate religious diversity and encourage interfaith cooperation, with the understanding that many of the world's social problems are rooted in religious intolerance

2004 Winning hymn - *Creator of the Intertwined*

By Jacque B. Jones, Brooklyn, NY

(Suggested tunes – KINGSFOLD or FOREST GREEN)

Meter - CMD

Creator of the intertwined, you made each soul unique:
each one with ears to hear faith's call, each one with voice to speak.
Each worships where the call is heard – in forest, temple, dome,
on mountain top, in upper room – the soul must find a home.

The song of peace best sung by all: strength born of unity.
In harmony we celebrate your gift: diversity.
Can we not sing each other's song? speak unfamiliar prayer?
rejoicing in the bounty of the differences we share?

In evil's wake we all are hurt; when pricked all humans bleed.
With common wounds and shared despair, we seek the balm we need.
We do not ask before we reach to offer our embrace.
We do not ask "How do you pray?" We reach with arms of grace.

Teach us to cherish what is strange and so the richer be;
To listen with our hearts and speak with loving honesty.
From different sources comfort comes, each seeks for the divine:
Your voice speaks many languages, just one of them is mine.

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2005 - Theme: Hymns which call the church and its people to greater awareness of the plight of the homeless, and to the need for affordable housing for all people

2005 Winning hymn - *The Church of Christ Cannot be Bound*
by Adam M. L. Tice, Goshen, IN

(Suggested tune - AZMON)

The church of Christ cannot be bound
by walls of wood or stone.
Where charity and love are found -
there can the church be known.

True faith will open up the door
and step into the street.
True service will seek out the poor
and ask to wash their feet.

True love will not sit idly by
when justice is denied.
True mercy hears the homeless cry
and welcomes them inside.

If what we have, we freely share
to meet our neighbor's need,
Then we extend the Spirit's care
through ev'ry selfless deed.

The church of Christ cannot be bound
by walls of wood or stone.
Where charity and love are found -
there can the church be known.

© 2005, Adam M. L. Tice, Goshen, IN

Inspired by the writings of Menno Simons, who in 1539 wrote "True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant. It clothes the naked, it feeds the hungry, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute, and it serves those who harm it. It binds up that which is wounded. It has become all things to all people."

2005 Honorable Mention - *If God Is Anywhere At All*

by Pamela Payne, Huntsville, AL

(Suggested tune – KINGSFOLD)

Meter - CMD

If God is anywhere at all
then, surely, in the midst
of those who have no roof, no walls,
no home, but must exist
in cardboard shelters, makeshift halls,
their lives and needs dismissed.
But God is with them there and calls,
“Awake! Arise! Resist!”

For God is restless at the sight
of children on the street.
God’s righteous anger, burning bright,
unmasks our fierce conceit,
and bids us turn relentless light
on human power and greed,
to trace the paths of wrong and right
and banish self deceit.

Reject the voice of scorn and blame
“The vagrants made their choice!”
Reject this lie that some would claim;
it is a bitter noise
that drags the homeless into shame
and rips away their voice.
Sing out, instead, the gospel’s aim:
“Rejoice, you poor, rejoice!”

God calls us from our small concerns
to put away routine,
and stand beside all those who yearn
for shelter, warm and clean;
to help this wealthy land discern
its greatness yet unseen
will rise when greed and war are spurned,
to save “the least of these.”

If God is anywhere at all
then, surely, in this place.
For when we gather to recall
God’s love, and seek God’s face,
we’re freed to break oppression’s thrall,
we’re freed to live in praise,
to pull away the unjust pall,
and share God’s earthy grace.

2005 Honorable Mention - *A Home for All Is God's Desire*
by William Allen Pasch, Griffin, GA

(Suggested tunes – KINGSFOLD or THIRD MODE MELODY)
Meter - CMD

A home for all is God's desire.
How can we turn away
from helping all our friends in Christ
find shelter day by day?
The homes we think we own are but
the gifts of Holy Grace,
not merit of our own, without
God's Providence of place.

Prophetic Amos chides the rich [Amos 6:4-6]
who dine and drink and chant
to instruments whose music drowns
the cries of those in want.
So let our worship, prayer, and song
inspire us now to share
fit sustenance and shelter safe
with all who need our care.

Our Savior traveled homeless, too,
throughout his ministry,
commanding hospitality
from those he came to free.
As guest to some but host to all,
Christ opens wide the door
to those denied a life of ease,
in health and substance poor.

Those not first summoned to the feast
shall yet be gathered in.
Now heed the loving words of Christ:
Those having lost shall win.
For all God's creatures need a home,
a refuge from the pain
of separation from the fold.
The Shepherd calls again.

Creator God, whose mansions wait;
Christ Jesus, leading on
to open up those spacious rooms
to welcome everyone;
Abundant Spirit, spreading hope
now and eternally;
All Three we praise, yet serve in faith
One Source, One Charity!

2006 Theme: Texts that call the church and its people “to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace” (*Confession of 1967*, 9.45).

2006 Co-winning Hymn - *Disarming Presence, Win Us*
by Dorothy Fulton, Abington, Pennsylvania

(Suggested tune - LANCASHIRE)
Meter – 76.76D

Disarming Presence, win us
away from warring ways,
your pow’rful love within us
our consciousness to raise,
rememb’ring pain, but learning
to leave it far behind,
our new forgiveness turning
old bitterness to wine.

Transforming Presence, change us
to better see the view
of those whom we call “strangers,”
to see them as you do,
no more in anger reeling,
no more impelled by fear,
instead, compassion feeling
for others far and near.

Redeeming Presence, save us
from endless, senseless wars,
from old ways that enslave us
and lock bright future’s doors.
Lord, send us forth with courage,
renewed, inspired, to build
a Peace shaped for a new age,
with love and kindness filled.

© 2006, Dorothy Fulton, Abington, Pennsylvania

2006 Co-winning Hymn - *To Dream of It Is Wondrous*
by John Core, Morgantown, West Virginia

(Suggested tune - LLANGLOFFAN)

Meter - 76.76D

To dream of it is wondrous:
those visions prophets tell
where with a toddler leading,
the lamb and lion dwell,
where on the holy mountain
all pain and hate shall cease,
when all God's children own there
a heritage of peace.

But visions are not justice,
and dreams are not enough:
the world beyond the stained glass
is nightmarish and tough:
it pleads with God's own children
to be peacemakers still,
to work amid the carnage
God's good and perfect will.

They glimpse that distant mountain,
and struggling on they climb,
and beat swords into plowshares
one small blade at a time,
remolding with their passion
each cold and cruel device
to serve the ends of heaven
and plow a paradise.

They plant in each short furrow
a slender, hopeful reed,
a tree whose leaves are healing
for ev'ry nations need,
so all the human family
at long last may indwell
that wondrous world envisioned
in what the prophets tell.

© John Core, Morgantown, West Virginia

2007 Theme: Texts to use on Mothers Day, sensitive to the changing nature of family life, and affirming feminist calls for equality.

2007 Winning Hymn - *Thank You, God, for Mother*

by Nathan Crabtree, Hickory, North Carolina

(Suggested tune - HYFRYDOL)

Meter - 8.7.8.7.D

Primal Mother of all living,
to the Garden Eve brought Love,
Wholeness to Creation giving
flesh of flesh sent from above.
Thank you, God, for Eve our Mother:
faithful friend and faithful wife.
First created then creating,
with God's help she brought forth life.

Caring Mother, Levite woman
in a basket put her babe,
floating in Egyptian waters
for his precious life to save.
Thank you, God, for Moses' Mother
and for Pharaoh's daughter's heart,
showing courage for the baby,
not denying mercy's part.

Jesus' Mother, Blessed Mary,
magnified by Heaven's kiss;
wonders for her heart to treasure,
pondered with maternal bliss.
Thank you God, for Mother Mary,
nurturing your holy son
from the manger to the temple,
to the cross and vict'ry won.

Modern mother in all people,
think of Eve and Mary kind,
Moses' mother, Pharaoh's daughter:
love your own and those you find.
Thank you, God, our Heav'nly Mother
for your nurture and your care.
Teach us love for all your children
in our homes and ev'rywhere.

© Nathan Crabtree, Hickory, North Carolina
mail@crabtreestudios.com

2007 Honorable Mention - *O Loving Creator, We Labor with You*
by Jann Aldredge-Clanton, Dallas, Texas

(Suggested tunes - ST. DENIO or FOUNDATION)

Meter - 11.11.11.11

O Loving Creator, we labor with you
to bring forth a world filled with beauty anew.
Fresh hope and fresh strength for our labor, we pray;
O give us your vision of glorious days.

O Loving Creator, within and above,
you come as a mother with comforting love.
We join in your work with the poor and distressed;
as partners we labor that all may be blessed.

O Loving Creator, we join in your plan
to bring peace and justice throughout ev'ry land.
We come now as families, all races and kinds,
to offer our gifts, as new freedom we find.

O Loving Creator, you nurture us all
to grow in your image and answer your call.
As sisters and brothers together on earth,
we labor with you, new creation to birth.

© 2007, Jann Aldredge-Clanton, Dallas, Texas

2008 Theme: Texts which will enable the church and its people to lament, to cry out in anger and frustration to God.

2008 Co-winning hymn – *When Brutal Forces Crush Out Love*

by R. Frederick Crider, Timonium, Maryland

(Suggested tune - KINGSFOLD)

Meter: CMD

When brutal forces crush out love,
when pain leads to despair,
when all we thought was good seems gone,
we cry: "This is not fair!"
When we receive a bad report,
when floods dash brick and stone,
when bombs and bullets shatter lives,
we feel afraid --- alone.

When narrow-minded acts oppose
the human love we share,
or greed within the market-place
spreads panic everywhere,
we brood, lament, or cry out loud,
as numbing pain we bear:
"How much must we endure, O God,
and do you see or care?"

Still, cling to faith with each new dawn,
till hope defeats despair.
Persist in fellowship and song;
display Christ's love and care.
For one faint spark of hope can burst
into a roaring flame –
the cross gives way to Easter morn:
"Rejoice! In Jesus' name!"

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2008 Co-winning hymn - *Earth Is Aching*
by David Gambrell, Louisville, Kentucky.

(Suggested tune - EBENEZER)
Meter 8.7.8.7 .D

Earth is aching – do you feel it?
Living God, stretch out your hand.
Wipe away the stain of violence,
soothe the fever of the land.
You gave shape to all creation,
tamed the chaos when it swirled.
Move with gentleness and power,
touch and heal our hurting world.

Tears of suffering – can you see them?
Living God, why hide your face?
Look with kindness on our sorrow,
show us your amazing grace.
You made mortals in your image;
don't just leave us cracked and crushed.
Now reclaim and recreate us,
breathing Spirit into dust.

Voices groaning – will you hear them?
Living God, it's not too late.
Answer misery with justice,
cast away the stones of hate.
You redeemed your chosen people,
made a passage through the sea.
Speak your Word of liberation,
come again and set us free.

Living God, we know you hear us;
loving One, we know you care.
We believe that you are near us,
that you still respond to prayer.
Now remember all you promised,
all you did in former days.
Show us you can still deliver –
we will gladly sing your praise!

2008 Co-winning hymn - *Can We Curse Without Blaspheming?*
by William Pasch, Griffin Georgia

(Suggested tunes - JEFFERSON or EBENEZER)

Meter – 8.7.8.7. D

Can we curse without blaspheming
When creation seems so marred
That you, God, are somehow deeming
Violence our faith's reward?
Hear our psalms of lamentation.
Feel our heartache and our grief.
God, our cries of desperation
Rise not from mere unbelief.

Demon impulse of aggression,
Vents its lustful primal need:
Brutish power of oppression,
Life but fodder for its greed.
Scorned as weak is Christ-like witness:
Outcast-seeking, servant love.
Patience, charity, forgiveness
Seem what only victims prove.

Violence, obscene in warfare,
Ends not just when bombs are done.
Sanctuary blossoms nowhere.
Hellish aftermath breeds on.
Poverty, disease, pollution –
Lost is all community.
Fear, distrust, recrimination –
Victory is fantasy.

Surely, though, the day is dawning
When, all jeremiads past,
Christ's ineffable returning
Brings surpassing peace at last.
Hope more hardy than earth's folly
Yet springs forth from soil of stone.
All creation – torn but holy –
Sings that Cross and Crown are one!

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2009 THEME: Hymns to be sung on Labor Day, with words that especially address the plight of the unemployed. Traditionally, we have celebrated work on Labor Day. But what if one does not have work or is under-employed? Denied the opportunity to earn a living, an unemployed worker often questions his or her value and worth. We hope to explore the role of the church in addressing these issues.