

Statement from Presbyterian Publishing Corporation on Concerns in *Glory to God*

Gifted hymn writer and chair of the Presbyterian hymnal committee, Mary Louise (Mel) Bringle, has described hymnals as denominational scrapbooks. They are snapshots of treasured heart songs that reflect the theology of a community in a certain time and place. The songs in *Glory to God* represent the breadth of our Reformed tradition and also include music from “extended family members” in the ecumenical church.

During the life of this hymnal, the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation has learned lessons that will shape future collections. Every hymnal captures a moment in time and eventually addresses theological issues in ways that the current generation may find unhelpful or even troubling. As the church grows in its theological and ethical understandings of God and one another, some songs may become less beneficial for worship and the life of the church. Therefore, we will eventually need to update our Presbyterian scrapbook of congregational songs. In the meantime, we will continue learning, growing, and singing new songs.

Following are some of the issues that have been raised since the publishing of *Glory to God* in 2013:

1. **Sexual Abuse.** To date, writers and composers of certain hymns included in the hymnal have been involved in sexual abuse scandals. We lament and condemn such actions and stand with survivors of abuse. Had this information been available at the time the committee was selecting hymns, these songs would not have been included. Sadly, more may be identified as abusers over the life of this hymnal. We want to identify who these men are and what their hymns are, so people can decide whether to sing them.
 - a. David Haas (hymns 148, 172, 177, and 749): 44 allegations of sexual abuse over four decades, according to a report in 2020. Haas initially denied the accusations but later issued an apology. Multiple publishers have removed his works from their catalogue, and several denominations have asked churches not to sing his hymns.
 - b. Cesáreo Gabárain (hymns 532 and 721): allegations of sexual abuse emerged in 2021, 30 years after his death. Oregon Catholic Press initially removed his works from their catalogue, but after an inconclusive investigation by the Archdiocese of Madrid, decided to restore them in 2024. Some communities have resumed singing his hymns, while others continue to prohibit them.

For some suggestions on alternate hymns from *Glory to God* to use in place of these songs, see below. If you have further questions, you’re welcome to email PPC’s customer service office at customer_service@presbypub.com.

2. **Distinction between biblical Israel and modern-day political Israel.** There is a heightened concern around the use of “Israel” and “Zion” because they may confuse people about the difference between ancient, biblical Israel and the modern country of Israel. This wasn’t an issue for hymn text writers prior to 1948, when the modern country of Israel was created.

The General Assembly has discussed this matter and did not request the hymnal to be

republished, but it did encourage clarity in the language of biblical or ancient Israel going forward. Presbyterian Publishing has updated the language in our curricula and other publications since this overture and encourages all our authors to be aware of this. Below, we have included a bit more information and a potential statement for churches to place in worship bulletins.

3. **Fair Payment for Anonymous Authors.** During the recent renewed awareness of racism in this country following egregious incidents of police violence against Black and Brown people and increasing discussions about reparations for Indigenous peoples and Black Americans, we realized we were not paying royalties to anonymous hymn writers, some of whom are attributed to these groups. In response, PPC collaborated with Indigenous and Black Presbyterians to designate groups to receive royalties for these works from the date of the hymnal publication forward.
4. **Non-binary Language.** The hymnal committee worked hard to update masculine language from previous hymnals to be more inclusive of men and women. Since publication, awareness has increased for persons who identify as nonbinary, with the understanding that hymn texts addressed to “men and women” or “sisters and brothers” unintentionally exclude those who do not identify with these categories. Future hymnals will likely aim to present a broader and more nuanced view of gender.

Hymn Alternatives

David Haas

Mary and Joseph Came to the Table, GTG 148. The Text was not written by David Haas. It was written by Andrew Pratt. Yet, the Music was composed by David Haas.

Substitute: This hymn text by Andrew Pratt may be sung to BUNESSAN (“Morning Has Broken,” GTG 664) or another 5.5.5.4.D tune.

Blest Are They, GTG 172. Text and Music by David Haas.

Substitute: Give Thanks for Those Whose Faith Is Firm, GTG 731

I Will Come to You (You Are Mine), GTG 177. Text and Music by David Haas.

Substitute: Do Not Be Afraid, GTG 76

Come! Live in the Light! (We Are Called), GTG 749. Text and Music by David Haas.

Substitute: What Does the Lord Require of You? GTG 70

Cesáreo Gabaráin

Sheaves of Wheat / *Una espiga*, GTG 532. Text and Music by Cesáreo Gabaráin.

Substitute: Seed, Scattered and Sown, GTG 531

Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore / *Tú has venido a la orilla*, GTG 721. Text and Music by Cesáreo Gabaráin.

Substitute: From the Nets of Our Labor (We Will Rise Up and Follow), GTG 751

More about “Israel” and “Zion”

There are over 2000 references to “Israel” in the Bible. Israel refers first to a person, Jacob, and by extension to his descendants, the united monarchy, the kingdom of Samaria, a geographic region, and the people of God. Biblical references to “Zion,” of which there are about 175, share a similar range of meanings. Zion refers to the site of the temple mount and, by extension, to the city of Jerusalem and the people of God. All these scriptural references to Israel and Zion predate the founding of the modern State of Israel in 1948 by two millennia or more.

Christian Zionism is the belief that, to fulfill biblical prophecy, the Second Coming of Jesus must be preceded by the gathering of Jewish people in the Holy Land—usually accompanied by the conversion of Jews to Christianity. This ideology was rejected by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 2004 and again in 2024.

During the proclamation of the Word, the preparation of the liturgy, and the selection of hymns, it will help worshipers if the leader avoids confusing biblical images of Israel with the modern State of Israel.

A Statement for Possible Use in Church Bulletins

References to “Israel” and “Zion” in Bible readings and hymns refer to figures, concepts, and places from the ancient witness of Scripture, not the modern State of Israel established in 1948. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) rejects Christian Zionism, the idea that Jesus’ Second Coming must occur after the gathering and conversion of Jewish people in the Holy Land.

Creating *Glory to God*

Traditionally, every 25 years or so, our denomination has decided it is time to make a new scrapbook, review what has been learned, update language, and choose which songs to keep or add.

The committee that assembled the current Presbyterian hymnal, *Glory to God*, consisted of fifteen Presbyterians — church musicians, pastors, theologians, composers, and church members — all volunteers. They dedicated countless hours researching in local congregations, reviewing hymnals from other denominations, debating old and new texts, and singing through hundreds of songs. We are grateful that our current denominational hymnal, *Glory to God*, has been well received by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and other denominations that have adopted it.

