

## Reviews

### **MORE VOICES**

#### **Supplement to Voices**

#### **United**

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Once again the United Church is proving to be on the cutting edge of hymnody in Canada. The vision of the wide-reaching and inclusive hymn book *Voices United*, published in 1996, continues in this supplement. It is a joint venture between the United Church of Canada and Wood Lake Publishing. Wood Lake is familiar with supplements and joint ventures, being instrumental in producing *Songs for a Gospel People* (1987) with British Columbia and Alberta Conferences, *All God's Children Sing* (1992) with Alberta and Northwest Conference, *Spirit of Singing* (1994) and *Spirit Anew* (1999).

*More Voices* is a theologically relevant and uplifting resource for the Christian community, bringing new energy and vision to the work and witness of the church by gathering together the musical gifts and styles of the worldwide Christi-

an community. In the words of the former Moderator of the United Church, the Very Rev. Peter Short, "it reflects the current renewal of worship and congregational song".

This supplement is not, of course, meant to replace *Voices United*, but to enhance and expand our contemporary and ecumenical repertoire. There is something for everyone: from a simple African call to worship – *Uyai mose* and a Canadian benediction – *Peace be With You*, to foot-stomping – *Draw the Circle Wide* and dancing – *Dance with the Spirit*, prayerful reflection – *Christ, within Us Hidden*, and joyous praise – *Glory to God* to name just a few of the 225 selections.

Musicians and clergy are encouraged to unpack the music, bringing it off the page in the best way suited to their capabilities and surroundings. Improvisation is encouraged, especially with the many selections for unison voices. Perhaps that is the one criticism I have – the abundance of unison selections. Many churches are fortunate to have a few voices that can carry a tune, where unison selections are necessary. Other churches with choirs capable of 4-part singing often find unison

singing tedious. It then becomes the job of the musician to enliven the presentation.

One might find some of the tunes not as lyrical as one might expect from congregational songs/hymns, or are we musically not as sharp as we used to be? Have we gone too far in “dumbing down”? We may conveniently forget that many of our “standard” hymns began life as folk songs of the time – look at a description of what we know today as the “Passion Chorale”. Who knows how long some of these selections will last – they were written for a time which may not be relevant years later. But just as the “Passion Chorale” has stood the test of time, perhaps “When We Are Tested” (#65) will do the same and become a new Lenten favourite.

This is also a specifically Canadian resource, in the sense that it features many of our own gifted text writers and composers. Some are being published for the first time – only in Canada, you say. We are a talented country and it makes me proud to see such inspirations being shared with the church and community.

The contents are ordered after a worship service, which

makes it easier to see where selections would be suitable. The indexes are informative, especially the Scriptural References and Liturgical Use, Topics and Categories. The layout is well-done for ease of playing and reading, and the coil binding allows the book to lay flat on the music stand.

Congregations are encouraged to supplement their singing with *More Voices*. It will open your hearts and minds to new horizons as we continue to evolve as a church in today’s world. Bravo on a job well done!

– Sharon L. Beckstead

## **SECULARITY AND THE GOSPEL: Being Missionaries to Our Children**

**by Ronald Rolheiser** New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006. 240 pp. \$24.95

Our congregations are receiving mixed messages about the world in which we live. On one hand, voices are telling us that our collective Christian spirit and memory are fading.