

**“New Songs for Our Hearts:
Getting to Know Some New Communion Hymns”**

I Corinthians 10:16-17, 11:23-26 – Rev. Rebecca Littlejohn
Vista La Mesa Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), La Mesa, California – May 5, 2024

*Holy God, bless the speaking, the singing, and the hearing of these words, that our hearts
might embrace new ways to commune with you. Amen.*

I am excited to begin this new worship series we are doing throughout the month of May. There are some real gems in the Chalice Hymnal that we have spent years ignoring. Obviously, we’re not going to get to all of them in a month, but we’re going to learn about a few of them. This isn’t just about appreciating our hymnal. It’s about stretching the muscles of our hearts. So often, the songs of the faith that we love are only the ones we’ve known the longest. Today, we’re embarking on a journey of considering ways to welcome new songs into the repertoires of our hearts, so that we can be better sustained for the future. As the Call to Worship reminded us, if we can allow the lessons of these new songs to take root in our souls, their comfort will be there when we need them to remind us who and whose we are.

Before we get started, I want to assure you that the rest of this series will not be like what we’re doing today. The next three weeks will only focus on one song per Sunday. But communion – well, communion is the center of our worship as Disciples, so we want to give it the attention it deserves. There are over 40 communion hymns in the Chalice Hymnal, and we only sing 17 of them with any

degree of regularity. So I thought we would take a quick tour through some of the best of the ones we haven't used and see what we might want to add into our rotation. In your bulletin, you have a rating chart. After we sing each one, you'll be given a moment to jot down your responses. Feel free to write on the back if you need to. Some of you probably won't have enough time, and others of you will just write in numbers, and that is all fine. I would encourage you to fill in your overall rating after you've considered the other questions.

Each week as we come to the table, you hear me say, "And now let us prepare our hearts to come to the table by singing our communion hymn." Today, I want us to think deeply about what that means. What does it mean to prepare our hearts to come to the table? How does singing these songs help? What gets in the way of being ready to come to the table? How might we mitigate those issues?

This is going to work best if you are singing from the hymnal. Even if you don't think you can read music, seeing the notes and whether they're going up or down will help. So get out your hymnal, get out your pen or pencil, and let's get started!

Our first song is one you've heard occasionally, and it's included because it is rather unusual. This song, #391, is a theological reflection on the importance of sharing in the peace of Christ before we come to table. We don't always focus on that, though we emphasize it more during Lent, but it's certainly one way we prepare our hearts to come to the table. [sing hymn] (Note on Spanish-language for #421)