

## **Why A Hymnal?**

Some may ask why, with the ability to project any text on slides for all to see, would we invest in hymnals at all. What is the value of using a hymnal? Here are a few reasons we believe hymnals are a worthwhile technology for our church to continue using in the digital age.

### **Conscious Active Participation**

Using the hymnal especially at the beginning of the service without a screen communicates to us that this is not a spectator sport, but a task we participate in together. Projection technology is wonderful in its flexibility, but it carries an undertone of passivity. When we see a screen we participate less. Holding a book in your hand becomes a catalyst for conscious, active participation. In the same way, we encourage people to read along in a physical Bible during the reading and sermon. While we also project verses on the slides for convenience and accessibility, we are much more engaged when following along in the text ourselves.

We are also bombarded with screens everywhere we go. We carry them in our pockets and have them in our homes. The church service should be a rest for our screen-saturated world.

### **Stewarding our Canon of Praise**

A hymnal is a “canon” or collection of hymnody in one place that gathers together hymns from over two thousand years of Christian worship. The very nature of this wide span of authors and musicians from various periods of history and life experience with the Scriptures provides a unified voice of who God is and who we are as His people. The digital texts that are displayed on the screen are there and then gone, but we can hold the hymnal in our hands and say, “This represents who we are as the people of God, who our Lord is and always has been throughout the history of the church, and what He has done for us in Christ.”

### **Singing with Understanding**

The full journey of the text can be seen and grasped as a whole on a single page, with all the verses that often convey a progression of thought. Digital projection is confined to a few phrases at a time, disconnected from what proceeds and follows. Thus, the flow of the unified thought is broken up into bite-sized pieces rather than seen as a whole, and the collective power of the full text is easily lost. The eye can take in the structural content and flow of thought at a glance on a hard copy page,

but the nature of the digital form never gives the eye (or the brain) the opportunity to do so. You can also pray through the texts before and after singing.

Information about authorship, time period of history, tune and meter is included. This information connects us with the saints throughout time, giving a sense of the “communion of the saints” as we sing and worship with their very words. In addition, the tune and meter information can aid worship leaders with the exchange of texts with tunes when needed.

## **Musical Notation**

While we understand not everyone reads music today, many people do have some rudimentary music reading from childhood, and if nothing else, people can see the length of the musical journey, as well as the flow and contours of the tune to be sung and where the phrases begin and end. All these things can aid the congregation to sing with confidence. Those that do read music can also take advantage of the printed harmony parts, allowing us to sing in four-part harmony as a whole church which can be a powerful worshipful experience!