

Hymn sing: A secular liturgy for hymnal transition times

by [Martin E. Marty](#) in the [January 9, 2007](#) issue

New hymnals, a.k.a. “Worship Books,” are forthcoming from numerous church bodies, including two Lutheran groups (among them my own ELCA). Having studied none of these books, I write with vincible ignorance about the details. Having studied church history, however, I write with invincible knowledge of how all of them will be greeted in some sectors of each church group. Those old enough to have savaged the books being replaced will now mourn their loss, just as they will grieve over the shelving of the ones they are now trashing if they live long enough. I herewith offer a secular liturgy, a rite of passage, to be used during hymnal transition times.

ANTIPHON

Nostalgists, whining: The new book is not as good as the old one, which we hated when it was the new one.

Response: *Get over it!*

Foot-draggers, complaining: They only gave us five (or 10 or 15) years to study drafts of the worship book and make comments.

R: *Get over it!*

Favorites-pleaders, murmuring: They left out my own old favorite hymn. They had 108,000 English-language hymns to choose from and made bad choices.

R: *Get over it!*

Masculinists, repining: The editors took out too many “He’s” and “he’s.” Our God is a male God and almost half the humans are male too.

R: *Get over it!*

Aesthetes, fussing: We don’t like the color of the cover. It should have been brighter (or darker), or red (or blue).

R: *Get over it!*

Antimultitudinists, wailing: They gave us too many optional orders of service or liturgies, and this will confuse the members who are dumber than we.

R: *Get over it!*

Antiminimalists, kicking: They gave us too few optional orders of service or

liturgies, and this will bore the members who are jumpier than we.

R: *Get over it!*

Glitch-seekers, bitching: We found a typographical error on page 459.

R: *Get over it!*

Keepers of the treasury, bellyaching: This process and product cost money. Why wasn't the money given to the poor?

R: *Get over it!*

Far-out and with-it crabs, griping: How retrogressive! We live in an age of electronics and PowerPoints and hymns-on-screens. You are old-school, stuffy.

R: *Get over it!*

Old-translation lovers, kvetching: Why try to improve on classics?

R: *Get thee over it!*

All: We have finally gotten over it. Alleluia!

End of secular liturgy. Now, back to the Bible. "*When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building us*" (1 Cor. 14:26b).

". . . and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God" (Col. 3:16).