

**Songs of Faith
Interim Report
October, 2011**

In the spring a Song of Faith Task Group was initiated at Crescent Fort Rouge. We are very engaged bunch, certainly honoured to be asked to address this important and meaningful task. The Task Group was commissioned to explore the future direction of music at CFRUC. A broad representation of folks has been named:

Ted Dodd
Debbie Girard
Doug Holroyd
barb janes
Emily Harasen
Helen Isaak
Yvonne Naismith
Herb Neufeld
Judy Valenzuela

In our group, some of us are trained musicians, some of us are pew singers, some of us have been in the choir, some of us have been at CFRUC for years and some of us for mere weeks. We have met several times in May, June, August, September and October. We have studied some articles about church music, brainstormed ideas, gathered with some of the musicians in this congregation (September 1 potluck), welcomed Annabelle, held a congregational consultation (September 18 after church), made some plans, and we have articulated our mandate:

“to enliven and to expand the ministry of music of this congregation.”

We intend to go in the direction of wider diversity of musical approaches and contributors, while at the very same time honouring the tradition of strong musical history at CFRUC. We want to honour and respect the best of the past and move into the future.

We have a great deal of enthusiasm for this project and we think of this journey as an adventure. This is a new day, a new opportunity to stretch our musical repertoire and worship experience. Change and transition can cause anxiety and fear; they also can include possibility, growth, new learning. We are very appreciative of the congregation’s demonstrated willingness to open their minds, hearts and spirits to the diversity of musical tastes and styles. Sacred music can take many forms. Music has the power to move us, challenge us, and encourage us. Music can express our joy, our lament, and our very souls. Because of this, music carries immense importance in our faith and worship lives. We feel privileged that you have trusted us with so crucial a responsibility.

We were particularly gratified by the wonderful turn-out and tone for the two consultations. The energy was excellent and the respectful listening provided a time for community connection. On both occasions, we shared personal stories about times when music touched our souls, and we identified musical resources and names of talented folks inside and beyond the congregation. Some of the creative thoughts and ideas that emerged include:

- no wholesale change is needed, we can celebrate and build on history – we are a singing congregation!
- sing with passion, authenticity, joy, spontaneity, inspiration
- create the occasion in which the music is meaningful; it is helpful to know the theme and how the selections fit with the theme

- choir need not always be in loft, can be part of congregation gives sense that we are all singing, not just a select group
- introduce context and history of some hymns
- use an eclectic choice of music and other arts from many lands, a variety of instruments, voice only, a variety of genres
- when singing in other languages, make sure everyone understands the message
- introduce a new song and then repeat it so it becomes familiar
- pre-service hymn sing can help centre and prepare for worship
- have the congregation involved in singing the introit using the choir to teach
- involve children and youth, even when unpolished, including junior choirs and rhythm instruments,
- encourage members to move, clap in rhythm, use sign language or dance when appropriate
- PowerPoint presentations allow people to look up to sing, become more interconnected
- special presentations such as Passion Play at Lent, religious musicals to allow participation without requiring the commitment of choir membership
- encourage composition of new music
- more choral postludes
- a communication plan is essential to spread and maintain enthusiasm, letting people know that this is a special initiative and giving opportunities for feedback, but also explaining the congregation's role in singing
- choir members: vocal exercises at choir practices, like to be prepared with lots of time to feel comfortable leading worship, with a prayer to provide spiritual grounding, singing in parts is important to some, a mix of simple and complex, occasional challenge of the classics, cantatas, requiems
- community choirs participating in a concert
- inclusive language
- maintain the use of the organ
- the volume of the organ should balance hymn singing
- be aware of acoustics and how things sound in different spots in the sanctuary
- have an instrument playing softly and ask congregation to meditate on Scripture reading
- being able to hear or know the lyrics of the anthems

This fall, we have been experimenting and trying new things musically. We are delighted by the flexibility, graciousness and incredible talent that Annabelle Paetsch brings to her leadership amongst us. Already a variety of talents and musical offerings have graced our worship. We are grateful for this willingness to contribute to our spiritual growth and awareness. Thank you to the congregation for your patience, good will and trust as we embark on this adventure. Please share with us your feedback and input as we journey together.

With respect and blessing,
Ted Dodd, chair