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A New Songbook for the Latino/Hispanic Ministry of the Episcopal Church

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Cancionero: A New Songbook for Latino/Hispanic Episcopal Congregations

Purpose

The purpose of this project is (1) to prepare an affordable and accessible Spanish-language songbook (in Spanish, *cancionero*) ready for presentation to a publisher; and (2) to provide electronic resources of every song in the cancionero, available on low-cost CDs or DVDs.

Need

We currently do not have an affordable and functional Spanish-language congregational songbook suitable for general use throughout the Episcopal Church. The most common source of liturgical music used in Latino/Hispanic Episcopal congregations is *Flor y Canto,* a Roman Catholic publication which has serious limitations for our purposes. The Episcopal Church has never produced usable contemporary music materials in Spanish. In 1961, the Church published a small "provisional" hymnal in Spanish, which only contained hymnody translated from English. It was 1998 before another Spanish-language hymnal was issued, *El Himnario*, which has been unpopular for several basic reasons: (1) 90 percent of the hymns are not popular Hispanic hymns within the Episcopal tradition; (2) the texts of some popular and well-known hymns have been altered; (3) there is no words-only edition for those who find the musical notation confusing; (4) there are no audio resources to accompany the hymnal; and (5) the hymnal is very expensive ($17 a copy), especially for congregations with limited financial resources.

Our growing Latino ministries throughout the Episcopal Church are crying out for a common and popular congregational music book. Many individual congregations struggle to create their own musical resources—as an immediate response to their needs—with questionable legality, sometimes without regard to issues of copyright, and with serious legal and financial risk to the Church. Therefore we must produce a legitimate cancionero for ourselves, one that meets our needs musically and spiritually without being prohibitively expensive. We do not need a songbook that enshrines the past or that is so avant-garde that it finds no positive reception in worshiping congregations. We need a collection that

includes honored treasures of the past and present as well as new songs that acknowledge and affirm who we are and who we are becoming.

Benefits

The cancionero will be an essential tool for evangelism and continued church growth because it will give voice to our unique Episcopal theological perspective and will help form an Episcopal ethos among Latinos/Hispanics. It will demonstrate the Episcopal Church's commitment to and understanding of the needs and cultures of Latino/Hispanic congregations. It will serve as a vehicle for unity among Latino/Hispanic Episcopalians by providing a recognizable common and legal source of essential music materials.

English-speaking Episcopalians have multiple worship resources: the *Book of Common Prayer,* the *Hymnal 1982* that embodies North Atlantic cultures, and *Wonder, Love, and Praise: A Supplement to the Hymnal 1982* and *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. The Church's Spanish-speaking congregations need similar culturally relevant resources, especially a cancionero that includes substantial materials from the various and different Latino cultures, signaling to Latinos/Hispanics that the Episcopal Church is a welcoming home in which they will find familiar cultural elements. Also, with truth, pride and a sense of sharing in power in the Church, Latinos/Hispanics will be able to point to their full equality within the Church. Such legitimate pride and dignity will enhance evangelism activities.

Project Participants

 A Cancionero Committee has been established which has determined the project guidelines, established the process we will follow, and will make final decisions regarding the content of the cancionero. An Executive Committee, appointed from within the Cancionero Committee, will oversee the process and details of compiling the cancionero. The Missioner (Anthony Guillén) will serve as ex-officio members of both the Cancionero Committee and the Executive Committee. The Cancionero Committee will invite musicians and theologians to a weeklong conference to assist in the selection process.

A Consultant, Sandra Montes, was contracted to assist the work of the Cancionero Committee and visited 19 Spanish-speaking Episcopal dioceses to

seek input on songs to be included in the Cancionero and to promote the Cancionero project. This is especially important as we seek to represent the full diversity of music currently being used in worship in our Spanish-speaking congregations as well as to identify new compositions appropriate for the cancionero.

Goals

1. Publish a words-only cancionero at an affordable price for use in Latino/Hispanic congregations throughout the Episcopal Church.

2. Produce electronic resources of the new music in the cancionero:

    a. A MIDI-format computer resource available on DVDs (MIDI— Musical Instrument Digital Interface—is an electronic communications protocol that represents music digitally, with distinct instructions for each individual note and instrument)

    b. Low-cost CDs with vocal tracks

    c. Low-cost CDs with instrumental tracks only

3. Create a musicians' edition showing keyboard, percussion, and vocal harmony parts where appropriate, guitar chords in both types of notation: English and sol-fa, which is widely used in Latin American countries.

4. Create other musical resources as time and budget allow.

Costs

We estimate that we will need about $100,000 for the cancionero project:

- $30,000 for several small gatherings around the church for collecting and sampling music and a large conference for musicians and theologians.

- $50,000 for salary and travel expenses to hire a musician consultant. The consultant's duties include working with the Cancionero Committee, gathering the musicians in local settings for the collecting of materials, securing the necessary copyright permissions, and preparing a draft cancionero.

- $20,000 for acquisition of resources and materials, and miscellaneous costs associated with the project.

- Additional funds will be needed to compile the electronic resources and the musicians' edition.

Process

First we will compile a list of original songs and previously published songs that are presently being used among Spanish-speaking congregations across all nine provinces of the Episcopal Church. From that list we will select the songs to be included in the new cancionero, and prepare the cancionero for print. We will also prepare the musicians' edition and the electronic resources that will aid congregations in adopting the cancionero.

The process will include many specific tasks:

- Buying (or copying) and distributing the available resources [songbooks, hymnals, etc.] to committee members

- Compiling a database of possible contents

- Making theological judgments about the texts

- Evaluating the appropriateness of the language

- Planning and preparing for conferences for musicians and theologians to assist in the selection process

- Choosing the songs to be included

- As needed, re-translating songs in the public domain

- Announcing the publication of the cancionero and arranging for its distribution

- Finding and negotiating with a publisher

- Deciding on questions of format and design

- Preparing the musicians' edition

- Checking and confirming the chords and accompaniment for each song

- Preparing electronic audio of the music

- Coordinating the tasks and the flow of information

- Determining the final per-copy cost of the cancionero

Procedures

1. The Cancionero Committee will handle the tasks of the project. These committee members may consult with others and use others' skills for particular tasks, but the responsibilities will rest with the committee members.

2. Agree upon the criteria for the final contents of the Cancionero.

3. Identify, collect, and list the likely sources of the music. This list will be used for dividing the tasks among the committee members, so as to avoid unnecessary duplication of work.

4. Establish a suitable timeline for the project.

5. Collect and copy the possible songs to include.

6. Evaluate each possible song on the basis of the following factors:

   - Popularity

   - Singability

   - Theology

   - Lectionary and biblical themes

   - Transnational quality

   - Liturgical value

   - Worship and inspirational value

   - Educational and formational value

- Ecumenical and trans-Anglican value

- Prophetic and liberation value

7. Complete an initial sort of the music into categories (seasons and particular uses).

8. Category by category, place the hymns in order of priority.

9. Examine the quality of the Spanish, and the quality of text-tune "fit", then to the extent possible, correct those that the committee considers high priority.

10. Decide on the approximate number of songs to include in each category.

11. Prepare a tentative list of the songs to include in the Cancionero.

12. Consult with clergy in Latino/Hispanic ministries, and other interested persons. Gather their reactions to the proposed list of songs to include.

13. Confirm the list of songs to include and the section in which each should be included.

14.

15. Type and proofread the texts of the words-only edition.

16. Contract with a publisher to publish the cancionero.

17. Present a tentative version to a few congregations for review and practice.

18. Confirm final version