

A Theological Statement on Music in The United Church of Canada

Preamble

We are a singing people. Music is not simply inserted into liturgy but liturgy is inherently musical. Music permeates all God's creation and enfolds and embraces all God's people. Our musical life is rooted in and evolves from God's relationship with us, and our relationship and response to God. That relationship, especially through biblical and theological witness, and the experience of being the church, shapes who we are and who we are becoming as persons baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and nourished at his table. How we sing together as a people of God shapes and reflects how we live as human beings and how we live with creation and with one another.

We long for a deeper relationship with God.*

Why do we sing? Where does music live in us? Music empowers us to listen for God's voice. It enables us to offer praise to God who has created and is creating. Music reminds us that we are loved by God and made for God. The fullest expression of this in the church is congregational song.

We long for deeper connections with one another.*

When we sing together, barriers and categories are transcended. Differences go away. Song enables us to bridge gaps. It unites us as the body of Christ. It helps us learn to listen deeply. When we sing each other's heart song, we take on a new sense of compassion and understanding.

We acknowledge the brokenness, pain, and fear we carry.*

Song enables us to confess our brokenness. In it, we call each other to account. We have been silent about music in the church. We confess that at times relationships with music-makers have not been what they could be. Songs have been broken. There has been discord and dissonance. Congregations have been part of this. We have not acknowledged this in our governance, especially in terms of shepherding care.

We believe that our spirituality and our prophetic voice spring from one source and are lived in one Body.*

We are grounded in God's Spirit as we sing to, for, and with the world. Through song, voices are found and nurtured. Song shows us how the world is and how it can be. Stewardship of the church's song therefore requires faithful discipleship of us all.

This draft statement was written at a United Church of Canada consultation on music called Are We Off-Key? It was held March 7–8, 2008. The writers include Dan Hansen, Nancy Hardy, Kenneth Inkster, Blair Odney, and Janet Wilson.

* From "[Call to Purpose](#): A message from the church to the church."