Canada, Worship in the United Church of

The United Church of Canada was formed in
1925 from the union of Canadian *Methodists, *Congregationalists, 70% of *Presbyterians and a number of 'union' congregations, making it the first union of its kind in the world. Others joined later, including Wesleyan Methodists of Bermuda (1930), Evangelical United Brethren (1968) and numerous congregations from other communions. The 'Basis of Union' states that 'orders for the Lord's supper first and basing those of initiation, public worship and occasional services on it. 'Contemporary' orders accompanied many of the rites. An emerging consciousness of lectionary and calendar is evident in the rubrics and 'Table of Lessons'.

The stability of the 1950s gave way to the turmoil of the 1960s, calls for the revision of the Books of Common Order. Services for the Offices of the Church. The Hymnary of The United Church of Canada (1930) and The Book of Common Order of the United Church of Canada (1932) shifted the focus from denominational particularity to greater catholicity. The legacy of John Knox's service books, United Church hymnody. Equally significant during this period was the emergence of liturgical periodicals, one descendant of which, Gathering, continued. Service Book, Hymn Book and Gathering helped prepare the way for some of the features of ecumenical liturgical convergence.

The 1980s saw the publication of a series of booklets 'for optional use' which introduced the resources of liturgical convergence to United Church worship. A Sunday Liturgy (1984), The Celebration of Marriage (1985), Baptism and Renewal of Baptismal Faith (1986), Services for Death and Burial (1987), Pastoral Liturgies and Prayers for Special Occasions (1990) grew out of a vision of the 'word-and-table' shape of worship, renewed attention to Christian initiation and a greater awareness of the language of symbol and sacrament. Common lectionary and calendar became widely accepted with the introduction of the lectionary-based Christian educational curriculum, Whole People of God. Inclusive language, lay leadership and 'inter-generational worship' has become more mainstream. White albs, seasonal stoles and architectural renovations are common. Songs for a Gospel People (Winfield 1987), a western
Canada initiative to supplement Hymn Book, was an instant best-seller and important pre-cursor to the next generation of resources.

The new hymn book, Voices United (1996), filters the musical resources of liturgical convergence through a United Church lens. Its popular success suggests a significant impact on United Church worship. It is marked by a breadth of classic and contemporary texts and tunes, a variety of musical and cultural styles and diverse local and global contributions. Service music from Russia to Iona supports increasing sacramentality in United Church worship. The structure of the book is calendar-based and lectionary-indexed. Resources for prayer model orthodox and radical theologies. Inclusive language is the norm, balance is the goal, diversity is the result.

The latest service book is Celebrate God's Presence (2000). Nearly every section contains noteworthy if not controversial innovations. 'General' and 'seasonal' resources can be adapted to any order of service, though a word-and-table structure set within the Christian calendar is presupposed. 'Eucharistic prayers range from that attributed to Hippolytus to those reflecting feminist Christologies and resources for original compositions. Services of initiation provide options for promises and blessings in inclusive language. Orders for 'Marriage and Life Partnership' permit same-sex covenants. Funeral materials include prayers for 'When a pregnancy is terminated' and 'On the death of a pet'. The second half of the book is given to pastoral occasions, including seasonal prayers beyond the scope of the traditional liturgical calendar, orders for the blessing of homes, fields, fisheries and animals, as well as ritual resources for 'healing,' 'closures' and daily prayer. Celebrate God's Presence is perhaps the first effort at a post-modern liturgical style that is post-ecumenical. Notable, finally, is its title and several chapter headings, taken from the United Church's 'A New Creed'. Introduced in 1968, it is now widely used as an affirmation of faith and is increasingly definitive of United Church worship and theology.

Each generation of United Church worship resources reflects and contributes to the dialectic of order and liberty that is its liturgical ethos. Liturgical freedom continues to be prized: regional, theological and stylistic diversity persist; ecumenism, liberalism and activism converge. From the contributions of the founding traditions to the catholicity of an increas-
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Round the Table Latest News. See more of The United Church of Canada on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of The United Church of Canada on Facebook. Log In. Forgot account? [Adapted for interfaith sharing by Richard Bott, Moderator of The United Church of Canada, from a prayer he had previously written. Feel free to share (CC-by/nc), but please make sure to keep the attribution attached.] See More. The United Church of Canada. September 3 at 4:16 PM Â· St. Paul's United Church. The United Church of Canada (French: Église unie du Canada) is a mainline Protestant denomination that is the largest Protestant Christian denomination in Canada and the second largest Canadian Christian denomination after the Catholic Church in Canada. The United Church was founded in 1925 as a merger of four Protestant denominations with a total combined membership of about 600,000 members: the Methodist Church, Canada, the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec, two-thirds of the congregations