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The Hymnal Accompaniment Project

by Vivian Rust

Matthew 13:31-32

"The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

Over the past 4 years, the Church of God, International has released accompaniment music cassette tapes for all 3 of our hymnals, and we are pleased to announce the Burgundy Hymnal music is now available on CD. There are future plans to release the Blue Hymnal on CD as well. [Since publication of this story, the Blue Hymnal CD's have been completed.] You can also find this music with lyrics on the internet through the link on the <http://www.cgi.org> main webpage. It is possible to record your own CD's from the hymnal website if you have all the right equipment on your computer. However, you can request your own official copy of the CGI Burgundy Hymnal accompaniment music on CD, or any of the hymnals on cassette tape by contacting the home office at:

Church of God, International
P.O. Box 2525
Tyler, TX 75710
USA
Phone: 903.939.2929
E-mail: info@cgi.org
Internet: <http://www.cgi.org>

As usual with CGI, the tapes and CD's are free of charge.

I was asked by Darren Cary to write an article for the International News about the hymnal accompaniment music, so here goes. First let me start by saying that the hymnal accompaniment music is computer generated. What I mean is that none of it was played on a piano keyboard. Each note was entered into a computer using the mouse point-click method on my Finale music software program on a Macintosh computer. Some people get the idea that I'm this wonderful piano player, and some have even speculated on which brand of piano was used in the recordings, so I keep trying to explain that it's technology more than talent that we used to make those tapes. I really don't play piano that well. There was no intent to deceive anyone on our part; however, I realize it is very deceiving.

It all started when I developed Multiple Chemical Sensitivity as a result of working with perfume chemicals on my job. I became so sick that I was confined for several months to a single room in our house with minimal furnishings, an air purifier, an oxygen tank and a folding canvass army cot to sleep on - my "allergy room". My body had become hypersensitized to everyday chemicals, and if I left my isolation room or brought anything else into it, I would have severe reactions. The only way for me to get better was to avoid chemicals completely. Well, when you find yourself with such extreme limitations that you can't even pick up a book without getting sick, it presents some very challenging circumstances. After an initial period of recovery, I found that I could bring certain items into my room for a limited time and then take them back out when I started to feel sick. Once I recovered from the exposure enough to function again, I could bring something back in for a while. I learned that reading books through a ziplock bag prolonged the time I could read before I had to put the book away. Then I discovered I could bring my Casio practice keyboard into my room for a half hour or so at a time. This gave me the opportunity to enjoy playing some music.

That was when Bob Swimm, pastor of the Fort Thomas, KY congregation, planted the seed. He heard I was able to play music in my room and called me up one day to ask if I would be able to make a song service tape for him of a few songs in the hymnal that he couldn't find on tape anywhere else. I was happy that I might be able to do something useful and readily agreed. After struggling with the chemical exposure of having a keyboard, a songbook and a tape recorder in my isolation room on and off for a few days, which at this point in my recovery was indeed a struggle, Bob Swimm got his first accompaniment tape. Then my Dad, Tom Kauffung, also known as pastor of the Middletown, OH congregation, asked me to start making song service tapes for him because the Middletown's only remaining piano player, Rebecca Shul, was moving to another city. I realized that other congregations must have similar needs and that people could enjoy their worship services more if they only had a little music to go along with their singing. Other people had commented in the past that having the hymnal on tape would be nice so congregations could always have music for services and all the songs in the book would be available. And, if Bob and Dad were going to be asking me for song service tapes on a regular basis, I figured I might as well do the whole hymnal and get it over with. So, God watered the seed and it grew.

I started making more tapes with the little Casio keyboard setup, but I found it was difficult to get a good recording before I had to remove the equipment from the room and rest. My piano playing is not that good and mistake after mistake kept me forever starting over on every song I tried to record. It was very tiring and frustrating. I was beginning to think I wasn't going to have the strength to do what I set out to do. If only I had a computer that I could get out and then put away again, I could computerize the whole process and eliminate my error-ridden piano playing. I already had the music software on our home computer system, but I couldn't use it because I couldn't leave my isolation room long enough to use the computer, and it was too much to set up the big computer in my room just to tear it down again a half hour later when it made me too sick. Then my husband Karl came home from work one day and told me he had seen a late model Macintosh laptop computer on the bulletin board for a bargain price we

couldn't refuse! He bought it the next day. When he got it home he loaded the music software for me and got it all set up. At last, I could program the music into the computer and it played the songs perfectly. The note entry process was painstakingly slow because each note had to be entered one at a time with a point-click or two, but it was still more efficient and way less frustrating than me trying to play all the hymns myself. As expected, the plastic laptop computer case made me sick as soon as it heated up and started off-gassing its chemicals, but it was very simple to put it away, wait a few hours or so until I felt better and then go back to it.

During those first months of isolation in my allergy room, it was difficult for me to find reasons to keep fighting. Based on case histories of other patients with similar health problems, we didn't know if I would ever recover enough to come out of that room. The statistics were grim in that more patients with MCS are lost to suicide than to the illness itself. I needed a focus - a reason to fight - an anchor to keep me tied to the church - a meaningful existence when my future was uncertain. The hymnal accompaniment music was my Godsend. I knew the church needed it. I certainly had the time to do it. And, there wasn't really much else I could do at the time. When Bronson James came to visit the Middletown congregation in May of '97, I braved the physical pain and symptoms of exposure to the chemicalized world beyond my isolation room with oxygen tank, portable air purifier, and laptop computer in tow and went to discuss the project with him in person. When I presented the idea of making accompaniment tapes to go with the church hymnals, I also explained how putting the songs on computer would someday allow us to put the hymns on a website for the church. He expressed his concerns about my health and was worried I might be taking on too much. I told him I needed this work and begged for his approval. With no further hesitation, he agreed with a smile and the CGI

hymnal accompaniment project was officially underway. The shrub had sprouted.



Through the months of point-click, point-click, point-click note entry my health slowly improved. By the time the Green Hymnal songs were complete, I was able to come out of my isolation room for short periods of time long enough to make the master tapes on our home computer. I printed up the labels and case inserts with song indexes and began the tape copying and production process. Each case insert was measured and cut with a ruler and scissors and hand folded to fit properly into the cassette case. The tapes were copied on a dual deck tape machine with double speed copy capability. Since their release, 179 Green Hymnal tape sets have been distributed at a cost of about \$3 for materials for each 3 tape set. Next came the Blue Hymnal. I point-clicked my way through all the Blue Hymnal songs that hadn't already been entered from the Green Hymnal. Again, there was the making of the master tapes, the labeling, and the hand cutting and folding of the case inserts. This time, we borrowed the hi-speed tape dubber from the Middletown church to speed up production. With that, we could zip off a 90 minute tape in about 5 minutes - a much faster process than the dual tape deck we used

on the Green Hymnal tapes. The Blue Hymnal was a 6 tape set, and to date 88 sets have been distributed at an average cost for materials of about \$4 per set before shipping.



Then CGI released the new Burgundy Hymnal. While my health had improved quite a bit to where I was able to stay out of my isolation room for several hours each day, I was still limited in the time I could spend on the computer. And, after having point-clicked my way note by note through 221 hymns from the Green and Blue Hymnals, I was starting to burn out on that note entry business.



To the rescue was my Dad, Tom Kauffung. He's a great Dad who has always been there to help me out whenever I'm in a bind. As my progress on the Burgundy Hymnal slowed to a snail's pace, I realized I couldn't do it anymore. I just couldn't point-click another note into place or I was gonna go bezerk. My Dad, who has a synopsis knowledge of musical notation, agreed to learn how to do note entry on the laptop computer. He took over the job and entered the last 90 songs for the Burgundy Hymnal. His wife Barb even joined in by entering a few songs herself. After which I went back and corrected their few mistakes, adjusted timing and put in the right number of verses for each song. On July 4, 1999 the last song for the Burgundy Hymnal was entered into the computer completing the note entry work. And there was much rejoicing! In the weeks to follow, all the tapes, cases and labels were ordered, the master tapes were made (a 6 tape set), labels were printed, and this time my Dad bought us a genuine paper cutter for cutting all those case inserts. And again, there was much rejoicing! We labeled and folded and copied and packaged enough Burgundy Hymnal tape sets to fill all the orders that were already waiting and enough to hand some out at the Feast sites that year as well. To date, 244 sets of Burgundy Hymnal accompaniment tapes have been distributed. The tape labeling, copying, and shipping process was a team effort between myself, my husband Karl, my Dad, and our friend Debbie Barger from Columbus OH who is not affiliated with CGI. Debbie helped us a great deal with the folding of the case inserts. Her biggest contribution was making a piece of cardboard into a folding template for us - such a simple idea and so very helpful. That was such a blessing! Kind of like when we got the paper cutter, we said, "Duh, now why didn't we do that sooner?"

We wanted to completely eliminate all the packaging expense, so we started out using bubble wrap that Karl's mom and brother saved up for us and used cut up brown paper

bags and packing tape to cover them. I apologize to everyone for the amount of time it took most of you to finally get those packages open. We eventually moved up to re-using the shipping envelopes and boxes that come with the video tapes from Tyler. Dad had been saving them for years, and they fit the tape sets just about perfect. We managed to minimize more of the shipping costs by sending via book rate at the post office - only \$1.13 for a burgundy hymnal tape set in the U.S. It's been raised over the past two years to \$1.30 now, but we still think that's not bad. Shipping out of the U.S. is the bulk of the shipping costs since we have to use air mail for that. However, we think our international brethren are well worth the expense!

Once the songs were finally complete in the computer, it was an unexpectedly simple task to put them all on the internet at CGI's hymnal website accessible through a link on the www.cgi.org main page set up by Dana McVey. The hymnal music went on line 8/17/99 and has been hit over 65,000 times now by people all over the world. The website is currently handling 6000-7000 hits per month. The shrub has definitely become a tree. I am currently in the process of adding lyrics to the website, so anyone will be able to sit and sing along at their computer without having to have a book in front of them. The Burgundy Hymnal lyrics are all there now, and the Blue Hymnal lyrics are on the way. It was exciting when I found our first website critic review at <http://www.cgmusic.com> - "Surprisingly complete for a small organization. Over 200 selections, with an excellent variety." We thought that was great! If I have enough steam left after the website lyrics are complete, I plan to produce an easy play version of the hymnal for people like me who don't read piano music all that well. We'll have to wait and see on that one though.

Having all the tapes completed and the music on the internet, I thought I was just about finished, but nooooo! In April 2000 Charles Groce spoke with my Dad at a regional meeting in Morehead, KY and asked if it would be possible to put the hymnal on CD. Dad said it had been mentioned before by Frank Denman and a few others. John Coish had also asked about recording it from the hymnal website. I'm not sure if anyone actually succeeded at recording the hymnal from the website onto CD, but we have some additional instructions posted there now to help all the do-it-yourselfer's out there. We didn't quite know how to make the CD's and didn't have the equipment to produce them here anyway. We didn't want to pay the expense of having a commercial production house do the job either. We knew CD's could be recorded from the files on the internet, but nobody we knew had actually been able to accomplish that task. So, we waited. The catalyst that finally started the production of the Burgundy Hymnal CD's was when my Dad blew the mother board on his computer. He was trying to install a replacement cooling fan when the screwdriver that the manufacturer's installation instructions directed him to use in the installation procedure slipped. Oops. He decided to buy a new computer and was able to get a bargain on one with a CD-RW drive built right in. Between my Dad, Karl and myself, we all figured out how to record the hymns onto CD. Within two weeks of Dad getting his computer, the prototype of the Burgundy Hymnal on CD was ready in a cute little 7 CD booklet complete with the Armor of God seal stamped on every CD and on the booklet cover. Making the CD set costs about \$5.50 per set for materials. Not bad for a 7 CD set with 234 songs on it, eh?



God had this one timed right because it just so happened that Bronson James was coming to Middletown to do a special Tuesday night bible study on December 12, 2000. The morning of the bible study we labeled the prototype CD's and put them into their sample package that had been overnight express delivered from the supplier. We got the prototype set together and once again, I braved the chemicalized world beyond my environmentally controlled house to meet with Mr. James. My health has improved enough that there was no oxygen tank in tow this time, and there was much rejoicing. Bronson gave us official approval to start production. Over the past couple months, we have been copying and packaging all the CD sets for the Burgundy Hymnal. In the near future, the Blue Hymnal will be available on CD as well. [Since publication of this story, the Blue Hymnal CD's have been completed.] That tree keeps getting bigger.



After all that, I'm happy to report that my health seems to be improving. Karl and I have been able to attend services again this year on a semi-regular basis with everyone in the congregation being extra careful not to wear perfumes, colognes or after shaves - bless their hearts - I love you all for that. It's been an answer to prayer to finally be able to fellowship again on the Sabbath - and they don't seem to mind me playing and singing some music for them there either. I still take an environmental beating when I venture out into the chemicalized world we live in, but it's not as bad as it used to be as long as I limit my outings and plan them very carefully in advance.

It's been a big project and I'm very glad there are no plans for another new hymnal... yet. I think the best part was getting all the letters and e-mails from people in so many different places around the world. It was also great getting thank you cards and get well cards. I am still a little dumbfounded about all the people who come up to me from time to time and tell me how wonderful the tapes are or what a blessing the website is. I was hoping that eventually they'd forget about me and just consider it a work that God did through our church. It doesn't look like that's going to happen. I suppose I'll get better at taking those compliments. Producing the hymnal tapes has been an anchor for me through my illness. It gave me a reason to keep fighting when I thought all my fight was gone. It gave me something constructive to do while I was confined. And, it gave me a way to stay tied to the church when I could no longer attend services. The church home office has covered all the expense of materials and shipping; the labor was a labor of love. The seed of faith planted, watered and grown by God has become a great tree of hymnal music for His church. While God called on me to do much of the work involved, it would never have been started without His calling, all the people involved, and the love and support of my Dad and my husband. I would also like to thank everyone in CGI who contributed to the cost of making this project possible and gave me such a wonderful job to help me through a very difficult period in my life. Just look at that tree now, ain't it great!

We all hope you enjoy the music!