

Brenda Sauder

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I was honored to be one of the attenders at the Laurelville Music and Worship Leaders Retreat a couple weekends ago. So this morning I'm sharing a few of my take-aways.

First of all, I was so impressed with what the committee for the new hymnal had to say about "heart-songs."

Heart-songs are the songs that each person in a congregation take to heart, that mean so much to them for whatever reason: *nostalgia* at singing a familiar, old-fashioned hymn, *the emotions* that arise when singing a song that you have memories about, (like "This song was sung at my mother's funeral" or "The first time I heard this song, I was at such-and-such a place or time in my life,") or *the heart-thumping Amen you feel* about the lyrics of a certain song that say it "just right" for your heart and experience. These are heart songs.

I believe it was Adam Tice, the text editor for the hymnal, who said the normal repertoire for any congregation is about 200 songs. And the new hymnal is going to have over 800 songs! He went on to say that each congregation should choose their own 200 heart songs, knowing that the hymnal will probably include at least a few hymns that the individual user will not appreciate.

But the ones that we don't like just may be the heart-songs of another congregation that isn't in the middle of Lancaster County, PA! I felt like this gave me permission to sing the ones we like.

However, maybe we should sing ones we don't know or that come from a different culture. Katie Graber, the person on the

hymnal committee working on the multi-cultural piece, spoke to us about the conundrum of singing songs that aren't ours.

For fear of appropriating a culture's songs, or using the songs written in a different language than our mother-tongue in an inappropriate, neo-colonial way, Katie first told us we should NOT sing multi-cultural songs. So we shouldn't sing the Korean hymns in the new book because we are borrowing them from another culture that may not wish to be imitated.

But, in the next breath, Katie Graber told us that we MUST sing these multi-cultural songs in order to acknowledge our global brothers and sisters with their heart-songs that are different than ours.

So we shouldn't, yet we must! We must sing others' songs in other languages to honor and acknowledge our global community, and to admit that we probably can't sing them "right." That humility is the goal of singing another culture's songs.

In an effort to learn what songs are the heart-songs of many Mennonite churches across North America, several of the hymnal committee travelled to 11 different Mennonite congregations, with the purpose of listening. We will now show you the video they made on that trip to help explain to us here in the heart of Mennonite country what some of our sisters and brothers sing. And hopefully, when the new hymnal comes out, we can humbly sing heart-songs of others around the world.