Sunday, July 15, 1973
SOME THINGS THAT HYMNS CAN DO!

Beginning with last summer, we've been paying special attention to the value of singing hymns as part of our Christian living and worship. Thus, one Sunday last summer like today, we had a service in which we sang the favorite hymns of many of you who were here, and we explored in some detail the organization and use of the hymnal.

Then last fall we spent a Sunday morning exploring different ways in which hymns can be sung by a worshipping congregation in an effort to make our singing more exciting and meaningful. Today we are continuing that process.

We do this because the singing of hymns has always had a central place in Christian worship from the beginning of the church in the first century and even before that in Jewish worship. The Psalmist invites us to "sing to the Lord a new song." St. Paul urges the churches to praise God in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." The Protestant Reformation began in a burst of congregational singing.

So, the singing of Hymns is as old as our faith. For more than 19 centuries Christians have sing hymns. In the upper room, in prisons, in the catacombs, in monastery chapels, vast cathedrals, camp meetings, revivals, rural churches, city churches and in other places, hymns of prayer and praise have been sung.

Good hymn singing does a number of things for us as Christians.

1. Through hymn singing, we express our feelings and ideas; we sing of our joys and fears and it's also a form of prayer. During the bombings of World War II, Londoners huddled in air raid shelters would express their calm faith by singing "Our God our Help in ages past." Parents and loved ones of military personnel sing with unusual fervor as do all of us — "O God of love, O King of peace, Make wars throughout the world to cease." Hymns can express religious feelings.

2. Through hymn singing, Christians proclaim their faith to others. People are attracted to music because the love of tonal beauty is a part of being human.

3. Through hymn singing, Christians are bound in closer fellowship. Singing helps to bind us together, we feel like brothers and sisters under God.

And there are many other values to the good singing of hymns. Again, one of our goals throughout the coming year is to improve our singing of hymns in the worship service.

How then are we to sing? John Wesley gave these suggestions to his congregations.

1. Sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep, but lift your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan.

2. Sing modestly. Do not bawl so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony. but strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear melodious sound.

3. Sing in time. Whatever time is sung be sure to keep with it. Do not run before or stay behind it.

4. Pay attention to the words.

Let’s now sing Hymn No. 447, and then we’ll sing some of your requests. Amen.