

Library – the Frank & Ruth Henderson Hymnal Collection

In the fall of 2013, Tammy-Jo had a conversation with a wonderful colleague of hers, Frank Henderson, about his work in the area of liturgy and hymnology. This wasn't his life's main work – that was biochemistry. He received degrees at the University of Arizona (B.S. and M.S) and a Ph.D. in oncology from the University of Wisconsin (Madison). He worked at Stanford, in Washington, D.C. as an assistant professor, and then came to the University of Alberta in 1963 as an Associate Professor and Professor of Biochemistry and member of the Cancer Research Unit. He says that he's been fortunate to have three careers: biochemistry and cancer research, liturgy, and medieval studies.

In the area of liturgy, Frank has been a member of liturgical societies, and an editor of several journals. He taught a variety of courses in liturgy at Newman Theological College, St. Stephen's College, and St. Paul University (Ottawa). In 1996, St. Stephen's College, awarded Frank the degree of Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa). One of his mandates was this: "I am committed to the principle of full participation - hence full inclusion - of all in the liturgy and life of the church."

Over many years, Ruth too was involved in one career while being firmly entrenched in the pursuit of music, as a student of organ and as a singer. She has a deep appreciation for classical music, for sacred music and is a wonderful supporter of the arts.

Frank & Ruth had recently moved into a smaller housing option but the entire basement of their former house was a library! They began to wonder what to do with the various collections contained within their library. Over their lifetime, they had amassed an incredible collection of 439 hymnals and other books related to sacred music from around the world. Frank was picking my brain to see if I knew of a place where this portion of their library could reside as a collection, or be absorbed into another collection. So, inquiries were made and none of the options seemed right. In many cases the collection would get split up, or only certain volumes would be retained. So, upon talking with the staff at R-W UC, there was excitement about acquiring the whole collection and reclaiming our own library in the process.

The Frank and Ruth Henderson hymnal collection now resides on two large shelves (all the shelves were also donated by the Hendersons) that can be searched manually or on librarything.com. The Hendersons also donated money for hiring Megan Spanner, a student in library science, to catalogue all the books. The collection includes hymnals from Australia, various parts of Britain, Native American, American and Asian. It also contains volumes of works of modern hymn writers like Gordon Light, Fred Pratt Green, Ron Klusmeier and Ruth Duck. There are also books about plainsong, Jewish music, psalters, books about liturgy, carols, music history, pipe organs, women in music and acoustics.

The acquisition of the Henderson collection was a catalyst for us to move forward with renovating the library and culling and cataloguing our library collection at R-W. There are now over 700 books in our library on topics of all kinds. Come downstairs to Room 10 any day and check it out, and don't hesitate to check a book out!