

# UUA Virtual Hymnal

## Frequently Asked Questions

October 2024

We hope this information increases your excitement and enthusiasm for this project!  
Please scroll down to view **our projected timeline**.

### What exactly is a “virtual hymnal”?

We’re using the term *virtual hymnal* to refer to an ever-changing, regularly-updated online collection of hymns, songs, chants, and other musical resources. Our first year of planning—and investigating the technology to house these resources—made it clear that our UUA virtual hymnal will be an app that can be used on a smartphone, tablet, or computer.

### Are you trying to replace the printed UU hymnals?

Absolutely not! This digital resource is intended to supplement our beloved hymnals.

### Will the virtual hymnal include hymns already in our printed hymnals (e.g. *Singing the Living Tradition*)?

Yes: as many as possible, and as many as are \*reasonable. We’ve done a careful survey of *Singing the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey* for hymns in the public domain, and for hymns that present no permission or copyright issues. We hope to survey *Las voces del camino* for the same.

[\*Some exceptions: hymns that are problematic or could cause harm. Due to emerging understandings of racism and other forms of oppression, we will either omit certain hymns from the Virtual Hymnal or protect them behind an instructional statement required of users.]

### How much will the Virtual Hymnal cost?

The cost of the virtual hymnal will reflect an ethic of care and responsibility, because it needs to cover fair and equitable licensing fees for our artists; staff time to maintain and update the hymnal; and hosting/technology fees. While we won’t know the exact cost



until our licensing agreements are finalized, the UUA virtual hymnal will be available via a subscription model. (We expect to offer subscriptions at a monthly rate, or at a reduced annual rate.)

We also imagine at least three or four subscription tiers: one for individuals or non-UU communities; and two or three tiers that reflect a congregation's size and/or budget. While a tiered subscription model is a bit more complicated, it's also more equitable.

### 🎵 **What content will be included with each hymn?**

We plan to offer single user and congregational subscriptions to the virtual hymnal, described above, which will offer the following content and materials:

- Single user: PDFs of the sheet music (which includes the composer, lyricist, arranger, and meter information), song context, mp3 files for learning (and individual part tracks when applicable to that hymn), braille compatible versions
- Congregational users: Everything the single users will have access to *plus* PowerPoint slides with lyrics, midi files, Music xml files, MEI scores, and transposed copies of the music.



### 🎵 **Which congregational permissions will be included with a subscription?**

We're making this app user-friendly for you: permission will be granted for **ALL** of its hymns, including being livestreamed in worship and posted on your website or social media channel **if your congregation's subscription is active.**

These additional permissions apply within the context of worship: to arrange for your bands and choirs (as long as the melody, chords, and/or lyrics are not changed); to share the PDFs and slides during worship... all without the weekly "reporting" typically required in other licensing agreements.

To be clear, this hymnal does *not* permit excerpting and sharing the song from the service or event recording. In other words, you may not post the song by itself anywhere online. It also does not permit songs to be performed in a recital or concert. It does not allow for any resale of any part of the hymnal. It does not allow arrangements that change the melody, chords, or lyrics. If an individual or congregation wishes to use the music in any of the above manners, they must seek permission directly from the copyright holder(s).

### 🎵 **Are you accepting music submissions?**

Not now—but eventually, yes! Our Task Force has spent most of 2023 and 2024 attending to important technical and legal groundwork (like technology and licensing agreements): the “container” for the music itself. We’re working with AUUMM leaders to create a song submission process that will likely open in February 2025.

Due to the easily-updatable nature of this app, we expect to add new music on a regular basis. There *won’t* be a “submit now or lose your opportunity” trap.

### 🎵 **What’s the **timeline** for the Virtual Hymnal?**

First, here’s a review of what’s happened recently:

- Our Team spent the **spring & summer 2024**:
  - drafting licensing agreements, informed by many in-depth focus groups with UU musicians
  - selecting a technology platform to house the Virtual Hymnal
  - building the prototype hymnal
  - providing detailed updates at AUUMM’s Annual Conference
- In **mid-August 2024**, we invited congregations to apply as beta tester for our prototype hymnal. 136 congregations applied—all within the continental US, and evenly divided across our five UUA Regions—and we said yes to *all* of them.
- In **September**, those 136 congregations received their log-in credentials, and began experimenting with the app to provide our team with feedback



Here's our timeline for the next "verse" of the Virtual Hymnal:

- **mid-October:** your Task Force will open applications to recruit 3 to 4 members for our new Song Selection team
- **October through December:** your Task Force will create financial models for Virtual Hymnal subscriptions; finalize our licensing agreements for musicians; and refine the app (including by adding more and more public domain hymns to the hymnal)
- **January 2025:**
  - your Task Force will hold a call for art/design proposals
  - the Song Selection team will begin formulating policies and procedures for their work
- **Spring 2025:** the submission process for new songs will open; subscription tiers will be announced; artwork added
- **General Assembly in Baltimore:** our Virtual Hymnal is launched!

### **How can I keep getting news?**

Make sure you've [subscribed to the WorshipWeb newsletter](#). Those subscribers will be the first to receive every update.

If you have questions about anything in this document,  
please [contact our Virtual Hymnal Consulting Manager, Camille Hatton](#).