

# Crossing Musical Cultures: Mary Oyer and Expanding Social Conscience in Mennonite Music

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In August 1969, Mennonites from all over the United States travelled to Turner, Oregon, for their biennial denomination-wide conference. Delegates brought varying perspectives on cultural separatism and political witness as economic and social forces eroded the cocoon of two-kingdom theology that had allowed them, up to that point, to turn inward and avoid engagement with the state. As they navigated these conditions, Mennonites came together in Turner to discuss some of the most controversial issues they faced, including draft resistance and the civil rights movement.

Mary Oyer, a Goshen College professor and a significant figure in the evolution of twentieth-century Mennonite musical culture, arrived in Turner from Uganda to introduce the newly published *Mennonite Hymnal*.<sup>1</sup> At the convention, as well as throughout the hymnal's production, theological and cultural crises paralleled those of musical practice, which Oyer participated in and bore witness to. On her return to Africa after the conference, she found herself on the precipice of a revolution in her musical understanding, which would filter into Mennonite music and identity in the years to come.

It is no surprise that music, a field where theology and culture overlap, not only emerged as a location for heated debate about the church's future, but also offers a unique view into shifting

Mennonite self-perception during this time. While Oyer's towering impact on Mennonite music has been traced in existing scholarship, her life also demonstrates deep connections between musical culture and the American Mennonite church's evolution toward social engagement and openness to external forces during the mid-to-late twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Conflicts emerged in Mennonite music over race, gender, denominational affiliation, and theology throughout her career. At times, Oyer found herself encouraging transformation, and at other times she clung to tradition. Her life demonstrates the tensions and contradictions inherent in the twentieth-century Mennonite experience of expanding social conscience as expressed through music.

### **Mennonite Social and Musical Context**

During the first half of the twentieth century, North American Mennonites came into greater contact with the outside world. The two largest denominations were the Mennonite Church (MCs), which had Swiss heritage with a strong tradition of cultural separatism, and the General Conference Mennonite Church (GCs), a mostly Dutch-Russian strand of more recent immigrants.<sup>3</sup> The early part of the century was shaped by the emergence of fundamentalism, which bolstered separatism among MCs, and conscription in the First World War, which solidified the importance of nonresistance.<sup>4</sup> In order to avoid military service, Mennonites learned to interact with the state in new ways, and by the Second World War, they collaborated with the US government to create Civilian Public Service (CPS), an alternative service program for conscientious objectors. This solidified nonresistance and service as core Mennonite identifiers.<sup>5</sup>

Mennonites also found a source of identity in their worship practices, particularly in their musical culture. Since their beginnings in sixteenth-century Europe, Mennonites had emphasized simplicity in worship as a return to biblical principles.<sup>6</sup> When they immigrated to North America, MC musical culture consisted of unison a cappella hymn singing, which fit this emphasis. In the nineteenth century, when the GC church was formed, their musical practice grew to include instruments, choirs, and singing in four-part harmony. Despite reservations, MCs began to adopt four-part harmony in the 1890s, although choirs and instruments remained taboo.<sup>7</sup> Gradually, four-part a cappella singing became a distinctive Mennonite tradition, so much so that by the 1940s it resonated as an important

symbol of identity which leaders feared might be lost if not adequately preserved.

Whether or not to accept gospel songs, a musical style that was popularized during nineteenth-century revival movements, also became an important ethical question and flashpoint among Mennonites, particularly MCs, some of whom were more fundamentalist than others. Unlike hymns, these songs included dotted eighth note rhythms and refrains. Most leaders believed that these musical innovations, while being emotionally appealing, obscured the firm resolve necessary to maintain Christian ethics in daily life, making them inappropriate for Mennonite worship services.<sup>8</sup> However, fundamentalist leaders stalled the printing of the 1927 *MC Church Hymnal* by demanding that Mennonite Publishing House (MPH) insert 150 gospel songs into the book. This was accomplished without consulting the editors, Lester Hostetler and Walter Yoder. Hostler was so upset that he left the denomination and joined the GCs.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, gospel songs were popular among Mennonites, so despite his aversion to them, Hostetler included several when he edited the 1940 *GC Mennonite Hymnary*, placing them in a separate section in the back of the book because the church still viewed them as less proper worship material than hymns.<sup>10</sup>

By the 1950s, Mennonites were being forced to confront the world in new ways. CPS had exposed young people to the outside world, undermining separatism. Church leaders had also established the "Lordship of Christ" paradigm, a new theological model which required greater witness to the state.<sup>11</sup> In addition, churches were becoming more aware of the civil rights movement.<sup>12</sup> These factors precipitated an identity crisis, and some of its most visible symptoms were fears about the potential loss of the Mennonite four-part singing tradition and the encroaching trend of the use of instruments in their worship. MCs began to discuss the possibility of creating a new hymnal, in part to strengthen the communal four-part tradition, just as the GCs were planning a similar revision to their *Mennonite Hymnary*.<sup>13</sup> Slowly, a collaboration was born. The denominations would eventually produce the 1969 *Mennonite Hymnal* together, attempting to create a unified Mennonite musical identity during a period wracked with theological and cultural unrest. The conflicts that emerged during this process not only reflected, but also became flashpoints, for broader issues of identity.

### ***The Mennonite Hymnal* and the Boundaries of Mennonite Identity**

When hymnal work began in the late 1950s, Mary Oyer was a member of the Goshen College music faculty. A talented cellist, she had attended Goshen as a music major, and as she neared the end of her degree in 1944, Dean Harold Bender asked her to do graduate work and then return to the institution to teach. Oyer began working at Goshen the following year while pursuing a master's degree, followed by a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in cello at the University of Michigan. Even though she faced criticism from MCs as a woman cellist in a position of authority, she felt she had freedom at Goshen, supported by her mentor and colleague Walter Yoder.<sup>14</sup> He brought Oyer onto the hymnal revision project in 1959, where she played a pivotal role and emerged as a highly regarded leader in Mennonite music. Along the way, she participated in conflicts and changes related to MC-GC differences, ecumenicism, gender, and theology. These issues and her work on them influenced the direction that Mennonite music would take and illuminated connections between music and Mennonite identity during the turbulent 1960s.

Originally, MCs and GCs worked separately on individual hymnal revision projects, pooling resources and research to assist each other. Over time, talk of a completely new collaborative book, one of the first large-scale cooperative ventures between the two groups, emerged, and the denominations began working together more formally.<sup>15</sup> Each group retained its independent committee, and together they formed a joint committee made up of GCs Lester Hostetler, J. Harold Moyer, and George Wiebe; MCs Chester Lehman, Yoder, and Oyer; and GC Vernon Neufeld serving as chair.<sup>16</sup> The joint committee synthesized the work of the denominational committees to create a book for both constituencies, and their deliberations demonstrated the ongoing tension as well as the growing closeness between the denominations.

Unsurprisingly, the use of musical instruments was a major point of contention. Instruments, especially organs, had long been in widespread use among GCs, and while they were becoming more common among MCs, most MC leaders still opposed them. MCs feared that congregations were not receiving adequate training to maintain the four-part a cappella tradition, which would be further endangered by the instrumental support of organs. Furthermore, leaders worried that their acceptance might cause some congregations with more conservative musical practices to leave the denomination.<sup>17</sup> The introduction of instruments, compounded by the potential loss of four-part singing, was so problematic because it symbolized threats to separatism, including individualization,

urbanization, and professionalization. The fear and anger directed at these cultural adjustments are best understood as proxies for larger, more nebulous shifts which were harder to address.

These anxieties were distilled in a letter outlining the concerns over changing musical practice that Ohio chorister Cletus Amstutz sent to Oyer during hymnal production.<sup>18</sup> He wrote that Mennonites increasingly privileged college-educated and non-Mennonite perspectives that damaged the four-part tradition, tying his musical anxieties to concerns about increasing external influences and education levels among Mennonites. Lamenting what he saw as a lack of respect for traditions crucial to Mennonite identity, he wrote that advocates for change were “so busy listening to others['] views that they have no time to investigate whether . . . perhaps the aged, proven Mennonite practice . . . might be the best conclusion after all even in our modern time.” But Amstutz’s biggest concern was the decline in the traditional practice of gender-segregated church pews which he felt was necessary for children to learn how to sing in parts. Further on in the letter, he listed several arguments supporting gender-segregated pews, only one of which was musical. Music was only one aspect of much larger trends of changing cultural practice, diminishing separatism, and the incursion of the outside world, but Amstutz hung all those concerns on this single issue. “P.S. Change is not always a sign of growth but could also be a sign of shriveling, death, and decay,” he concluded.<sup>19</sup>

A broader mistrust of the arts among MCs also fed opposition to the use of instruments. Young Mennonites latched onto Bender’s “Anabaptist Vision,” which declared discipleship, community, and nonresistance as the central Mennonite tenets.<sup>20</sup> Early in Oyer’s tenure at Goshen, a group of students who supported Bender’s vision concluded that the arts were an individualistic distraction from the gospel. They told their professor that her pursuit of the arts was wrong and pressured their peers to drop enrolment in choir and other arts courses.<sup>21</sup> Older MCs shared a suspicion of aesthetic experience, fearing that musical beauty could distract from hymn texts and preclude worship of God. These perspectives loomed large for the MC hymnal committee as they confronted the potential costs of collaboration with the GCs. Early in the collaborative process, MC committee member J. Mark Stauffer was unsure about the joint effort because it might encourage the trend toward the use of instruments.<sup>22</sup> The representative for MPH, which handled publishing and publicity for the new hymnal, expressed worry that the collaboration would stop MC congregations from buying the book altogether.<sup>23</sup>

In the face of concerns that GC connections would lead to the embrace of instruments, and therefore down the slippery slope of

worldliness, Oyer, who had researched this issue in the context of medieval European Christians during her graduate studies, continually advocated for the value of instruments and musical beauty in Mennonite worship.<sup>24</sup> She actively pushed the issue by playing cello in the South Bend Symphony, coordinating a 1963 church music conference devoted to the question of the use of instruments in worship, and serving on the MC hymnal committee's instrumental subcommittee.<sup>25</sup> These efforts were not always greeted kindly, with one colleague going so far as to say, "I just don't see how Mary Oyer can play the cello and be a Christian."<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, the subcommittee recommended preserving the Mennonite vocal tradition while being open to the use of instruments in individual congregations, likely the only path forward if the collaboration was to result in a hymnal both groups could use. They did succeed in creating a hymnal acceptable to both constituencies, and while MCs did not embrace the use of instruments in the 1960s, neither did they condemn it. As a major advocate for instruments, Oyer played a huge role in shifting MCs toward accepting them, placing her at the forefront of efforts to introduce external cultural practices into Mennonite life and bring MCs and GCs together during this period.

In addition to conflicts over instrumental use, MCs and GCs possessed different hymnodies. MC practice was built on a strong tradition of American folk hymns, whereas GCs had a broader but less distinctive hymnody that emphasized the German chorale.<sup>27</sup> Oyer undertook the challenge of bringing these two traditions together in a single book. She served on the tune committee, supervised and personally conducted most of the research on texts and tunes, and intentionally sought out music from both traditions for inclusion. When the committee faced discrepancies between shared hymns, Oyer's organization and research skills were vital to resolving these issues. On a 1963–1964 sabbatical from Goshen, she travelled to Scotland to study with hymnologist Erik Routley, where she became interested in researching primary source material for hymns.<sup>28</sup> This research provided the committee with a common base from which to work and made changes more palatable to both groups, a solution in which Oyer was indispensable.

But the largest problem continued to be the inclusion of gospel songs. The issues dating from the 1927 *Church Hymnal* had never been resolved, and while many leaders, especially older ones, remained hostile to gospel songs, they were so popular that their inclusion in the new book was deemed necessary.<sup>29</sup> The question was whether gospel songs should be set apart in their own section as in the GC *Mennonite Hymnary* or integrated based on their textual themes. This sparked a heated debate that signalled the depth of

denominational tensions. Furthermore, the actions of some committee members demonstrate the disputes inherent in MC-GC collaboration.

To narrow the hymn list to a manageable 650, the joint committee tasked Oyer with creating a ranking system to assist them in deciding which hymns would be included in the book. Hostetler, who became the project's sole editor after Yoder's death in 1964, ignored this system, replaced several highly ranked hymns without the committee's consent, and created a new outline that segregated gospel songs.<sup>30</sup> Oyer felt that Hostetler's refusal to accept changes from the *Mennonite Hymnary* indicated he was ignoring MC interests.<sup>31</sup> In a 1965 letter to Neufeld, the joint chair, she wrote, "I feel the bitterness of the [MC]-GC breach of the last generation coming to the front. I have never experienced this before and I want nothing more to do with it."<sup>32</sup> The treatment of gospel songs, which had once represented a response to fundamentalism, now took on the added significance of demarcating denominational boundaries and the balance of power between them. The committee ultimately revised Hostetler's hymn choices, and the final outline of 1965 that integrated all hymns except gospel songs and choral anthems moved the project forward.<sup>33</sup>

While intra-Mennonite interactions were an important aspect of defining identity in the hymnal process, a growing ecumenicism also became visible, in part because of Oyer. As the first Mennonite to receive any type of doctoral degree in music, Oyer opened fresh territory to Mennonites, and her work on the hymnal connected Mennonites to Protestant church music in a new way. Her primary source research brought her into a larger scholarly conversation through the Hymn Society of North America, opening doors for Mennonite involvement with other denominations. Oyer also made a conscious effort to expand the Mennonite musical palette by including Anabaptist, Lutheran, and Calvinist hymnody as well as Gregorian chant in the book.<sup>34</sup> Her research was crucial to that expansion, creating a hymnal that emphasized ecumenicism even as Mennonites were questioning their relationship to other denominations.

Oyer also led the church to accept greater roles for women. At a time when women were mostly confined to children's ministries, she was highly visible as an instrumentalist and as a scholar on the hymnal committee. As the project's executive secretary, she had a great deal of influence on the book and played the most significant role in its production, which was widely recognized by the denomination at the time.<sup>35</sup> Her extensive knowledge of the new hymnal also meant she was an ideal choice to introduce it to the rest of the church.

Following its release, she travelled to congregations to teach them about its contents, and in doing so became the most well-known figure in Mennonite music in the United States, the first woman to gain this distinction. “[I knew] the hymnal, and when people would ask for something, [I was] able to talk about it, and say something of its importance,” she later said.<sup>36</sup>

However, even as Oyer shattered gender boundaries, she also met with opposition. When MPH was tasked with introducing the book to the MCs at their 1969 biennial meeting in Turner, they were hesitant to give Oyer the assignment. “They didn’t know who should present it. I mean, it was obvious that I’d done so much of the work that I should’ve done it, but I was a woman,” she said. When they finally decided to let her do the introduction, they gave her these additional instructions: “‘You ask [committee member] Ed Stoltzfus how to talk in public.’ Now, I had taught twenty-five years by that time, and I had taught Ed Stoltzfus. Not that he didn’t have anything to teach me . . . But that’s the way you existed as a woman.”<sup>37</sup>

The creation of the hymnal had been a point of contention over the direction of the Mennonite church as a whole, which was experiencing a deep fracturing at this time. However, after its release, it also became a source of shared identity amid sharp theological differences. Despite leaders’ acceptance of the “Lordship of Christ” paradigm, most lay MCs were far less activist.<sup>38</sup> They clashed with a growing group of young people troubled by the church’s cooperation with Selective Service, who were beginning to orient themselves toward draft resistance and become increasingly integrated with the secular anti-war movement shaking the United States.<sup>39</sup> Tensions came to a head at the 1969 meeting in Turner. On Saturday afternoon, activists took the floor of the convention and asked delegates to recognize draft resistance as legitimate witness to the state. After tense deliberations, they voted to recognize the activists’ position and asked a committee to draft a new statement which the entire group could affirm.<sup>40</sup>

That evening, Oyer introduced the new hymnal and led the group in congregational singing. To conclude the session, and “with some fear and trembling,” she chose number 606, an obscure setting of the doxology placed in the Choral Hymns section because of its difficulty and length.<sup>41</sup> But it was a hit, becoming a kind of theme song for the rest of the week and embedding itself for years ahead in Mennonite consciousness. Despite the tense meeting earlier that day, when delegates had argued over the proper practice of nonresistance, a fundamental aspect of their identity, they were united by this song that tapped into their four-part a cappella singing tradition. Amid theological and cultural rifts, music brought this group

of MCs together and affirmed their shared history. On Monday morning, an amended report which confirmed draft resistance as an option for young Mennonite men passed with opposition, and the young resisters and older delegates expressed reconciliation and appreciation for the church.<sup>42</sup> Things had been patched over, but the Mennonite church was undeniably changing, and music was both a forum to debate the nature of Mennonite identity and a source of unification in the face of these shifts.

Throughout the 1960s, Mennonites also began to confront the question of civil rights, though most were unwilling to get deeply involved in such a political struggle.<sup>43</sup> *The Mennonite Hymnal* made some attempts to cross racial boundaries by including six non-Western hymns and a few African American spirituals, but several committee members were hesitant about these styles.<sup>44</sup> A hymnal based on consensus and trying to serve two denominations faced inherent limitations, of which the committee was keenly aware. "Basically a denominational hymnbook must be a very conservative production," they reported to the MC General Council in the early 1960s.<sup>45</sup> Despite the hymnal's wild success, Oyer favoured revisions immediately. "The manuscript was submitted in September of 1966. In three years a country changes greatly—Martin Luther King was killed; that event alone made me look at hymns quite critically . . . Our College and Congregation have changed," she wrote in a letter in 1970.<sup>46</sup> She too was beginning a process of change in her musical understanding which would shape her work and that of the church in the coming years.

### **Hymnal Supplements of the 1970s–1980s and the Increasing Pace of Change**

In the 1970s and 1980s, Oyer was deeply involved in effecting changes in the church with respect to cross-cultural music, non-Mennonite North American musical cultures, and gender. These issues reflected the expanding social conscience of the church during this period. However, as the pace of change increased, these shifts moved beyond her comfort zone, demonstrating the tensions presented by the growing incorporation of mainstream culture into Mennonite life. Oyer's viewpoint began to change when she travelled to Africa in 1969, where she studied African church music. She returned several times during the seventies and eighties, living in Kenya, Tanzania, Congo, and Madagascar for a total of five years.<sup>47</sup> Over time, she developed greater respect for oral tradition and the body's integral role in African music-making. She remembered a

meeting of Mennonites in Kenya where African participants “were not supposed to move. They danced and they were scolded for doing it, dancing. But it was very clear that dance and the movement was important to them, and it wasn’t important to us [North American Mennonites].”<sup>48</sup> Experiences like this made a great impact on Oyer. Her biases about what constituted “good” church music became more relative, and her exposure to the anthropological aspects of music that had not been included in her Western musical education brought her into the field of ethnomusicology.<sup>49</sup> She transferred this new understanding directly to American Mennonite congregations, playing a major role in expanding intercultural awareness and social conscience in the church as expressed through music.

During this period, Oyer contributed to several supplemental songbooks to *The Mennonite Hymnal* featuring African, Asian, and Indigenous hymns; spirituals; and hymns with Spanish texts. She spearheaded the first of these books for a mission conference in 1971, resulting in a cross-cultural collection that broadened the range of music available and acceptable to Mennonites.<sup>50</sup> More supplements followed, for which Oyer was a near-constant consultant or committee member, gathering hymns, offering advice, and serving as the song leader for church conferences. Of note is her work at the 1978 Mennonite World Conference in Wichita, where she contributed to the first *International Songbook*, which featured cross-cultural hymns in several languages and served as an important basis for developing cross-cultural Mennonite music in later hymnals. As the main song leader at the meeting, Oyer introduced Mennonites from all over the world to music from a variety of different cultures, building appreciation for these cross-cultural interactions, and thus expanding Mennonite identity.<sup>51</sup>

Oyer also taught cross-cultural songs to individual congregations. Indigenous African song was usually sung in unison and emphasized repetition and rhythm, placing it outside the comfort zone of most North American Mennonites. By teaching this music to church groups, she made it accessible in the context of their congregational singing, thereby increasing intercultural awareness within the church. “While the committee does not claim the understanding and competence to represent all kinds of Mennonites, we are trying to say symbolically, with this collection, that such a goal is important,” reads the title page of a collection Oyer edited for the 1977 MC meeting in Estes Park, Illinois.<sup>52</sup> This attempt at intercultural awareness allowed these songs to become part of American Mennonite identity, expanding its boundaries beyond traditional four-part singing and its implicit association with white European Mennonite heritage to include a more diverse global Mennonite

community, a representation that continued in later American Mennonite songbooks.<sup>53</sup> Oyer's work was essential to this transformation and remains one of her most important contributions to Mennonite music.

Beyond cross-cultural additions, the 1970s saw growing acceptance of external dominant trends from American society, in keeping with the gradual disappearance of cultural separatism.<sup>54</sup> Musically, this meant openness to styles beyond the four-part a cappella tradition, both in cross-cultural contexts and through the inclusion of guitar-accompanied unison music in several supplemental collections. Even traditional hymns were increasingly approached and understood with attention to their varying historical contexts, a development that was certainly due in part to Oyer's 1980 publication *Exploring the Mennonite Hymnal: Essays*, a companion to *The Mennonite Hymnal* which proved a useful guide for Mennonite worship leaders across North America.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps most significantly, while nearly everyone on the hymnal committee twenty years earlier had major concerns about the validity of traditions like jazz in worship, the committee for the 1983 MC meeting planned the inclusion of a jazz big band and a Black gospel choir without even considering its theological implications.<sup>56</sup> North American Mennonite music was more oriented toward external cultural expressions than ever before, reflecting the church's changing orientation. Oyer's early advocacy for the inclusion of instruments and her role in introducing the church to these broader musical considerations laid crucial groundwork for these developments.

Further pointing to their outward orientation, American Mennonites also found themselves taking cues from the rest of the United States on issues of gender as the women's liberation movement of the 1970s and 1980s swept the nation. Head coverings for women, like most dress restrictions, disappeared as cultural separatism became a thing of the past.<sup>57</sup> In 1973, the church issued a study document about women in leadership as they took on roles spanning the range of congregational activities, including being called as ministers.<sup>58</sup> Despite not being a Mennonite pastor, Oyer held a highly visible position in the church, and her work opened new avenues for women as it did for all Mennonites. Other Mennonite women in music drew on her example and continued the cross-cultural work she had started, including Marilyn Houser Hamm, a student and later colleague of Oyer's who cited her as an important influence.<sup>59</sup> The Mennonite church's attitudes toward gender roles were beginning to shift on a large scale during this period, and within this changing milieu, Oyer was certainly an important and

influential figure who justified and made space for growing opportunities for women in leadership.

The 1980s also saw the emergence of conversations about inclusive language. As Mennonites became increasingly aware of other cultures, they grew more sensitive to the implications of their language. Oyer drew attention to problematic imagery in hymns, and the 1983 handbook for *The Mennonite Hymnal* addressed the symbolic racial weight of the phrase “whiter than snow” in a well-known hymn at her suggestion.<sup>60</sup> Gender-inclusive language also appeared in songbooks, a process influenced by Oyer and others. She chaired the committee for *Assembly Songs*, a collection created for the 1983 MC biennial meeting that altered language used for people to be more gender-neutral, though it did not address language for God, which “would have required a longer period of time for reflection and a much broader base of consensus.”<sup>61</sup>

Oyer was a crucial force in convincing the church to accept certain aspects of external musical culture, but she did not embrace every change. The conflicts that arose during this process can be seen in her relationship with Goshen College throughout this period. While Oyer was thinking progressively and developing broader interpretations of the nature and function of music, the college was also moving in a new direction. An early sign of trouble came in 1972, while Oyer was on sabbatical. Without her knowledge, the fine arts course she had developed and often taught since the 1940s was cut in a curriculum review. She was deeply hurt and later said, “They would just say, oh you can’t change. I’d changed so much. I’d been in Africa three or four times . . . But I couldn’t find anybody who would listen.”<sup>62</sup> Goshen was changing its view of what a Mennonite music education should be, and Oyer had been excluded from that discussion.<sup>63</sup> As her interests moved beyond Western art music, the institution was increasingly orienting itself toward training classical performers. She felt that Goshen was “trying to imitate a more professional music school without proper resources or consensus on what we want to be. Areas that seem to me to fit Goshen College especially well—church music and ethnomusicology—are discounted, and we are unable to speak or hear each other.”<sup>64</sup> As Goshen moved toward a more conservatory-style musical education, Oyer’s expanding interests in hymnody and ethnomusicology became marginal to the institution’s vision, and she increasingly felt that she no longer fit there.

At the same time, female faculty and students were participating in consciousness-raising meetings and advocating for women’s causes on campus.<sup>65</sup> Female faculty held varying views about how vigorously to confront sexism at Goshen, and a younger cohort

pressed harder on issues than some, generally older, female faculty members were comfortable with.<sup>66</sup> Many expected Oyer, who broke barriers for women throughout her career, to be on board, but as part of the older generation, she was uninterested in taking on a feminist agenda.<sup>67</sup> During this period of growing feminist consciousness on campus, Oyer had a disagreement with a colleague in the music department who told her that she was “becoming like all the feminists. He even named them. It was beside the issues . . . It was assigning to me the anger because I was a woman instead of because there were some issues to deal with.”<sup>68</sup> Unlike several female faculty members who saw women’s issues as a primary concern, Oyer felt they were obscuring the more central issues of identity and direction. Because of this difference in perception, she felt increasingly out of step with female leaders at the college and the feminist movement in general.

Taken together, these factors made the 1980s a tense period in Oyer’s relationship with Goshen. Ultimately, she met with a counsellor and realized it was time to step back from the institution. She parted ways with Goshen in 1987 at age sixty-five, after a total of forty-two years of service to the college.<sup>69</sup> Oyer, a firebrand in her early career, still wanted to shape Mennonite music and expand the boundaries of Mennonite identity within her own cultural comfort zone, but the college’s changing priorities, whose cues were increasingly being taken from broader non-Mennonite society, did not sit right with her. Like Mennonites who advocated for continued separatism earlier in the century, Oyer now struggled as she watched the traditions she valued wane. Though she eventually reconciled with Goshen and continues to hold a great deal of love for it today, she struggled during this period as the college took on a level of external cultural engagement that she was not prepared to accept. This theme reappeared in her work on the next Mennonite hymnal.

### ***Hymnal: A Worship Book and the Legacy of Cultural Integration***

In the early 1980s, MCs and GCs began discussing the creation of a new hymnal. After successful collaboration on *The Mennonite Hymnal*, this seemed like a natural course of action. By the 1990s, cultural separatism was largely a thing of the past and American Mennonites united around a concept of peace and justice which included witness to the state and nonviolent resistance.<sup>70</sup> The 1990s also saw discussions of a potential MC-GC denominational merger, and this shared project was one important facet of their growing cooperation.<sup>71</sup> However, this by no means meant that the project

avoided conflict, and Oyer's role in the project threw the tensions that accompanied the changing church into sharp relief.

The Hymnal Project, which formed in the early 1980s, included GCs, MCs, the Church of the Brethren, a denomination with similar theological commitment, and the Churches of God, a denomination with origins in nineteenth-century American revivalism, who left the project before its completion. The development process immediately proved cumbersome because the structure of authority and lines of communication were unclear. In addition, the idea of adding gender-inclusive language in the hymnal was divisive.<sup>72</sup> Oyer originally chaired the group, but she stepped down when she took a sabbatical from Goshen in Kenya in 1985, in part because she felt unable to manage these difficulties.<sup>73</sup> Nancy Faus took over and Oyer remained on the music committee. In 1986, as she prepared to retire from Goshen, Oyer accepted a position as project manager, but her actual responsibilities were still unclear on her return from Africa in 1987.<sup>74</sup>

This lack of structure posed particular problems for the discussion about inclusive language. Although many supplements of the 1970s and 1980s had adopted gender-neutral language in hymns to refer to the church and its members, this was still somewhat controversial. Even more contentious was the prospect of changing gendered language that was used to represent God. Particularly heated disagreements surrounded language in hymns that were near and dear to specific groups within the committee and had definitively shaped people's lives and identities.<sup>75</sup> Differences in culture also created issues. Beyond MC and GC divisions, which, though less obvious now than in the 1960s, still remained, the presence of the Church of the Brethren added new dynamics. The groups were used to different rhetorical strategies and held different underlying assumptions that showed up in hymnal work and were not adequately addressed, exacerbating language tensions.<sup>76</sup>

Oyer felt that controversy over inclusive language was overshadowing other concerns, mainly historical context. She recognized the conservative nature of her position and already in 1986 said that depending on the hymnal's direction, "I might not fit."<sup>77</sup> The committee created a policy to clarify expectations, but like any generalized policy, it was full of abstractions which could be agreed on in a meeting but then interpreted in vastly different ways in individual hymns, so it did little to resolve building tensions.<sup>78</sup> Oyer believed the impulse toward inclusive language was becoming a license to change other textual elements and cited the diminishing use of titles like "Lord" and "King" to represent God and the text committee's low rankings of early hymns, which she felt stemmed from their lack

of understanding of their historical and poetic value.<sup>79</sup> “We seem to be on the defensive, compelled to explain ourselves if we do *not* make alterations. Are we not responsible for the changes we make, as well?” she asked.<sup>80</sup> Historical context was Oyer’s entry into the world of hymnody thirty years earlier, so she had difficulty with a new approach that assigned less value to it.<sup>81</sup> She also knew these texts were foundational for many Mennonites and feared that changing them would cause frustration and alienation in the context of cultural memory and identity.

At the same time, many people were just as passionate about the immediate expansion of inclusive language. Oyer received several letters from Mennonites lamenting the fact that the hymnal would retain patriarchal language that they found exclusionary.<sup>82</sup> But while many Mennonites felt these shifts were necessary to cultivate a sense of belonging in the church, some opposed any changes. A new hymnal would need to serve those on both poles of this spectrum and everywhere in between, obviously no easy feat. Faus, the committee chair, supported full inclusive language, but she also stressed that “if we would produce a totally inclusive language hymnal that would not be purchased and used by the majority of the church we would have failed our people.”<sup>83</sup> Some viewed Oyer’s resolve as rigid and outdated, but she did not oppose all changes, and represented a real constituency whom the hymnal was supposed to serve. Moreover, her concerns about historical context and memory were noted by other committee members as important.<sup>84</sup> Still, tensions continued to mount.

The tipping point was the controversy over “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow,” known as 606 for its number in *The Mennonite Hymnal*. When Oyer introduced this hymn many years before at the Turner convention, it became a favourite, uniting Mennonites through their tradition of four-part singing and transcending fears about the changing church. In the following decades, it embedded itself in Mennonite consciousness, and it would undoubtedly be included in the new hymnal. The committee had a covenant not to touch the hymn in any way, but the Church of the Brethren already had an alternative, gender-neutral text, which they felt should be the obvious choice. The text committee treated it like any other hymn, and member Marilyn Kern, a vocal advocate of inclusive language, later wrote to Oyer, “We had been trying over and over to find a compromise that could be accepted by all, not realizing that all of our efforts looked to the Music Committee like finding new ways to break the covenant. No wonder they were so angry!”<sup>85</sup> This deepened divisions and managing editor Rebecca Slough later remembered a lack of empathy across the board, but particularly for

the depth of meaning that 606 held in Mennonite constituencies.<sup>86</sup> For Oyer, attempts to change this hymn, which had become so crucial to the Mennonite ethos, were the last straw in a series of frustrations and difficulties.

Oyer wrote to denominational leaders with several concerns. These included the lack of clarity in the language policy and resulting text changes in the hymns, the devaluation of poetry, the hostility to historical context, an overshadowing of cross-cultural hymns caused by the preoccupation with inclusive language, and unclear boundaries in her capacity as manager.<sup>87</sup> She felt ignored and became embroiled in further conflict, which she did not always manage well. In letters to Faus and Kern, Oyer demanded they apologize for sharing her letter to denominational leaders with others on the committee and complained about perceived slights, including not being referred to with the honorific "Dr." in press releases about the book when others on the committee with doctorates were. "I must say [your letter] is a vivid example of the glaring differences in interpretation and perception. It also shows a great deal of anger you are carrying," Faus replied.<sup>88</sup> Oyer was also accused of overstepping her boundaries and interfering with the text committee, although she never received the clarification she continually sought about her responsibilities.<sup>89</sup> In 1989, while editing the *Hymnal Sampler*, a collection of hymns under consideration for inclusion in the new book, she announced her plans to step down after its completion. "I think the project must be carried on by those who believe in it," she wrote in a letter that year.<sup>90</sup>

Oyer was a respected hymnologist and a force whose work had shaped Mennonite hymnody as it reflected a changing church, but she now found herself extrinsic to the process of ongoing cultural change. In June 1989, she felt so hopeless that she wrote she could no longer recommend a full new hymnal to the Mennonites she represented because "the losses would be too great."<sup>91</sup> She felt abandoned and looked down on by those in the feminist movement, saying, "I was the first woman to do this and that and the other thing, but I suddenly became old hat and a drag on the feminists because I wasn't ready to change all the words."<sup>92</sup> Like Goshen College a few years earlier, Mennonite hymnody was moving in a new direction which Oyer did not feel she could follow.

However, Oyer maintained a significant role in the church after she stepped down from the hymnal committee. During this period, she taught at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and travelled to congregations to introduce the *Sampler* and teach cross-cultural hymns. Hymnal committee members kept her informed of their work and continued to ask for her advice.<sup>93</sup> Eventually, when

*Hymnal: A Worship Book* was released in 1992, Oyer travelled to congregations plugging the book, and her approval was essential to its success.<sup>94</sup> She felt the position on inclusive language had been moderated after her exit, and she ultimately supported the hymnal, saying, "I am on the whole quite pleased with what's there."<sup>95</sup> Although she had left the project, her influence is clear in the finished product, both in the hymnal's source tracing, which clearly drew on her work as its model, and her pioneering work with cross-cultural hymns, which made them accessible in congregational contexts and provided much of the material included in the new book.<sup>96</sup>

This saga demonstrated the tensions inherent in the twentieth-century process of incorporating external culture into Mennonite life. Just as complex processes of change can be observed in the church as it struggled to discern its future, the same struggles took place within individuals. These are well-encapsulated in Oyer's experience. For much of her career, she was a progressive, fighting for the inclusion of instrumental and cross-cultural music in Mennonite worship, as well as greater roles for women. However, she was a product of a specific time, and by the late 1980s, she found herself out of step with the pace of change. As time passed, the church she had invested so much of her life in moved beyond her values, and her role in it began to shift accordingly. It is no surprise that such a transition was deeply painful.

*Hymnal: A Worship Book* was the culmination of the musical aspect of cultural integration for the church, resolving questions that emerged in *The Mennonite Hymnal*. Just as declining separatism did not herald the demise of Mennonite distinctiveness, four-part cappella singing remained a vibrant part of Mennonite worship despite the growing popularity of accompanied and unison hymns. American Mennonites became open to mainstream influences like inclusive language. As they became increasingly aware of other cultures, their hymnal became one of the most important spaces where they incorporated other traditions into their worship. Unlike the six non-Western hymns in *The Mennonite Hymnal*, the newly released *Hymnal: A Worship Book* featured an expansive group of cross-cultural hymns which American Mennonites were comfortable using. The new Mennonite self-understanding which emerged from the turbulent middle decades of the twentieth century was based on shared commitments to peace and social justice, which the new hymnal took as bedrock themes, integrating the two into a single "Peace/Justice" section, whereas *The Mennonite Hymnal* had separate "Peace and Nonresistance" and "Social Justice" sections.<sup>97</sup> Working for justice was now integrated into the Mennonite ethos, and *Hymnal: A Worship Book* represented this new consensus and

the decline of separatism-based divisions, laying the groundwork for the MC-GC merger and the church's new direction.<sup>98</sup>

### Conclusion

Oyer pushed the boundaries of Mennonite musical identity and drove many of the changes that occurred in Mennonite musical culture during the second half of the twentieth century, even those that extended beyond her comfort level. After the publication of *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, she continued travelling to churches, leading conferences on church music, and learning about other cultures, including a teaching stint in Taiwan during the 1990s.<sup>99</sup> Her influence continues today, and *Voices Together*, the hymnal released in 2020 by Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, the denominations which encompass the former MCs and GCs, continues traditions she established while moving in new directions. Its wealth of cross-cultural music clearly bears her mark, and the acceptance of Christian rock songs can be traced in part to her advocacy for openness to new traditions, which has borne increasing fruit over time. The book also includes gender-neutral pronouns and feminine images for God, continuing the inclusive language that began in the supplements of the 1980s. This has led to discomfort for some, for many of the reasons that Oyer raised in the 1980s, but today, at age ninety-nine, she has joyfully accepted *Voices Together* and spends time singing from it each day.

The process of musical and cultural change for twentieth-century Mennonites represented both growth and loss. Oyer saw the Mennonite church change drastically during her lifetime, and she sought to expand Mennonite identity and social conscience while preserving tradition, two desires which sometimes conflicted. Her changing relationship to Mennonite music over the course of her career reveals the complexities and tensions North American Mennonites faced as they navigated their identity in a changing world, and her experience and actions continue to shape Mennonite music today.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Thirty-Eighth Mennonite General Conference (36th Biennial Meeting) Proceedings: Turner, Oregon, August 15–19, 1969* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite General Conference, 1969), 51.

- <sup>2</sup> For a fuller biographical treatment of Oyer's life and an exhaustive bibliography of her work, see Rebecca Slough and Shirley Sprunger King, eds., *Nurturing Spirit Through Song: The Life of Mary K. Oyer* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2007).
- <sup>3</sup> For details about North American Mennonite separatism, two-kingdom theology, and social conscience during the twentieth century, see Perry Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).
- <sup>4</sup> Rodney James Sawatsky, *History and Ideology: American Mennonite Identity Definition Through History* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2005), 51, 58.
- <sup>5</sup> Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties*, 57.
- <sup>6</sup> Abraham Toews, *American Mennonite Worship: Its Roots, Development, and Application* (New York: Exposition Press, 1960), 19.
- <sup>7</sup> Earl Maust, "The History and Development of Music in Mennonite-Controlled Liberal Arts Colleges in the United States" (PhD diss., George Peabody College for Teachers, 1968), 43.
- <sup>8</sup> J. Mark Stauffer, *Mennonite Church Music: Its Theory and Practice* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1947), 6.
- <sup>9</sup> Mary Oyer, interviewed by Rebecca Rich, Mar. 16, 1999, b.3, f.3, Hist. Mss. 1-553, Mary K. Oyer Papers (MKOP), Mennonite Historical Library (MHL), Goshen, IN.
- <sup>10</sup> Oyer, interviewed Mar. 16, 1999.
- <sup>11</sup> Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties*, 126-127.
- <sup>12</sup> Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties*, 203.
- <sup>13</sup> Walter Yoder to the Mennonite Church General Conference Music Committee, Feb. 26, 1957, b.5, f.6, I-3-1 Mennonite Church Music and Worship Committee Records, 1909-1992 (MCMWC), Mennonite Church USA Archives (MCA), Elkhart, IN.
- <sup>14</sup> Slough and Sprunger King, *Nurturing Spirit Through Song*, 22-23.
- <sup>15</sup> Minutes of the General Conference Music Committee, Nov. 19-21, 1959, b.8, f.1, I-3-1 MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>16</sup> Minutes of the General Conference Music Committee, Oct. 27-29, 1960, b.5, f.6, I-3-1 MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>17</sup> J. Mark Stauffer to the Sub-Committee of the General Conference Music Committee, Jan. 16, 1961, b.3, f.12, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>18</sup> Cletus W. Amstutz to Mary Oyer, Apr. 10, 1963, b.2, f.13, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL. A discussion of this source can also be found in Jason Kauffman, "New Hymnals and the Politics of Mennonite Music," Mennonite Church USA, Sept. 22, 2016, <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/menno-snapshots/new-hymnals-and-the-politics-of-mennonite-music/>.
- <sup>19</sup> Cletus W. Amstutz to Mary Oyer, Apr. 10, 1963, b.2, f.13, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>20</sup> Harold S. Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 18, no. 2 (Apr. 1944): 88.
- <sup>21</sup> Mary Oyer, interviewed by Rebecca Rich, Mar. 13, 1999, b.3, f.3, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>22</sup> J. Mark Stauffer to Walter Yoder, Mar. 18, 1959, b.5, f.6, I-3-1 MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>23</sup> Ellrose Zook to Walter Yoder, Apr. 4, 1960, b.5, f.6, I-3-1 MCMWC, MCA.

- <sup>24</sup> Report to the General Conference Music Committee from the Sub-Committee on the Use of Instruments in Mennonite Worship, b.5, f.7, I-3-1 MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>25</sup> Oyer, interviewed Mar. 16, 1999; Memorandum by Mary Oyer, Mar. 5, 1963, b.1, f.12, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>26</sup> Oyer, interviewed Mar. 13, 1999.
- <sup>27</sup> Mary Oyer, "Cultural Problems in the Production of a Mennonite Hymnal" (paper presented at the 16th annual Conference on Mennonite Educational and Cultural Problems, Hesston, KS, June 8-9, 1967, 137-138), b.2, f.14, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>28</sup> Mary Oyer, Report to Members of the GC and MC Hymnal Revision Committees, 1965, b.18, f.1, I-3-1 MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>29</sup> Mary Swartley and Rhoda Keener, eds., *She Has Done a Good Thing: Mennonite Women Leaders Tell Their Stories* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999), 142.
- <sup>30</sup> Mary Oyer to Vernon Neufeld and J. Harold Moyer, Feb. 3, 1965, b.15, f.1, I-3-1 MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>31</sup> Mary Oyer to Lester Hostetler, Sept. 7, 1964, b.15, f.1, I-3-1 MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>32</sup> Oyer to Neufeld and Moyer, Feb. 3, 1965, I-3-1 MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>33</sup> Minutes of the Joint MC-GC Hymnal Committee, Apr. 12-15, 1965, b.11, f.3, I-3-1 MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>34</sup> Introduction to *The Mennonite Hymnal* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1969).
- <sup>35</sup> *Thirty-Eighth Mennonite General Conference*, 51.
- <sup>36</sup> Mary Oyer, interviewed by author, Goshen, IN, June 26, 2021.
- <sup>37</sup> Oyer, interviewed Mar. 13, 1999.
- <sup>38</sup> Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties*, 219.
- <sup>39</sup> Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties*, 240.
- <sup>40</sup> *Thirty-Eighth Mennonite General Conference*, 13.
- <sup>41</sup> Mary Oyer, presentation, Goshen College chapel, Jan. 25, 2008, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>42</sup> *Thirty-Eighth Mennonite General Conference*, 25.
- <sup>43</sup> Tobin Miller Shearer, *Daily Demonstrators: The Civil Rights Movement in Mennonite Homes and Sanctuaries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 126.
- <sup>44</sup> Oyer, interviewed Mar. 16, 1999.
- <sup>45</sup> Edward Stoltzfus, Report of the Hymnal Revision Committee to the General Council, b.13, f.3, I-3-1, MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>46</sup> Mary Oyer to Erik Routley, Feb. 2, 1970, b.22, f.1, I-3-1, MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>47</sup> Slough and Sprunger King, *Nurturing Spirit Through Song*, 74.
- <sup>48</sup> Oyer, interviewed June 26, 2021.
- <sup>49</sup> Slough and Sprunger King, *Nurturing Spirit Through Song*, 142-143.
- <sup>50</sup> Memorandum from Boyd Nelson, Jan. 26, 1971, b.4, f.8, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>51</sup> Rosemary Wyse to Mary Oyer, Sept. 8, 1978, b.3, f.30, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>52</sup> *Estes Park 77 Program and Songbook*, b.1, f.22, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>53</sup> Jonathan Dueck, "Worship Wars, World Music, and Menno-Nots: Recent Studies in Mennonite Music," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 23 (2005): 124.
- <sup>54</sup> Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties*, 258.

- <sup>55</sup> Mary Oyer, *Exploring the Mennonite Hymnal: Essays* (Newton: KS, Faith and Life Press, 1980).
- <sup>56</sup> Philip Clemens to Mary Oyer, Feb. 8, 1983, b.38, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>57</sup> Ervin R. Stutzman, *From Nonresistance to Justice: The Transformation of Mennonite Church Peace Rhetoric, 1908–2008* (Scottsdale: PA, Herald Press, 2011), 264.
- <sup>58</sup> Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries, “Women in the Church: A Study Document,” Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>59</sup> For information on Marilyn Houser Hamm’s influence in Mennonite music and education, see Troy Landon Toavs, “Mennonite Music Education in Southern Manitoba: A Descriptive Study of Mennonite Collegiate Institute and Steinbach Christian High School” (PhD diss., University of North Dakota, 2013), 292.
- <sup>60</sup> Mary Oyer to J. Harold Moyer, July 29, 1982, b.35, I-3-1, MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>61</sup> Introduction to *Assembly Songs* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1983).
- <sup>62</sup> Mary Oyer, interviewed by Kathy Kauffman, Goshen, IN, Sept. 15, 1994, b.2, f.8, Hist. Mss. 6-295, Kathy A. Kauffman Oral History Project, MHL, 8.
- <sup>63</sup> Slough and Sprunger King, *Nurturing Spirit Through Song*, 51.
- <sup>64</sup> Mary Oyer to J. Lawrence Burkholder, Feb. 3, 1984, b.6, f.13, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>65</sup> Janneken Smucker, “A Curriculum of One’s Own: The Emergence of the Women’s Studies Program at Goshen College” (senior seminar paper, Goshen College, 1997), 4.
- <sup>66</sup> Smucker, “A Curriculum of One’s Own,” 17.
- <sup>67</sup> Slough and Sprunger King, *Nurturing Spirit Through Song*, 59.
- <sup>68</sup> Oyer, interviewed Sept. 15, 1994, 9.
- <sup>69</sup> Oyer, interviewed Sept. 15, 1994, 9.
- <sup>70</sup> Stutzman, *From Nonresistance to Justice*, 270, 280.
- <sup>71</sup> Stutzman, *From Nonresistance to Justice*, 238.
- <sup>72</sup> Maureen Epp and Carol Ann Weaver, eds. *Sound in the Land: Essays on Mennonites and Music* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2005), 27.
- <sup>73</sup> Mary Oyer to Nancy Faus, Oct. 4, 1986, b.39, I-3-1, MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>74</sup> Mary Oyer to the Hymnal Project Administrative Unit, Mar. 9, 1987, b.39, I-3-1, MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>75</sup> Rebecca Slough, interviewed by author, Goshen, IN, June 25, 2021.
- <sup>76</sup> Slough, interview.
- <sup>77</sup> Mary Oyer to Nancy Faus, Nov. 3, 1986, b.39, I-3-1, MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>78</sup> Mary Oyer, “Language Concerns,” Oct. 2, 1987, b.42, I-3-1, MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>79</sup> Minutes of discussion of the music committee, Oct. 29–Nov. 2, 1987, b.39, MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>80</sup> Mary Oyer, “Language Concerns,” Oct. 2, 1987, b.42, I-3-1, MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>81</sup> Oyer, interviewed Mar. 16, 1999.
- <sup>82</sup> Cynthia A. Lapp to Mary Oyer, July 12, 1988, b.39, I-3-1, MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>83</sup> Nancy Faus to Ann Morgan, Dec. 2, 1987, b.42, I-3-1, MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>84</sup> Harold Bauman to Mary Oyer, Sept. 25, 1986, b.39, I-3-1, MCMWC, MCA.
- <sup>85</sup> Marilyn Kern to Mary Oyer, June 1, 1989, unprocessed b.4, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>86</sup> Slough, interview.

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- <sup>87</sup> Mary Oyer to Joan Deeter, Norma Johnson, Bill Reist, and Gordon Zook, Oct. 14, 1988, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>88</sup> Nancy Faus to Mary Oyer, July 17, 1989, unprocessed b.4, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>89</sup> Oyer to Deeter, Johnson, Reist, and Zook, Oct. 14, 1988, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>90</sup> Mary Oyer to Laurence Martin, Feb. 16, 1989, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>91</sup> Mary Oyer, "Notes about June Meeting," 1989, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL.
- <sup>92</sup> Oyer, interviewed Mar. 16, 1999.
- <sup>93</sup> Joan Fyock to Mary Oyer, Apr. 1, 1991, b.44, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL; Slough, interview.
- <sup>94</sup> Slough and Sprunger King, *Nurturing Spirit Through Song*, 67.
- <sup>95</sup> Mary Oyer to J. Harold Moyer, June 20, 1992, Hist. Mss. 1-553, MKOP, MHL; Oyer, interviewed Mar. 16, 1999.
- <sup>96</sup> Slough, interview.
- <sup>97</sup> *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992); *The Mennonite Hymnal*.
- <sup>98</sup> Stutzman, *From Nonresistance to Justice*, 238.
- <sup>99</sup> Slough and Sprunger King, *Nurturing Spirit Through Song*, 73.