

<http://womenssacredmusicproject.org/>

In anticipation of the retirement of founding President Lisa Neufeld Thomas, the board of the Women's Sacred Music Project (founded in 1995 in Philadelphia) is soliciting proposals from experienced church musicians interested in assuming a leadership role in the organization by September of 2019. A short history of the organization is attached below.

The board seeks to engage qualified candidates with a passion for the work of women composers in submitting proposals of how they would carry forward the mission of WSMP in relation to their current professional interests and priorities. While the position up to now has been a volunteer role performed by the founder, there is seed money for a part-time salary and/or administrative assistance, as well as a designated fund for commissioning new hymns, anthems, or liturgical music from women composers and writers. The Board is open to amending titles and job descriptions to allow concentration on the music and program, with the Executive Director position separate from the Board Chair.

Building on the foundation of the supplementary hymnal *Voices Found* (2003) and numerous commissions of hymns and anthems over the years, types of proposals might include

- development of a curated website and/or social media platform to promote and link to the work of women composers;
- further development of the annual commission program for established composers;
- a competition for young composers;
- creating a funding source for new women composers.

However, other ideas are also welcomed and encouraged. Rather than prescribing specifically how the mission is to be carried forward, the board is seeking entrepreneurial individuals who would bring their own personal stamp to building on an important legacy.

Proposals should be sent by email to Virginia Ratigan, Interim President (jratigan@aol.com) by March 15, 2019.

The Women's Sacred Music Project

Convened by Lisa Neufeld Thomas in 1995 following the twentieth anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church, a group of laywomen at St. Mark's Church, Locust Street in Philadelphia, began to meet regularly to encourage each other to find their voices in worship. The music and liturgy of the Episcopal Church was only just beginning to reflect women's needs. Using newly authorized supplemental liturgical texts, the group worshiped monthly in the Lady Chapel at St. Mark's.

The group began searching more widely for music by and about women. A small group of musicians started to meet weekly to learn and sing the pieces that she collected. This group evolved into The Lady Chapel Singers, an ensemble that gave regular concerts using this repertoire in the USA and abroad, and made two recordings.

This growing movement to draw attention to the contributions of women in the church through music came to the attention of then-Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, The Right Rev. Allen Bartlett. Together with bishops Barbara Harris, Frank Griswold, and John Howe, he sponsored a resolution at the 1997 General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, directing the Standing Commission on Church Music to prepare a supplement to The Hymnal 1982 that would emphasize

“... liturgical music, hymns and other songs by women composers and poets both historical and contemporary; texts and music to be included which celebrate the contributions and diversity of women in scripture, women saints and churchwomen ...”

The resolution passed, and with extensive further research, review, and editorial advice, the supplement *Voices Found* containing more than 160 hymns, psalms, canticles, and spiritual songs was published by Church Publishing in 2003. A companion Leader’s Guide followed shortly afterwards.

Early in this process the Women’s Sacred Music Project was incorporated as a 501(c)3 entity and acted as agent of the Standing Commission in compiling *Voices Found*. Since the completion of that major project the WSMP Board (on which Bishop Bartlett still serves) has furthered the intent of the early sponsors by commissioning new works by and about women. To mark the 15th anniversary of the hymnal, a new anthem by Andrea Clearfield, *The Song of Hannah* (to be published by G. Schirmer in 2019) was commissioned for the 2018 convention of the Diocese of Pennsylvania and performed by the Cathedral Singers. On November 18, 2018, when the Song of Hannah was appointed in the lectionary, the anthem was also performed at Holy Trinity Rittenhouse Square, St. Martin in the Fields, Chestnut Hill, and again at the Cathedral.