

Preface | Samuli Korkalainen

## **Hymns in the margins and marginal groups' hymns**

Although large national Lutheran churches still operate in the Nordic countries and have their own officially authorised hymnals, hymns and spiritual songs also flourish on the fringes of society and seek their limits here in the north. Nordhymn's spring seminar in March 2025 was organised in Helsinki on the theme 'Hymns in the margins and marginal groups' hymns.' The idea was to focus on the hymns and spiritual songs of different minorities and their singing practices, as well as the use of the hymns and spiritual songs in rare, unusual, or limited situations. The topics of the presentations were wide-ranging, and the approaches were both present-day and historical. By minorities, we referred to ethnic and linguistic minorities, sexual and gender minorities, minority churches and spiritual movements, and various disability groups. We also discussed situations, circumstances, and people outside majorities in general. Marginal groups create their own hymns and reinterpret old ones, sometimes revealing discriminatory practices within congregational singing. In doing so, they remind us that hymns and songs do not belong exclusively to the majority.

The December issue of *Hymnologi – Nordisk tidsskrift* is always thematic and relates to the topic of the previous spring's Nordhymn seminar. This issue therefore contains several texts on the topic, some based on presentations given in Helsinki and some otherwise inspired by the topic. In peer-reviewed articles, David Scott Hamnes and Johan Máhtte Skum discuss hymnological decolonisation by introducing the Northern Sámi hymn tune accompaniment book *Sálbmagirji šuokŋagirji*, while Peter E. Nissen presents songbooks in the missionary revival movement in Denmark 1982–2025.

Two of the three essays are also closely related to the theme of this issue. We invited our North American colleague, Stephanie A. Budwey, to write an essay on methods on researching queer hymnody, as this topic has not been studied in the Nordic countries and we wished to encourage researchers to take an interest in it. In her essay, Sofia Gustavsson discusses hymns in sign language. We also have a third essay in which Jørgen Hasseriis

ponders on who composed the hymn 'Dejlig er den himmel blå.' In addition, this issue of our journal features two interviews related to marginal groups. Firstly, with Ann-Christine Ruuth we discuss questions of inclusivity, queer hymns, and choosing hymns at worship services, especially at Rainbow Masses. Secondly, Sofija Lazić Pedersen interviewed Sofia Östling on the newly established organisation for Female Swedish Organists and their three reports on why their existence is much needed.

Many members of our Nordic networks have once again participated in conferences and events. We have received greetings from the Societas Liturgica congress in Paris in July and from the Christian Congregational Music Conference in Ripon College Cuddesdon in August. Nordic events reported on are the seminar during Ecumenical Week in Stockholm in August and the gathering of a new Danish network for hymnology. We also have eight reviews of books and websites published in the Nordic countries and elsewhere.

Advent and Christmas are the seasons for hymns and songs all over the world. Here in Finland, more than a million people gather in churches, schools, retirement homes, pubs, and outdoor venues to sing Christmas carols together under the title 'Kauneimmat Joululaulut / De vackraste julsångerna' (The greatest Christmas carols). Many of these songs are shared with other Nordic countries and the rest of the world. As these songs echo, it is good to sit down and familiarise oneself with the broad variety of hymnological research and practices, of which this issue is another excellent example.

On behalf of the editorial board, I would like to express our warmest thanks to everyone who has contributed with articles, essays, reports, reviews, and other texts to our journal this year. We would also like to thank all the anonymous reviewers whose feedback has helped to improve the peer-reviewed articles. Thank you also to all our readers. We welcome your feedback, as this journal is made for you. We wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year!