

The Future of Worship in the WELS  
from the perspective of a new hymnal project

*for the annual meeting of the*

Institute for Worship and Outreach  
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## Devotional Introduction

We tend not to preach it from pulpits lest our purpose be misconstrued or some poor soul be confirmed in despair. Since it is the opposite of the good news, it is understandable that we are very careful not to lead someone to dwell on it because it is definitely something on which we really don't want them to dwell. Doubt is the enemy and we don't want anyone, including ourselves, to be in doubt about what the future holds. So we tend not to invite people to think about what it would be like to endlessly writhe in the pain and eternal God-forsakenness of hell, to suffer shame and despair and torture that will never let up. It's an understatement to say that thinking about it is unpleasant. Dwelling on it for any length of time is extremely disconcerting. Planting that horrible "What if..." in a person's mind is something we rightly want to avoid – all those subjective, self-focused questions such as, "What if I fell away? What if I only thought I was a believer? What if I really were a hypocrite?"

Forgive me for delving into such things in the opening paragraph of an essay, but then again, maybe I shouldn't be asking for forgiveness. Perhaps I should let Jesus' words stand: "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart" (Matthew 18:35). The treatment referred to was being handed over to be tortured until an unpayable debt should be paid; the unmerciful servant was going to be tortured forever. Jesus spoke of the gnashing of teeth six times in Matthew's gospel. Hell is real. It is bad. It is where I and every sinner ought to be. Pondering the eternity of divine condemnation for sin is a frightening thing.

I recall going back to a seminary classroom after a guest preacher had delivered a mission festival sermon. The classroom professor was appreciative of the fact that the guest preacher had actually spoken plainly and clearly about hell, citing the opinion that he didn't often hear the topic brought up any more. I don't have to tell anyone in this room what it is we have been saved from, but until the beatific vision blots out any dwelling on hell which we might ever do, our Savior isn't much of a Savior if we're not thinking in terms of what he saved us from.<sup>1</sup>

The torturous God-forsakenness of hell which we genuinely deserve but genuinely don't want to think about is what was being visited on the Lord Jesus in the darkness of Good Friday afternoon. Our worst nightmare was his reality because he became our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). He became our curse (Galatians 3:13). He became every sinner and was despised and rejected by both men and God. There is no amount of imagining that can allow any person to gaze deeply into Jesus' eyes between noon and 3pm on Good Friday and to see within his tortured soul the actual depth of his sufferings. Many have already said that the whole reason Jesus suffered as he did was so that we will never have to, so that we will truly never need to dwell on what it would be like to go to hell. That is one accurate way to express the truth of Christ's crucifixion. The son of a Church of England clergyman expressed that same truth in this way: "How deep the Father's love for us." He followed that line up with a full stanza and five more stanzas after that. When wondering in the final stanza why Jesus should do what he did for us and for everyone, he wrote: "I cannot give an answer, but this I know with all my heart, his wounds have paid my ransom."<sup>2</sup>

At the outset of a new hymnal project, plenty of thoughts and questions will be flying around. None is more important, however, than this – that we know the answer when these questions are asked: Why will we sing? Why will we devote ten years to this? Why will we put so much work into this? Why will

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<sup>1</sup> Intentional ending of a phrase and a sentence with a preposition, for emphasis

<sup>2</sup> Townend, Stuart. "How Deep the Father's Love for Us." © 1995 Thankyou Music.

we have such great concern over what happens in the public worship service? Answer: Because Christ has delivered us from hell, because he lives and because in him and in him alone, we live.

We will be digging into this project, and having dug in, we will be inundated by and buried beneath a seemingly endless number of forms and texts and tunes and settings and prayers and translations and descants and canticles and psalms and verses and chorales and chants and accidentals and sharps and flats and opinions and complaints and surveys and meetings and to-do's and pdf's and emails and articles and promotions and headaches and joys and probably some laughter and possibly some tears, but of this we dare not lose sight: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. For the work we do and in the work we produce, we dare not lose sight of Christ, who suffered hell in place of everyone and rose from the grave, indicative of God's decree of innocence for all. That, again this time around, is what is going to put the Latin adjective *novum* after the noun *canticum*.

## Logo

Hebrews 2:12 has been utilized at WELS Schools of Worship Enrichment as a way of encapsulating some of the key features of corporate worship. I would like to express my thanks to Caleb Bassett and Ian Welch for their work on this hymnal project logo, which gives expression to the principles of corporate worship expressed in the passage. Corporate worship is and we want it to remain nothing other than people gathered around and making use of the means of grace to declare to the Lord and to each other the saving name of our God. From the context we know the speaker of these words to be our Savior Jesus himself. How fitting that our worship traces the footsteps of the one who worshiped the Lord in spirit and in truth as mankind's sinless substitute!



# HYMNAL PROJECT

*I will declare your name in the assembly.*

WELS • HEBREWS 2:12

## Dedication

### To a people yet unborn<sup>3</sup>

Since no single individual produces a hymnal, the phrase above is more of a reminder for everyone rather than one person making a dedication. Throughout the course of this project we want to dedicate ourselves to providing high-quality, gospel-rich worship materials for the people of our church body, recognizing that under the Lord's blessing and direction these same materials will make their way into the hands and heads and hearts of people yet to be born. Such a reminder also speaks to the matter of the high responsibility we hold when it comes to what we are delivering to God's people of this generation and to what we are passing down to God's people of the next generation.

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 22:30,31 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn— for he has done it.

## Introduction

At the very beginning of the most recent hymnal project within our own church body (1983), in his first essay for that project, then project director, now sainted Rev. Kurt Eggert stated: "...we have no specific experience in producing a hymnal."<sup>4</sup> What prompted that statement can be captured through a cursory look at what was going on with Lutheran hymnals from the late 1950's to the early 1980's.

Just before Missouri and Wisconsin formally went their separate ways in 1961, plans were afoot for a handful of Lutheran church bodies to work on a revision of The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH). Several years after the LC-MS/WELS split, some of the parties involved in this revision effort had morphed into the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW; 1965). Apart from ILCW undertakings, Missouri had advanced the TLH revision work begun in 1959 and in 1969 released its *Worship Supplement*. Ultimately, the Lutheran bodies which had come together in the ILCW released Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW; 1978). The LC-MS had stepped out of the ILCW just before LBW was published.

Through the 1960's and until the 1978 publication of LBW, WELS had been an interested bystander, not particularly minded to publish a hymnal of its own but content for the most part to wait and see if something like the emerging LBW could be used in its congregations. When both Missouri and Wisconsin determined LBW to be unsuitable for any kind of formal adoption or use, Missouri went forward with its own publishing efforts, which resulted in Lutheran Worship (LW; 1982). WELS also looked closely at LW but finally determined that there was a need to produce a hymnal of its own.

Thus could Eggert say in 1983 that WELS had no specific experience in producing a hymnal. Thirty years later, we are not in a position to say that we have a storied past or a vast amount of experience in producing a hymnal, but it can be said that we have some experience. A Sampler intended to be used for a trial period of six months practically became a hymnal unto itself as far as the use of its updated order of service. Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal (CW; 1993) became nearly legendary as far as how quickly and broadly it was incorporated into congregational use across the synod. Christian Worship: Supplement (CWS; 2008) again showed congregations' desires to make use of an increasing amount of worship resources and to incorporate materials which had become available after the release of CW in 1993.

In the above-referenced essay, project director Eggert identified four TLH issues which were in need of addressing as that hymnal was moving past its fortieth anniversary: 1) hymnody; 2) liturgy; 3) language; 4) music. If one steps back for a moment and gives thought to what constituted TLH, it appears from those four points that everything in TLH needed to be addressed. That may be one of the most significant differences between the project which began in 1983 and the one which is beginning now in 2013. There does not seem to be any overwhelming sentiment that CW has worn out its welcome or that it is in dire need of being replaced. What does meet with agreement is that TLH went beyond the expected lifespan of a hymnal. Now that our church body does have a very limited amount of experience in producing hymnals, it would appear that, along with many other church bodies, we have also come to have a fair sense of how long hymnals can be expected to serve, that in the case of TLH, fifty-two years was significantly too long, that a hymnal's lifespan may more realistically be placed around thirty years, that a supplementary volume at about half of that span seems to have been well-timed.

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<sup>4</sup> Eggert, Kurt. "The Shaping of the New Hymnal", an essay prepared for the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum, p. 1.

If, however, replacing CW is not viewed as being as critical as was replacing TLH, what are the issues which call for this new project, beyond the fact that the end of the three decade lifespan is only ten years away and beyond the fact that a 2024 release lines up nicely with the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Lutheran hymnal? To conclusively arrive at what those issues are may require a kind of surveying of the constituency which has not yet been scheduled but which will undoubtedly take place. Short of such survey results, the previous paragraph is intended to lay the groundwork for making the statement that the time has come for us to again evaluate what we have in hand and to do the detailed, tedious, exhaustive and exhausting work of seeing what can be added to the corpus of published worship materials which exists in the CW line. (That there may well be some new digital delivery vehicles for worship content is a secondary matter, but one which certainly comes into play and one which will be covered later in the essay.)

Both WELS as it approached its 1983 hymnal project and the LC-MS as it approached its most recent hymnal project Lutheran Service Book (LSB; 2006) recognized that the heritage of Christian hymnody and liturgical material which can rightly be published under the name Lutheran is a heritage which needs to be preserved and enlarged.<sup>5</sup> One might draw an analogy to the concept expressed with the phrase *ecclesia semper reformanda est*, as it relates to the state of the visible church. There shouldn't really be a time when a hymnal is done. We will always need to be re-examining the worship materials we use, for their doctrinal expressions, for passage-of-time language issues, for content gaps which we can continuously work on filling, and for opportunities to add quality material (ancient or recent) to what we already have. In plain language, we want to hold onto all the good we have and we want to build on it with the best we can find. As a church body, we have corporately decided that the time has arrived for that process to again run its course. It will remain to be seen, but very early in the project, with CW and CWS having opened people's eyes a little wider to the concept of ongoing updates, there doesn't seem to be any real pushback as far as moving forward with the church body's next hymnal.

There are, however, the same kinds of recurring issues today as there were in the late 1970's and throughout the 1980's such as, "Where are our congregations at when it comes to the orders of service they use, the hymns they sing, the prayers they pray, the psalms they chant (or don't chant), the musical instruments they use (or don't use), the vestments they wear (or don't wear)?" Again, we haven't taken the surveys yet and who knows how conclusive they will be, but the reader is cordially invited to serve as evaluator and, by circumspection, to compare what is seen and practiced among us in 2013 with an assessment made by one of our worship professors twenty-one years ago, one year before the release of CW:

*In 1992 there is nothing approaching liturgical uniformity in the Wisconsin Synod. The roster of our 1200-plus parishes includes congregations which will use nothing else but The Lutheran Hymnal as well as congregations which will use everything else but The Lutheran Hymnal. A visitor to our congregations just in the state of Wisconsin could find*

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<sup>5</sup> Eggert, Kurt J. "Enriching Our Worship Heritage." Essay prepared for the Convention of the Northern Wisconsin District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, June 23-25, 1986: "In addition to preserving and improving our worship heritage, we should also ENLARGE it by incorporating the best and most useful of that which has emerged or been produced since our hymnal was published. PRESERVE, IMPROVE, ENLARGE. This, I believe, would constitute the 'enrichment' of our worship heritage."

[CPH website regarding LSB](#): "To honor that tradition, Lutheran Service Book not only preserves significant portions of that heritage but also makes its own contribution for our time."



*the very liturgical Common Service at one end of the spectrum and a very unliturgical “seeker service” on the other end. A poll of our home missionaries, conducted by the Commission of Worship in 1986, revealed that the majority were regularly using dozens of hymns from sources other than The Lutheran Hymnal. Homemade rites for marriage, installation, confirmation, and baptism abound, and are often shared among congregations. Replacements for the Common Service, prepared by men considered to be wise innovators, are duplicated and mailed upon request. Even before the new rites from Christian Worship began to appear, it was not uncommon that congregations would have a different order of service each Sunday of the month. Such has become more common since those services began to be issued. Many of our pastors no longer preach on the basis of lectionary texts; expository preaching (defined by its advocates as chapter by chapter preaching) is growing in popularity.<sup>6</sup>*

How would we characterize the state of worship in our church body today? Since the 1993 release of CW, there has been plenty of water which has already long ago spilled over the dam regarding praise bands and so-called contemporary services, different sources for hymns and liturgical materials, liturgical and non-liturgical worship, etc., etc. A later section of this essay will explore those things which have to do with unity or uniformity in worship. Suffice it to say for now that on the front end of a new hymnal project, we do want to ascertain where we stand as a church body, specifically with regard to the use or non-use of the Christian Worship line of materials. That means that virtually everything in the CW line is going to be up for review. The three main worship services, the two services from the daily office, the two additional main services from CWS, the psalmody, the marriage and burial orders, the lectionary (or lectionaries, when CWS is included), the hymns, as well as all the materials in what was called *New Service Settings*, in Christian Worship: Occasional Services (CW:OS), in CWS, *Planning Christian Worship* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) and the Hymn of the Day and suggested hymns which are in it – everything will be reviewed in terms of both usage and content.

For example, as one of literally thousands of examples, are we happy with where the hymn, “Rejoice, Rejoice Believers” (CW #7) has ended up after it was “divorced” from its more familiar TLH tune (VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN) and “wed” to the less familiar tune HAF TRONES LAMPA FÄRDIG? Other hymnals have wed the text and tune as did CW. Has that worked out as planned or was it simply that with seven instances of it, VALET was overused in TLH? As another example, a decade ago, an LC-MS worship professor was writing on the use of “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” as an opening hymn for Lent 5, sung to ROCKINGHAM OLD. A little over two decades ago, the decision was made that CW would not offer that text/tune combination, whereas for fifty-two years among us that tune had been available in TLH (and, for that matter, is still available today) as a second tune for the text. Somewhat interestingly, LSB offers two tunes just as TLH did (LSB 425 HAMBURG; LSB 426 ROCKINGHAM OLD). Both tunes can obviously accommodate the text as far as meter and syllables are concerned, so should we go back to offering both? We could, but the way the syllables and the music align when Watt’s text is sung to ROCKINGHAM OLD presents some challenges (st. 2 emphasizing the tiny preposition “in” on an accentuated half note/first beat of the measure with “Save in the death...”; the next line in st. 2 is more awkward with the definite article “the” on the same accentuated half note with “All the vain things...”; the second line of stanza 3 again has a questionable syllable assignment on the accentuated half note/first beat of the measure, i.e., the second syllable of the word “sorrow”, so that the singer is emphasizing sor-**row**, rather than the common pronunciation of **sor**-row, emphasis on the first syllable).

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<sup>6</sup> Tiefel, James. “Toward a Liturgical Unity”, p.2. Arizona-California Pastoral Conference, Tempe, AZ, October 29-30, 1991.

The choice of tunes for this text is not by any means an earth-shaking matter which will soon or ever affect one's ministry or congregation, but nor are these matters arbitrary as if any text can be sung to any tune which has a meter which can accommodate it.<sup>7</sup> It's time again to review everything.

Not to be lost in a conversation about assessment and review is the understanding that a church body which has produced a supplement to a hymnal is looking toward getting back to one book by combining resources from the two it has. This essay will begin to address where those various materials will land in terms of publication of both hard copy and digital-only materials. The point is that certain committees of the new hymnal project may anticipate that they will be spending upwards of a year going through detailed assessments and evaluations of what we now have, so that, with a different set of eyes evaluating all the materials thirty years after the fact, we can reassess where the weaknesses and gaps might be, charitably realizing that, from the perspective of hymnal committee members thirty years ago, things we notice now may then have had no reason to be categorized as weaknesses or gaps.

In addition to reacting to assessments of where we are at as a church body and to how our materials are holding up now that the hymnal has been out for twenty years, there are some principles which I would feel are worth exploring, principles which are not necessarily reactionary to any particular aspect of the status quo. They will appear in ***bold italic*** in the closing paragraphs of this lengthy introduction.

Were we to be living in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, we might well need to be all over the matter of translating German hymnody into English, as the German American Lutherans of that time were transitioning into the adoption of English as their spoken language.<sup>8</sup> Were we to be living in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, we might well need to approach the matter of the production of a hymnal from the angle of seeking to re-forge doctrinal unity, since rationalism was taking a heavy toll on orthodoxy. Not long ago I was given my grandfather's German hymnal, the year of his confirmation (1917) imprinted on its cover, a volume with no musical notation and not much bigger than a deck of cards. In that same year, the United Lutheran Church in America published "Common Service Book of the Lutheran Church (with Hymnal)", which, by virtue of the orders of service contained in it, was an obvious precursor to TLH.<sup>9</sup> Were we to be living in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in post-WWI America, a rising and distinct distaste for things German may well have moved us even more quickly toward producing hymnals in English. If we lived through those days in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century where a new Bible translation (NIV) was finally going to shoot past the 450 year old standard (KJV), we might well be recognizing that the Lord is not demeaned if we address him with "you" rather than with "thou" and we might well recognize that our generation would have to take its knocks for being that generation which instituted that rather unpopular change, including archaic language changes other than just the pronouns for the deity. But having gone through that Bible translation change in the 1970's so that the gospel might be clearly

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<sup>7</sup> The old joke about "Amazing Grace" sung to the "Gilligan's Island" theme.

<sup>8</sup> "It was also at about the beginning of the nineteenth century that the transition to the English language began among these early German immigrants. In the course of this transition serious questions would be raised as to whether good translations of German hymns were even possible, if possible whether they were desirable, and whether the literary quality of the result was worth the effort. All these questions and how they were answered were to have an impact on the development of Lutheran hymnody in the nineteenth century and would continue to trouble Lutherans to the present day." Schalk, Carl. "The Roots of American Lutheran Hymnody", an essay appearing in "Hymns in the Life of the Church," the Journal of the Fourth Annual Conference of the Good Shepherd Institute, p. 107.

<sup>9</sup> Schalk notes that there were other hymnals which were serving to bring denominational or ethnic groups together around this same time: the Norwegians' *Lutheran Hymnary* (1913) and the *American Lutheran Hymnal* (1930) of the Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo synods.

proclaimed to a people yet unborn, we might now be able to recognize that producing a hymnal which began to do the same was doing something that was also necessary and would soon be viewed as beneficial. So what will a hymnal released one quarter of the way into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century need to address or accomplish? There may well be many opinions, including the one expressed by a member of the congregation I recently served,<sup>10</sup> but I will seek to put forth a few issues which I see looming on the horizon (or closer than that), which I believe we might do well to address in our day.

It's not every day that a young man walks into your congregation and you come to find out that he is majoring in choral conducting. Such was the case for me once, and while we were in the process of going through BIC lessons, this young man (I was young then, too) stated that he appreciated how we didn't just throw congregational membership out there for anyone, that what we taught and what members believed was not a matter of "anything goes," but that we let people know in detail what we believed from the Bible before inviting them to join based on a shared belief in those teachings. He told me he had been in other churches where it was pretty much "anything goes," that he'd been at places where you were considered a member after having attended once. I understand that such approaches may be altogether commonplace in various "congregations" still today, but the point is that we operate in a worship climate where, like the old television program that ran from 1975-1976, "Almost Anything Goes."

This first point, however, is not aimed at the Christian liberty teachings which address the particular ways in which a worship service can be carried out (ancient rite vs. non-liturgical vs. "orderly" free-for-all). It is aimed at the materials themselves, especially the hymns and their music. It is a point which is not original to me or to this essay. While not original to him, either, it was recently raised by a Commission on Worship (C/W) member<sup>11</sup> and I have found myself to be in agreement with it. In a word, it is the matter of **discernment**. In a worship world where almost anything goes, whose place is it to render evaluations or judgments about the relative worth of one hymn text as compared to another, or of one hymn tune or setting as compared to another, or of one Gloria sung in a worship service as compared to another? Over the years I have seen traces of this issue expressed most frequently in statements such as, "Those who have expertise in this area are qualified to render decisions or give guidance when it comes to \_\_\_\_\_ ..." Undoubtedly I am not well enough read to say it definitively, but I haven't seen this issue fleshed out in print among us. I've heard several colleagues talk about it this way: "Just because X congregation recently had what they felt was a spectacular youth service last year doesn't mean that service should ever again see the light of day."

I don't have any problem whatsoever with a congregation where a budding poet or composer is given an opportunity to let his/her own materials be put to use in a public worship setting. I have probably been that poet or composer in a case or two. I don't have any problem when a choir director or worship leader, in Christian liberty, makes a judgment call and makes use of a less than stellar hymn (like the old favorite "In the Garden") once in a while. While there will be more and more people who have never heard of such old "classics", that particular piece was used at a recent funeral service because the deceased, a WWII vet, absolutely loved it. Hopefully we can all recognize that an occasional exception to the high standards we seek to uphold (one which does not compromise any of our scriptural convictions but may challenge the personal tastes of various individuals) does not mean we have sold out to whatever is deemed relevant, caved in rather than stood firm, or scrapped our heritage.

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<sup>10</sup> "I can save you a lot of time by just getting back out the old blue hymnal (TLH)."

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Kermit Moldenhauer

At the same time, when we publish something as a church body, we want to practice discernment. There are standards. There are people with training who can recognize a good text, a good tune, a good setting, as compared to materials that just aren't that good. There will also be popular materials which, for scriptural and confessional reasons, Lutherans will not want to make use of in a public worship setting. As was the case with the last hymnal project, this kind of discernment is something we again want to practice, and it may be good to have qualified individuals write on the topic as this hymnal project advances over the next decade.

If you have had opportunity to read through Not Unto Us: A Celebration of the Ministry of Kurt J. Eggert, you will have noticed that he had extensive personal experience in emphasizing the benefits and encouraging the use of the **Christian church year**. If, throughout this essay, our working definition of liturgical worship can be viewed as the use of the ancient rite with its ordinary and propers (including a set lectionary), the observance of the Christian church year, and regular provision for the sacrament of the altar, Eggert championed all of them. As this hymnal project ramps up and ten years' worth of work is set up to bring it to completion, we would have to recognize that American Christianity today goes in a host of different directions, many of which are not at all guided by the Christian church year.<sup>12</sup> Apart from Christmas and Easter, it is as though the various topics of the non-festival half of the Christian church year (and others from who knows where) have been stretched across the entire year and have swallowed whole the festival half of the church year. That is one way to go about it. I would, however, like to follow Eggert's example in going about it another way and would like to encourage all who will listen to stay with the Christian church year and its accompanying lectionary.

One committee of the new hymnal project will have up to eight years to work on the lectionary, three series of readings built to coincide with the observance of the Christian church year. It is a work process which includes myriad intricacies, such as distilling texts down to their main emphases, coordinating them with other texts on the same Sunday, keeping them distinct from other texts in the three year series, giving thought to the matter of covering the whole counsel of God throughout the three years and also respecting the way in which Christians from previous generations have organized the scriptures for public reading at worship services. Other committees' work will dovetail or overlap as Hymn of the Day and Planning Christian Worship resources (along with hymn suggestions which carry out the themes of the lessons) are re-crafted once again.

The liturgy and the lectionary are sturdy warhorses which, through a project such as this, are again given fresh legs so as to continue to deliver the goods of the gospel of our Lord. A later section of the essay will spell out some of these matters in greater detail, but for now, please recognize that the new hymnal project will be built around a regular observance of the Christian church year and the lectionary. This becomes a key point as we recognize that music for the orders of service will be music that is composed with the texts of the historic liturgy in mind, that hymns which this project will present to Lutheran congregations will include many which are specifically geared toward supporting the lectionary which the church body chooses to publish, that service folders and attendant music and the devotions in Meditations and several other specific published items are all coordinated with the lectionary and with hymnody which is aligned with the church year and the lectionary. While fully understanding where Christian liberty allows congregations and worship leaders to go, I am also fully convinced that church

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<sup>12</sup> The UMC church down the street is my "favorite" because they always put a new banner out on their yard advertising their most recent series. It appears they are observing the Easter season with a "God in the Movies" series.

year and lectionary-based resources offer congregations of all sizes the opportunity to fill their public worship with an abundance of freshness and variety.

While serving as a pastor in Arizona in the early 1990's, I was sitting in a prospective member's living room and he had the nerve, the nerve to tell me that the day would eventually come when people would sit or walk around in their living rooms with flat panel devices and that information would come into those devices through the air. That was the early 1990's. His name was not Steve Jobs, but he was spot on. Will those panels end up in the hands of worshipers in a public worship service, guiding them through what happens that day?

It was also while serving in Arizona that digital projectors began to be used in public worship settings. Having an appreciation for computers and technology, I began to think that from what I was starting to see, every church would soon have a screen on which to project whatever it is they would project. My thinking on that has since changed, but utilizing that kind of hardware seems to have gone beyond being only a trend or fad.

What lies behind both of these examples is the matter of **communication**, specifically, how we communicate. This essay, as long as it may turn out to be, will not explore in any depth things like peer learning, visual learning, rote learning, the use of SMART Boards for Bible Class or screens for worship, bulleted PowerPoint presentations in worship, or any number of other types of learning or presentation-related items. What it will seek to emphasize is the matter of clear communication as that relates to a hymnal project. Most if not all of those who read this essay will recall Paul's comment in 1 Corinthians about preferring five intelligible words over endless speaking in tongues which no one could understand and from which no one could thus benefit.

Intelligible communication is vitally important when it comes to the prayers which are written and spoken, the poetry and language of hymns and psalms and lessons, the translation(s) of which we will make use in worship, the visitors and guests who join us, and, most notably, the next generation of worshipers which will hear the Lord's saving name declared in the assembly. As was the case in Corinth, we cannot guarantee that every unbeliever who walks into our public worship services will buy or believe what is being proclaimed, but we can take every possible step to insure that what they hear is intelligible. The time is now to evaluate and to work on what we will pass on to worshipers over the next forty years, a people yet unborn, Christians whose births may well succeed our deaths and whom we will only meet in heaven but Christians whom, nonetheless, this project's materials will reach. Language and other means of communication through which we wish to accomplish this are issues that call for our attention and for our best efforts.

Perhaps all of us have heard of problems which come into play when worship is nothing more than *entertainment*. In a related way, perhaps we've already discussed plenty how the determinative factor of public worship has never been meant to be, "Did I *enjoy* that?" There is, however, another term which begins with "en-" which I would like to set forth as a final point to consider by way of introduction, and that is the term **engaging**.

Long before CW was published, Rev. Eggert wrote that a new hymnal will never, of itself, enliven or enrich or enhance public worship. It will always be the gospel activity of the Holy Spirit which grabs

people's attention and leads them to worship which is sincere and in keeping with the truth. He added that there needs to be a lot of work and effort on our part to take ownership of the music and texts and forms which bring the gospel to us.

Some of those tunes are getting tired. Some of that music is no longer "in people's ears."<sup>13</sup> Some of those texts are not saying a whole lot and some of them are saying it in ways which are more likely to have people shooting straight past them without even pausing to think about them rather than in ways which cause them to appreciate or ponder what is being said. There is some music that is inaccessible or outdated or low-quality or all three.<sup>14</sup> There are some texts which either need to be overhauled or hauled away. If we want what we publish to be engaging, to have an impact on cognitive and affective domains of believers' beings, then once again in our day we're going to have to recognize that some materials from past hymnals will go on, some will need to be altered, some ought to be archived, and some need to be let go.

In thinking through this term engaging, there has been a part of me which wants to say that our materials need to be "not boring." I recognize that there may be difficulties in saying it that way, because, for example, God's Word ought never to be regarded as boring, or because what is boring and what is not boring is an awfully subjective thing to try to determine. But I think the readers of this essay can get past such difficulties and I think they will know what I mean. Even ancient hymns and rites can be done in a fresh, engaging way, but I would submit that there are ways that we no longer speak, no longer write, no longer compose, and no longer sing, and that some of the materials which fall into those categories are just difficult to freshen up. I'm not going to make blanket statements about this genre of music or that type of text, because blanket statements are typically out of line and they always have their exceptions. I am going to say, after scriptural and doctrinal integrity issues have been taken care of as a matter of first priority, that our goal, with every turn of a paper or digital page, needs to be, "We can put that to good use for the people who are gathering for corporate worship (or are using these materials privately)!"

## **Worship Education**

For me personally, the last two years of college, the four years of seminary, and the first four years of parish ministry in AZ were the ten years during which the previous hymnal project was being carried out. I recall bits and pieces of it. The things I recall most were the Sampler (of course), various worship elements/hymns which were informally field-tested at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and that one order for a Service of the Word which had four options within one service (Christ as Servant, King, Lord, Teacher), the four-column formatting of which was deemed, in the final analysis, to be too difficult to follow.

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<sup>13</sup> Again, not a phrase which is original to me but which Dr. Moldenhauer has used.

<sup>14</sup> This is not intended as a critique of the faithful individuals who worked on the previous hymnal and its line of products. It is a simple recognition that some materials which are placed in a hymnal soar and others don't. It is not only our assessment of materials but it is also time which determines value and worth and shelf-life.

A concentrated decade of worship education is one of the beneficial returns of another hymnal project. It can additionally be stated with confidence that what are now considered to be even some of the more basic technological advances will be giving us much broader opportunity to bring people along through the educational processes which a hymnal project can also provide, things like email and websites and YouTube and online surveys, things which were not a part of the previous project. Apart from the specific ways in which media are used to involve the constituency, a good number of items comes to mind when worship education topics and a hymnal project are combined. This first and likely longer section of the main body of this essay may also be thought of as the philosophical section of an essay which is treating the direction of worship in the future of our church body.

### ***1) Corporate worship which is evangelical***

I appreciate short, memorable ways of saying things. So I like it when Prof. Tiefel has a short section in the essay already cited where he states (I am paraphrasing): “Did we please the people with what we did today?” is a Church Growth question. “Did we please God with what we did today?” is a Roman Catholic question. “Did God come to us in the gospel today?” is the question framed from a “public worship is evangelical” perspective. I also liked it and probably laughed a little when Marva Dawn responded to the person who was talking about “what they got out of worship” by saying something on the order of, “Well, that’s nice but we didn’t come to worship you today.” I have appreciated for some time the reminder that what used to appear on church signs on a regular basis (Divine Service – 10 am) is a very accurate way to talk about how God serves us in worship. Luther’s comment about the highest keeping of the Sabbath is to hear and heed the Word is yet another succinct way of describing the key component of public worship.

Regularly translating all of that into a discernible public worship emphasis and setting forth worship materials which are meant to have that focus and making it a principle which is understood by all the public worshipers takes ongoing effort. It’s likely going to involve more than merely talking once in a while about public worship as receiving Christ and his gifts, which also seems to be one of the specific ways in which the evangelical nature of public worship is being spoken of these days. In whatever way it is articulated, it is our desire that it happen, that those who come to the house of God are carefully and consistently fed with the gospel truth of Jesus Christ as Savior from sin.

In practice, one would hope that we would be able to apply a homiletical principle to this specific public worship principle which we call evangelical. Herman Sasse has been credited as the one who first spoke in terms of not preaching *about* the gospel but in terms of preaching the gospel. In that same way, we really don’t want or need our public worship services and their materials to be constantly speaking *about* receiving Christ and his gifts, but simply to be a receiving of those gifts. The singers of hymns are singing forgiveness and peace in Jesus into their own hearts and the hearts of those who hear them. The reciters of creeds are reciting the truths about the Trinity, truths which are coming from hearts that believe and which are directed toward fortifying those who hear. We’re a means of grace church body and the way in which the Spirit uses the means of grace is an emphasis which is almost unique to our church body. There will always be a need and a place for making this emphasis, for talking about how the gospel works (Isaiah 55; Romans 1), especially the BIC and other Bible Classes. What we might want to be sensitive to is talking/singing *about* the means of grace or talking/singing *about* the Word and sacraments as opposed to simply using them, i.e., using the means of grace full strength without talking about the means of grace or about how worship is receiving. Sing Christ. Preach forgiveness. Confess the creeds. The gospel will work and the people will be receiving and will be fed.

And they will be inspired and enabled to respond, because the good news about Jesus does that. The worship writers I've been reading in the past years from both WELS and LC-MS have come down very strongly and clearly on the receiving side of public worship, so strongly and clearly, in fact, that, in some cases, I've been given the impression that the response or sacrifice of praise side of things has almost been relegated to insignificance. I understand the need for the emphasis. With all the talk and writing and strong sentiment which there can be about which forms are best and which features are thought to be indispensable and "How could you have thought to have had a service without confession and absolution?!" and "What on earth were you thinking putting THAT in a worship service?!", what we're in church to give can quickly and easily occupy a place of importance which it ought not have. But response has a place. It needs to have a place. With how we approach worship and with the way in which we use the materials that a hymnal project will produce, what we really need is balance.

If it is the chicken and the egg question as far as which came first, it is the gospel which has always preceded (obviously) a response to the gospel. Christian Worship: Manual (CW:M) from our most recent hymnal project has a section which speaks with perfect clarity: "This receiving from God and giving to God is the sum total of the Christian life. It is a never-ending cycle. Receiving from God and responding to God are not only the sum total of each individual Christian's life, however. They are also the heart and soul of the public worship of the Christian Church."<sup>15</sup>

First things first (the gospel), followed by some sort of balance (receiving and responding). Keeping that balance in mind will also be important when we come to the matter of evaluating hymnody which leans toward the responding side, toward praising the Almighty and giving thanks for First Article blessings.

## ***2) Corporate worship which is liturgical***

A working definition of the term *liturgical* was given in the introductory paragraphs and is repeated briefly here: ancient rite/church year/sacrament. Why our church body and its Commission on Worship are not exclusively but are yet strongly supportive of liturgical worship (as just defined) is really not a matter of tradition but of confession. It can be demonstrated within Lutheran history of the past century and a half that a strong desire to preserve liturgical worship stemmed from confessional needs rather than from traditional preference. A LC-MS writer recently noted pretty much the same for any number of ages that might be examined.<sup>16</sup> Our theology hasn't fared especially well when we have been influenced to drift from those worship forms and that kind of liturgical worship which have a long and successful track record of delivering the gospel and retaining its veracity.

As our Christian brothers set about the work of shaping and then publishing CW, there were various endeavors through which their intentions to continue with liturgical worship shone rather clearly. Among other things, the Common Service and the Service of Word and Sacrament demonstrated the liturgical direction in which that hymnal project was determined to go. The one ancillary volume that was actually published at the same time as the release of the CW pew edition, CW:M, in addition to its

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<sup>15</sup> Christian Worship: Manual, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> "Every time there has been a decline in distinctive Lutheran liturgy and hymnody and the church has accommodated the prevailing culture, the church's theology has also been compromised." Rast, Lawrence R., Jr. *Journal of the Fourth Annual Conference of the Good Shepherd Institute*, p. 8.



essays, was structured to include a resource which spelled out the lessons, prayers and hymns of the day intended for each major and minor festival of the church year.

If amount of materials is any kind of gauge, it would be anticipated that the current hymnal project will quite possibly have an even stronger liturgical emphasis. Already in the works are an updated lectionary, an updated Manual, an updated Planning Christian Worship with its strong church year and lectionary basis, and quite probably an online database, the parameters of which will include more church year and lectionary based materials than that at which you could shake a stick. If Prof. Tiefel's assessment from two decades ago still holds true today, that "there is very little being done with church choirs to move through the church year by means of the propers and there is a great deal of preaching which does not match the focus of the lectionary,"<sup>17</sup> the current project will be seeking to continue to address the issue by making church year and lectionary resources so abundant and compellingly high quality that pastors and worship leaders will truly want to use them and will possibly feel that they are missing out if they don't. (Think in terms of how many congregations now regard the Easter Vigil as one of their favorite services and then multiply times ten, or by whatever number might represent the increased amount of strong liturgical resources we desire to place into people's hands.)

It's interesting how this emphasis has historically shown up in the actual layout of hymnals. Roughly speaking, the first twenty-five (out of a total of fifty) hymn categories in CW are those which specifically support the church year and the worship service. Schalk traces that specific kind of hymnal layout back to the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>18</sup>

"Not exclusively but strongly supportive" was the carefully chosen phrasing above which described the WELS C/W's support of liturgical worship, this because the Commission recognizes that ancient rite, church year based worship services are by no means the only way Christians can acceptably worship the Lord. Other essays have and can pursue the matter of people's perceptions of what constitutes a contemporary service – that a Saturday evening praise service in which recent worship songs and instrumentation other than an organ are wrapped around a lectionary-based service which includes the same sacrament which will be distributed and the same sermon (on one of the appointed lessons) which will be preached in the traditional Sunday service the next morning is probably not a contemporary service, technically speaking.<sup>19</sup> But if we have fellow Christians in sister congregations who choose not to make use of the ordinary and propers of the ancient rite and have set aside a week by week use of the Christian church year, a hymnal project which will have a liturgical emphasis is still a hymnal project which has no intention of disenfranchising any individual or congregation. We want to make sure that lines of communication remain open, that provision of resources, if there is potential for such, is explored, and that respect for different but legitimate forms of public worship is fostered. In strictly non-liturgical settings, "How may we be of service to you?" may be a question to which this hymnal

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<sup>17</sup> Op. cit., p. 18

<sup>18</sup> "The Geistliche Lieder (1545) for example, the so-called Babst hymnal, contained 129 hymns in two sections. The first section, containing 89 hymns, was largely given over to hymns for the church year and the Sacraments together with the Litany, various chants, and similar material; the second section, containing 40 hymns, was designated as 'Psalms and spiritual songs written by other faithful Christians.' The clear division in this hymnal between hymns for liturgical use and other songs, which were helpful and useful for devotional purposes but not necessarily for use in public worship, is important to note. This hymnal, described as 'the finest hymnal of the Reformation period' set the standard for future Lutheran hymnals of the time." Schalk, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>19</sup> This is a loose description of "contemporary services" which the essayist has attended in two of the academic centers of our church body – New Ulm and Watertown.

project will only be able to give limited answers, but in such settings it will be a question which is sincerely asked.

### ***3) Corporate worship which is timeless***

It's fairly easy and certainly convenient to incorporate more quotes from CW:M because many of us have become familiar with its themes and perhaps even its phrases over the past two decades. It is not quite so easy, however, to unilaterally implement all that might be quoted from that volume across the congregations of our church body. For example: "At public worship believers of all ages, shapes and sizes join to offer God their mutual response of faith. Worship intends to bring the church together, not to separate it by age groups, financial status, or social circumstances."<sup>20</sup> Any pastor who has moved from one weekend service to two (or two to three, or whatever the case might be) realizes that the body of Christ is being physically separated from itself, either by necessity or by choice. It's not at all uncommon for "first service people" to not know who the "second service people" are, and v.v. Dividing a congregation by the choices its worshipers wish to make as far as attending a traditional service, blended service, contemporary service, praise service, youth service or little children's service is also something which various writers have addressed in print. Is there anything which a hymnal project might bring to the table when it comes to public worship's intention to bring the church together?

Not everyone will buy into it, but the orders of service (published rites) and actually even the various components of the different services which can be compiled into a hybrid rite can easily be of the kind which allow public worship to bring the church together. I am talking (as one option) about a slate of morning or weekend services which are all the same, at which individuals of all ages and all backgrounds can feel comfortable, not because the service includes their kind of music or has their kind of vibe, but because the content of the worship service is timeless. As such it is, *in toto*, meant for everyone, rather than offering certain things for certain ones. As such, those who are planning and preparing it are constantly on the lookout for how they can make it the best it can be for every one of its fifty to seventy minutes. It includes the ancient and the recent, the organ as well as the piano and other instruments, the adults and the teenagers and the young children active in various roles, men's choirs and women's choirs and mixed choirs and antiphonal singing between a soloist/duet/choir and the congregation, heritage hymns and hymns which might someday make their way into the heritage and good, strong hymns which may not, and as many other examples as can be thought of to make public worship "locally catholic."

This is not the only way to orchestrate public worship, nor is it the only worship philosophy that calls for a great deal of planning and preparation. But giving this one option one's best efforts does call for a great deal of work and it certainly doesn't hurt to involve a growing number of qualified individuals to execute it. The role of a hymnal project in this approach will be to provide and to encourage the use of those kinds of materials which have the above-mentioned variety and which can be implemented by more than one individual.

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<sup>20</sup> CW:M, p. 10.

#### **4) The hymnody of corporate worship**

In one of the essays compiled in the Good Shepherd Institute's journal of its fourth annual conference, popular LC-MS hymnwriter Stephen Starke made these comments:

In his book Hymns and the Human Life, Erik Routley writes that a good hymn is one that passes two tests. The first test deals with craftsmanship, to which we will come in a moment. Second, a good hymn needs to be communal in nature; in other words, a hymn text is designed to be sung by a congregation, the hymn writer putting words into the mouths of the worshipers for their own edification... Texts to be sung in Lutheran worship should "Give primary voice to the congregation." Here is another area in which many songs from the "contemporary" genre are found wanting. Much of contemporary song was neither designed for corporate use nor really intended to endure. Much of contemporary song is performance-based, with a melodic line often soloistic in nature and heavily dependent upon rhythm.<sup>21</sup>

My tastes for contemporary religious vocalists are rather narrowly-defined. For me there are only a few names which make the list. But even with a limited song list such as I have, whenever a hymn or worship song comes along that I really like, I am almost automatically thinking, "How would that come off in a worship setting? Could it be done as is? Would there have to be a major adaptation for the choir to sing it, not to mention the congregation?" Routley knew what he was talking about. As Lutherans, it's something we've heard about before. When Luther needed to give primary voice to the congregation, he moved away from selections which were strictly performance-based, which could only be sung by choirs in city churches in Latin, the kinds of things so many worshipers had silently observed for such a long time, and he brought into play texts and tunes and music into which worshipers could sink their teeth and on which they could use their vocal chords.

Just how performance-based is a particular song? Just how much rhythmic variation can a typical congregation handle? There's that beautiful answer from the teacher's guide: "Answers will vary." However, through the worship education aspect of a hymnal project, it is hoped that we will be able to share with the constituency of our church body that these and more are the types of issues we are assessing as we plow through long lists of hymns in search of those which can be put to good use *in a congregational setting*. If we're being honest, we ought to recognize that not every great worship song or hymn or latest hit off Christian radio will work in a congregational setting where it is our expressed hope and our proper desire that all will be able to participate. Sure, there are some folks who don't sing at all if a new hymn comes along, who will only sing softly until they have some sense that they know how it is to be sung. I can distinctly remember the first times we sang "O Lord, Our Lord" in CW's SWS. People weren't smiling, nor were too many of them singing. But now, that downbeat, bass clef "D" is played and the next think you know, there they are, singing on the second beat. There will always be a learning curve for the new items we bring into public worship, but before we've brought them in is the time to evaluate them on the basis of the assembly's ability to handle them.

If corporate worship is to be corporate, it is going to need to have a certain sameness and a certain amount of repetition. Apply Lewis' comment about the liturgy (you're not dancing if you have to count the steps) to other aspects of the worship service. We probably don't want to spend five Sundays in a row learning a simple worship song which we'll never sing again, but nor do we want to foist upon the

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<sup>21</sup> Op. cit., pp. 43, 47.

congregation the kinds of songs or hymns that some will just plain give up on because they are not able to “stay with” everyone else. You can find it stated this way in a number of places, but I’ll float it out once more. Some good Christian music is better used in private worship with an Ipod than in public worship.

Somewhere in all of this we need to reckon with the front end learning curve of what we are asking/hoping/expecting the people in the pews to learn. As far as how frequently we release new materials, will there be two or three or four years of learning on the front end of every five years? of every ten years? of every fifteen or twenty or thirty? Mixed into that equation are the great hymns that come out between published releases and the matter of how we incorporate them. We are currently inching toward having a better grasp on these things as we have now gained this small bit of experience in presenting to our fellow Christians sets of new hymns and new orders of service in 1993 (CW), 2002 (NSS), 2004 (CW:OS) and 2008 (CWS). Those who are in the position of releasing these materials bear the primary responsibility for evaluating what is too much or too little, what is too soon or too late.

### **5) “A Lutheran Hymnal”**

The naming of Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal (along with determining the color of the book) was said to be among the most difficult of items which that hymnal’s committee needed to resolve. We haven’t yet given much thought to the naming of the next book, but I will confess to non-seriously considering Christian Worship: Another Lutheran Hymnal. I haven’t anywhere come across it in print, but I sense that the indefinite article “A” before “Lutheran Hymnal” may have been a backing away from a use of the definite article which, in the case of the preceding hymnal, made it sound like there was and could ever only really be one authorized version (The Lutheran Hymnal).

Maybe I’m reading too much into it, but for twenty years the title of our hymnal has made me think that ours is a hymnal which Lutherans can use but at the same time is quite far from being exclusively Lutheran. I would like the educational opportunity which this hymnal project affords to include the concept that hymns in a Lutheran hymnal are, properly understood, non-denominational.

As to the hymns in our hymnal, it is obvious even to the casual student that our hymnody is drawn from many past centuries, from different nations, and from various denominations besides Lutheran. Our hymnal with 660 hymns includes in addition to the hymns from various English sources, 347 translations; German, 248; Latin, 46; Scandinavian, 31; Greek, 9; Slovak, 6; French, 2; Italian, 2; Dutch, Welsh, and Finnish, 1 each. The Lutheran church is ecumenical in its selection of hymns and other worship materials. Whatever is scripturally sound and true, poetically and musically worthy, and edifying for the faith of worshipers may be drawn on for use in our hymnal. For this principle we can thank Luther himself.<sup>22</sup>

Some voices will call for a more distinctively Lutheran hymnal, with obvious Lutheran emphases and a generous use of materials authored by Lutherans. Other voices will likely not call for a less distinctively Lutheran hymnal but will want a greater diversity, achieved through the use of a broader swath of Christian hymns and songs. Some of those other voices will undoubtedly have in the backs of their

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<sup>22</sup> “Enriching Our Worship Heritage.” Eggert, Kurt J. Op. cit., pp. 2,3.

minds the age of many of the distinctively Lutheran hymns (Eggert noted that no TLH hymns were written in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century), or how some of those hymns have been judged to be rather stodgy.

This section of the essay isn't seeking to compare the overall relative quality or worth of one denomination's contributions to Christian hymnody over another's. It is seeking to establish that hymns which are textually sound and musically acceptable can rightly be viewed as the property of the Christian Church rather than of their authors' denomination. One of the first things I heard about "On Eagles Wings" (CW 440) was that it was Roman Catholic. Yes, Michael Joncas is a Roman Catholic priest, but the hymn he wrote does not come to us from Roman Catholicism; it comes to us from Psalm 91. Upon moving to Lawrenceville, one of the first things I heard about its use was that it was sung at the funeral of a dear loved one and that it reduced everyone to tears. Of those who have shared their opinion with me, "How Great Thou Art," is clearly a hymn which, for some reason, is either loved or hated.<sup>23</sup> Translated/written by a Methodist (Stuart Hine) and most popularly sung by a Methodist (very recently deceased George Beverly Shea; I should sing the hymn more often if I am minded to live to 104), it gained enormous popularity through the crusades of a Southern Baptist (Billy Graham). It is said to be based in part on Psalm 8. A hymnal project isn't going to change much about its being a favorite or least favorite hymn. One would hope, however, that the hymn's evaluation would be more directed toward the answer to the question, "Is God not great?" and to the fact that "God, his Son not sparing, sent him to die," than to the particular settings or circumstances where other Christians have sung it.

The two examples above are not intended to single out those two particular hymns. There are literally hundreds of others. At this point in the essay, I am not (yet) addressing how the matter of a broader repertoire of Christian hymns can have appeal for an increasingly broader segment of our congregations' members who do not have a Lutheran background. Singing acceptable hymns "from other traditions" does not make one less than confessional or something less than Lutheran. If anything, making use of solid-content hymnody from other traditions is one of the best examples of catholicity we might expect to find. Much like we pray the same Lord's Prayer with all Christians (but not physically together), we can also sing some of the same songs, albeit under different physical roofs and under different denominational flags. The point is being made from the angle that the release of materials which are not always new but are new to the church body tends to prompt the kind of evaluation which asks, "Well, where did we get that from?" Hymns written for Lutherans by Lutherans may have some of the strongest and clearest expressions of the theology of the cross which will be found, but it is also true that hymns which end up on the long list of hymns which Lutherans will potentially publish will be judged on their own merits before they are judged on the basis of the denomination from which they came.

## ***6) A heritage of Lutheran hymnody***

A volume which was formerly a regularly used text at Dr. Martin Luther College is Hilton Oswald's<sup>24</sup> "Studies in Lutheran Chorales." Its forty-seven essays appeared in the "The Lutheran School Bulletin" between 1947 and 1961, bulletins which were the predecessor of "The Lutheran Educator." In 1981, editor Bruce Backer wrote: "'Studies in Lutheran Chorales' is unique. There is no other collection of

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<sup>23</sup> British hymnologist Erik Routley so disliked the hymn that he rewrote and reharmonized it shortly before his death.

<sup>24</sup> Oswald served as a professor at Northwestern College, was a translator of Luther's Works and was the brother-in-law of recognized LC-MS worship professor Walter Buszin.

essays on German Lutheran hymns in the English language.” From an educational perspective, there is much about this compilation which commends its reprinting or its being made available in digital format. Ingesting its content would cover much ground as far as fostering appreciation for the value of these heritage hymns.

There is reason for recommending and/or making available such a volume.<sup>25</sup> Early on in this new hymnal project, concern has already been expressed by some over the matter of what will happen to the heritage of Lutheran hymnody which has been passed down to us since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. I suppose a fair question would be to ask whether we (collectively as a church body) are currently holding onto that heritage or if it has actually already been lost. Anecdotal “usage surveys” and the hard data that would be retrieved if we could pull it from every congregation in our synod would undoubtedly show that printing a hymn in a hymnal does not guarantee its use. The question will be raised: “Should some of ‘those hymns’ take up space in our next hymnal?”

A staunch proponent of quality, Lutheran hymnody such as Carl Schalk has been would not hesitate to ask the questions which cut to the heart of the matter, questions addressed especially to those directly involved with producing hymnals. “Are we allowing our glorious heritage of hymnody to be drowned beneath a flood of theologically and musically questionable third- and fourth-rate material? What are the consequences for our children and grandchildren if we fail to pass on that heritage to future generations? In large part the answers to those questions are in our hands.”<sup>26</sup>

LC-MS Professor of Music Joe Herl (Concordia, Seward, NE) knows the issues we are dealing with and once listed five points to address them. He writes: “It is no secret that early Lutheran hymns have received a mixed reaction among our people. Some treasure them highly. Others see them as irrelevant and would just as soon be rid of them. While it is unrealistic to expect all our people to love these hymns, I would like to suggest five things we can do to encourage their appreciation.”<sup>27</sup>

1) The first is to give our people a solid grounding in Lutheran theology so they will appreciate the riches these hymns contain. It is no accident that in considering hymn texts for our new hymnal, two authors have risen to the fore, and both are Lutherans: Herman Stuempfle and Stephen Starke. There are some other recent hymn writers who have produced some wonderful and poetic spiritual texts, but their emphases point in a direction other than where Lutheran theology would take us, that is, to the cross. The same can be said for many recent songs in the praise and worship genre. People are constantly raising the issue of musical style in regard to these songs; but for me, the central issue is not style, but theology. The songs frequently focus on the individual more than on God, hold up an exalted and majestic God rather than one whose humiliation allowed him to be crucified for our sins, and hardly ever make a sacramental reference, even where the connection would appear obvious to Lutherans. Neither this theology, nor the sort of fluffy and unfocused theology found in many recent mainstream hymns, is acceptable to us.

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<sup>25</sup> The pages have been scanned and converted to a Word document. The text needs to be proofed and formatted and then permission needs to be secured for its use.

<sup>26</sup> Op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Herl, Joe. “The Lutheran Roots of our Hymnody” an essay appearing in “Hymns in the Life of the Church,” the Journal of the Fourth Annual Conference of the Good Shepherd Institute, pp. 67ff.

2) The second thing we can do is to produce better translations of the old Lutheran hymns.<sup>28</sup> (This essay will offer an expansion on this point below.)

3) The third way we can promote Lutheran hymns is by providing a good education in music. The problem of singing... is with a culture that no longer values group participation, especially vocal participation. When was the last time you sang the national anthem at a sporting event? We used to sing it all the time, but these days it is generally done only if a soloist cannot be engaged. The next time you go to church, look at the people around you during a hymn. Chances are, a third of them will not even have bothered to have opened their books (or service folder, as the case may be). Another third will have their books open and will be moving their mouths, but with no apparent sound coming out. The remaining third will carry the singing. Now this is what it is like in a church where the singing is considered good. I have been in churches where no one sang at all.

4) My fourth suggestion is to teach our people why we sing the rhythmic versions of our tunes rather than the equal-rhythm versions favored by most Protestants. Simply put, the rhythmic versions are the original versions of the tune. Some of the settings by JS Bach of these isometric tunes work well with choirs, but are not well suited to congregational singing.

5) My final suggestion deals with the musical settings of early Lutheran hymns in our hymnals. So often I visit our churches and hear these hymns played as though they were being dragged through a thick load of mud. (Herl goes on to say that sometimes the harmonization or other things about the written score are problematic.) Sometimes using a different tune altogether can bring life to a hymn. Johann Crüger's tune has been associated with Paul Gerhardt's Christmas hymn "O Jesus Christ Thy Manger Is" ever since its first publication. The tune, found at TLH 81, works well and is not unusually difficult to sing. But it has received little use in our congregations and so the editors of HS98 decided to try a lovely new tune by Kenneth Kosche (HS98 #814). The jury is still out on whether this tune will help to popularize the hymn.<sup>29</sup>

Along with Oswald and Herl and others, I share a high regard and appreciation for hymns from our Lutheran heritage, and I anticipate Hymnody Committee and Executive Committee time being spent on determining the best way to preserve that corpus of hymnody among us and to keep it in use.

## ***7) The contemporary worship song***

A specific genre of congregational song with which the CW committees wrestled was gospel songs. Typically characterized as shallow in content, more personal than corporate in nature, and simple in

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<sup>28</sup> Herl notes that Walther's Easter hymn, "He's Risen, He's Risen" is much more interesting in the original German, and that "Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure Eternal" could benefit from some reworking of the translation.

<sup>29</sup> There will be an almost identical assessment of Moldenhauer's tune NORTHBRIDGE for "Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands", and our hymnal project will carefully consider whether or not this fifth point to which Herl obviously subscribes will be something on which we expand even further in years to come.

tune, the gospel songs did end up with what might be called token representation in CW.<sup>30</sup> Eggert led the committee members of a generation and a half ago to consider the fact that Christians from other denominations, making their way into Lutheran congregations, might benefit from the occasional use of a handful of these songs, and that the songs could serve as a sort of stepping stone into the use of hymns with richer content and better music.

The parallels may not be perfect, but a genre which may call for similar assessment in our generation is what is variously referred to as “heart music” or contemporary worship songs or even, simply, songs which come from Christian radio. For those who have not been exposed to it, perhaps the best way to make the comparison is to intentionally listen to Christian radio for a while, and to compare the lyrical content and musical structure of those songs with the same in CW and CWS hymns. They are different animals. Where will the debate go this time around, and are there other genres where similar discussions need to be held, either for inclusion or exclusion?<sup>31</sup>

Some individuals among us have been zealous to explore this broad genre of music and have been devoted to doing so with a confessionally critical eye. They are fellow Christians who, while evaluating the songs, are sensitive to scriptural accuracy and who recognize the responsibility of insuring the integrity of what is placed onto the lips and into the hearts of the worshipers who will sing them. Neither the Commission on Worship nor the currently forming hymnal committees have formally taken up the matter of reviewing such songs or lists of song titles (although this has taken place in rather limited ways in the past), but it can be recognized that there are songs in this genre of which Lutherans could make use on an “as-is” basis. In such cases, as with the gospel song genre in the past, the question remains as to whether or not we will actually publish such songs and thus, in effect, endorse them and make them available to the constituency of our synod’s congregations. The matter will be receiving attention.

Critical to the current hymnal project is the realization that, when the recognition is made that the lyrical content of this genre of music in many cases falls short of standards we wish to uphold in publishing sacred music, we apparently do not have a plenitude of our own authors or poets or composers who could provide us with the kinds of texts and tunes and settings and arrangements which this genre utilizes.

Finally, and again parallel to the gospel songs issue from the previous hymnal, we will need to give consideration to the matter of arguments for and against inclusion of this genre of music. Does it consist of melodies that are more soloistic in nature and more rhythmic than the typical worship assembly is able to handle (points made above by Starke)? Or may it give to another growing segment of our society a sampling of a type of music with which it is familiar? And further, a point about which this essayist is often left wondering, is it realistic to think that half a dozen to a dozen songs of a certain

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<sup>30</sup> The shaping of CW is chronicled by Rev. Victor Prange in “Not Unto Us.” In addition to noting that Prof. D. Valleskey from WLS wrote the committee encouraging inclusion of gospel songs, Prange listed the following synopsis of where this issue went: *The Hymn Committee suggested that four such hymns were already on the master list: “How Great Thou Art,” “Come, Sing the Gospel’s Joyful Sound,” “God Be with You till We Meet Again,” and “Go, Tell It on the Mountain.” The JHC added three more to the master list: “To God Be the Glory,” “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms,” and “Take the World, but Give Me Jesus.” Later “Come, Sing the Gospel’s Joyful Sound” and “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms” were deleted, but “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” was added (p. 198).*

<sup>31</sup> Eggert presented both sides to the committee: “The Case for and against Inclusion of Gospel Hymns in the New Hymnal.”



genre will, when published in a hymnal, ever see enough light of day to have an impact on an unknown percentage of new members who may have grown up with and come to love them? Eggert had it in the form of an open question and it would seem to remain so: “Will a scattering of [such] songs in our hymnal help them [those who were familiar with them before joining our ranks] to have some comfortable part in the worship?”<sup>32</sup> All such questions regarding contemporary worship songs will again be asked, in the hope that toward the end of the project the questions will not remain as open as they may have seemed at the beginning.

Worship education topics form a long list. If a critical topic went unaddressed in the previous ten pages, I would be pleased to have it aired. Beyond that, let the seven topics above be sufficient for now and let them hopefully be viewed as topics which are germane to a hymnal project.

In this worship education section of the essay, however, one wrap-up type of question remains. What will be the most effective means for getting the message out, not only on the items listed in the “worship education” section above but on a broad array of worship topics connected with a hymnal project? If it is accurate to say that articles in the *Northwestern Lutheran* were the main source of broad-based information dissemination for the previous hymnal project (along with conference presentations and field testing), it would seem safe to say that this is one area where we can today “bring more people along for the ride.”

Since the release of CWS in 2008, it has been interesting to hear comments about something as simple as the footnotes in that volume’s *Divine Service 2*. The CWS Rites Committee fully intended the notes in that service to meet the needs of worship education, especially in the case of visitors and those new to Lutheran, liturgical worship. Those notes seem akin to something that used to be called “Walking through the Liturgy,” a service with a narrator’s running explanation of the various parts of the order of worship. Hymnal projects which will again release updated or new orders of service are good times to return to these kinds of ongoing, “real time” worship education methods. And can the same not be said concerning providing information about individual hymns, special services and festivals and saints days, and the seasons of the church year? This is a hymnal project that will be able to provide a rich slate of those kinds of “notes” in a digital format, to be used as-is or customized for local use, to be or not to be made use of according to local preference (rather than printed out in full in published materials).

Add to this simple and very doable singular item the whole matter of digitally-based communication and the potential for establishing and consistently reaching a broad base of the synod’s membership. This hymnal project will include a project website, one of the functions of which is already envisioned to be allowing committee chairmen and other executive committee members to tell the story of the shaping of the next hymnal as that work and that shaping are taking place. Which specific social media might be employed for the same will be explored and, where deemed fitting, will be implemented at the front end of the project. Rather than simply wondering about the state of worship education in our church body as it relates to its reception and use of a new hymnal, we wish to be proactive in disseminating educational materials and resources not only when the time has arrived for hymnal introduction but throughout the entire course of the project

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<sup>32</sup> Not Unto Us, p. 77.

To that end, we might be able to give consideration to a recent approach that was used in our synod in connection with advertising for Easter, namely, E12. For any not familiar with it, this was an approach which sought to deliver a carefully timed and complete approach/package/process for individual congregations to carry out Easter-based outreach efforts. Something from that process that we might do well to emulate is the approach which registered various individuals within participating congregations so that they might be in email reception of the timed project materials. Registering pastors and worship leaders and others in individual congregations to be in reception of email blasts or RSS feeds indicating project website updates, and having this registration also facilitate a controlled comments and feedback process to take place between congregations and even specific committees of the new hymnal project, are a few of the specific ideas we have in mind and very much wish to implement in this calendar year. We want to invite members of the synod to be looking for a feature- and content-rich website which allows them to be well-informed about where their church body's hymnal project is heading. These are only a couple of the many items to which a Communications Committee will be able to give its attention.

### **Multicultural / Multi-contextual**

The process followed for seeking to include in CWS a few examples of “world music” was a regular mentioning of a desire to do so and a review at the end of the process to see if we had done so. It took place in a limited way. The exploration of the music of many different cultures will more substantially reappear as the more expansive resource of a full hymnal is compiled.

For the CWS project, inclusion of non-English hymn texts or other resources was non-existent. Perhaps the reader has seen various hymnals which seem to include a token amount of foreign language resources, such as “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know” printed in three or four languages other than English.<sup>33</sup> As I recall, the CWS project took an all-or-nothing approach to foreign language texts (which resulted in none being printed), an approach which didn't want to leave with anyone capable of speaking a particular foreign language the impression that we were giving them nothing more than a “token” presence in our supplement.

While our denomination is relatively small, our Multi-Language Publications Committee stays very busy and it keeps its ear to the ground regarding the matter of foreign language hymnal materials, particularly those in Spanish.<sup>34</sup> While this hymnal project does not have in its sights the production of any substantial amount of foreign language materials, we can bear in mind a couple items.<sup>35</sup> A first item is that we currently serve approximately 5000 Hispanic members in our synod and that there is a need for liturgy and hymnody materials in Spanish. Within our own country it would work acceptably well for

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<sup>33</sup> An example occurs at LSB #363 where German and Spanish texts are included with “Silent Night.”

<sup>34</sup> “Just about every winterim at the Sem, a group of students goes to Puebla, Mexico to study Spanish and attend a pastors' conference with all the Mexican pastors and missionaries. The focus for this year's conference (Jan 2013) was a new Spanish hymnal being produced by Lutherans in Argentina who are in fellowship with the LCMS. The hymnal hadn't yet been published. We studied through a rough draft as a group at the conference. Afterward, I was asked to type up my personal thoughts and send them to Pastor Sanchez in Mexico who was going to send our group's comments to the publishers (I think). So I have a short review written in Spanish of this hymnal. It could prove to be a useful Spanish hymnal.” (email from seminarian Nathan Nass)

<sup>35</sup> These items come from a phone call with Rev. Paul Hartman, coordinator of the WELS Multi-Language Publications Committee.

these materials to be nothing more than translations of the materials which already exist in English. A second item is that many of the foreign language speaking individuals with whom we work, both at home and abroad, are those with whom we come into contact through ESL classes. Their needs, for both Bible study and worship, fall into the area of simplified English, the quality production of which would also take no small amount of work. As a new hymnal project is initiated, we will want to explore these areas and to be in contact with those who are regularly involved in multi-language work, to see if a collaborative effort between them and our synod's worship personnel might be able to address the matter of non-English or simplified English worship resources.<sup>36</sup>

Additionally, something on which we will have our sights set is the possibility of making available multi-contextual materials, specifically the kinds of hymnody and/or music and/or worship orders which may be regionally defined within our own country. Offering one example which is based on locations where I have either served or visited, it is fairly easy to establish that the repertoire of hymnody and the styles of music used in a western Wisconsin congregation and a southern Louisiana congregation could possibly differ. They could possibly differ greatly. Need we have the expectation that one hard copy hymnal will be able to accommodate those differences, in areas such as hymnody, psalmody and orders of service? Selecting and printing digital resources or even actual hymnals on a regional basis is a concept which has recently been explored in a [seminarian's senior thesis](#).<sup>37</sup> While it may not seem entirely feasible at this moment, it may be very much so a decade from now. Such will not be the only thing but it will certainly be the kind of thing we will want to bear in mind as the project advances. Such a possibility leads smoothly into the next section of the essay.

## Unity / Uniformity

It must have begun somewhere toward the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century – that oft-quoted phrase among Lutherans that you could go virtually anywhere in the country and the worship service would be nearly identical to the one to which you were accustomed at home. There certainly used to be corporate worship uniformity when a high majority of WELS congregations made virtually exclusive use of orders of service which came to be known merely by their page numbers – 5/15. By the 1970's the uniformity had begun to erode. In the years just prior to the release of CW, uniformity was not really a term that could be used to define WELS corporate worship.

When CW achieved over 90% coverage in its first year, one would have to conclude that, at least to a comparatively greater degree, public worship uniformity had returned. To whatever degree that may have been in the two to four years following CW's release, we would be lead to conclude that the passage of time has again seen an erosion of this uniformity. While there are plenty of individuals in our church body who will know what you are talking about if you refer to page 15 or 26 or 38 (or possibly also page 45 or 52, or maybe even DS1 or DS2 in CWS), it's not as likely in 2013 as it was in 1995 that your cross-country travels will take you to a congregation whose worship service mirrors your own. Two to four years into the life of the next hymnal, say in approximately 2026, will the cycle have repeated once again? Will that hymnal's published orders of service have again brought our

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<sup>36</sup> Worship personnel of the LC-MS recently wrapped up four years of work which resulted in a [new hymnal for Lutherans in Kenya](#).

<sup>37</sup> Reeder, Kent. "The Necessary, Relevant, and Practical Digital Media for the Development and Dissemination of a Worship Compendium in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Hymnal Rebuild from the Cloud Down."

congregations back toward a greater uniformity in corporate worship? A good question for our generation and for those involved in this hymnal project is – should they?

Encountering a public worship version of *cuius regio, eius religio* can be disconcerting. When the comment about finding identical worship services at churches around the country has become more of an exception and the statement which has in some cases ended up replacing it is something on the order of, “Where did they come up with a service like that?” or “Why don’t they include this?” or “Why did they think they needed to change that?”, some faithful Christians may understand what is involved in the areas of Christian freedom and take worship variety in stride, while other just as faithful Christians may have a knee-jerk, negative reaction and hastily fire off a not-so-charitable email, betraying an unhealthy hyper-affinity for certain forms.

For the sake of both order and common sense, it will be necessary somewhere along the way to ask the survey type questions regarding congregational worship practices. How many congregations are using all or some of the present CW resources (CW; Altar Book; NSS; CW:OS; CWS)? Specifically, are congregations using the more chant-like services found in Compline I and the various Holy Week occasional services or do they prefer more contemporary or hymn-like liturgies, e.g., Compline II and DS II? Prior to the surveys being taken, one would guess that we might have a fairly good idea of what the responses will be – a great deal of diversity and plenty of variations but, for the most part, an undergirding, underlying, confessional, Lutheran, scriptural, sacramental approach and practice.

What we want to keep in mind in all of this is not what level of “order of service” *uniformity* a new hymnal can bring about among us but how can we rightly understand a public worship *unity* which exists among us and how will a new hymnal allow for the expression of that unity through the forms and materials which it makes available.<sup>38</sup> The unity we’re talking about comes from scriptural principles, not from forms or rites which are structured in just such a way or which include an approved list of components. The unity we have is comprised of scriptural conviction and doctrinal agreement and a common confession of faith, all of which lead to worship services where the gospel is given free rein, where the sacrament is regularly celebrated, and where things are done decently and in order. While there is any number of good reasons to pursue uniformity, lockstep use of worship forms in congregations across the country is not the goal. The unity we already have is more important than a uniformity after which we might be chasing without ceasing.

And yet this is another juncture at which we come across the importance of giving a balanced presentation. Consider another pointed section from Eggert’s previously-cited hymnal project essay and think how easily we could change “TLH” then to “CW” now:

In addition to preserving and improving our worship heritage, we should also ENLARGE it by incorporating the best and most useful of that which has emerged or been produced since our hymnal was published. PRESERVE, IMPROVE, ENLARGE. This, I believe, would constitute the "enrichment" of our worship heritage.

But many today are reproducing new hymns, psalm settings, prayers, and other material from a variety of hymnals, not always with copyright clearance, it might be added. But it does indicate the growing interest in worship and new hymns and liturgical material not

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<sup>38</sup> Another church body’s discussion of worship uniformity based on constitutionally mandated statements can be referenced [here](#). The article makes reference to the issue; the comments are more revealing.

found in TLH. The negative side of this is that TLH no longer enjoys the relatively uniform use in the Synod that was once the case. Perhaps no future hymnal will. Yet a *general* uniformity of worship material in the Synod is desirable for obvious reasons. A new hymnal, presenting more choices in liturgy, modernized language, some new hymns and new types of hymns, a more comfortable singing range for both hymns and liturgies, and a user-friendly format could perhaps restore a larger uniformity in the use of the hymnal.<sup>39</sup>

Anyone who knows Luther on the matter of corporate worship reform knows that he wasn't legislating but that he was seeking to clearly articulate principles which would be for the sake of good order and for the good of the visible church and that he was doing so from a pastoral heart.

When you hold Mass, sing and read uniformly, according to a common order—the same in one place as in another—because you see that the people want and need it and you wish to edify rather than confuse them. (*LW* 53, p 48)<sup>40</sup>

I would like to ask that this paraphrase or admonition follow a prescribed wording or be formulated in a definite manner for the sake of the common people. We cannot have one do it one way today, and another, another way tomorrow, and let everybody parade his talents and confuse the people so that they can neither learn nor retain anything. (*LW* 53, p 80)<sup>41</sup>

Several years ago, when the number and operation of synod schools was a front burner synod convention issue, the comments about getting back to the core issues of why our churches formed a synod in the first place centered on an ability to do together what individual congregations could not accomplish on their own. In addition to the operation of ministerial education schools, the publication of materials was also listed. If the publishing of orthodox, confessionally Lutheran materials is a core reason for the existence of our church body, something would seemingly need to be explored if congregations were going completely apart from those materials for the conducting of their public worship services. Such exploration is never to build walls or to create us/them groups; it stems from a passionate desire to walk together not only as fellow Christians but also as sister congregations.

If it is agreed that a general uniformity is a good thing, how can one work toward unifying WELS worship without inappropriately demanding lockstep uniformity? One first of all looks in the mirror to see the chief of sinners and then in the scriptures to see that Jesus nonetheless “shed his blood for me.” One then looks around and notices that one is still in the church militant and that, till the *parousia*, one will need to be patiently and lovingly working with other sinners whom God regards as saints in Christ. One then also looks over the dashboard and the top of the steering wheel and takes inventory of where exactly he is on the road and one asks the Lord to keep him and all his fellow Christians in that not-always-easy-to-hold, Lutheran middle of the road position. And having prayed as if everything depends on God, one then works as if everything depended on him. He works tirelessly and cheerfully to share with people and to educate people on the point that one of our ways of trying to stay on the narrow

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<sup>39</sup> Eggert. “Enriching Our Worship Heritage”, op. cit., pp. 4,6.

<sup>40</sup> As appearing in the previously cited essay by J. Tiefel.

<sup>41</sup> As appearing in the previously cited essay by J. Tiefel. Cf. also this related statement in the Tiefel essay: “The people of 20<sup>th</sup> Century America, no less than the Germans of Luther’s day, need order in their worship: one or two services, one church calendar, one set of propers, etc.”

Lutheran middle is through the worship materials we publish and through the understanding that there are materials we choose not to publish, that lockstep uniformity will pretty much always smack of “your teachings are but rules made by men,” that complete independence can be tantamount to a detrimental kind of isolationism and that what we agree is a body of worship materials and forms which are good is certainly not the only way but is in fact one important way of walking together in that desirable Lutheran middle.

For this to work we will be in need of the Lord’s blessing, specifically the blessing that he lead us individually and collectively away from any thinking that it is ok if we are being an island. As pastors and worship leaders, it is not a judgmental thing, it is a fraternal thing to avoid doing one's own thing and to humbly work to keep others from doing the same. Being part of a brotherhood, part of a ministerium which the Spirit has brought together by grace and by means of the gospel, we want to be trusting the assessments of our brothers, and to trust them we need to let ourselves be open to those assessments. Maintaining a vulnerable transparency instead of constructing a defensive opacity is part of what love is willing to do, also in the area of worship practices. We want to openly talk about not going it alone, about walking together.

Part of opening up to others is consulting with those who have been called or appointed to work with pastors and worship leaders and congregations in the area of public worship. It was amusing to me to read Prof. Tiefel’s observation in the already-cited essay regarding how congregations didn’t all write their own version of “This We Believe.” We recognize that that kind of going it alone isn’t really what we’re about. Are we willing to recognize the same when it comes to those important things which constitute the regular worship activities of God’s people entrusted to our care?

There are a few specific issues which a hymnal project will be able to study and to discuss so as to make recommendations or to come to decisions with regard to what will be published, so as to evangelically foster worship unity and even a degree of worship uniformity among us. The items are one person’s compilation and are to be considered exemplary rather than exhaustive.

- Personal contacts – Being only human, maybe the day will come when I will tire of it, but I very much want to hear what people have to say about the current state of our worship and of our worship materials. I would be curious about a pastor’s or congregation’s decision to not use the main worship materials which have been recently published, such as CW and CWS. Already, even with a mostly neutral term such as “curious,” the way the previous sentence is phrased can almost imply that there is something automatically wrong about their decision. When making personal contacts we want to bend over backwards to create an atmosphere of trustful openness and to carefully listen. For example, there are two ways of asking congregations why they don’t use the Supplement, one a condescending way which makes them look like idiots for not using it, and the other a concerned way which clearly recognizes that there is nothing wrong about their decision but that the interviewer would certainly benefit from understanding that decision, so as to be aware of what led to it as future courses of action are planned.
- The preparation part of the service - While a somewhat late addition to the ancient rite, the confession and absolution part of the worship service is typically identified as part of the ordinary – a component of the service which does not change (even though it may take various forms). It also seems to be that portion of the service which is most frequently altered, with general confessions and general absolutions customized for the season or for the individual Sundays, or completely “homegrown”. There might be value in making use of a few

standardized sets and in using them in a regularly unaltered fashion, in line with the Luther quote above (*LW* 53, p 80). Since pastors continue to report visitors' misunderstanding of the use of the keys in the general absolution, it might be wise to agree once again on several standardized wordings so as to be able to serve people (both members and guests) by giving them consistent explanations of why the presiding minister is saying precisely what he is saying.

- Let the ordinary be the ordinary – Expanding beyond the preparation part of the service, the ordinary is, by definition, regularly the same. Sincerity, vocal inflection and practice will keep it fresh. It is not begging for the kind of customization where the theme of the tightly integrated service leaks over into its various elements (communion dismissal; benediction introduction; etc.). Let the people benefit from “no surprises” when it comes to the ordinary and, to avoid mindless rote repetition, consider reminding them of why we recite certain things.
- A common corpus of resources – The rites of which we make use needn't become cookie cutter services which are everywhere identically executed. It would, however, be valuable and beneficial to the people of the worshiping assembly to be able to regularly say, “I've seen this before.” Formulating our worship services from a common pool of our own published materials or from otherwise recommended materials can be very helpful as far as the way in which service elements which have become familiar over time tend to put worshipers at ease. Making sure that the elements don't become so familiar that they are used mindlessly is another reason that hymnal projects recur. Familiar complete orders of service are helpful to worshipers. An eclectic service where familiar resources from a number of services are formed into a hybrid can also keep things fresh. The use of worship service components from a common database is for me a worthwhile goal.
- Common ancillary resources – To have dozens if not hundreds of congregations following the same lectionary on a weekly basis would seem to offer many advantages to those who were of a mind to collaborate on text studies and worship service embellishments and the like. To return to an updated, fresh Hymn of the Week program on a national basis could afford congregations the same kind of collaborative possibilities as far as identifying/sharing alternate arrangements and choral settings for antiphonal singing of the hymn, while Lutheran schools and Sunday Schools could concentrate on the use of that hymn for hymnology and weekly chapel. Planning Christian Worship resources, updated once again according to the lectionary decisions which will be made, will be able to draw in an increasing amount of suggested resources as the “CW line” is further expanded, while that kind of service planning which includes attendant music and specific choral suggestions on a Sunday by Sunday basis (as appeared on the [Institute for Worship and Outreach](#) website) brings even more possibilities into play.
- Encouragement from leaders – District Presidents and C/W District Worship Coordinators (DWC's) are called to serve in the districts and are given responsibilities in the areas of worship. Seeing to it that some of the suggestions above are implemented or modeled at district and conference worship events, and in individual congregations as well, are responsibilities which are built into the calls under which these individuals operate. How beneficial might it be for unity and for a degree of uniformity for these leaders to foster walking together in worship through regular encouragements to make use of what we have published as a synod (not at all implying that the same is not being done)!

## Can / Should

An example was given earlier of the marriage of a text and tune which, in the opinion of one person, doesn't work out so well ("When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" to ROCKINGHAM OLD). Let's say, hypothetically, that an entire hymnody committee agrees with that assessment, and that accordingly it's not going to appear. Then, however, we explore the reality that there are those who still like pretty much everything about their old TLH; they like it "real well" and they are just fine with singing the Watts hymn that way (ROCKINGHAM OLD). We certainly *can* make that hymn available in that way. Again, however, we find ourselves asking – *should* we?

The examples go in many directions. We could start with a sampling of hymnody examples. I know individuals in my parents' generation who would be happy to be able to sing some of the hymns which for them came to be classics simply by virtue of the fact that they were in TLH, hymns such as "Nearer My God to Thee," or "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me," or "Come, Ye Disconsolate." They will be the first to recognize that hymns such as those don't have the strongest texts, but that, for reasons of familiarity or nostalgia, it still feels good to sing them. Others who may have long ago come into Lutheran congregations from other denominations may still have a certain fondness for hymns like "In The Garden" or "The Old Rugged Cross" or "Blessed Assurance" or "Faith of our Fathers." Depending on various copyright issues, we can make them available (likely not in actual print but certainly in digital format) – but should we?

The issue will especially present itself in the area which the previous hymnal committee simply labeled the "hit list." If we were convinced, and we may be, that there is really nothing wrong with any of the hymns in CW or CWS, there might not need to be any hit list at all. All hymns from those two volumes which were not slated to be reprinted in the next hymnal would be preserved in digital format. In fact, in the two electronic versions of CW/CWS, they already are. Going back one volume further to TLH, we would find that there were a number of decisions where hymns were let go for good reason ("This Child We Dedicate to Thee" in the baptism section). But we could easily make many of those dropped TLH hymns available once again for printing in service folders, perhaps with the kind of tweaking that has set them free from Elizabethan language. Should we?

When I was on the phone with him, one WELS pastor was already wondering out loud if this new hymnal project wouldn't possibly have 600 or so hymns in print and another thousand or two available in digital format. In practical terms, will our hymn committee pause at a hymn, as I have, and think, "Maybe this hymn won't be among the 600 but it could be scored and made available in the digital resources"? Without much explanation, the reader can already sense the slippery slope toward which this approach inclines. It harks back to the Schalk comment above regarding third- or fourth-rate material. It includes the Moldenhauer concern in the introduction regarding discernment.

I would anticipate a copious amount of materials available in digital format. All 711 hymns in CW and CWS already are. I would also anticipate a quality control process very consciously and intentionally built into our committee work, since *can* doesn't always equate with *should*. It would generally seem more defensible to include in a larger corpus of digital hymnody those hymns which have already appeared in Lutheran hymnals (and which have possibly undergone language or translation updates). However, with quality control in place, the fact remains that we do have much more latitude as far as what we are able to make available.



A colleague and I have been talking about the release of digital hymnal materials since approximately 2003 or 2004, specifically the kinds of graphics files which allow for clear, crisp reproduction in service folders in which the entire order of service is being reprinted. A decade later, the days have now come where this is more commonplace, where less than high quality scans of the psalm of the day crookedly pasted into a service folder need not occur (not to mention the possible copyright infringements which come into play in that scenario). This project will have as a goal that all its materials will be available in digital format (with the appropriate copyright observations in place) and we confidently anticipate that such a goal will not be overly difficult to achieve.

The “can/should” issues, then, will go far beyond hymnody. If three or four of the most prominent gathering rites are printed in a hard copy hymnal, will we make a dozen more available in digital format? If four or five main orders of service appear in a hard copy hymnal, will there be fifteen other settings of the *Gloria* and fifteen other settings of the *Agnus Dei* which can be swapped in and out? Such a scenario, while thoroughly possible, would seem to be at odds with the statement on p. 26, footnote 41.

These possibilities are raised to move us into the matter of repertoire. Beyond “can/should” issues, there is the matter of how many different hymns or psalms or canticles a congregation is capable of learning. Certainly this is a significant issue in the mission setting. When the number of options is so great that what is being sung is regularly outside of the assembly’s repertoire, this great thing called variety can become more of a foe than a friend. I haven’t researched it other than to say that 200 is the number I have consistently heard for the number of hymns which a congregation will typically have in its repertoire.

To briefly get into specifics, the CW hymnal committee expressed early on its goal of keeping 400 TLH hymns and adding approximately 200 new hymns. As it turned out, it was 423 TLH hymns which made the jump into CW, leaving almost exactly 200 new hymns in the new book. Adding in CWS (a total of 711 hymns in CW and CWS), and remembering that every dropped hymn would remain available in digital format (which would be yet another debate as to whether or not such dropped, digital-only hymns would actually be preserved or would continue to be used), might we be anticipating something more on the order of 350 CW/CWS hymns appearing in the next book, along with 250 new? Or might it be something even more drastic such as 300 CW/CWS hymns, along with 300 new?

Or might the “can/should” issue move us toward the even more radical thinking, expressed in Reeder’s senior thesis, that we would really like to step away from being jerked forward into a mass of new hymnody, psalmody and liturgy every fifteen years? Is there the possibility that this would be the last time that we have a traditional hymnal project, that, from here on out, the new resources are rotated in and the tired resources are rotated out on an ongoing basis and the all-digital resources are constantly available and allow for a self-serve compilation and publishing process? That would be interesting. Whether or not it would be advisable or beneficial for the constituency we are seeking to serve is a matter we will certainly investigate.

The many possibilities will not be treated lightly, nor will new approaches be taken for the sake of novelty. They will be treated pastorally, not that only pastors will be working on them but that they will be treated in line with providing God’s people with what is for their spiritual good.

## Texts

It's called a hymnal for a reason. Most will judge it by its hymns rather than by its order for marriage. Expectations of this hymnal are that it will have a rich array of technological products and, accordingly, that its technological features will strongly appeal to the multiple generations in our society which are being swept along by the swift current of a digital age. With the people we have and will have on board, I am confident that those expectations will be met. From the outset, however, we do want to emphasize texts over tech. It will quite possibly be fascinating to see what the media for content distribution will turn out to be ten years from now, but the content is more important than the media which distributes it and to that content we now want to direct our attention.

After spending three to four years going through hundreds of hymns in order to include eighty-five in CWS, it was easy to conclude that there were many hymns which were close but which ultimately had to be let go because the text fell short in one way or another. When it comes to evaluating hymns, there really can't be an overly rigid set of criteria that a hymn simply must meet because artistic expression and poetry and poetic license and thematic content will sometimes cross over lines which one or another person has drawn in the sand. We can, however, speak in terms of general guidelines (many have sought to draw them up),<sup>42</sup> and we can recognize that confessional Lutheran guidelines will and ought to differ from plenty of other approaches which there may be.

- Scripturally accurate – Texts can't conflict in any way with the truths of God's Word.

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<sup>42</sup> *Characteristics of a good hymn, as noted by my daughter from her MLC class with Dr. Moldenhauer* 1. They are liturgical. They call on God and invite others to call on God's name. 2. They are doxological, naming the trinity. 3. They have strong and accurate doctrinal content. 4. They make use of the Word of God (quotes from scripture/paraphrasing). 5. They apply the message of the gospel (making application to our lives). 6. They have high quality poetry. 7. They exhibit an emotional aspect that supports the gospel (tugs at the heart strings with the gospel). 8. They are influenced by the church year. 9. They have melodies that touch the heart of the worshiper and point to the eternal song.

*Chad Bird "Why Lutherans Sing What They Sing" pp. 52-53* 1. A Lutheran hymn aims not to create the right atmosphere or mood for worship, but serves as a vehicle for the Spirit-filled Word of God. 2. A Lutheran hymn is not entertainment but proclamation. 3. A Lutheran hymn is shaped by the theology of the cross. 4. A Lutheran hymn is not bound merely to paraphrase the biblical text, rather it interprets the Scriptures in reference to Christ. 5. A Lutheran hymn is bound to no culture, save the culture of the Church catholic.

*Stephen Starke - "Discerning Strengths and Weaknesses of Hymns" in GSI Journal of the Fourth Annual Conference* 1. Is the text Christ-centered or man-centered? Does the pronoun "you" or the pronoun "I" predominate? 2. Does the text speak from a "theology of the cross" perspective, or does it speak from a "theology of glory" perspective? 3. Does the hymn text emphasize the special revelation of Christ in God's Word or the natural revelation of God in his created works? 4. Are the means of grace highlighted as the way in which the Spirit works, or is the impression given that the Spirit works apart from means? 5. How is faith used? Is faith described in terms of trusting in God's mercy in Christ, or is faith described in terms of feelings? 6. Does the text have an incarnational worldview, that is, God has acted in Christ ("Christ is our peace" [Eph 2:14]), or does the text have a mythical worldview, that is, one based on wishful thinking ("Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me...")?

- Christocentric /salvation – As a few professors used to say, “If it could just as easily be sung in a synagogue, it may be missing something.” (We’ll have a little more to say about “1<sup>st</sup> Article” hymns below.)
- Artistic / poetic – For a text to be a thing of beauty which is going to stand the test of time and be of value to the church, the term “craftsmanship” is one to be borne in mind (Routley quote above).
- Clear – All that might be contained in the imagery of poetry may not be captured by a singer making his first pass through a hymn text. However, on the intelligibility spectrum which has perfect clarity on one end and incomprehensible ambiguity on the other end, hymn texts need to be well over on the clarity side.
- Dignified / Proper English – Passage-of-time issues will continuously be redefining “language which befits the Almighty,” but good English which avoids the cheap and excludes slang is a goal. The previous hymnal moved us past the thinking that God is degraded if he is not addressed with “thee” or “thou”, but public worship is still a place to address and to speak about the Lord with respect and a certain amount of decorum. Appropriate language for corporate prayer and appropriate language for corporate singing are close cousins.

With regard to clarity and scriptural accuracy, a gentleman who has made a career of emphasizing that hymns teach the faith has put it this way: “Our singing together will have the result of teaching something, so it had better be right. For it is not easy later to erase or correct that which is false and has been learned through hymnic repetition and given to the memory. It is therefore wise for those given the authority to choose hymns for the church’s life to see hymns as teachers of the faith.”<sup>43</sup>

With regard to craftsmanship, a contemporary performer of classic hymns has put it this way:

It’s easy to write a chorus that says

God, you are a Holy God  
I need your grace to see me through  
I need your mercy to make me new  
Let me live each day for you.

I just made that up in 2 minutes and there’s nothing wrong with it. It would fit easily and competitively among the hundreds of worship songs that are available to choose from. Compare those lines to the third stanza from the above hymn:

Let holy charity mine outward vesture be,  
And lowliness become mine inner clothing;  
True lowliness of heart, which takes the humbler part,  
And o’er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

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<sup>43</sup> Resch, Richard. “Hymns in the Life of the Church: Defining Our Singing Together” an essay appearing in “Hymns in the Life of the Church,” the Journal of the Fourth Annual Conference of the Good Shepherd Institute, p. 20.

It took some real thought to craft those lines, but they are timeless. They set a standard for all of us who write music for the church.<sup>44</sup>

As we look out over the upcoming project and think in terms of the research and development years and specifically in terms of identifying a large number of hymns to review, I would hope that a good number of strong church musicians of both genders would be willing to do the kind of thing one group did in putting together its supplement – individuals independently formulating and submitting hymn lists.<sup>45</sup> Working through our Hymnody Committee, how broadly can we solicit what experienced church musicians and worship leaders have found to be examples of strong hymns? One might suppose a project director would do so as a matter of course (and it is being done and currently numbers in the seventies), but from how many worship professionals in our own church body might we request and receive lists of strong hymns to review over the next five years?

Add to that the increasing amount of hymnody that has been written and is being written and can be reviewed in the recently published compilations of one author's hymn texts (such as those available for the hymns of Wren, Dudley-Smith, Dalles, Stuempfle *et al*). Add to that the actual hymnals which we will have opportunity to acquire and review. Add to that the online resources or cyber hymnals that have proliferated in recent history ([Cyber Hymnal](#), [Oremus Hymnal](#), the [Christian Classics Ethereal Hymnary](#), [Hymnary.org](#)<sup>46</sup> which describes itself as "A comprehensive index of over 1 million hymn texts", *et m al* [*yes, I am coining a new Latin abbreviation for et multa alia*]) and we will have our work cut out for us when it comes to applying an agreed upon set of Lutheran criteria to an extremely large pool of resources.

Add to that the matter of hymn translations and it is almost like entering another world of possible pursuits. TLH was comprised of 660 hymns, 52.5% of which were translations from an original language other than English into English. (An Eggert quote above showed the details; it is reprinted below.<sup>47</sup>) From TLH to CW the number of translations decreased slightly (347 down to 283), but with 623 hymns in CW, the translation percentage was still nearly half (45.4%). Details again are below.<sup>48</sup>

As only one example of translation pursuits, John Kelly translated the complete works of Paul Gerhardt during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (complete Project Gutenberg e-book [here](#)). Winkworth and Massie translations of Gerhardt hymns are also 19<sup>th</sup> Century. One of the CW Gerhardt hymns was translated by John B. Wesley in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Four of the seventeen Gerhardt texts in CW were re-translated as part of the 1941 TLH hymnal project, and one of the stanzas of one of the Gerhardt hymns was re-translated by H Kuschel for CW. LC-MS Rev. Rick Stuckwisch has spear-headed yet another go-around of translating Gerhardt's hymns.

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<sup>44</sup> Ortega, Fernando. [Blog comment](#).

<sup>45</sup> Starke, op. cit, p. 29. "Each of the five members of the Hymn Selection Committee for Hymnal Supplement 98 prepared himself for our first meeting in December of 1996 by selecting 75 hymns deemed worthy of serious consideration for the hymnal supplement. In the end, the Hymn Selection Committee reviewed over 600 hymns, sifting through the stack of hymn texts to choose the roughly 110 hymns that make up HS 98."

<sup>46</sup> [CW](#) and [CWS](#) have been made available on [hymnary.org](#).

<sup>47</sup> Our hymnal with 660 hymns includes in addition to the hymns from various English sources, 347 translations (52.5%) ; German, 248; Latin, 46; Scandinavian, 31; Greek, 9; Slovak, 6; French, 2; Italian, 2; Dutch, Welsh, and Finnish, 1 each.

<sup>48</sup> Hymn translations in CW - 283 (45.4%); Bohemian, 1; Czech, 1; Danish, 18; French, 1; German, 208; Greek, 2; Italian, 2; Latin, 36; Norwegian, 8; Swedish, 5; Welsh, 1

As one further example (and there are many more), Christian Worship: Handbook (CW:H) shows nine untranslated “other stanzas” of Johann Rist’s hymn which we know as “Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light,” a one-stanza hymn in CW which is actually stanza 9 of Rist’s original. Review work has been done to at least show which CW hymns actually have untranslated stanzas or translated stanzas which have archaic language. Similar groundwork has been done for TLH. *Early on in the project* it will be desirable to invite individuals proficient in German (or Latin or Greek or Danish [if you know any]) to render hymns into prose so that poets can render the prose into metrical poetry. In this area it is time once again to return to what happened in the CW project and to what our forebears (including Luther) regularly did, to consider centos and composite translations and adding needed stanzas to hymns which are partially strong, and to expend every effort possible to present to the people of our church body hymnody which has already served well in previous generations, but to present it to them in the poetic language of today.

As we raise the issue of hymn translations for this project, and as we are mindful of the fact that the matter has already been bounced around at C/W meetings, we wish to pursue that course of action which will review hymn translations, especially German translations, to see to it that out of date translations are updated, if possible, and to seek to avoid letting good hymns slip through the cracks merely because centuries-old translations were not considered for updating. The translations of heritage hymns or Lutheran chorales seems like a good place to begin a review, but there are plenty of places for us to be looking. The amount of caution and care and discretion which will go into determining when to alter or update an English translation and when not to do so will be significant. We want to respect English translations which many of our fellow Christians have committed to memory and so our retranslation efforts may well lean toward those translated texts which are less well known than toward those which are more well known.

If we are committed to that aspect of liturgical worship which makes use of the church year and a lectionary based upon it, then there is a great deal of room to search out or to solicit or to commission the kinds of hymn texts which serve to support the lectionary which we will choose to publish. The [St. Ambrose Hymn Contest](#) would be one example of a group of people who are looking to foster that kind of hymn writing/composing which supports the lectionary. Their hymn contest asks for hymn texts/compositions which cover those Sunday lessons which seem to have a paucity of supporting hymnody.<sup>49</sup> There are different philosophical approaches to the hymnody which supports each weekly festival. Some feel that the Hymn of the Week (or Day) is the only hymn which needs to strongly support the theme of the Sunday. Others are of the opinion that every hymn in the Sunday service ought to be tied to the theme of the day. This is less of an issue during the festival half of the church year when the body of hymnody in a hymnal such as ours naturally supports those specific festivals which proclaim the birth, life, preaching, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension and glorious return of our Savior. When the theme of a Sunday is less defined and the Sunday’s selection of hymns less obvious, it might be good for a Scripture Committee which already has experience with suggested hymns listings to be sensitive to identifying pericopes which would benefit from supporting hymnody.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Beyond “lectionary gaps”, topical needs will also receive attention. For example, in an age where the estate of marriage is taking such a beating, finding or commissioning hymnody which supports God’s estate may be a need that is viewed as extremely timely.

<sup>50</sup> Resch, op. cit. p. 18. “Hymns as proclamation are liturgical, and that means they always have a function within the church year of grace as they are applied to a specific liturgical day and liturgy. As a member of the hymnody

Finally, in line with the matter of intelligibility which was raised in the introduction of this essay, a new hymnal project means that the time has come to re-evaluate language issues which were painstakingly reviewed in the previous hymnal project. There is not a time when language is not in flux. Hymnal projects which fail to recognize this and to address it will find themselves in trouble.

It's probably unfortunate that the German "dir" (you) and "wir" (we) are such a good rhyme. It's probably doubly unfortunate that the English "thee" and "we" are such a good rhyme, especially when they are translations of "dir" and "wir." How unfortunate it is comes out when we see how, so frequently, translations into the English "we" and "you" are so far from rhyming. Yet, such specific examples are just a sample of the language issues which we will again face with another hymnal project.

It is, however, beyond the somewhat vexing translation issues which will always be in play that our attention will need to be directed. Let's put an example on the table which can be typical of perhaps a dozen similar language issues. The renowned English hymnologist Erik Routley regarded James Montgomery as, "without any question, on the verdict of posterity, the greatest of Christian lay hymn writers."<sup>51</sup> A year before he died, Montgomery wrote about "the humility and tolerance a hymnwriter must exercise over against those who would unduly and unjustly criticize and revise the original texts."<sup>52</sup> But here we are (or here I am), suggesting alterations to one of Montgomery's English texts. Consider "Hail to the Lord's Anointed" (CW #93). Stanza two refers to the Lord's anointed as the one who comes to rescue God's people, as one who will "give them songs for sighing." While not realistically to be expected, it would be helpful if, prior to singing that text, worshipers could read Isaiah 61:3 and compare the KJV with the NIV. 17<sup>th</sup> Century English easily understands that the preposition "for" means "instead of." That's how Isaiah 61:3 reads in the KJV: "to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." When CW retains Montgomery's 19<sup>th</sup> Century English and has stanza two read, "to give them songs for sighing," 21<sup>st</sup> Century worshipers may be left in the dust. To them, it reads and sings as if they are being given songs in order that they might sigh them. They won't automatically think that the preposition "for" means "instead of" as they quickly sing those three English words "songs for sighing." They might easily miss that the Messiah's arrival replaces their guilt-laden sighs with guilt-free songs. Is that being too picky? Or ought we remember that sometimes poetry needs to remain as it is and we need to accommodate ourselves to it rather than taking the chainsaw of alteration to it to make it accommodate us? In either case, our highest concern is that the gospel message be intelligibly communicated to guest and member alike.

Other than language problems, there are also language issues to be assessed. Two can be briefly treated here. Ought a new hymnal, published for the decades to come, be cleansed of all Elizabethan language? A blanket "yes" or "no" won't very likely give us the best result; a case by case review, one which especially shows respect for original English poetry, will better serve the cause. What about "perfect" or "true" rhyme?<sup>53</sup> At least in some contemporary hymn writing which we have seen, say, in the examples of CWS and the texts reviewed for it, there has been a little bit of a trend toward less

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committee, I can report that the place and function in the lectionary's year of grace is part of the discussion for every hymn under consideration."

<sup>51</sup> CW:H, p. 790.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> In an interview about his hymn writing, regarding the hymn "Water, Blood and Spirit Crying," Starke stated: "Stanza 5 was originally 'Water, blood and Spirit pleasing,' which wasn't a true rhyme, especially when you get down to 'completing.' I never liked that, so I just reversed it all and made it 'Spirit, water, blood entreating,' which gave it the perfect rhyme I was looking for. I always try to get a perfect rhyme. It doesn't always happen, but I try." Op. cit, p. 178.

concern for perfect rhyme and more frequency of “vowel-sound-only” or other “less than true” rhyme schemes.<sup>54</sup> We may wish to let it be known or to bear in mind that perfect rhyme or even any rhyme is not the sole item which determines whether or not a text qualifies as poetic verse.

Once, while being interviewed, Jaroslav Vajda made a passing comment regarding a text he had shortened from nine stanzas down to three: “I figured that nowadays nine-stanza hymns don’t have much of a place in the service anymore.”<sup>55</sup> Not that Vajda has the final word on the matter, but “fewer stanzas is better” is certainly the impression one is given when people comment freely about hymnody issues in the worship service. It is more and more common to see examples, such as the singing of Tisserand’s “O Sons and Daughters of the King” on Easter 2, where a longer hymn is divided and sung in two separate places in the worship service. (For possibilities where software can provide graphics with selected verses of a hymn we will look toward a later section of the essay.) On the other hand, with reference to the length of “All My Heart This Night Rejoices,” Oswald comments, “But when there is much to say, volume should not be criticized.” We will be discussing the length of hymns.<sup>56</sup>

A final text issue that this essay will treat is that of so-called “1<sup>st</sup> Article” hymns. Whether the focus is on “praise songs” from a particular contemporary genre or on “providence songs” straight from the Bible or even on psalm texts which seem to do nothing other than praise God for being God, does the absence of a salvation theme or of the mention of Christ disqualify a hymn? In the world of homiletics, we might all be aware of certain OT texts where it has seemed that the only mention of the gospel is in the appearance of the tetragrammaton. How should that matter be treated when we are looking at including or excluding hymns?

Neander’s “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” tends toward the “salvation-light” end of the spectrum. “Salvation” in stanza 1 is not in the original German. There are two references to mercy. The German does have “der gnädige Gott” in stanza 3. But for all practical intents and purposes, it’s a 1<sup>st</sup> Article hymn, appearing in the general “Worship and Praise” section of countless hymnals. Does it, then, meet our general criterion of being Christocentric or salvation-based?

One writer’s comments regarding another such hymn are worth applying not to every specific hymn which speaks little of Christ or of salvation but hopefully to the general issue before us, and will require no further elaboration:

One of the most controversial of Gerhardt’s many excellent hymns of consolation is “Commit Whatever Grieves Thee.” Like a number of his other chorales this one has occasionally been criticized as being restricted to the message of the First Article of our Creed and consequently as neglecting Redemption and Sanctification. Such neglect is hardly thinkable unless one insists on treating this chorale in complete isolation from Gerhardt’s other poetry. Certainly our poet neither meant to hint at or [sic] pretended to know any other way to the Father than by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. In fact, it is his reliance upon justification before God through Jesus Christ, and no other relation or access, that permits him to speak freely of the Father without everywhere

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<sup>54</sup> Townend’s “How Deep the Father’s Love For Us,” referenced at the beginning of this essay, has some imperfect rhyming patterns such as “shoulders / scoffers”, “answer / ransom”, and “accomplished / finished.”

<sup>55</sup> GSI IV, p. 157.

<sup>56</sup> LSB seeks to address this, for example, at #618/#619, where it distills “I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table” down to ten stanzas, and, in fact, sets those ten stanzas as two five-stanza hymns.

making specific mention of him who brought him to the Father. The very name “Father” implies and recalls all that.<sup>57</sup>

We have been lengthy enough in writing about texts but nowhere near exhaustive. However, when the kinds of things mentioned in this section (and whatever else might be profitably mentioned) have been observed or factored in, we will welcome every publishing and technological innovation which can deliver these texts in the best and broadest possible ways. (Cf. appendix A for statistics regarding numbers of texts which have either been preserved or set aside as far as recently published Lutheran hymnals. Lengthier reports can easily be printed from this index, disclosing the actual titles.)

## Music

Just prior to the development phase of CWS, the goal was expressed that, with every turn of the page, the user would come across another “home run” hymn, one that hits it out of the park regarding both text and tune. During those development years we came to find out how difficult a goal that was to attain. We might also recognize from general experience that “home run” in the minds of the worshiping assembly may lean more toward music which they like than toward texts which they appreciate.

There are some “givens” in this section of the essay which the reader is invited to take as such. We consider it a given that the text is more important than the tune. We understand that the music is to serve the text, is, in fact, to serve the gospel by carrying it to the heart of the believer, not to carry sole responsibility for making the singer happy (a role it ought not have) or for building up the singer’s faith (a role it is not able to carry out). We subscribe to every bit of the philosophy that can be included in a proper understanding of music as *viva vox evangelii*. We are in agreement with our seminary’s Dean of Chapel when, some time ago, he wrote regarding the form of the order of service: “Today’s church needs to testify as clearly as Luther did that it will not bow to the contention that the gospel needs a better package.”<sup>58</sup> The same could be said of music’s relationship to the gospel.

As far as home runs are concerned, it typically turns out that such greatness is a *post mortem* determination, i.e., a judgment which comes long after the death of the author/composer. “History will tell...” is a maxim which doesn’t fail. Meanwhile, we are engaged in evaluating how much longer the works of previous generations will be put to use among us, and in commending to the generations which succeed us a body of hymnody which they will similarly evaluate after we have transitioned into glory.

For a discussion of the musical side of this matter, I will not be so bold as to offer a definitive list of musical features which best befit congregational song in a conservative, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Lutheran church body. What I would be interested to explore and to discuss is the impressions we have come to have about music which works for congregational song and music which doesn’t. Putting it that way is not at all intended to reduce the discussion to mere singability. Every congregation is different in the musical gifts its members have, in its historical experiences, in the direction its ministry of music goes in its

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<sup>57</sup> Oswald, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>58</sup> Tiefel, op. cit., p. 19.



particular context, and in what it has learned to sing (repertoire). Given enough exposure, it is safe to say that a congregation could learn to sing almost anything. Whether or not the members would be willing to go along with such an undertaking, or whether or not the musical “anything” which they might sing would at all serve well to carry the message is another matter. Can we agree or conclude, however, that there is a point at which we need to ask if certain types of music work well for congregational song anymore and if certain specific tunes should proceed any further in carrying a specific hymn text? Both in the years of serving as a pastor and in the months of serving as a project director, I have fielded not a flood but a fairly regular stream of comments which have seriously questioned “our music.” I know this is not unique to me. I fully understand that what people say can be generated by a thousand different things, including the individuals’ background and experiences and personal preferences. At the same time, some of the most scathing comments about the worship services in congregations I have served have come from visitors who were commenting about the hymns, and I’m referring to comments since 1993, regarding a hymnal that I personally like and appreciate. Not everyone likes or appreciates the music of our hymnal. It’s foolish to think that everyone ever will. We can perhaps soothe ourselves with the thinking that not everyone is really capable of knowing the difference between what they like and what they need. But we don’t need to assume that they are talking about the music because in the cases I’m talking about, they make that very plain: “The music in that hymnal of yours needs some freshening up!”

It will be our responsibility to do those things which insure that the music is serving in a ministerial role, that it is not replacing but carrying the message. Part of that responsibility is also to give consideration to music which is no longer doing the best job of carrying the message but is perhaps burying rather than carrying the message. That might rub against our own personal knowledge of and appreciation for music which for centuries has carried distinctively Lutheran texts, but I’m not even trying to single out modal music written for Lutheran chorales or plainsong music written for texts before the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. As with the sermon, I can’t enhance the gospel by my riveting presentation of it but I can turn people off to it by my shoddy presentation of it. Great music doesn’t make the text any better, but not so great music can turn people away from paying any attention to a text. For all the right arguments and points that could ever be made about the interrelation between the music and the texts of our hymns and liturgies, and for all that those arguments could ever do to silence those who might be inclined to gainsay our musical choices, all I am seeking to say is that I would prefer to give not complete but at least some credence to the impressions people seem to have about the music of our hymns, psalms and liturgies. I would prefer that we not bury our heads in the sand by saying that they just must not know what they are talking about or that they just must not be Lutheran enough or whatever defensive posture we might assume. I would prefer to be vulnerable on this point rather than defensive, to look into it as much as a hymnal project can look into it and to come out of this project confident that we have done our best “for the glory of God and the edification of man.”

There will again be matters of balance. I have seen the printed encouragements to consider making use of “Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above” (CW #266) in place of the Gloria during Lent. That is a way to make use of a heritage type hymn in a season typified by musical restraint rather than by musical exuberance. Local conditions would dictate whether or not it would first need to be taught. More likely than not that is also an example of the kind of music about which not too many are thrilled and in which not too many are excited to participate. Where will such an issue land after a hymn committee and an executive committee have had their opportunity to review? Are its two pages in CW important as far as preserving that piece for generations to come or are those two pages not a good use of space?

There are congregations which have fairly mastered such hymns as “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands” (CW # 161) or “Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart” (TLH #429) and there are other congregations which have never sung those hymns, don’t know them, and perhaps have no desire to sing the likes of them. I could sing the daylights out of those songs and I probably have. The same holds true for hymns like “Who Trusts in God, A Strong Abode” (CW #447) or “In You, O Lord, I Put My Trust.” I either learned those tunes in grade school or sang them in church when I was growing up. I’ve already learned them. Not everyone has. Not everyone wants to. But be stupid enough to name names, such as I have done with a handful of titles, and you can be sure someone will have a reaction.<sup>59</sup> A “preserve our heritage” part of me says we certainly ought to do all we can to keep such hymns not only in print in our hymnals but also being sung in our naves, but another part of me wonders, “Is it time to let some of those tunes go, or to give some of those texts new musical garb?” And who knows if the new garb will be better? We know for sure some will think it not. I plainly sense that some of the music we have in print is a kind of music which no longer has appeal for a significant percentage of today’s worshipers and that we do need to strike a balance when we come to decisions about what we want to hold onto and publish again for preservation’s sake and what we will be willing to let go, recognizing that with this project, the digital copies of all we’ve published are already in place to live on in that format and can be used in a service folder at any time.

We have ten years during which forty to fifty hymnal committee personnel will be able to bat this around in ways which we pray will be for the good of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We can also recognize that such a review process (relative to music and other items) is always another step. CW was a step (reviewing TLH). This hymnal project will take another step (reviewing CW). The next hymnal project will be another step (reviewing our work).

Going further on the topic of music, just what is the state of church music in WELS? Is the organ any longer the main worship instrument in a majority of our congregations? Are congregations using a mixture of organ and piano or obviously favoring one or the other? Is there an increasing number of congregations making use of other instruments on a regular basis rather than only on major festivals? How many find themselves in a situation where the music that leads most or all of the worship services is generated by computers, keyboards and other digital media rather than by a live accompanist? Is the level of difficulty of the worship music we have published too high for the average accompanist among us, so that he/she has to practice excessively or so that the music which is actually chosen has to be at a much lower level of difficulty? We will be exploring items such as these and the reader is invited to comment on what appears or to make additions. What follows are some specifics with regard to the music of a hymnal:

## **1) Settings**

Worshipers born and bred on TLH became accustomed to hymns with musical settings written almost exclusively in a chordal or vertical style (sometimes also referred to as “block harmony.”) Accompanists and singers could appreciate the predictability and the relatively lower level of difficulty afforded them by such a style. In both liturgy and hymnody, singing in parts was much more noticeable. Before the arrival of CW, Missouri’s LW became well known for its relative unpredictability, for its frequent use of

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<sup>59</sup> Potentially falling into the same category could be the *Gloria* from the Common Service or the *Create in Me* reprinted at CW #272.

linear settings where individual voices would go in horizontal directions independent of any regular kind of vertical chordal structure.<sup>60</sup>

Those in our church body who compared the settings of CW with those of TLH can still be heard to say that the CW settings are noticeably more difficult than those of TLH, perhaps not to the degree that was true of LW, but yet to a noticeable degree. If we care to learn anything from Missouri's most recent hymnal project (LSB 2006), it might be that simplifying the best settings is the path to follow.<sup>61</sup> That often faceless, nameless but indispensable band of keyboardists who strive so diligently to continue the church's song will, we are told, be eternally grateful.

Returning completely to the types of TLH settings described above would no doubt be an overreaction. Many of the CW settings, while admittedly more difficult, are musically superior. However, with such a high percentage of those TLH settings residing in the public domain, they would, after being updated to rhythmically and notationally align with their CW counterparts, certainly provide an almost automatic supply of alternate hymn settings.<sup>62</sup> (Cf. Appendix B for side by side examples).

A comment above expressed the opinion that the performance of "Bach harmonizations" belongs more to the choir than to the congregation.<sup>63</sup> If that is to be the case, we can recognize that most if not all of those harmonizations are in the public domain and that we would be able to put them in the cloud so that congregations could have their choirs make use of them, especially for stanzas sung on an alternating basis between choir and assembly. Might a similar project be undertaken with the male chorus hymn settings scored by Prof. Albrecht, resulting in male choirs also singing those alternating stanzas?<sup>64</sup> What other "sets of settings" can be identified for similar use?

## **2) Overall Arrangements**

Of the pew edition hymnals in my possession, one which demonstrates a greater level of musical expansiveness would be The Celebration Hymnal (© 1997 by Word / Integrity). Printed out fairly regularly in it are modulations to a higher key for a closing stanza (not that this needs to happen with every hymn that has a more festive melody or a doxological final stanza, but it is nice to have it available for judicious use), optional repeat settings and optional transitions to a next song in a medley, optional choral endings or reprises and optional last stanza settings. While our practice might be to include such items in the accompaniment edition, their location (treated toward the end of the essay) is less

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<sup>60</sup> This was the case to such a degree that one LC-MS hymnal committee member spoke with me on the phone and referred to LW as a Christmas present when it came to the matter of settings, indicating that, however they might end up, the new LSB settings could only be considered an improvement over the settings of LW.

<sup>61</sup> During the same phone call as the previous footnote, it was noted that, with the hymn settings of LSB, steps were taken to insure that there were no three-texture chords in either the left or right hand but rather only two-texture chords in either hand.

<sup>62</sup> The project director has scored all the TLH settings (without text) into Finale, anticipating that their availability will result in at least some kind of potential use.

<sup>63</sup> While more than one individual has made this point with me, I have yet to be convinced that these settings should be the exclusive property of the choir. The Bach harmonization at CW #44 ("Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light" and the isometric version of FREU DICH SEHR at CW #320, "On My Heart Imprint Your Image," are two examples which lead me to feel that we could easily include in a hymnal a few more selections like them.

<sup>64</sup> To be sure there would be key signature issues to resolve so that these TTBB settings could be merged with standard SATB settings. The example is given to spawn more examples.

important than their actual existence or presence. How much can we expand over the next decade when it comes to items such as vocal and instrumental descants, alternate settings and scores for additional instruments, including percussion, and the like? CWS took these kinds of resources farther than did CW, so if the next hymnal project is to continue on that path, work on all the “extra” resources will need to begin early.

### ***3) Old Texts with New Music***

After what may be viewed as a miniature pilot project within the CWS project, I am convinced that a new, additional tune to which “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands” may be sung is a pilot project that has, at least in that one case, been successful and gained traction. The fact that both tunes are now being utilized in various places would lead one to conclude that a quality text is receiving a broader usage. Whether or not every such project would be successful or should even be considered or executed will have to be approached on a case by case basis, each with its own merits. It would be wise to have more than a few opinions rendered as such cases are considered.<sup>65</sup>

### ***4) Of Organs and Pianos***

It doesn’t take too much training to be able to pick out a pianist who has transitioned to playing the organ without having taken any organ lessons. Other than the pedal quite possibly not being played, there is often a lack of sustain between the successive notes or chords, because the pianist is not accustomed to thinking the keys need to remain depressed. This is due simply to the fact that a piano is a percussion instrument, whose keys are struck to cause a string to vibrate. Once struck, the vibration immediately begins to die, whereas with the sustained organ note, the pipe continues to speak full strength until the key is no longer depressed.

It is, again, only an impression that has been received, but the anecdotal comments I’ve heard would indicate that congregations are using the piano as an instrument to accompany congregational singing much more often than in the past, and in some cases, are doing so exclusively, with the organ virtually placed into retirement. While it has been described as the best possible instrument for accompanying congregational song, organ accompaniment of singing is not as longstanding a norm as one might think, having become popular only as recently as the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>66</sup> It would be interesting to see how congregations would assess the way in which an acoustic piano, for example, supports congregational song. By the nature of the instrument itself, it can only do so to a lesser degree than can a pipe organ. Even a digital keyboard played through a PA can’t be as supportive as a pipe organ, due again to the dying vibration of the struck string. Yet the popularity of using the piano for worship has risen, seemingly significantly.

What can also be noted (as almost an addendum to the “settings” section above) is the greater amount of pianistic settings available for psalms and verses and canticles and hymns, even in one of our own

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<sup>65</sup> Both of the retranslations of CW texts commissioned for the 2011 WELS National Conference on Worship, Music and the Arts (“Jesus, Priceless Treasure” retranslated as “Jesus My Joy”; “Where Wilt Thou Go Since Night Draws Near” retranslated as “Dear Jesus, on Your Pilgrim Way”) also received new tunes/settings. The former was unique in that the new text and tune employed a meter different than that of the original text and tune.

<sup>66</sup> Herl, op. cit., p. 56.

published worship books. CWS includes pianistic settings of a gathering rite and other liturgical canticles, as well as more than a few hymns originally written specifically for piano. Typical of those kinds of settings are broken chords in the left hand, intended to be played with the sustain pedal. The range and speed of those broken chord combinations can be the friend of the accomplished pianist or the foe of the minimally accomplished pianist. The rise of the use of this instrument will lead toward consideration and discussion of the publication of a complete edition of piano accompaniments as one of the volumes in the new hymnal project.

## 5) Key

Lowering key signatures was plainly a pre-meditated step as the CW hymnal committee began to meet in the mid 1980's.<sup>67</sup> Over the years there was apparently enough buzz about high melodic ranges that the committee assumed it would be lowering the key of more than a few hymns (139, as it turned out [downloadable table [here](#)]). Altering a key signature can have a domino effect. Extant alternate settings or other musical literature which has already been written on a piece (perhaps centuries ago) may not be in a particularly easy format to transpose into the new key.

It has become more and more commonplace in recent years for electronic keyboards and organs and even genuine pipe organs to have electronics which are able to transpose or modulate simply by rotating a knob. Anyone who watches any kind of guitar performance on a television reality show or elsewhere will almost certainly notice a capo regularly affixed to the fret board of the guitar, altering its key. While I have heard it may be on its way out, Sibelius' Scorch browser plug-in has for years allowed for online review, performance and printing of sheet music, in any key signature which the user desires. Are all such things trending toward key-signature independent music?

Imagine my surprise to find out one day that George Winston's popular "Variations on the Kanon by Pachelbel" off his "December" album was actually played in C major (Kanon in C?). That may not be consequential at all, nor may be the various key signature changes which appeared in CW, but there are a few examples that make me wonder if the key changes are entirely inconsequential. "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" (CW 234) is now printed in our hymnal in F rather than its original key of G. Do organists then use the transposer (obviously not if the instrument is not equipped with one) if they make use of Manz's LOBE DEN HERREN organ prelude, or does the assembly simply sing a whole step lower when the hymn is sung, or is the key signature difference inconsequential (even when certain hymn tunes have dozens of pieces of musical literature written for them)? LASST UNS ERFREUEN now appears in D in CW rather than its original E $\flat$ . Apart from what composer Vaughan Williams may or may not have thought of such a change, most organists or keyboardists wouldn't have had any major difficulties with the change, since most beginner to medium-level keyboardists likely have a slightly easier time with two sharps than with three flats anyway.

Another lowering key change, that of C major to B $\flat$  major, can be seen in the TLH to CW transition in a dozen instances. From the perspective of level of difficulty, that change seems a bit more consequential than some of the other key changes. UNSER HERRSCHER ("Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty"), for example, has a significantly different look to it in the lower key signature; the setting lies beneath the fingers in a substantially different way, one which again might cause a bit of a struggle for less accomplished keyboardists or for those who had become so familiar with the easier C major setting. In

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<sup>67</sup> See [here](#) the resultant statistics for specific key signatures used.

C major the melody reaches the high E (E 6) a total of four times in three phrases. By comparison, LANCASHIRE (“The Day of Resurrection”), in D major in TLH, had only two high E’s (but also a string of five high D’s in the final system) and was lowered to C major. I would have to say that playing the two settings side by side in D and then in C makes me want it to be played in D. But I have also very recently been told that plenty of our hymns are still too high, and this by a person who freely admitted that increasing age has made the higher hymns harder to sing. Some may be giving consideration to a certain brightness which certain keys are said to possess more than others, as was the case when Dr. Moldenhauer originally wrote NORTHRIDGE (“Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands”) in the key of A major, a key signature which was ultimately lowered to G major for publication.

Obviously, low melodic range can also be a concern, as evidenced by the fact that two of the four Getty hymns in CWS were raised. “There Is a Higher Throne” appears in the “In Christ Alone” album songbook in E, with a low range of B 4 and an octave higher high range of B 5. CWS raised the song into the key of F major, its range then being C 5 (middle C) to C 6. F major is plainly an easier key to play than E major, so it is possible that difficulty and range were being addressed. In the key of A major in the songbook, “Speak, O Lord” is raised to B ♭ in CWS. All may not agree on whether or not the lower sharp key is any brighter. A more recent Easter hymn by the same composer (“Christ Is Risen, He Is Risen Indeed”) is written in E major. It could be made more accessible to the beginner or medium-level keyboardist by transposing the piece into D major or F major but we don’t want to consistently drift away from key signatures which composers have chosen for a reason.

Capo’d guitar playing alters the chords which are played, but most often this is done only to allow the guitarist to play easier chords on a different position on the fret board. Tonally, the piece is quite often still being played in its original key. While beginning guitarists may experience some level of difficulty with certain basic chords such as F and B which are barred, I/IV/V chord progressions in almost any key signature can be simplified by use of the capo and many more guitarists are seeming to do so more regularly. Playing in the native key of E with the simple I/IV/V progression results in making use of the E/A/B chords. Some would just as soon skip barring the B chord, place the capo at the second fret and play the D/G/A chords instead. Playing in the native key of A is not particularly difficult at all, with the basic A/D/E three-chord progression. Some, however, prefer capo 2 which then allows for the fingering options of the G/C/D chords. This is why guitar lead sheets so often have the optional line of capo chords in parentheses.

Regarding range, Hilton Oswald, cited earlier, had this comment to make about the Paul Gerhardt text / Johann Schop composition, “I Will Sing My Maker’s Praises”: “But the music for the glorious conclusion, ‘God’s great love abides for aye,’ ranges high above that of earth’s climaxes and it climbs to its apex with unfaltering confidence. All true appreciation of the intended effect of this splendid refrain will inspire even us poor basses to breathe deeply and to reach out for that glorious high ‘F’ of the latter half of the refrain.”<sup>68</sup> When the Lord graciously brings me home, I’m not going to be the one to tell the former Northwestern College professor that CW baled on the high E-F-D-D-C in the latter half of the refrain, opting instead for E-C-C-B ♭-C.

We’ve already gone in the direction of not reaching for too many glorious high “F’s” anymore. Perhaps that’s for the best. Rather than only considering comfortable range of singing, the hymnal project will want to give some of its attention to original key choices of composers, to the possibilities afforded by transposing keyboards, and, because transposing musical scores is only a matter of a few clicks, some

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<sup>68</sup> Oswald, op. cit., p. 45.

attention to the wisdom or folly of providing musical scores in a handful of different key signatures which might make things easier for beginner- and medium-level accompanists, and, finally, some attention to the wisdom or folly of providing musical scores in a completely key-signature independent format where the user makes the decision.

## 6) Rhythm

The image shows two staves of music in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The first staff contains the lyrics: "Speak, O Lord, as we come to you to re -". The second staff contains the lyrics: "ceive the food of your ho - ly Word." The melody is written in a treble clef. The lyrics are placed below the notes. The word "to" is on a sixteenth note on beat 2.5, and "you" is on a sixteenth note on beat 2.75, illustrating syncopation.

In the first line of stanza 1 of “Speak, O Lord,” the “you” of the phrase “as we come to you” falls just before beat three. There is syncopation which results from the fact that the note on beat 1 for the word “come” is a quarter note tied to an eighth note, but the note on beat 2.5 for the word “to” is a sixteenth note, leaving the note for the word “you” to be another 16<sup>th</sup> note (tied to a quarter) on beat 2.75 rather than on beat 3. Just after CWS came out and the hymn began to be used, several performances which I heard glossed over the way the music was actually written and sang the phrase as if it were the more expected dotted quarter note, eighth note, quarter note combination. Not the biggest deal in the world, but singing worship assemblies don’t always do especially well with 16<sup>th</sup> notes or syncopation. It’s not that they can’t, but practice and learning are usually required.

Melismas (when a syllable is sung over the course of more than one note) are manageable. “This Joyful Eastertide” (CW #160) has several six-note melismas and worshipers can handle it without much problem. But they’ve had the opportunity to practice and learn it. When dotted slurs or alternate grace notes are added to the picture, worshipers don’t have the easiest time following along. The pianistically written and seemingly well-received “Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled” (CWS #759) is one of the guiltier parties. It’s six dotted slurs, beneath which one stanza has a melisma but another does not, coupled with its eighth note triplets which are once sung as only two eighth notes and its dotted eighth/sixteenth note combination which is once sung as a straight quarter, make it challenging to follow the text. Congregations should probably have started learning the hymn with the choir singing the verses (and with the tempo not rushed). I’m picking on that hymn because while it is relatively complex, it can be learned. Hymns like that, however, should probably be more the exception than the rule.

Not all sixteenth notes, however, are syncopated and not all melismas are extremely challenging. If more recent hymnody should have such items more frequently, rather than becoming roiled in a debate about whether or not any such music should be included, a way to address the matter is to be sure that repetition and choir assistance are used to bring such pieces into the assembly’s repertoire.

## 7) Digital Music

Congregations which find themselves without any keyboardists or without a keyboardist who can cover every weekend are still turning to digital music for necessary solutions. Those who have done so in a mission setting have had the legitimate concern that they be able to produce worship music of the highest quality possible. Whether or not this has been uniformly achieved will always be debatable.

Apart from the new hymnal project itself, NPH is poised to release HymnSoft 3, which for some has been a long awaited update to a media player which can make use of midi files for worship. Users should be able to fairly easily make the new media player work with whatever midi-capable organ or digital piano or sound module they possess. Unlike the previous releases, the update will allow full access to the midi files for those who wish to manipulate them on their own. Also unlike the previous release, a separate dvd of mp3 (actually m4a) recordings created from the updated midi files will be available. For those who wish to bypass all use of midi, this option will basically allow Itunes-type playlists to be used for public worship. For those who are interested, the psalm recordings were timed according to verse length (meaning that with the recordings, the verses can be sung without manually “advancing the tone”, the method which the media player used and will continue to use). The recordings were made in both pipe organ and piano format, from samples of a much higher quality than typically found on a computer sound card. In addition to public performance, both the media player and the recordings will allow worship leaders without musical or keyboard training to audition all the items as needed. The materials in this release are everything in the CW line since 1993, including CW:OS and CWS.

We’ll be returning to some music matters later when we further explore specific, future-oriented issues. As inviting as it may be at this point to speak in terms of specific hymn titles and specific musical arrangements of various hymns and psalms and verses and canticles, that will have to be entrusted into the hands of various committees so that a project director’s personal preferences don’t fill the pages of an essay. Something of which I would invite consideration, however, is the matter of new musical arrangements of older texts, an expansion of #3 earlier in this section. There are artists within and outside of our church body who have the desire to bring their best musical skills to bear on texts and tunes which are already part of the broader heritage of the Christian church. Some of those arrangements, while not currently in the traditional musical format of a congregational hymn that can easily be published in a hymnal, can in many cases be packaged/formatted in a way that enables publication and congregational use. “Freshening up the music”, as referred to earlier in this section, does not always mean changing the tune or getting rid of what exists. It can simply mean taking a fresh musical approach toward a wealth of extant materials.

Having written of texts and music, it is time to echo Luther’s call. “...in 1524, the year in which his own hymns first appeared in print, Luther wrote to his friend Georg Spalatin, ‘We are looking everywhere for poets...’”<sup>69</sup> There may not be an excess of gifted poets and composers in our congregations, but ask yourself this: Have we called out very frequently to those of whom we do know? How many texts have we asked to be written and how many tunes have we commissioned to be composed? Where are the Paul Gerhardt’s and the James Montgomery’s and the Richard Massie’s and the Catherine Winkworth’s and the Nikolaus Decius’s and the Johann Crügers’s and the Philipp Nicolai’s of our generation? Sure, only one or two seem to rise to the very top in any one generation or country, but now, at the beginning of another project which will publish worship materials for our synod – now is the time to ask the Lord to raise up not only preachers and teachers but also poets and musicians as well.

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<sup>69</sup> Oswald, op. cit., p. 6.



## Performance<sup>70</sup>

It hasn't been traumatic, but it has been interesting – moving from the chancel chair to the nave pew. What does one see? Plenty. What does one hear? Not always very much. In beginning to comment on the feat that Luther accomplished in putting hymn singing onto the lips of the common worshipers, Oswald threw out the rough estimate of a fourth of German-speaking people as those who were converted from silent worshipers into a singing church.<sup>71</sup> Changing the focus from part of a continent to people in a single congregation, how common does the reader feel Herl's observation to be?

Some time ago I had the opportunity to play the organ for Sunday services at one of the largest Missouri Synod churches in its state, a church that is proud to have a full-time director of music on staff and a fine pipe organ. From the organ console in the choir loft I was able to listen to the singing of the congregation. Perhaps I should say rather that I listened for the singing, because for the most part I did not hear it. I could hear my wife clearly, and I could sense a few other voices murmuring something indistinct, but that was about all. After the service the pastor commented to me how much better the people sang that Sunday than usual.<sup>72</sup>

It's a tired old question, but hopefully asking it again will be part of the unending process of seeking to address the matter: Are we still "the singing church"?<sup>73</sup>

A dear old friend from the congregation where I grew up took the few minutes during which we were in each other's presence last fall to share an experience she had recently had while visiting what I believe was a world mission outpost. With a small number of worshipers present, the congregation made use of a simple male chorus recording of the singing of the hymns. Those present sang along with those who were singing on the recording. My friend noted that the use of the recording significantly helped the singing of the live worshipers. I doubt that such a practice would spread like wildfire across the congregations of our synod where the assembly's song is currently weak, but her example was an example of trying to do *something* about the matter.

The opinion seems to be fairly commonly expressed that better music would lead to stronger singing. It's an opinion. I don't know how true it would be, nor is it always easy to quantify what "better music" would be. Here's another opinion. Talking about it stands a better chance of doing something about it

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<sup>70</sup> The term is being used simply to talk about the execution of, the speaking of, the singing of worship texts. It will hopefully not be misconstrued only to mean performing for God or however else the term may be misconstrued with regard to an entertainment type of performance.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>73</sup> Ralph Gehrke, a colleague of Kurt Eggert, described what Eggert wrote in *Viva Vox* regarding revitalizing congregational singing: "That [*Viva Vox*] article pinpointed factors that were devitalizing current hymn singing: (a) tunes that were either boring or trivial, (b) inadequate texts, (c) absence of a church-year oriented celebration of God's great deeds of salvation, (d) lack of integration into the liturgy of Word and sacrament, and (e) failure to plan for improvements. The author urged the implementation of our church's historic "Hymn of the Day" program. Similar articles were "Singing Hymns Antiphonally," giving steps toward reestablishing an earlier custom, one with great promises for the future; "Music and Worship: A Checklist of Questions," each with several possible matching answers; "For Discussion by Worship Planners"; and "A Narrative Service," the liturgy with brief explanatory comment." *Not Unto Us*, p. 125.

than does not talking about it. I realize there have been initiatives presented to worship committees and church councils and possibly even voters' assemblies, initiatives aimed at improving congregational singing. They might have to do with replacing carpet with flooring which is acoustically better, with the purchase of an instrument or even with new construction. But even such things aren't always communicated "to the masses."

Hymnal projects are opportunities for education. That might mean we can speak to people about making the occasional encouragement to the congregation gathered for worship to sing the hymns of the worship service – an occasional oral encouragement or a recurring service folder invitation. Newsletter articles and online communications and whatever other redundant means of communication congregations are using these days can be used for the campaign. We can fall back on Colossians 3:16 as often as we want in order to note how it speaks of using psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to admonish and teach each other, but, as with anything else, that point will be lost on many if we aren't regularly telling and teaching people that there is a horizontal, edification-of-their-fellow-members purpose to their singing of hymns.

I have some good friends in the church I most recently served. I know that some of them never sang a single word of a hymn the entire eleven years I was their pastor, and undoubtedly longer than that. They are, of course, men. As fathers, they did an excellent job of teaching their sons, who have also grown up into young men who sit arms crossed and mouths silent during every hymn. One almost wishes to get very specific and tell the men they really ought to sing, but you can't make them sing and I don't know that we're going to be able to tell them they're sinning if they're not singing. So we encourage and, hopefully, we also lead by example.

And if we do indeed wish to join in the ongoing and endless work of strengthening and amplifying the congregation's song, let's not look right past one of the best ways to do so – through the choir. It may be preaching to the choir to give the encouragement that choirs support the singing of the public worship service rather than only sing anthems, but I sort of miss regular preaching so I guess I'll preach. In the 1950's, long before he directed a hymnal project, Eggert was "preaching" that choirs be regularly engaged in assisting with the sung music of the worship service rather than tackling anthem after anthem.<sup>74</sup> I understand that that same campaign is continued through encouragements and modeling at Schools of Worship Enrichment. It will be good to broaden that campaign in any way we can. New materials which a hymnal project will throw into the mix will increase the opportunities for the choir to assist the congregation with the performance of what is new.

So-called "liturgical choirs" have weekly opportunities to assist the congregation with its singing and/or to participate in the "regular parts" of the weekly worship service as they take up the singing of 1) an introductory first stanza of a hymn or song that is new to the congregation; 2) stanzas which are sung on an alternating basis between the choir and the congregation, including special arrangements of a stanza of the Hymn of the Day; 3) alternate tunes or festival settings of canticles; and 4) Psalms and Verses of the Day. In the settings of the smaller worship assembly and of the new mission start it can be remembered that, if need be, the "choir" can consist of two or three, of adults or of younger members, and that the singing of these various elements of the worship service, with or without the assembly, can consistently be performed in unison rather than in parts.

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<sup>74</sup> Eggert wrote about his preference that congregations have a "genuine church choir" rather than a "parish concert choir." Not Unto Us, p. 10.

That congregational singing which in the past was rather regularly and consistently done during the distribution of the sacrament will receive brief attention in this essay but will receive a higher degree of attention as a hymnody committee thinks about what will be included in the Lord's Supper category of a hymnal. I don't believe I'm the only one who remembers when "I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table" was sung at what seemed like every single distribution of the sacrament which took place throughout the entire year. It no longer seems common for congregations to be singing fifteen-stanza or even the longer eight-stanza distribution hymns during the distribution (or to be guessing about how many stanzas the organist was going to play before putting an interlude smack dab in the middle of the hymn, leaving worshipers with the challenge of remembering which stanza to continue with after the break was over), but rather for there to be only interlude type music played at this time.

There seemed to be some favorable response to the two verse-and-refrain type of distribution hymns which appeared in CWS – "Draw Near" (#740) and "Take and Eat" (#741) – the nature of both of which lends itself well to a choral singing of the verse and a congregational singing of the refrain. It would be interesting I'm sure to hear feedback on the suggestion in the CWS accompaniment edition that the refrain of "Take and Eat" could be sung by worshipers also as they approached and returned from the altar. Having the choir sing during the distribution is surely one option. While not a huge fan of the use of screens in worship, experience with the occasional projection of distribution hymn lyrics onto what in our case was the wall and not a screen was well-received. It could be observed that a fair number of those "in line" were glad to be able to continue singing the hymn at that time. Projection of the distribution hymn lyrics was viewed as worthwhile if for no other reason than that it kept everyone singing the correct verse during those awkward times at a lightly attended service when there were more people receiving the sacrament or in line to receive it than there were in the chairs.

While much of what can be written in an essay such as this may be stating the obvious, it may also be highlighted once again that repeating new hymns or other items over a number of successive weekends is extremely helpful for learning both tunes and texts. The specificity of a text will at times not allow for it, such as a new text and tune written specifically for Maundy Thursday, but it may be helpful for worship leaders to bear in mind that their own familiarity with the new text and tune should not lead them to conclude that worshipers will automatically think it ridiculous to sing the same hymn or song three weeks in a row. An anecdotal account of this approach can be read in an email appearing in the footnote.<sup>75</sup>

It may be a matter of preference that some are and some are not comfortable practicing elements of an upcoming service in the space of a few minutes immediately preceding the actual beginning of the service. Because it makes good sense and without offering any other kind of persuasive, winning argument, I would speak in favor of the practice, as have others.<sup>76</sup> Going beyond a few minutes' worth of practice just before the service, a bigger step would be returning to holding hymn sings, as fifteen to thirty minute events before the service (time-permitting) or as self-standing sixty to ninety minute

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<sup>75</sup> I did want to share with you something. We had our first Easter Vigil at St. Stephen this year, and it went very well. Our closing hymn was "Dear Jesus, On Your Pilgrim Way." We used that hymn as our closing hymn for all of our Lent 2012 midweek services, so it's become familiar. I daresay, it was a very fitting close to the service, and the 50 or so people we had in attendance sang the hymn louder than probably any other hymn we sang in the vigil. It was great.

<sup>76</sup> "That's why I would hope that some place, before the service is begun, a congregation could take five minutes and just work on learning a new hymn – go through it line by line, learning the words first, and then the melody. Some congregations have done this in the past, but these days everyone's schedule is so tight that it's a problem to introduce more than a handful of new hymns during the year." Vajda, op. cit., p. 154

events. While I am not personally aware of any regular hymn sings, I would be curious to know how much interest and participation there would be in such events.

In the years to come there will be plenty of musical material which is new, which will require learning, and which will, at least to some degree, enjoy a measure of appreciation. How we go about improving congregational singing, however, will be more a matter of what is done in the trenches than in what appears on the pages of a new book. It will take continued planning, speaking, encouraging and plain old work for ours to be a singing church.

## **Publishing / Pragmatism / Profitability**

Being able to kick out a pdf or to throw up a website or to share a document not only nationally but globally in a matter of minutes is a phenomenon to which not all are yet accustomed. There's a bit of a power or ego trip involved when we can all be little Gutenberg's. What was at one time referred to as desktop publishing has some unique pros and cons in the context of a small Lutheran church body's hymnal project and its partnership with its own publishing house.

Possibly overshadowing hymnal content itself is the question of how that content will be published and distributed. Let's use a hypothetical example which may be closer to actual than to hypothetical, but we'll still call it hypothetical. A large group of Lutherans has just attended and taken part in a worship service at a national event such as a synod convention or a worship conference. Components of the service included various materials which were protected under copyright and were reprinted either with permission specifically granted for the event or under a license agreement, as well as some non-published materials which were also under copyright (we'll say a hymn text and a psalm arrangement). The various components served very well to proclaim law and gospel and were very well-received. They were so well received, in fact, that some expressed the desire to acquire a copy of the entire service and others asked about how to acquire the non-published material.

The example is given not to explore its specifics but to discuss possible courses of action in making materials available. It doesn't take too much effort to upload somewhere some crisp, clean graphics files of worship music so that interested parties can download them. A complicating factor arises if the artist would prefer to be compensated for his or her efforts. If the non-published materials happen to be moving in the direction of being published, then ability to acquire them as published, purchasable materials will be based on the timing of the publisher rather than on that of the individual who wishes to use the material immediately, which will make acquisition later than sooner.

Pragmatism says that if there are easy, quick ways to make certain kinds of worship materials available, then please do so. Profitability comes into play when we realize that, even if it wanted to, our publishing partner is not in a position to simply give worship materials away. Different than, say, our synod's C/W which receives a portion of synod offerings as its budget, our publishing house can only go on publishing materials if those materials, collectively, are making a profit.

We have been operating in this way for years and no one, certainly not the essayist, is suggesting any drastic changes because, in fact, there really aren't any drastic changes that can be made. What enters

into the equation is the way in which technology and publishing and specifically music publishing capabilities are now, to a much greater degree than ever before, in the hands of individuals and small groups rather than only in the hands of publishing houses. Of interest to this essay and to this essayist is the matter of what approach is taken as new hymnody and psalmody and liturgy become available in pre- and post-publication years. Can we only make such material available through a major publishing undertaking of our own (such as CW, then NSS, then CW:OS, then CWS) or by directing individuals to its various publishers to secure whatever permission they will need? And what of reprinting?

Without (yet) knowing all the ins and outs of publishing issues, it is that final question which is intriguing to me. NPH does not publish individual hymns. There are feasibility issues. I don't know how many publishing houses do. Many websites (including NPH) offer downloadable choral sheet music for purchase, but there are also artists who use their websites to sell sheet music of regular congregational hymns. Even in such cases, however, the purchaser typically receives a full score pdf rather than a text/tune graphics file which can be cleanly reprinted in a service folder.

As mentioned above, more and more individuals are becoming aware of and familiar with music notation programs like Finale and so some congregations are producing and printing whatever they wish. But when worship materials which the C/W may wish to promote are produced apart from going through the publishing house pipeline, beyond the financial feasibility issues which exist on the publishing house side of the equation there are also quality control issues which arise. If we are going to promote or make materials available, we do want them to have a professional rather than an amateur look to them. We do want them to have gone through proofreading and copyediting and all the things which publishers do to insure their integrity. But we typically want it yesterday, not a year or more into the future.

With another hymnal project now begun, will we be able to join forces and decidedly move toward methods and practices which will combine pragmatism and profitability? The reader may sense that these lines are also aimed at finding ways to publish and release materials in ways we have not done so in the past (such as individual hymns with full scores, digital music files, and text and tune graphics files being made available for online purchase in a sort of iTunes fashion) and to be doing this continuously throughout the ten years of the hymnal project instead of in one large helping at the end of that decade.

There is nothing secret about the fact that a major publishing effort such as the next hymnal will be the publishing house's most significant potential revenue stream for more than a decade. (Lifetime statistics for the entire CW line are in appendix D.) We want to proceed carefully when it comes to things like electronic editions and subscription-based online database distribution, because after ten years have passed, it will be our desire that congregations will see the wealth of resources that have been reworked, retranslated, newly written, newly composed and recently found – all the elements which will comprise the new hymnal and all its ancillary volumes – and will by that time be ready to set the current hymnal aside and to welcome and to purchase the new one in large quantities. When we know the kind of content the various volumes and editions will hold, there's no reason to shy away from saying that we want their publication to be both a smashing success and a financial success.

To that end we desire that our overall course of action and the specific steps we take be monitored by the publishing house so that the pursuit of things we might wish to accomplish does not in any way jeopardize the success of what will be the major publishing effort for a generation. Our fellow Christians at NPH know from experience that we don't want to be telling the world about the details of a new product too far in advance because it brings on a small flood of people asking when the product will

be released. We also want to be sure to avoid putting NPH in the awkward position of not being able to deliver something we have said we want people to be able to have or use. This may in some ways speak to the difference between the C/W modeling something at a SoWE or a national worship conference and NPH planning to publish something. There is a difference on a number of levels but at the same time there are some pursuits, common to both parties, where we would like the two parties to be able to work with each other even more closely than they already are.

## **Seven Committees**

The broader scope of the upcoming hymnal project called for a broader array of committees than was in place for the previous hymnal project. Thus below you will find a brief description of the seven committees which have been formed.

### ***Psalmody (PC)***

The refrain and tone format which appeared in 1993 was new to our synod at the time. It will be necessary to make an assessment of how Psalmody and the Verse of the Day are being carried out in congregations today. Is there too much use of the sung general Verse of the Day? Is the specific VotD being spoken or sung? Are the VotD settings published by NPH being used? Is there the kind of psalm and verse variety which is mentioned in C/W Administrator Gerlach's recent article in *Worship the Lord* (using a variety of publishers' materials)? What is the state of chanting in our church body? Are congregations using great or little variety in the singing of the psalm and the verse? How will we approach the matter of combining the psalmody resources from CW, CW:OS, NSS and CWS? Can these resources include mp3 recordings which allow worship leaders to audition them and performers to practice with them? Over the next three years, will the psalmody committee be able to make use of the opportunity to review the current psalm and verse selections, both text and music, as current selections come up in years A, B and C?

### ***Hymnody (HC)***

The hymnody committee may well divide into text and music subcommittees. By design a new hymnal will consider the merging of the hymns appearing in CW and in CWS. Will hymns which are cut not actually be cut but remain in their already-digital format within or apart from the resources of the new hymnal project? How much research can be done to determine when and why specific texts were wed to specific tunes? Some have noted how "Father Most Holy, Merciful and Tender" (TLH #240) was an example of a great tune (HERZLIEBSTER JESU), a great text, but an awful marriage of text and tune. Some may think similarly that SPANISH CHANT is not an especially Lenten tune for "Savior, When In Dust to You" (CW #124), but that ABERYSTWYTH (as in LSB #419) is a better fit. How much room in a new hymnal will be given to old texts which have merely had their tunes changed? How much evaluation of translations can we do? How far ought we to go with retranslations? Which new genres of hymnody ought we to explore? Can we produce a full piano accompaniment edition? guitar edition? other instruments edition? What might we glean from contacting as many ministers of music as possible (all ALHS and synod school and national worship conference personnel and the like) to solicit choral

selections which would be excellent candidates to be adapted into hymns? “Blessed Are They” and “Christ Is with Me” and “Peace Came to Earth” and “The God of Love” are CWS examples of hymns which were originally in the form of choral anthems. Kosche’s “Look, Oh, Look, The Sight Is Glorious” or the Haas/Dunstan piece “The Tomb Is Empty” or the Vikki Cook arrangement of “Before the Throne of God Above” are examples of potential adaptations in the future. Can we solicit worship song lists from those who have set CW or CWS aside, to be able to review such other resources? What will happen with texts whose current tunes have an association with something other than sacred music, such as used to be the case with AUSTRIAN HYMN (Third Reich connections) or BUNESSAN (“Baptized in Water” CW #297) which some still associate with Cat Stevens’ “Morning Has Broken” or a Kristyn Getty piece such as “What Grace Is Mine” sung to LONDONDERRY AIR (O DANNY BOY)? How will a reworked Hymn of the Day list look? Will the hymnody committee be able to identify lectionary selections which have little or no supporting hymnody as those selections come up in years A, B and C?

### ***Rites (RC)***

The Rites Committee’s scope of work will be significantly broader than that of its counterpart in the previous hymnal project, in that it will also be covering all the rites included in CW:OS. Composing liturgical music that will wear well is a challenging task. Concerning what some regard as the best worship song in all of history, the *Te Deum*, Eggert wrote: “If God would grant us the gift in our time of a really fitting and inspiring musical mate for the *Te Deum*, that would be an event itself worthy of a *Te Deum!*” What will happen as we reevaluate the main orders of service which are currently published in CW and CWS? Will we target a certain number of orders as being just right for a sufficient but not too great of a variety? Will we again skip past crafting a confessional service connected to the sacrament so as not to intimate that some kind of corporate confession and absolution must precede the distribution? How far will we go in making use of already published orders of service or individual canticles, such as are published, for example, by GIA? Would we want to or would we be able to afford to commission such composers to produce an order of service for us? How will we determine who will serve as authors of prayers and meditations?

### ***Communications (CC)***

There are many stakeholders as our church body sets out on a new hymnal project. Coordinating the information which goes out with regard to the project will call for a high level of organization along with an ability to articulate a clear message about worship-related items. How will the project website be used for education and promotion? How early and how frequently can we expect to have listening sessions around the country to get the kind of feedback we need for the many items on which the various committees will be working? How can we best coordinate the electronic surveys which will need to be done? Which of the various synod entities and publications will be making information available to the constituency (WELS Communications / WELS website / NPH / WELS Connection / Worship the Lord / national worship conferences / regional conferences and conventions / etc.) and how will these communications be coordinated and balanced? How far can we go with things such as early promotion of memorial gifts for congregations to purchase the new book/resources?

## ***Literature (LC)***

Two of the more significant published works which were part of the CW line of products were the Manual and the Handbook. What information from the current Manual will need to be updated as the project unfolds? What information will need to be created from scratch? How will we approach the matter of bringing the Handbook resources up to date both for the hymns of CWS and for the additional hymns which will have appeared when the project is complete? Who will be responsible for updating the comprehensive scripture index which was published in the Handbook? Will the literature committee be tasked with compiling a concordance to the hymnal? Which of these ancillary volumes will be in hard copy books and which will be in digital format only and which will be in both formats? Will the Literature Committee take the lead in compiling an electronic resource of comments which can be used as footnotes or as introductory/explanatory paragraphs in service folders?

## ***Scripture (SC)***

As with hymnody, psalmody and rites, the current existence of two worship books (CW and CWS) will also call for a merging of materials for which the Scripture Committee is responsible. Attention will need to be directed toward the two lectionaries which we have published. While the lectionary in CWS is not actually a stand-alone product but is supplemental to the 1993 lectionary, decisions about supplemental lessons will need to be made. Will we retain the shift which was made away from *lectio continua* to coordinated lessons in the case of the second lesson? Can the lectionary be translation-independent? Will we publish a hard copy lectionary book? What direction will we want to go as far as the publishing house printing service folders which include the Sunday lessons? Do we have any real insights into people's desires to follow along with the lessons in a service folder as compared to there being actual eye contact between the lector and the assembly? (I believe a person seated or standing in the middle of the assembly could quite possibly kill, clean, and cook a rabbit during the reading of the lessons without being noticed, with the way everyone, including the presiding minister, is looking down during the time these lessons are read.) Will the scripture committee be able to analyze lectionary selections over the next three years as those selections come up in years A, B and C?

## ***Technology (TC)***

Since 1993, electronic products have been regularly added to the CW line. The first of these may have been HymnSoft. Most recently, CWS could be purchased as an electronic product and used, for the most part, without purchase of any hard copy books. One of the biggest questions that will be raised early in the project concerns whether or not we really ought to expect a hard copy hymnal or if all the resources will be available electronically. An early guess is that there will be both. How will the ten year collaboration be set up as the committees set about their work? What functions is the project website designed to carry out? Will there be a subscription-based service to be able to access information and to acquire materials? Will there be some kind of electronic service builder? Will the use of copyrighted materials be automatically reported to licensing agencies where necessary? Will materials be able to be accessed or purchased online before the project formally concludes? Will the project conclude or will the technological and electronic resources which are created and made available in this project mean that the project will actually remain open-ended at the end of ten years? Will we really be able to afford an outside company's management of a database and creation of apps?



## Ideas

One of the Institute's moderators has asked what we might expect in the way of worship changes as this hymnal project unfolds. A similar question was asked during an interview for a WELSTECH podcast. If scripture itself has given us certain convictions regarding principles we want to observe in public worship, then we might expect that very little will change about what we do in worship. However, as rites and forms and translations and music and scripture selections and texts are all reviewed and updated, and as editions and additions come along, and as technology is utilized in both preparing and conducting worship services, we might well notice that some things will look and feel different. It is our prayer that whatever improvements come along will be just that – improvements. Till our Lord returns, we can always do better. Striving to do so need never be anything less than constant.

To that end, wouldn't we want to be visionary rather than apologetic about the kinds of things we want to produce and accomplish in this project? I suppose we will have to rightly distinguish between what is being too ambitious and what is being foolish, but the thinking that we are typically behind as a church body or slow to move forward or just too small to be able to do this or that is a kind of thinking I would want us to be able to leave behind. If the beginning of a hymnal project is a time to draft lofty goals, then let's remember the William Carey sermon outline on Isaiah 54:2,3 and both expect great things from God and attempt great things for God.

If we have our eyes set on a kind of public worship that is timeless, we might also expect it to be ageless. If we know that we are certainly free to provide for young children or teens something that is different in the way of worship, but if we haven't really been convinced that that is absolutely what they need, then we might wish to keep them specifically in mind as we conduct worship and as we craft items for worship. In addition to a children's message (which some support and others don't care for), don't stop thinking about how canticles and creeds and responses and refrains teach the faith and bring the gospel to young hearts and minds in memorable and meaningful ways.

An average amount of experience with youth events and youth rallies would indicate that they usually involve "something different" such as the VBS theme song of the week or the rally theme song. Themes and integrated materials are fine. The younger children embrace them. Teenagers may tolerate rather than embrace them. But the theme song for "On Safari with Jesus" will likely never be repeated in public worship. While I would not necessarily recommend filling VBS week with the English chant of the Common Service, I might think in terms of the piano version of the *Gloria* of CWS DS1, which includes a refrain in which even the youngest children can participate. Or one might think about hymn refrains such as "On Christ the solid rock I stand..." or "Onward, Christian soldiers..." mixed in here and there, without turning VBS into liturgy week or expecting the children to tackle "Isaiah, Mighty Seer." The point is that we can take a balanced approach and intentionally include something that is more on the timeless end of things, so that when it appears in regular worship, children's eyes will light up with that "Hey, I know that song!" look.

I wasn't asking for a job, but I did have opportunity to throw my name into the mix as having an interest in the worship that is lined up for the next WELS International Youth Rally. An inquiry could be made as to whether or not there might be one familiar type of service included in the week's worship schedule. An idea might be to take a classic or a highly regarded recent choral work, to distribute it weeks beforehand (with copyright permission), to provide the recordings which allow for part rehearsal, and to set the goal of having the largest WELS mixed choir performance in history with an SATB choir of 1500-

2000 (if that, in fact, were a record, not that setting a record is the big thing). It's not too far into the life of CWS to suggest that a hymn or two from that volume could serve well as one to be repeated and learned in the course of the week's worship, as will be the case in years to come with other hymns which will be appearing. If a hymn such as "Children of the Heavenly Father" fits children of all ages (including adults), the hymn referenced at the beginning of this essay (Townend's "How Deep the Father's Love for Us" or something similar), would have tremendous potential for learning and retention.

Is there a youth program that can be pursued in connection with a hymnal project? Can a Hymn of the Day program be thought of more as a Hymn of the Week for those in Lutheran Elementary School or weekly confirmation class? It is a worthwhile goal to do those things which lead children to learn hymns and to love hymns, to know that liturgical worship isn't the only way but is a good way to gather before God.

How many high school kids play an instrument or are in band or marching band? In my experience, always seemingly more than I knew. It's a perfect place for pastors, musically inclined or not, to delegate and to get those students to add the sounds of their instruments to the worship service. As the ideas section of this essay has spoken about involving young people, it is intentionally now segueing into how to produce all the music for various instrumentalists.

It sort of scares me, even ten years out, when I think about the amount of music that we quite possibly ought to be thinking about producing. Perhaps this essay helps begin the process of crystallizing some thinking on the topic, but the thought occurs that we might not be able to physically produce all the music for which this project may call. Yes, we can lean on other publishing houses which put out scores and scores of religious sheet music for all sorts of instruments, but how useful would it be to have a small collection of sheet music (instrumental accompaniment for C instruments and B $\flat$  instruments, descants for the same, percussion where deemed appropriate, bass guitar, etc.) for each hymn (or other selection) which we are including in the corpus of music that the hymnal project will release! (A music file or sheet which does nothing more than double a melody line for a B $\flat$  instrument is accomplished with a few clicks, especially when the original file is layered according to voices. The same holds true for printing out bass lines.) A beginning was made in this area with the auxiliary resources on the CWS accompaniment CD. Even those resources which basically covered 85 hymns took a significant amount of work to be able to publish them as pdf's. Is it too early to think in terms of nailing down the core 200 hymns we know would be in almost any conservative Christian hymnal and to begin composing and compiling and engraving as much music for them as we can? It's probably not too early to do that, especially in consideration of the next item.

As mentioned previously, when inquiring about the state of church music in our synod, I am hearing more and more reports of congregations moving almost exclusively to piano accompaniment of the public worship service. In some cases, those reports indicate that electronic or actual pipe organs are sitting idly by, for the most part unused. It would be hazardous for me to try to attach any numbers which would indicate percentages of congregations where this is happening, so I am left to a generalizing comment such as "more and more." It is without any desire to have a negative impact on the use of the pipe organ or on the training of future organists<sup>77</sup> that I would nonetheless write about the inclusion of a complete piano accompaniment edition in the materials of this project.

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<sup>77</sup> In my own family I have been pleading with one child not to set organ lessons aside, and with another child to take them up now that the time has come.

In addition to the obvious pianistic hymn settings in CWS, I rather appreciate the piano edition of DS1 (raise your hand if you knew there was one) and of the Gathering Rite on Holy Baptism. That kind of composing work takes time and skill and cannot be put off toward the end of this project, if we are indeed going to pursue it. All are welcome to ponder what it would take to accomplish this and if, in fact, we ought to ponder it or pursue it. See appendix C to compare one artist's "piano/vocal" type of setting alongside another setting which is categorized as "hymnal/4 part harmonization."

When, in addition to organists and pianists, we purposefully want to bring other instrumentalists into the mix, being mindful that musicians use and "read" music in different ways will be worth remembering. Some accompanists are comfortable with nothing more than a lead sheet, which typically includes only the tune, the text and the lettered guitar chord above.<sup>78</sup> The CWS guitar edition has such lead sheets, but we will want to make them more available across the entire product line, and expand the offering to include bass line lead sheets and percussion. As with the recent electronic editions of CW and CWS, we will want to provide full score pdfs along with text/tune tiff files for service folders<sup>79</sup> for all that we produce, available as a complete edition but individually as well. Even with the challenges which arise with copyright and permissions, in this day and age we ought to be able to provide almost a suite of music files with every individual hymn or piece.

A small idea might get me in trouble if it involves suggesting a change to the NPH styleguide, but the examples in appendix C also demonstrate how one artist's publisher is having the hymn text printed out, namely with capitalization only at the beginning of a sentence. I am not knowledgeable enough about hymn publishing to know when capitalizing the first word of every musical phrase was begun, but it is certainly easier to visually "see the sentence" with the kind of capitalization which appears in that appendix.

While introducing a guitar and piano setting of the liturgy to groups at the last national worship conference, I tried to be sure to ask them their impressions about the accessibility of the music. On that occasion and with those particular materials, they felt that especially the guitar part and the melody were very accessible. To my knowledge, our church body's statistics have not recently changed in any drastic way as far as half of our congregations worshipping less than a hundred per weekend. That statistic makes it incumbent upon us to consistently bear in mind levels of musical difficulty both for the accompanist and the worshipers in the pew. Congregations with less resources will often have an acute need for that type of music which is easily accessible both to the musicians and the assembly.

This need not and ought not be viewed as musically dumbing everything down. It might better and more appropriately be viewed as taking every possible step to do all we can for everyone for whom we can do it. Another "raise your hand if you knew it existed" question would be to ask if the reader has seen the simplified version of the keyboard score for DS1. That version was composed and published basically because it was requested. Providing not only a generous number of alternate settings and instrumental scores but also a simplified version for each individual piece we will release is another idea

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<sup>78</sup> There are keyboardists who can provide an excellent accompaniment which is more of an ad lib performance, based solely on the lettered guitar chord names.

<sup>79</sup> Even with an artist's site which makes available individual congregational hymns in two different styles, a key missing component is the text and tune graphics file which makes possible legible, professional presentation on paper or perhaps through projection.

which needs some philosophical discussion, but if it is genuinely needed and would be put to good use, it would again require a significant amount of time, skill and effort, because such settings are not merely thrown together.

The reader might be surprised to hear how many functioning musicians are not able to read music. The essayist might be surprised as well because he is not claiming to know the number. However many there are, there are musicians who play by ear. A musician with whom I had conversations over the past few months is a case in point. I'm sure it holds true of piano, but being a guitarist, I know it holds true of guitar. Typing out a Google search for "Rolling Stones Heartbreaker Guitar Chords" (or any similar search string ending in "guitar chords") returns a handful of specific sites which are set up and managed in order to display virtually every song that could possibly be played on a guitar, with the lyrics written out and the guitar chords printed above the text (not always very well aligned). Go to a YouTube page and use its search window to type in that same search, and you will typically find, in addition to some kind of video with the original artist's version of the song, a dozen guitarists' "cover" of that song – musicians (and sometimes wannabe vocalists) who have videotaped themselves playing the guitar chords and who are slowly and carefully demonstrating for the viewer just how to play the song on guitar, going beyond chords to the specific fingering and picking and riffs, phrase by phrase, first in slow-motion, then in real time.

Hymnal projects will also have a stewardship component which makes committee members realize that they simply can't cater to everyone nor can they provide everything. But millions of kids (and more than a few adults) are learning guitar songs (and songs on other instruments) in that way. Can we think about doing something in this venue? It will again involve a clear understanding of what can and what cannot take place relative to copyright, but assuming such things are carefully and legally provided for, what might we provide in the way of a WELS worship channel or hymnal project channel on YouTube? How far can we go in having various choirs post videos of hymn performances which may not be on a studio recording level but can certainly be on a level which offers helpful assistance to those who may want to learn the music by watching instead of only hearing? What of a pianist or organist offering a helpful interpretation of a piece in such a way? What of "covering" a hymn on any number of instruments in such a way that viewers who may not read music could "learn in their own way"? This isn't intended to be opening a can with worms in it, but it is recognition of how a good number of people play music, and is possibly a way to involve more of them in the public performance of that worship music.

Among the things this essay has already addressed are new music for old texts and performance. Combining those topics would bring another topic into this "ideas" section. I need to get out more, by which I mean to say that I need more exposure to what our congregations (not other denominations) are doing when they make use of a praise band or any other kind of ensemble which is leading the assembly in song. I'm not talking about what happens when an instrument or two or more is added to a hymn which is being sung out of the hymnal. I've seen and been involved with plenty of that. I'm talking about praise bands which lead songs which are not in CW/CWS, which are perhaps heard on Christian radio, or which are from sources with which I am not familiar. What I'd like to learn more about is how often the bands or ensembles are actually leading the assembly compared with how often they are simply performing something to which the assembly listens. Essentially, a praise band which has a vocalist and backing vocals and which presents a piece to a non-singing assembly is no different than a choir singing an anthem. When a praise band sings to an assembly which is only listening, this of itself should not be open to the "charge" of being worship which is only entertainment. If the

assembly seldom sings and the typical practice is that the ensemble is more in the realm of presenting a concert than in leading worshipers in song, Lutherans will want to ask the Lutheran question about letting the people participate.

What I would like to explore more is something I could illustrate with two examples. It was promoted as a concert and we paid for tickets and since it played out more as a worship service than a concert, we were content to observe rather than participate, but attendance at a Keith and Kristyn Getty concert was for me an example of a way in which public worship can be done. There were various pieces which were plainly for the assembly, and, when that was the case, the vocalists and the band were very interested in having the assembly join in. I wouldn't be inclined to adopt everything about how it went, but when, in a single instance, there was a shift away from their own materials to a classic hymn which everyone knew and the overall format and type of arrangement remained the same, it was quite a thing to see – a full band arrangement with vocal leaders and assembly singing “All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name” or a similar hymn. I could go for more of that.

A second example would be this year's WLS concert tour version of “This Joyful Eastertide,” sung with the assembly and to an arrangement by Koine. There was a bit more instrumental and emotional restraint in this example than in the previous one, but as far as participation on the part of the assembly, this second example could certainly be described as taking a step or two forward in the area of improving congregational singing. In short, it would be very interesting to me to see more of this performance approach not so much with songs from the radio but with songs from the hymnal. I don't want to sound so naïve or ignorant as to be understood to be saying that no one is doing this, because I'm certain some are, but I don't see evidence that we are anywhere close to being in full stride as far as that kind of congregational singing is concerned, the kind of singing where the hymn melody and rhythm are mostly unaltered and the arrangement is geared to allow the assembly to sing the melody it knows. I'm guessing that part of the issue is that there are congregations who would not care for such an approach, even occasionally, and that is fine. I'm also guessing we haven't really pursued the concept of making those kinds of arrangements available and, at least among ourselves and what we might produce, that we really don't have either the production or the delivery system in place to do so.

If a piano accompaniment edition would take a great deal of time and effort, then locating or creating the kinds of arrangements I am trying to describe with the examples above would require a great deal more time and effort. It would not be a matter of simply producing “Koine-type” arrangements (or copying actual Koine arrangements) and letting congregations “cover” those arrangements with their own bands or ensembles. I imagine there could certainly be a few of their arrangements, as is or adapted, but compiling a broader array of such arrangements would call for healthy doses of discretion and discernment as to what we might best provide for our fellow Christians and for prospective members as they go to the house of the Lord.

Earlier I struggled to describe the publishing challenges which can exist when we wish to make single hymns or the like available to the congregations of the synod. Assuming that the obstacles can be overcome, it makes sense to me to continuously release a stream of single hymns over the years of a hymnal project, so that they are “out there,” so that through regular use prior to the publication of a hard copy hymnal it can be observed which selections are rising to the top, so that, when the time comes, people will want the best ones in a book rather than having to print them out in folders for every use. This would be one aspect of a subscription-based or database distribution model.

That last sentence was easy to write but it would represent an almost entirely new direction for our church body as far as how it makes worship materials available. I've already heard the comment that if we don't make this new hymnal subscription-based, we will have wasted a decade's worth of work. A big question which needs to be answered early on has to do with feasibility. If an electronic version of CWS can be considered an embryonic version of a subscription-based service, where the user purchases and makes use of only what he wants rather than a total package in book or hard copy form, does the publishing house stand a chance of breaking even? Another question has to do with the unity and uniformity issues. If the next hymnal turns out for many to be a "pick and choose the electronic resources you want" venture rather than a "we want to place this new book in our hymnal racks" venture, it would tend to decrease the degree of uniformity which we would hope a hymnal publishing project would produce among us. At such an early stage, the only prophetic statement I would be minded to make is that I am imagining it will be a "both/and" issue rather than an "either/or" issue, with what I pray will be a large percentage of congregations purchasing pew editions for their sanctuaries and an equally large number of congregations acquiring hymnal materials and a broad array of ancillary worship materials through subscription or download. The Technology Committee is acutely aware of these issues and of how important it will be to explore them. Additional, pertinent comments will appear in the balance of the essay.

"Free trial versions" come in various shapes and sizes. A Hauptwerk virtual pipe organ program is fully downloadable, along with a free sample pipe organ. When using the free version, however, a chime sound is heard at a regular interval. Purchase the program and the chime, of course, goes away. Limited or interrupted functionality is a common component of test-driving various programs. In the world of sheet music, it used to be fairly common that a potential purchaser could only hear or view a small part of the score, for example, page one of a three page score. Or the entire score was available with a copyright watermark of some kind.

Secular artists allow potential buyers to listen for free to an entire album.<sup>80</sup> In connection with artists and sources which are often explored or utilized by our synod, two examples can be noted. LCMS's Lutheran Service Builder allows the potential buyer to download the entire program and to test drive almost everything which the interface allows the user to access, which is virtually its entire hymnal. Its functionality stops short of graphic or text file output and printing. Just before the observance of Easter, GettyMusic sent to its customer list an email blast with a download link to a single pdf of four songs especially fitting for Holy Week, full scores, completely free.<sup>81</sup> Similar links have come out at Christmas. Separately, text and tune settings of their top five songs can be downloaded without charge. Over the years, these artists have demonstrated more of a desire to have people use their materials than to make money by selling them. Obviously, not everyone is in a position to be able to do that.

Various choral publishers allow potential buyers to view the entire piece and to listen to a full choir recording of the entire piece, all to encourage purchase. We need to not only be looking at but using this approach beyond choral music into the area of hymnal materials. Today's buyers and users expect to be able to see and to try almost everything before they commit to a purchase.

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<sup>80</sup> iTunes Store ad this week for Kenny Chesney's upcoming album: "Stream Album for Free + Pre-Order Now"

<sup>81</sup> "Christ Is Risen, He Is Risen Indeed," "The Power of the Cross" (piano and four part harmonization), "In Christ Alone," and "My Heart Is Filled."

Then there is the matter of post-purchase obligations on the part of the user. Occasionally, some of our NPH products have a pre-release production cost of a size that requires a post-purchase annual usage fee in order to recoup those production costs. I can't say whether or not the annual usage fee for CW electronic edition has limited sales of that fairly recent release, but only 160 congregations have purchased it – a product which (with the usual reprint licensing requirements) allows especially those congregations which prefer to print out the worship service in full to have clean graphics files with which to do so. I believe it took a few buyers by surprise to hear that they would be paying not only for annual licensing fees but also for the product itself on an annual basis. Production costs are what they are and they need to be recouped in some way. Together with our publishers, our hymnal committee personnel will want to investigate how we can eliminate from significant publications an annual usage fee.

Expanding further on the idea of subscription-based or database-distributed worship materials, are we looking at providing the user with a certain degree of one-stop shopping? I suppose one-stop shopping should not come in degrees. It either is or it isn't. It is unrealistic and actually rather unintelligent to think that we could ever provide or link to everything our congregations would ever want to use in the area of worship materials. Yet, our church body's worship planners who are constantly looking for resources and spending a lot of time and effort tracking them down and securing them would indeed benefit from a greater amount of worship materials and worship planning materials centralized in one place.

The envisioned database or webapp(s) which will provide such centralization will be explored in the final section of the essay. For now, the reader can think in terms of virtually the entire CW product line available in one program with one interface across multiple platforms.<sup>82</sup> The reader is also invited to consider whether or not we would want to seek to provide within that database or repository that additional aspect of worship planning which to this point does not appear in the Christian Worship line but which has been appearing in various versions and formats – the coordination of attendant music and suggestions for the same.<sup>83</sup> Thought was given to this during the development years of CWS but it was not pursued. The workload of multiple hymnal committees shoots upward again if this area of planning is pursued.

As of this moment, Rev. Caleb Bassett, the chair of the Technology Committee, and I have only generally coordinated our writing efforts for the May 2013 meeting of the Institute for Worship and Outreach. I will seek to paint with broad strokes a picture of the next idea and what it might involve. The likes of what we are talking about cannot be accomplished in the garage of the Technology Committee chairman, even though it is my understanding that he does currently work out of that location. If we are to take all the good, strong, scriptural, gospel content we can possibly compile, commission or otherwise produce and have it stored in a managed database system and made available via the cloud and multi-platform web applications, we are going to need to contract with commercial professionals

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<sup>82</sup> One of the caveats which NPH wishes to be sounded is that we not promise people items which we ultimately cannot deliver to them. In an essay which is intended to include a certain amount of vision casting, readers are encouraged to distinguish between what is being envisioned as possible and what is being promised.

<sup>83</sup> Versions which I have actually seen are the seasonal installments Rev. Phil Huebner was sharing around the South Atlantic District (and elsewhere, I assume), the Sunday by Sunday installments which have appeared on the pages of the IWO website with Rev. Aaron Christie coordinating, and the MS Access database built by Rev. Jonathan Bauer.

who do this kind of work on both a daily and global basis. A single, slang term may be helpful in describing one of the main things which this will involve. Ch-ching. Pursuing this matter will not fall entirely on the Technology Committee, but that committee will surely benefit from your prayers.

Managed database systems and subscription-based services and web applications are not the stuff of dreams or visions. They are the kinds of things that will be expected of this project and they are the kinds of things which are commonly in place and employed in the world in which we live and move. Since it was written many pages and topics ago and so as not to lose sight of it, I will repeat that the precious good news centering in our Savior Jesus is the most important element in the project. Remembering that, allow me to move forward and to spend more money I don't have. Managing the database and getting the bugs out of software with patches or updates would be the work of professionals. Ongoing content management would be our work. When a complete product line is placed into the cloud (or whatever the cloud will be a decade from now) and users are accessing it whenever they wish (through whatever devices they will be using to access it a decade from now), the issues we will need to explore before any of it might ever happen have to do not only with feasibility but also with sustainability. Once launched, how would we keep the thing going? Something like this will not be able to fall either on a C/W administrator or on a Northwestern Publishing House sacred music editor. If what we are hoping to offer will be content-managed, if it will not remain static but will, in fact and by design, be growing, and if it will be sustained into the future, it will need a dedicated, full time position.

I am not joking in saying that the project director is not seeking to line up his next job a full decade early. He is not. He is indicating that what we are envisioning setting up is going to create more work in the future. If we are to go forward with the kinds of things that people are looking for us to provide, we will need to consider the matter of personnel. Since the funding of a full time position which is in addition to a C/W administrator and a NPH sacred music editor is a conversation which could go in half a dozen different directions, I will leave it at that so as to be able to discuss one more idea that has to do with funding.

If the limb on which I am about to go out is thin and weak, feel free to ignore the cries of pain as I crash to the ground. I am fairly convinced that ideas of which we may be able to conceive early in this project are ideas which already lack funding. I alluded to this above and it is my general understanding that Rev. Bassett will touch on it as well. Since I have not as yet moved to Milwaukee or met very much at all with the powers that be, I will respectfully say that I don't mean to be throwing out ideas which ought to have been run past various individuals before being aired. It's really a simple idea. Its appropriateness, however, has not yet been established.

I say this because I have a genuine and strong desire not to suggest things or to talk about ideas which would cause conflict. Recent years have seen our church body centralizing rather than diversifying its financial stewardship efforts. By this I mean to refer to how we have "returned" to funding the core ministries of the church body through the Congregational Mission Offering (CMO) rather than through a combination of the CMO and other revenues sources or special gifts, the latter of which tend to fluctuate and those fluctuations tend to destabilize synodical budgets and synodical pursuits.

That having been said, I am wondering out loud about what I can perhaps best describe as a Kingdom Workers concept or approach to funding worship-related items, specifically some of the items



referenced in this essay and related directly to the new hymnal project. Whether being on page 62 makes you believe it or not, I will try to be brief. Previous ages and eras have had vast experience with patrons of the arts. There are still such patrons around the world. At various synod-affiliated schools and institutions and congregations there have certainly been individuals and groups which have patronized the arts through donations or challenge grants or charity events or the like. Operating apart from the synod budget, a group such as Kingdom Workers has taken upon itself the coordination and subsidization of mission activities and endeavors which the synod budget itself cannot cover. Worship and outreach are not the only things for which congregations organize themselves into synods, but couldn't a group of individuals organized to support and subsidize C/W approved worship projects be viewed as the other side of a coin which has already been minted for outreach efforts? (Please read the footnote.<sup>84</sup>)

While it may at this point be no more than speculation, the kinds of things we are envisioning will likely not be covered by either the synod budget or the publishing house budget or even by a combination of both. If we thought to commission a composer from the broader, visible Christian church, such as Haas or Haugen or Ortega or the like, to compose a setting of a liturgical service specifically for use in our congregations, and were it to cost quite a bit more than we are accustomed or able to pay, might there not be individuals willing to patronize the worship arts among us and to subsidize such a commissioning in full or in part? If organized into a functioning body, would not that body's board of directors be able to designate its collective resources toward such a list of prioritized projects? Aren't there at least enough possibilities that would make us want to look into something like a WELS Worship Foundation?<sup>85</sup>

A much bigger matter than commissioned compositions or texts would be the managed database systems and webapp design costs which would be incurred from putting those items into operation. If we know that some kind of media distribution is definitely where this hymnal project is headed, we could really use the kind of thing which Kingdom Workers has in place, a group of lay men and women committed to supporting those worship efforts which will not otherwise be funded. Suffice it to say that there are dozens of other worship pursuits<sup>86</sup> which could find their way onto the prioritized list of a group such as this. What has been written should be sufficient to plant a seed and to see if there will be any growth.

## Resources

With the expectation that all the resources of the hymnal project will be in digital format, it would be nice to be able to say that an individual will be able to point and click and get anything he needs. Whether or not it will be so remains to be seen, but from noticing what others have already done and

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<sup>84</sup> I don't mean to minimize the impact of this whole idea or suggestion or concept by hiding it in a footnote, but anything of this nature would need to be explored and discussed and ultimately endorsed and approved by whoever it was that did those things for a group like Kingdom Workers, so that we don't cause there to be a proliferation of different groups starting their own foundations and then get away from CMO being the primary funding vehicle for the synod budget.

<sup>85</sup> not to be confused with the World Wrestling Federation

<sup>86</sup> Examples: supporting poets who write hymnody, sponsoring hymn contests and musical composition contests, granting scholarships to national worship conferences, subsidizing organ or instrument lessons, subsidizing a minister of music to serve in a congregation for two to three months around Lent or Easter (in the same way that WKW volunteer couples used to have extended stays at Whiteriver, AZ)

from reading about what some feel can and ought to be done and from pondering the possibilities day in and day out, an initial list of “possibilities” can be produced. The Technology Committee, with input from all the other committees and from the constituency of the synod, will take the large amount of content produced by the hymnal project and will work with professionals to put it into an accessible, user-friendly application.

- multi-hymnal index
- concordance
- search function for all lyrics and literary texts, with Boolean operators
- hymn selection guide ([sample](#))
- every index imaginable (meter, key, composer, author, translator, tune name, hymn list by number or title, category, etc.)
- lectionary
- Manual
- Handbook (point and click)
- Scripture Indexes for hymns blurb for every hymn in a digital file,
- all the footnotes for orders of service, seasons of the church year, liturgical terms, church year terms, seasons, advent wreaths;
- prayers (copyright);
- hymns (play; point and click on credits)
- alternate settings
- alternate tunes
- audition music
- music with alterable key signatures
- Stanza Select (for which stanzas are to be placed into a text tune graphic)
- HymnSoft equivalent
- canticles
- psalmody
- Enchiridion
- service builder
- automatic reporting to licensing agencies
- hymn use record
- Prayer of the day
- Verse of the day
- Hymn of the day
- Psalm of the day
- customizable Planning Christian Worship
- suggested hymn lists
- suggested attendant music and choral repertoire

While some are DIY's,<sup>87</sup> others are collaborators. Organized, online collaboration has enormous potential for worship planning. An example: Through video conferencing and screen sharing, a small group utilizes Planning Christian Worship materials, compiles a full church year of worship services, and shares the planning guides online, where, depending on permissions, other users can offer suggestions, discuss specific choral or hymn arrangements, and download the plan or access it in the cloud for their own use.

What happens as we think in terms of not a fixed but a fluid resource? Good materials come available on an ongoing basis. Good hymns typically pop up the day after the hymn list has been finalized for the

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<sup>87</sup> Do-it-yourselfers.

twenty-second and final time. Who is going to do the quality control for materials added to the database in the future? Why couldn't there be five great hymns added to the digital resources four months after the pew edition rolls off the presses? There could be, but there would also need to be five more authors and five more composers added to the Handbook resource, five more digital hymns in midi and m4a or whatever the format will be a decade from now, five or ten or fifteen or more alternate settings, additions to the scripture indexes and the suggested hymns list, additions to the list of titles automatically reported to the licensing agency, royalty agreements written and signed and put into place and set up for payment, and whatever else I have missed.

And if we dare ask it, what resources are people looking for which we have not provided in the past or planned for the future? We're going to have to ask them.

## Availability

In 2013, it's not only youngsters – it's the older crowd as well which lives according to the operating principle, "The world comes to me through my phone." Solomon's "nothing new under the sun" has not been compromised. It's the same kinds of things they are seeing and learning and communicating and discussing – they're just accessing them or disseminating them in different ways. Two generations ago people complained that they felt like a number or a statistic. Now they are users, as in username and password, as in mobile users, as in network users and user groups, as in plastic users who swipe their card and enter their PIN or device users who swype their touch screen keyboard to compose text or who display their mobile BCBP (barcode boarding pass) to board a plane. "Joined at the hip" may be fading out because to their devices people are "joined at the hand."

This is the way in which our generation accesses almost everything. Whatever the device, people expect to find everything in the universe to be only a few clicks away. Prior to its release in the HymnSoft update, I can say that it's convenient to have all the music of the CW line available on my Ipod. I can't say I often listen to it or access it from that source, but it's there – 11Gb of it in four different instrumental versions. I imagine I would be more with the times if I let it reside in the cloud and not take up all that space on the actual device, but I'm not yet into paying for a data plan on a device. Perhaps I'll actually need to be as a project like this forges ahead.

Three items can receive some attention in this second to last section of an essay, a section which touches on availability. One is the private devotional use of materials. As a matter of priorities, we would want there to be a bible in every home (or on every device). After that we would move on to wanting there to be a catechism and a hymnal in every home (or on every device). Personal editions of hymnals have been around for a long time, from the old German, text-only hymnals which worshipers brought to worship services with them and which easily fit in a small pocket, to the personal edition of a recent Lutheran hymnal which is a touch smaller than the pew edition. As is the case with the current hymnal, there will be in the next hymnal (and its ancillary volumes) a wealth of devotional materials from which "users" can benefit.

In addition to a possible personal hard copy edition, perhaps there ought to be a personal digital edition of the hymnal. Can't the reader picture selecting the prayers section or the catechism section of a personal digital hymnal and swiping across the Apple or Android touchscreen to locate the desired

prayer or major section of the Enchiridion? Wouldn't it accomplish some kind of benefit for that personal edition to be linked to a calendar which made available to the user the same Hymn of the Week which X number of fellow Lutheran Christians are pondering and reading and studying and singing that week in their personal devotion time? Wouldn't it be something if a father printed out a hymn text for the members of his family and pressed play on his Iphone to actually be able to have his family sing an accompanied hymn around the evening dinner table? Wouldn't it be wild if the parish pastor could make use of the ten-years-from-now version of Facebook or Twitter or Mailchimp to automatically schedule and deliver a midweek devotion to the users in his parish, a devotion which was built to be executed on the personal, digital editions of the hymnal which they have at their disposal? Minds more facile than mine can formulate questions more salient than these few.

When we give thought to availability issues, examples are limited only by imagination. During the festival half of the church year (or actually any time), users can click the group of hymns categorized in iTunes by their hymnal category and play back that category of hymns which reflects either the current church year season or the category of their choice, if they should desire to create such a devotional setting. Worship planners without the ability to play an unfamiliar hymn or to know what it sounds like can audition the music of all hymns, psalms and rites. Individuals can make use of the personal preparation for Holy Communion pages and the prayers and hymns associated with the sacrament to prepare for the upcoming communion service. The possibilities mentioned here have centered on a personal hard copy or digital edition of the hymnal. The broader array of project materials multiplies the possibilities when the setting goes from personal to professional use. The list goes on and its possibilities border on infinite.

Several releases of WELS worship materials have included materials on a CD. Accessing those auxiliary materials has been "hit or miss." After the use of such auxiliary materials has been noticed, it is not uncommon to hear the comment, "Where did you get that?" If we can anticipate an increase in the kinds of auxiliary materials which were available with the release of CWS (on its accompaniment edition CD), auxiliary materials such as alternate settings, alternate arrangements, vocal and instrumental descants, guitar/bass/percussion lead sheets, and the like, we will want to see to it that these valuable resources are not "lost on a CD."<sup>88</sup>

I will be happy to be labeled an imbecile for various ideas which I put forth. When it happens, I'll move on to the next idea. Consider this one of those times when I may be thus labeled. I don't at all expect it to happen this way because it could easily be regarded as unattractive, unprofessional or downright hokey. There is, nonetheless, a part of me which wants to add to the text and music information at the bottom of each hymn a line of code. I am not referring to html code but to the kind of abbreviation code that you see on your auto insurance card. Those capital letters which spell out your coverage – if you have collision or comprehensive or roadside assistance or whatever – I would love to see something like that at the bottom of every hard copy and digital hymn and psalm and canticle which we publish. They need to be somewhere where someone else than the pastor can see them. I am not in agreement with every statement that says the pastor is the bottleneck which stops every this and that from happening in the congregation. But let's be honest. Not every pastor is a good delegator. Not every

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<sup>88</sup> It is amazing to see the efforts that have been poured into crafting files which are placed in the directory of a CD, files which painstakingly lay out the additional resources available on the CD and how to access them, only to find that users have not opened the file or have not been able to navigate through folders to find the materials which are said to be available. Found [here](#) is the listing of such files for CWS.

pastor plans out worship six months in advance. A hymnal's auxiliary materials, as good as they might be, can be wholly lost if the pastor or worship planner/leader is less than adept at being able to access resources which are in pdf format on an accompaniment edition CD. Believe it or not, there are faithful church musicians who see an accompaniment edition CD and never put it in a computer's CD tray. No fault directed at those who package the materials, but we need to do better.

The insurance card example was offered as a sort of safety net for those scenarios where a pastor or worship leader may not have as his or her particular strength worship planning or recruiting members with instrumental skills or accessing materials off a disc. Readers of the essay can alter this thought into something better which accomplishes the same thing, but the insurance card code analogy is offered to allow, for example, high school instrumentalists to look toward the bottom of a hymn or psalm or canticle and to say, "Hey, why aren't we adding this or that instrument or using this or that arrangement? It says right there that it is available." Crude? Perhaps. The reader and the members of the hymnal committee and any others are invited to ponder the underlying issue and to see what good ideas can be generated and implemented to insure that available resources are resources which are used.

There was a time when copyright issues were regularly ignored. Ignored is probably the correct term because there was a time when worship leaders were by and large ignorant of copyright issues. Those days have passed. Only those who don't want to have anything to do with them are "ignorant" of copyright issues. There has been a sufficient amount of bold print paragraphs at the bottom of page one of choral pieces to lead any rational person to conclude that the only people who are unaware of copyright issues are those who are intentionally ignoring them. The same holds true of the texts and music in recently released hymnals, including our own. There has been more than sufficient information given out to lead users to reprint worship materials only under the required reprint license or only with the publisher's permission.

If copyright issues remain sketchy, a new hymnal project is a grand opportunity for clarification.<sup>89</sup> Especially with the use of GIA materials and with the release of CWS, our worship leaders have become familiar with the need to secure a OneLicense.net license to be able to reprint the materials of publishers who have made use of that licensing agency. As most are aware, the lion's share of worship music of which our congregations make use is covered under a OneLicense.net license.<sup>90</sup> There are still cases where congregations or worship leaders are unaware that purchase of the license must be accompanied by online reporting of each reprint occurrence. If this reporting is not done, the artists are not compensated for the use of their materials.<sup>91</sup>

Securing a OneLicense.net license allows the licensee to reprint text and tune settings of any music published by those publishers who have signed on with OneLicense.net. The licensee is also able to reprint the texts (not the settings or arrangements) of choral music whose publishers are affiliated with OneLicense.net.

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<sup>89</sup> The project director is adding a footnote here as a reminder to self that taking a semester on copyright law for a product such as ours might be a good idea. When he gets his act together, he'll put this kind of note in Evernote instead.

<sup>90</sup> NPH; CPH; Morningstar; Hope; GIA; Augsburg Fortress; Hal Leonard; Hope; Oxford University Press; Shawnee Press; Alfred Publishing; many others

<sup>91</sup> LSB's service builder has automatic reporting to agencies such as OneLicense.net.

A licensing agency which covers an even larger collection of music than OneLicense.net is Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI). A [file](#) on the CW Electronic Edition disc entitled “CW El Pew Ed README.rtf” lists hymns which are not covered under OneLicense.net. A [file](#) on the CWS Electronic Pew Edition disc entitled “Readme.rtf” lists hymns which are not covered by OneLicense.net. Often but not always, titles not covered by OneLicense.net are covered by CCLI. One of the most notable instances of this is the music of Keith Getty which is currently not covered under OneLicense.net but is covered by CCLI. Congregations may need to secure a CCLI license so as to be able to reprint Getty music pieces (including the four pieces in CWS, if the congregation only makes use of the electronic edition of CWS).

A notable difference between OneLicense.net and CCLI is the reporting process. OneLicense.net requires reporting of every reprint. CCLI requires a reporting period of only six months out of every two and a half years. They represent enough artists so as to be able to pay their artists based on an average rather than an actual use.

It would be good for the NPH permissions department, the NPH sacred music editor, and members of the hymnal project committee to meet and to establish clarity on various copyright issues. Any kind of subscription service or database distribution will call for a high level of copyright clarity. Understanding the differences between public domain materials and copyrighted materials is not always as cut-and-dried as it might appear. Copyright law is not intended to limit reproduction but to allow it to take place in a way that benefits the creator of the materials. A brief treatment of the history and applications of copyright is available in a previously cited [essay](#).

## Conclusion

What will this book and its array of resources do? If it carries the gospel to the broken-hearted, and it will, then it will serve for the glory of God and the edification of man.

When synod president Carl Mischke presented Rev. Kurt Eggert with a copy of CW during Eggert’s last days in the church militant, the calendar year read 1993. The scripture message of that hymnal would be handed down to a people yet unborn. One of those yet unborn was a son of mine who was born in 1995, who has used those materials throughout his seventeen and a half years, who, God-willing, will be a few years into serving as a pastor when the next set of resources is ready to be released. If God is willing and if the ultrasound was read correctly, an older son of mine will be placing a grandson in our arms later this year, a boy who will discover this hymnal when he is a fifth grader and will perhaps use it till he’s a man of forty.

People yet unborn will obviously not be the only worshipers who make use of the items this project will make available. The resources will be presented to the church body in order to serve members and guests alike. The far-reaching implications of how a new hymnal will also serve a generation in the future both drive us to our knees and call for our best efforts. The prayers we address to our Savior will be answered and the best efforts we put forward in his name will never be in vain. May Jesus Christ be praised!

Respectfully,  
Michael D. Schultz, director  
WELS Hymnal Project

## Appendix A – Multi-Lutheran Hymnal Index

### *Statistics from a Multi-Lutheran Hymnal Index*

*Numbers are +/- a handful or so (multiple tunes for same hymn, or the like)*

LSB has 636 hymns, 342 of them were in TLH (53.7% TLH carryover)

LSB has 636 hymns, 413 of them were in LW (64.9% LW carryover)

LW has 520 hymns, 378 of them were in TLH (72.6% TLH carryover)

95 out of 114 HS98 hymns appeared in LSB (83.3% from a supplement to a new hymnal)

CW/CWS have 711 hymns, 422 of them were in TLH (59.3% TLH carryover)

LSB and CW/CWS have 444 hymns in common

LSB, CW/CWS, LW and TLH have 295 hymns in common

LSB, CW/CWS, LW, LBW, ELH and TLH have 184 hymns in common

TLH had 382 tunes for 671 hymn selections

## Appendix B – Comparison of Settings

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (CW setting as compared with TLH altered)

### Praise to the Lord, the Almighty *CW setting*

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a vocal melody starting on a dotted quarter note. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving bass lines. The second system continues the vocal melody with a similar rhythmic pattern. The third system shows the vocal line ending with a final note and a double bar line, while the piano accompaniment continues with a final chord and a double bar line.



Appendix B (cont'd)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (CW setting as compared with TLH altered)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty  
*TLH setting (altered)*

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The melody in the treble staff consists of quarter notes and eighth notes, with some notes beamed together. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

## Appendix C – Piano Style and Chordal Style

### May the Peace (CWS 745 piano style)

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## May the Peace of God

I May the peace of God our heav'n - ly  
peace which pass - es un - der -

The first system of musical notation for 'May the Peace of God'. It consists of a treble and bass staff in 4/4 time, with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The melody in the treble staff begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a quarter rest. The bass staff provides a simple accompaniment with a quarter note G2, followed by a quarter note A2, and then a quarter rest. The lyrics are: 'I May the peace of God our heav'n - ly peace which pass - es un - der -'.

Fa - ther, And the grace of Christ the ris - en  
stand - ing, And this grace which makes us what we

The second system of musical notation. The treble staff continues the melody with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The bass staff continues with a half note G2, followed by quarter notes A2, B2, and C3. The lyrics are: 'Fa - ther, And the grace of Christ the ris - en stand - ing, And this grace which makes us what we'.

Son,  
are, And the fel - low-ship of God the  
And this fel - low-ship of his Com -

The third system of musical notation. The treble staff continues with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The bass staff continues with a half note G2, followed by quarter notes A2, B2, and C3. The lyrics are: 'Son, are, And the fel - low-ship of God the And this fel - low-ship of his Com -'.

## Appendix C (cont'd)

### May the Peace (CWS 745 chordal style)

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## May the Peace of God

Alternate Accompaniment

1 May the peace of God our heav'n - ly  
peace which pass - es un - der -

The first system of musical notation consists of a treble and bass staff in 4/4 time, key of A major (three sharps). The treble staff contains a vocal line with lyrics. The bass staff contains a chordal accompaniment. The lyrics are: "1 May the peace of God our heav'n - ly peace which pass - es un - der -".

Fa - ther, And the grace of Christ the ris - en  
stand - ing, And this grace which makes us what we

The second system of musical notation continues the vocal and accompaniment lines. The lyrics are: "Fa - ther, And the grace of Christ the ris - en stand - ing, And this grace which makes us what we".

Son,  
are, And the fel - low - ship of God the  
And this fel - low - ship of his Com -

The third system of musical notation concludes the piece. The lyrics are: "Son, are, And the fel - low - ship of God the And this fel - low - ship of his Com -".

## Appendix D – Christian Worship sales data

<b>Description</b>	<b>Total Printed</b>	<b>Total Cost*</b>	<b>Life-to-Date Units Sold</b>	<b>Life-to-Date Sales</b>
CW Pew Edition	459,778	\$1,656,717	442,344	\$7,656,790
CW Keepsake Black Leather	7,471	\$81,811	6,519	\$222,144
CW Keepsake Burgundy Leather	7,708	\$78,200	6,396	\$217,041
CW Accompaniment for Liturgy and Psalms	6,673	\$41,849	6,505	\$180,772
CW Manual	4,166	\$26,120	3,851	\$111,577
CW Planning Binder			957	\$4,438
CW Planning Series A	1,753	\$10,288	1,834	\$23,045
CW Planning Series B	2,031	\$13,942	1,070	\$13,969
CW Planning Series C	2,017	\$11,231	1,850	\$22,701
CW Accompaniment for Hymns	548	\$15,735	1,889	\$113,123
CW Large Print Edition	3,050	\$75,282	2,719	\$124,522
CW Psalms for Worship Accompaniment	765	\$2,296	271	\$3,847
CW Handbook	2,340	\$42,764	1,852	\$79,435
CW Altar Book Black Leather	246	\$7,126	146	\$14,513
CW Altar Book Burgundy Leather	448	\$14,418	316	\$31,955
CW Altar Book Burgundy Hardcover**	306	\$5,550	834	
CW Alternative Accompaniments	2,110	\$4,391	184	\$2,162
CW New Service Settings Pew Edition	15,970	\$23,069	13,507	\$67,830
CW New Service Settings Accompaniment**	1,439	\$23,981	1,280	\$59,950
CW New Service Settings Electronic Edition	662	\$3,354	593	\$16,853
CW New Service Settings Morning Praise Download			38	\$380
CW Occasional Services Black Leather	153	\$11,996	67	\$9,123
CW Occasional Services Burgundy Leather	301	\$22,551	102	\$13,229
CW Occasional Services Burgundy Hardcover	1,305	\$62,133	847	\$87,866
CW Occasional Services Accompaniment Only	607	\$6,707	143	\$4,818
CW Pastor's Companion	2,041	\$27,277	1,457	\$64,146
CW Electronic Pew Edition	190	\$5,391	160	\$39,678
CW Electronic Pew Edition Usage Fee			375	\$9,375
CWS Pew Edition Spiral	13,095	\$71,327	11,621	\$181,593
CWS Pew Edition Perfect	45,734	\$172,344	40,123	\$539,188
CWS Electronic Pew Edition	615	\$24,057	576	\$141,283
CWS Accompaniment Edition	2,042	\$88,012	1,881	\$124,849
CWS Guitar Edition	654	\$6,489	585	\$8,455

\*This figure includes expenses once the manuscript came in to the NPH production department (design, copy editing, and printing). Editorial time and any other expenses for the project (salaries, meetings, etc.) are not included. Financial VP Tom Siegel estimates that these costs may have been another \$1 million or so.

\*\*This product has been discontinued.

### **Other Notes**

1. Because of the transition to a new business system in 1998, some of the figures before that date may not be exact.
2. The costs of editorial time (salaries and benefits, etc.), warehousing, shipping and handling, and other expenses of the items are not tracked in this data. Financial VP Tom Siegel generally says that to break even on a product, sales should be four times greater than expenses to cover all costs.