



Gather in your scattered flock;
give us water from the rock.

Lenten and Easter Services in a Pandemic *One Church Musician's Perspective*

by Karen S. Eddinger

As those of us of a certain age will remember, Sunday morning services had been broadcast live over local radio for decades. On January 6, 1976, Trinity Lutheran Church in Reading, PA, began live video broadcasts of Sunday services utilizing a local access cable channel. Oh, how the times have changed. We stopped broadcasting over local radio more than two decades ago. About four years ago, the changing cable system forced us to stop our live feeds, except for Thanksgiving morning, Christmas Eve, and Maundy Thursday. While we still broadcast our Sunday service, it is now on local cable in the early evening. Over the years the focus of our media ministry has changed to sharing recorded services via streaming video.

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Normally, our 11:00 a.m. Sunday morning service is video recorded, edited, and replayed over local cable and uploaded to the church Facebook page and YouTube channel. Our perception was that viewers typically watched the service much like any other program. Then new terms entered our dialog: “social distancing” and “shelter in place.” Knowing that people are now *participating* in worship, we are changing our mindset and must determine how best to support our online “congregation.”

The services for Lent seemed much easier to navigate. The contemplative underpinning of the season helped us ease into the new reality. Trying to find an appropriate mix of celebrating the season of Easter, while still acknowledging that we cannot worship together in a joyous celebration, proved to be more challenging. From the correspondence we have received, we know that worshippers from many denominations are joining us. Since the decision has been made not to publish a bulletin, I try to think more ecumenically when choosing hymns and sung liturgy while staying true to our Lutheran heritage. One example has been the choice to use Carl P. Daw Jr.'s setting of “God’s Pascal Lamb Is Sacrificed for Us” from *Music Sourcebook for Lent and the Three Days* instead of a setting

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of This is the feast. Set to SINE NOMINE, it is my hope that the tune would be more familiar to a wider number of singers.

My daily and weekly workflow has changed dramatically. The music portion of Sunday worship is taped on Tuesday afternoon. Drawing from a pool of six singers willing to venture into the sanctuary, I ask a quartet of singers to record hymns, liturgical responses, and an anthem. The spoken liturgy and sermon are recorded Wednesday morning. The edited service is reviewed by staff on Thursday and is available online by 7:00 a.m. Sunday.

One of our biggest changes, and challenges, has been adding text to the broadcasts. Hymns and other liturgical components asking for congregational participation are now shown in split screen. Liturgical texts and responses are shown on the right side of the screen. Hymn texts scroll at the bottom of the page. Congregational texts are in a different color than texts by the pastor or assisting minister. We have already begun to contemplate whether this is something we can, or should, continue. When we return to a “normal” Sunday, the additional editing and uploading time may prohibit this well-received new component from being



ready for our Sunday evening broadcast.

We decided to purchase a professional Zoom license. So now, like many others, we are doing a virtual coffee hour and Sunday School time. Weekly on our rehearsal day, I email the choir and insert a video clip of an anthem that we have sung. I have now added a Zoom hour with my choir that coincides with our normal weekly rehearsal. It nourishes my soul to hear and see my choir.

During Lent we decided to publish an organ piece for mid-week meditation on Facebook and YouTube. I have decided to keep doing that through this time of uncertainty. One of the unexpected joys of this time has been the gift of still being able to go to the “office.” Time on the bench in a quiet and unoccupied church has brought solace. The sun gleaming through stained glass has brought glimpses of glory and beauty. I have cherished spending time with pieces, hearing

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and feeling them in fresh new ways through the silence.

Based on positive feedback to this point, we believe that our media ministry has provided some degree of comfort and sense of community during this time of uncertainty. We are hopeful that a number of people will continue to worship with us remotely, even after they are able to rejoin their own congregations for worship. We are grateful for ALCM and our local mission district for helping to inform people of worship opportunities like Trinity.



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