

# CROSSACCENT

**Crossing  
Thresholds**

# ALCM 2021 Friday Webinar Series

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*Michael Joy*, First Presbyterian Church, Ambler, PA



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*Mark Mummert*, Trinity Lutheran Church, Worcester, MA



Friday, August 27

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*Mark Oldenburg*, United Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg, PA



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*Alexa Doebele*, Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, WI



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*Adam Lefever Hughes*, St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran, Lancaster, PA



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# CROSSACCENT

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JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF LUTHERAN CHURCH MUSICIANS



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Cover: Walking the labyrinth at Notre Dame Cathedral in Chartres, France.  
Photo by Maksim, Wikimedia Commons.



**Chad Fothergill**  
Editor, CrossAccent

## Crossing Thresholds

*The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called,  
and the house filled with smoke.*  
(Isaiah 6:4; NRSV)

*Through the narrow gate now draw us,  
past all empire's pull and strife,  
where beyond our fear and clinging  
stands the threshold of new life.  
Let us cross out of the wilderness  
to the threshold of new life.*  
(ACS 923, st. 4)

**“T**hreshold” is a durable, multivalent word, the kind of word eminently suited for the language of song, preaching, prayer, and ritual. Devoid of context, “threshold” can refer to: a physical object—a strip of wood, stone, or metal—at the bottom of a doorway, a synonym for a boundary or beginning, and a marker of minimum and maximum limits. We can literally stand *on* the threshold between rooms or be metaphorically poised *at* the threshold of a new era or endeavor. We possess individual thresholds for hearing and pain, hot and cold, style and taste, as well as societal thresholds for (un)acceptable behaviors and conditions—or so we’d like to think. In the realm of copyright law, a “threshold of originality” helps determine whether or not a particular work can or should be protected. We are invited to cross some thresholds yet cautioned to stay within the bounds of others. As people of God baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection, we make the sign of the cross at a common threshold, the waters of the font.

Some thresholds cleave our perceptions into tidy opposites. The door above a physical threshold may be either closed or open. Children and pets scamper and cavort indoors or outside. But most

thresholds are transitional, shifting spaces. Seemingly firm boundaries are, upon closer inspection, actually porous. With just a little effort and imagination, dividing lines become dotted or blurred: a door can be ajar or fully open, permitting a small sliver or a brilliant flood of light to cross its threshold. One can pause at a threshold in order to simultaneously glimpse an origin and destination—things above, behind, before, below, and around. Some thresholds—the doors of one’s home—are crossed daily without notice. Some thresholds—the doors of a hospital, the entrance to a labyrinth, the start of a new year or century—invite further reflection. Such is the advice given in one labyrinth guide:

There are times  
when we are neither here  
nor there.

Imagine a world where  
we honored transitions enough  
to take at least a moment  
to notice and acknowledge them.<sup>1</sup>

Together, we stand at a pivotal threshold—perhaps a labyrinthine maze of intersecting thresholds—in our common life as a church and society. As I write this, my phone buzzes incessantly with news alerts about revised mask guidance for vaccinated individuals. Indeed, this is a threshold moment. Is it the end of the pandemic? The beginning of our coping with its trauma, of coming to terms with its myriad effects on daily life, work, and worship? What will my choir be capable of singing with fewer members? Will my musical selections and their attendant licensing requirements be prescribed by the congregation’s decision to continue livestreaming? How will the cultural maladies of these long months—racism, violence, inequality—shape us and our song in the days ahead? We

prepare to cross these thresholds exhaling sighs of relief, sadness, exhaustion, and yearning.

As a historian, I have been trained to look both ways before crossing a threshold. Whence have we come? Where are we going? What wisdom, stories, and lessons from the past provide footing and sustenance for long or rocky paths ahead? What must be left behind? What new things will be seen, observed, or discovered?

These questions and more like them are addressed by six authors whose work has appeared at threshold moments in the life of ALCM: the end of the twentieth century, the development of new worship resources, times of vocational discernment, and more. Authors Jennifer Baker-Trinity, Mark Bangert, Lorraine Brugh, Susan Palo Cherwien, Frederick Niedner, and Samuel Torvend have generously granted permission for their sound wisdom to be reprinted—sometimes with minor updates and emendations—for a new generation of worship leaders, especially those who have joined ALCM in the years since these essays first appeared in *Cross-Accent*. Though originally written for a different time and place, I hope they provide grounding, centering, and encouragement for paths ahead, for thresholds traversed, and for liminal, in-between times and spaces that invite reflection and pause. You are invited to *translate* or *transpose* them in ways unique to your calling and context or seek out the chorus of thoughtful voices—many of which still speak urgently to our time—in past issues of the journal.<sup>2</sup>

As this issue was being prepared, I was reminded of a curious keyboard piece once attributed to J. S. Bach, the *Kleines harmonisches Labyrinth* (“Little Harmonic Labyrinth”). One carefully prepared nineteenth-century manuscript assigns programmatic headings to its three short sections: *introitus* (“entrance”), *centrum* (“center”), and *exitus* (“exit”). Players and listeners alike cross the labyrinth’s threshold in C major and twist through a sometimes-disorienting progression of keys, only to return—perhaps weary, perhaps invigorated, perhaps changed—to C major. The journey—its turnings, transitions, and crossings—is just as important as the destination:

Creator of life’s turning,  
horizon of our quest,  
praise be for our unlearning,  
unknowing, and unrest.

May wonder lead to waking,  
may sight our minds renew,  
that every course of seeking  
turn deeper into you.

Remind us of the story  
in which our paths unfold;  
reveal our hidden glory,  
which, loving, you behold;  
inspire this deeper vision  
through worship, word, and bread,  
and ground our great procession  
for all the paths ahead.

So form in us your calling  
that, wakened, we become  
your Spirit’s open dwelling,  
a just and questing home.  
Creator, to our learning  
the mind of Christ impart,  
that every step and turning  
expand the thinking heart.<sup>3</sup>

*Birmingham, AL*  
*Ascension of Our Lord*  
*May 13, 2021*

## Notes

1. Jill Kimberly Hartwell Geoffrion, *Pondering the Labyrinth: Questions to Pray on the Path* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2003), 17.
2. Past issues of *CrossAccent* may be accessed through the ALCM members area at <https://alcm.org/members-area/crossaccent-issues/>.
3. Susan Palo Cherwien, “Creator of Life’s Turning,” in *Come, Beloved of the Maker: Hymns of Susan Palo Cherwien*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2010), 71.

## Abbreviations frequently used in this journal include:

<b>ACS</b>	<i>All Creation Sings</i> (2020)
<b>BWV</b>	<i>Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis</i> (“Bach Works Catalog”)
<b>CW</b>	<i>Christian Worship</i> (1993)
<b>ELCA</b>	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
<b>ELW</b>	<i>Evangelical Lutheran Worship</i> (2006)
<b>LBW</b>	<i>Lutheran Book of Worship</i> (1978)
<b>LCMS</b>	The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
<b>LSB</b>	<i>Lutheran Service Book</i> (2006)
<b>TFF</b>	<i>This Far by Faith</i> (1999)
<b>TLH</b>	<i>The Lutheran Hymnal</i> (1941)
<b>WELS</b>	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
<b>WOV</b>	<i>With One Voice</i> (1995)

# TAKENOTE

## ALCM News and Views

### 2021 Raabe Prize Winner

Jacob B. Weber has been named winner of the 2021 Raabe Prize for Excellence in Composition for his choral work “Festival Gloria” (Concordia, 2019) scored for SATB choir, organ, and brass quartet. The selection committee noted, in particular, the work’s quality of voice leading, its “natural” sense of text declamation, use of text painting, and idiomatic brass writing. This is the first time in the history of the Raabe Prize that it has been awarded to a setting of a text from the Mass Ordinary.

Weber is associate editor of music/worship at Concordia Publishing House (CPH) and assists in the editing and development of handbell, keyboard, and choral publications, as well as other worship resources. He previously served as cantor at Emmanuel Lutheran Church and School (Dearborn, MI) where he oversaw and directed the church and school music programs and served as organist. He earned degrees in church music and organ from Bethany Lutheran College (Mankato, MN) and Concordia University Wisconsin (Mequon, WI), studying with John Behnke and Michael Burkhardt during his graduate work.

Jacob and his wife, Rachael, reside in St. Louis with their children. Aside from editing and composing, Jacob remains active as a substitute organist for local LCMS congregations, as a hymn festival presenter, and as a recitalist. His music has been published by Augsburg Fortress, Choristers Guild, St. James Music Press, Northwestern, GIA, and CPH.

The Raabe Prize for Excellence in Sacred Composition is awarded every two years for a single musical work, published or unpublished and written within the last five years, that reflects a larger history of excellence on the part of the composer. Dr. William and Pr. Nancy Raabe endowed this prize to recognize and encourage significant

accomplishments in composition contributing to the body of sacred music for the church in the Lutheran heritage.

### Music and Faith

The May 2021 issue of *Living Lutheran*, the monthly magazine of the ELCA, celebrates the gift of music and includes several articles written by or featuring the work of ALCM members. Topics include listening, the church and music during pandemic times, stories of favorite hymns, the meaning of a Lutheran musical heritage in the twenty-first century, an inside look at the Lutheran Summer Music Academy and Festival, and reflections about the personal and universal nature of music by ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. Articles and past issues can be viewed at [www.livinglutheran.org](http://www.livinglutheran.org).



### Mentorship Opportunities

One of the great strengths of ALCM is the wealth of different gifts of its members. The board has had several discussions about how members with more experience and training might be able to mentor their colleagues. Before implementing any kind of mentoring program, it would be helpful to know the level of interest of our members. If you would benefit from participating in a mentoring program, or if you would like to share your expertise with others, please write to ALCM executive director Jim Rindelaub at [jimrindelaub@alcm.org](mailto:jimrindelaub@alcm.org) to express your interest (please mention “Mentor Program” in the subject line). Note that we are not asking for a commitment at this time; this is just to gauge interest in such a program.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Peter Mehrings Wessler, 1957-2020***by Thomas Bandar*

**P**eter Wessler, beloved father, husband, educator, musician, and longtime academy director of the Lutheran Summer Music Academy and Festival (LSM) died on November 24 from COVID-19 complications.

Peter was first and foremost dedicated to his faith and family. His servant-leadership style was evident in the many capacities and positions held throughout his career. With Peter, there was no ego. He often stepped into leadership positions where he saw a need and humbly accepted the role, always elevating the people around him to reach new heights and become better versions of themselves.

Peter had served as the LSM academy director since 2003 and was both the face and the backbone of the LSM summer community for almost two decades. Perhaps no one else had a greater impact on the LSM community than Peter. His leadership always included kindness, patience, dedication to students, and reverence for the program he served. Peter was devoted to LSM because of its impact on his family after his two children, Jonathan and Daniel, attended as students. With all that Peter gave for almost two decades, he still recently commented that he hadn't even begun to give back what LSM had given to his family.

Before and during LSM Peter rose to meet new challenges, eager to solve the unique logistical puzzle that each summer presented and make the summer academy run without a hitch. Only a fraction of his hard work was visible to the community, as he would wake with the sun and set himself to task hours before the community gathered for Morning Prayer and heard his announcements for the day. His hard work was punctuated always with joy, good humor, and warmth, setting the tone for the welcoming environment at LSM. With his humble and inviting leadership, Peter effortlessly



earned the respect of the entire faculty and student body. LSM was in good hands with Peter at the helm for 17 years. Peter was not only a faithful servant to LSM but a friend to all and an irreplaceable fixture in the LSM community and our lives.

For almost 30 years Peter served as choir director at Trinity Lutheran Church in Pekin, IL. During his time at Trinity, he was a mentor to the organists of the parish and composed hundreds of psalm settings and antiphons for the choir and congregation. Peter's compositions were idiomatic for the Trinity choir and proclaimed the word of God in the congregation. LSM included one of Peter's

***Peter's leadership always included kindness, patience, dedication to students, and reverence for the program.***

*Peter was a man of deep faith who loved Christ and passed his faith on to his family.*

gospel acclamations during the closing festival worship service in 2012.

Peter's primary career was that of orchestra director in the nearby public schools in Peoria, IL. Peter taught for many years at Woodruff High School, but his assignments also included teaching strings at various middle schools in the area. Peter took pride in building the orchestra program at Woodruff into a first-rate ensemble. Peter's patient style combined with his high standards brought out the best in his students. Shifts in the school district eventually caused Woodruff to close, a significant heartbreak for Peter as he suffered the loss of a program he painstakingly had built over decades. Peter went on to teach at other schools in the district until his retirement. Peter also served as the director of the Central Illinois Concert Orchestra, the feeder program to the Central Illinois Youth Symphony, and for 15 years was an adjunct faculty member at Bradley University, teaching string instrument methods and techniques.

An accomplished violinist, Peter played in the Peoria Symphony Orchestra for more than 30 years. The majority of those years his wife, Carol, was nearby in the cello section. Whenever possible, Peter also joined the LSM Bach Cantata orchestra, which was often the highlight of his summer.

In Peter's retirement, he drove a motor coach for the Peoria Charter Coach Company, which fulfilled a longtime dream of his.

Peter was devoted to his family and proud of his children, both of whom are LSM alumni. Jonathan, an organist with degrees from Oberlin Conservatory of Music (OH), Notre Dame (IN), and the Eastman School of Music (NY), now serves First Lutheran Church of Boston as kantor. Jonathan and his wife Joy, who met at LSM 2000, have three children. Daniel, an educator and musician with degrees from Bradley University (IL) and Western Illinois University, served for many years as the director of choral activities at Freeport High



School in Freeport, IL. He and his wife, Molly, now live in Colorado where Daniel is pursuing a DMA in choral conducting at the University of Colorado. Daniel is a founding member of the After Hours Barbershop Quartet, which won the gold medal at the 2018 Barbershop International Quartet Championship. After Hours was a Guest Artist at LSM 2019, presenting a concert and working with students during their residency.

Peter loved his family and loved the simple things in life: playing with the babies; drinking a cold beer with family; sitting by the fire at home watching cable news and typing emails; going on errands; helping grandchildren with homework.

Raised in a Lutheran family, Peter was a man of deep faith who loved Christ and passed his faith on to his family. Any accomplishment he had was never about him but about what Jesus had done for him. "Precious in your sight, O LORD, is the death of your servants" (Psalm 116:15; *ELW*).

Peter Wessler, we give thanks for you.



**Thomas Bandar** is a concert violist and serves as the executive and artistic director of the Lutheran Summer Music Academy and Festival.

A new LSM scholarship endowment fund has been established to honor Peter and continue his legacy. To date, over 130 people have contributed to the fund. If you wish to share a message with Peter's family or make a contribution, you may do so at <https://www.lsmacademy.org/support>.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY AUTHOR/FAMILY.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Scott C. Weidler, 1959–2021**

by Mark A. Mummert

**S**cott Weidler was a cantor’s cantor. If a bishop is a pastor to pastors, Scott Weidler was a church musician to church musicians, for at least the Lutheran musicians in North America, if not well beyond. His love for the church’s song and the liturgies that contained them was spacious, exhilarating, and contagious.

Scott died after a valiant struggle with pancreatic cancer on January 23, 2021, in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, with his devoted husband Zia Ahmed by his side. Scott’s life witnessed to the extravagant love of God, made visible in the way he loved others, life, the church, and the diversity of God’s beloved people.

For those of us associated with Scott primarily through the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians, we came to know him first through his work in LCMS and ELCA congregations in Florida, New York, and Pennsylvania. He served as an associate in ministry as cantor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Lancaster, PA, where he especially exhibited his creative and visionary leadership.

It was in his role as associate director for worship of the ELCA from 1995 through 2016 where we were most influenced by his work. Scott was a key figure in the introduction of *With One Voice* (1995)<sup>1</sup> and also served on the editorial teams for *Libro de Liturgia y Cántico* (1998), *This Far by Faith* (1999), and *Worship and Praise Songbook* (1999).

Scott was prominently at the forefront of leadership for the ELCA’s Renewing Worship project that yielded *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (2006), eventually supervising the introduction of a robust family of worship resources to the church and beyond, among them *Musicians Guide to Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (2007); *Worship Guidebook for Lent and the Three Days* (2009); *In These or Similar Words: Crafting Language for Worship* (2015); and



*Singing in Community: Paperless Music for Worship* (2017).

In addition to these resources, Scott was also attentive to the needs of smaller parish choirs, leading him to commission several composers for *O Lord of Light: Nine Two-Part Mixed Anthems for the Church Year* (MorningStar, 2013) that, in his words, were fashioned for “those times we regularly need

to either learn something very quickly” or “sing with limited forces because of holiday schedules” (2). Scott’s attention to detail and strong pedagogical foundation enabled this time of creativity and faithfulness to flourish in our church.

Any consideration of Scott’s service among Lutheran musicians must include his dedicated teaching and leadership of the Lutheran Summer Music Academy and Festival (1984–95), his work with the Leadership Program for Musicians, Valparaiso University’s Institute of Liturgical Studies, the Liturgical Music Seminar of the North American Academy of Liturgy, and Music that Makes Community.

**Scott’s life witnessed to the extravagant love of God, made visible in the way he loved others, life, the church, and the diversity of God’s beloved people.**

## ■ TAKENOTE

**Scott's leadership was regular and reliable, sturdy and strong, such that each of us could join his beat and lead with freedom and confidence.**

Any musician who spent any quality time with Scott knew that he was all concerned with “tactus.” In the volume *Leading the Church's Song* (1998), for which Scott served as project coordinator alongside Norma Aamodt-Nelson, he wrote with passion about this foundational principle of assembly song and its leadership. Of primary importance to Scott was a predicable, reliable, steady beat that would gather all in any room, no matter the size or characteristic, to a unified sound. This devotion to beat served also as a primary metaphor for his vocation: he provided a pulse for us to do our communal work of leading the church's song. His leadership was regular and reliable, sturdy and strong, such that each of us could join his beat and lead with freedom and confidence. Scott's insistence that a beat be a unifying principal, rather than any one style, meant that he pushed us all out of our places of comfort and challenged us to draw the repertoire circle ever wider. His vision led the way to the church beginning to open the windows and doors that confined our music to particular styles, origins, or ages, admitting much more of the world's finer music to our communal song.

Because of Scott—when we sing with the choir of angels and all the saints who have died before us, of which Scott now takes a prominent but “pitchy” tenor part—we know the notes and words to more of the world's songs of praise. Thanks be to God for



Scott's life and witness among us. Let us pray that God continues to raise up and call more cantors to the task Scott took up worthily and with profound dedication.



**Mark A. Mummert** serves as cantor at Trinity Lutheran Church (Worcester, MA). He was the 2015 Distinguished Visiting Cantor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (now United Lutheran Seminary), and previously served as director of worship at Christ the King Lutheran Church (Houston, TX) as well as seminary musician at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary) where he led the music for the daily chapel, conducted the seminary choir, and taught courses in hymnology, liturgical practice, and church music.

### Note

1. This and all other works cited are published by Augsburg Fortress in Minneapolis, unless otherwise noted.

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## IN MEMORIAM

**Carl Flentge Schalk, 1929–2021**

by Michael D. Costello

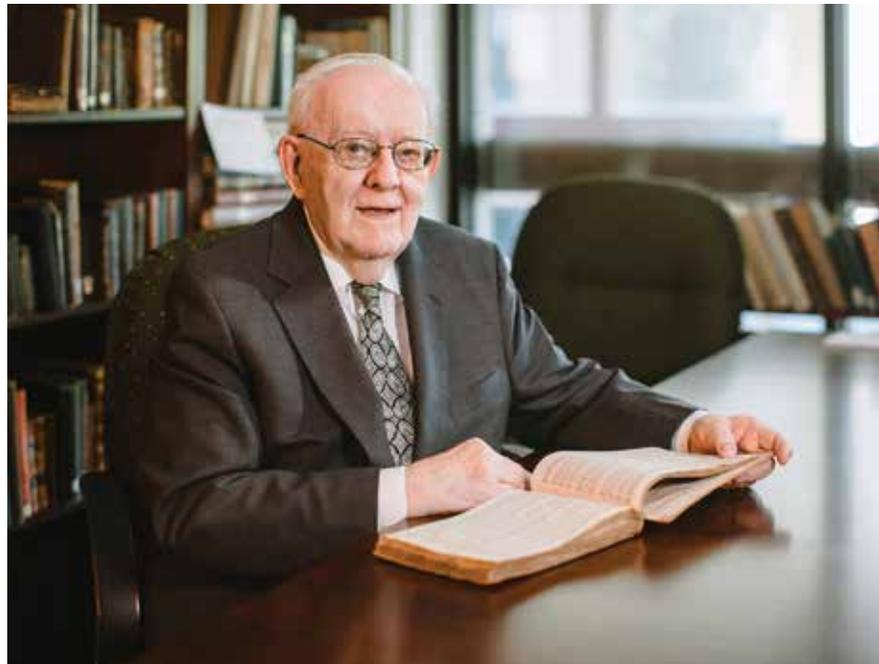
**C**arl F. Schalk, author, church musician, and composer of sacred music, died on January 24, 2021, the Third Sunday after Epiphany.

Schalk was born on September 26, 1929, to Erich and Elsie Schalk in Des Plaines, IL. He was baptized at Immanuel Lutheran Church and School in Des Plaines on November 10, 1929. Schalk attended school at Immanuel, where his father was a teacher and in the rotation with other teachers to be organist about once per month. In 1943 he entered Concordia High School, located at Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, IL (now Concordia University Chicago), where he continued to sing and take piano lessons.

Schalk remained in River Forest, attending Concordia Teachers College, learning the fundamentals that would inform a lifetime of composing, arranging, and conducting sacred music. There he studied organ with Victor Hildner and, later, with Carl Halter. During his senior year Schalk met his future wife, Noël Donata Roeder, who also sang in the college's A Cappella Choir.

In 1952 Schalk accepted a call to Zion Lutheran Church and School in Wausau, WI, where he taught fifth and sixth grade and directed the music for the church and school, including three choirs and a string ensemble. Carl and Noël married in the summer of 1953 at Bethany Lutheran Church in Chicago, where Noël's father was the pastor. During his years in Wausau, Schalk commuted to Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, to earn his Master of Music degree.

In 1958 Schalk accepted a call to serve as director of music for The Lutheran Hour, a radio broadcast of the LCMS, where he programmed music and directed The Lutheran Hour Choir, traveled around the country to direct choirs for



Lutheran Hour rallies, and edited The Lutheran Hour's newsletter, the *Lutheran Hour Music News*. While serving in St. Louis he also enrolled at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, where he studied with Walter E. Buszin, among others, and earned a Master of Arts in Religion.

In 1965 Schalk accepted a call to serve at Concordia Teachers College in River Forest. Steven Wente points out that Schalk's first few years at Concordia were filled with a flurry of activity:

Immediately upon arriving at Concordia, Carl launched three projects: editorship of a new journal, *Church Music*, a collaborative publication between Concordia Teachers College and Concordia Publishing House; the initiation of the church music conference to be called "Lectures in Church Music" and, within a few years, the development of the Master of Church Music program.<sup>1</sup>

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**Carl curated an incredible collection of hymnals, spanning centuries of the church's song,**

## ■ TAKENOTE

**Carl always looked forward, wondering how the church's song could be stronger, better, and more focused on the gospel.**

During his years at Concordia, Carl also served on the hymn music committee of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (the committee's work culminated in the publication of *Lutheran Book of Worship* in 1978) and the music editorial advisory committee of Concordia Publishing House.

Schalk also served as assistant to the director of music at Grace Lutheran Church and School in River Forest from 1968 until 1997, which created opportunities for partnerships between Concordia and Grace Church. The most significant collaboration was the Bach Cantata Vespers series at Grace. Never missing an opportunity to venture into a new project, Schalk worked with Paul Bouman, director of music at Grace, to establish the series, which is now in its 50th year. During the 1971–72 academic year, Schalk directed Concordia's Kapelle, its premier choral ensemble, during the sabbatical leave of director Thomas Gieschen, something Schalk would do again some years later.

In the 1980s, along with Carlos Messerli, Schalk was instrumental in the formation of Lutheran Music Program, home to the Lutheran Summer Music Academy and Festival, serving for many years on the board of directors and composing several works for the organization, most notably his setting of "Luther's Morning Prayer" (MorningStar, 2011).

He retired from Concordia in 1993 and enjoyed a long retirement as distinguished professor of music emeritus. In truth, however, Schalk never slowed down. He continued to teach, give lectures, compose, and write articles and books on sacred music. His most recent book, *Singing the Faith: A Short Introduction to Christian Hymnody*, was published just last year (MorningStar, 2020). He curated an incredible collection of hymnals, spanning centuries of the church's song, that now resides at the Center for Church Music at Concordia



University Chicago.

While people close to Schalk knew him as their teacher or conductor, he was known to most church musicians as a composer of hymn tunes, anthems, and concertatos. Hymns such as "Before the Marvel of This Night" (WOV 636), "Now the Silence" (ELW 460; LSB 910; CW 231), and "Thine the Amen" (ELW 826; LSB 680) easily come to mind as Schalk melodies paired perfectly with their respective texts by Jaroslav J. Vajda and Herbert F. Brokering, both of whom were frequent collaborators. In his later years he continued to compose, working with such poets as Jill Peláez Baumgaertner to create such works as *Scenes from the New Testament: 12 Motets for SATB Voices and Lector* (Augsburg Fortress, 2009) and *The Great O Antiphons: A Service for Advent* (Augsburg Fortress, 2013).

As cantor at Carl's church, I enjoyed his occasional visits to my office, which over the years turned into phone calls and, eventually, into visits at his home. He always had a new piece of music for me to look over, especially over the summer, when I would receive a new piece that he had written for Christmas. Carl would always deliver the piece to me saying, "Here is a new piece for Christmas that I've been working on. Do with it what you will." Whatever he gave me each year for Christmas was, of course, always programmed for our annual Christmas concert and then again for Christmas Eve. His presence at Grace Church was such a gift (for over half a century!). He will be dearly missed by the people who sang and prayed with him each week.

**Carl never slowed down. He continued to teach, give lectures, compose, and write articles and books on sacred music.**

Even to his last days Carl had new projects on his mind. He always looked forward, wondering how the church's song could be stronger, better, and more focused on the gospel. Our conversations moved from topic to topic, including how smaller churches could be better served by composers or how, at Grace Church, we should set apart the season of Lent by altering the way in which we begin our worship during the season.

Every conversation I had with Carl—and I know I am not alone in this—was filled with a combination of genuine concern for the life of the church and jovial dialogue filled with humorous quips, leaving me feeling as though I not only had had a conversation with one of the most gifted and faithful humans I have ever known but also that we were friends and colleagues—one in our work for the sake of the gospel. In this way Schalk was most engaging. To one of my colleagues at Grace, Carl would always bid farewell by saying, “Write when you find honest work.” To me he often concluded a serious conversation about some issue related to church music with this advice: “Now remember, always trill from the upper note ... [insert dramatic pause] ... except when it's the other way around.”

The last time I saw Carl we celebrated the sacrament of Holy Communion. During our visit he recited chorale texts and prayers, some of which I can imagine he taught to children in Wausau, to students at Concordia, or to choir members too many to count over a long and storied career. In my last visit with him he taught me one final lesson: that a lifetime of singing the Christian faith gives us the language—in text and in tune—that equips us to face our last days with grace and in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection. The church's song—the song that he dedicated his life to sharing with others—was on his lips and in his heart to the end.



**Michael D. Costello** serves as cantor at Grace Lutheran Church in River Forest, IL, and is the artistic director of Chicago Choral Artists. He has many anthems, hymn concertatos, and organ settings published by several publishing houses.

## Note

1. Steven Wente, “A Focused Life,” in *Thine the Amen: Essays on Lutheran Church Music in Honor of Carl Schalk*, ed. Carlos R. Messerli (Minneapolis: Lutheran University, 2005), 272.

## Recommended Reading and Viewing

### Interviews

Carl F. Schalk, “Profiles in American Lutheran Church Music,” interview by Paul Westermeyer, Nov. 4, 2015, <https://youtu.be/82mAvZulqL0>

Carl F. Schalk, “A Conversation with Carl Schalk,” interview by Thomas Bandar, September 28, 2020, <https://youtu.be/IYj3barKBRs>

### Biography

Nancy M. Raabe, *Carl F. Schalk: A Life in Song* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2013)

### Selected Articles by Schalk in *CrossAccent*

“Some Thoughts on the Writing of Hymn Tunes,” *CrossAccent* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 6–10

“The Church and the Composer,” *CrossAccent* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 3–8

“Voices of the Early Reformers: Their Message for Today,” *CrossAccent* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 3–10

“Bach Cantatas at Grace Lutheran Church, River Forest, Illinois,” *CrossAccent* 16, no. 3 (2008): 19–20

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY AUTHOR/FAMILY.



# Pruning at the Threshold

by Mark P. Bangert

**R**eaching the end of a century brings with it a set of rubrics for reflection. Among these might be the inclination to review major developments in modes of culture, to test the political waters to see if they are fed by any clear springs of truth, to enjoy the time with merriment, to permit oneself to ask “what next?” But surely also, if for no other reason than to maintain some sanity, to go ahead and see in such times the sign of the end of all things.

A student pointed out recently that the majority of best-selling books currently deal with destruction and death. If nothing else, James Cameron’s epic movie *Titanic* (reaching its own end of popularity as this is being written) is a salient symbol of end-times. On April 5, 1998, the top-selling hardback book was *Talking to Heaven*, a book written by a “world famous medium” who helps us understand the importance of communicating with the world on the other side.

## Looking Back 100 Years

“*Fin de siècle* is the answer,” my mentor of 19th-century music history said as we struggled to explain what was happening in central Europe during those last years of the 19th century.

The French term literally means the end of the century, especially the end of the 19th, but with

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**Editor’s note:** This essay originated as a keynote address to the Valparaiso Church Music Study Group in April 1998 and was first printed in *CrossAccent* 7, issue A (January 1999): 4–11. It is presented here with minor revisions and updated hymnal references.

connotations of decay. Our discussion evolved from a reckoning of details, many of them now resting firmly in the cobwebs of my brain, including the social and musical significances of the Parisian *soirée*—that gathering of socialites come to hear the latest charismatic artists—and the salon where the privileged could gather to talk leisurely about those things that are happening politically and musically, and not without the marks of leisure, such as wine and cigars.

Across Europe there was an uneasy peace, and people everywhere during moments of sobriety (memories of Napoleon still clamoring for recognition) knew in their hearts the erstwhile calm was not going to last. In fact, the dramatic players for the first world war were already being booked. Realities such as that needed their antidotes.

On the musical stage there were nearly two centuries of the Classic Romantic structure (ca. 1730–1911), the symphonic form having been nearly wrung dry of its potentials; the redefinition of *Kapellmeister* as a sign of the change of locus for musical energy; the mining of national musical wealth exemplified in Frédéric Chopin and Anton Dvořák among many others; the elevation of the individual performer or composer as the new dispenser of visions, a not unsurprising manifestation of the credo proposed by such early Romantics as Jean Paul and W. H. Wackenroder;<sup>1</sup> and the recognition that the shared currency of tonality and harmonic vocabulary left little for the innovators. It has been said that Richard Strauss approached the brink that pitched into the abyss of atonality, stopped, looked (maybe listened), and turned back. There were those, of course, who decided to leap.

If you were active in church (whatever that means) during the last *fin de siècle* a hundred years ago, the musical dynamics of the century were felt also within organized Christianity. Apart from the notable efforts to re-establish contact with mentors from the past, such as the generating goals of the Schola Cantorum in Paris, the renewed reverence for J. S. Bach at St. Thomas in Leipzig, or the attention-getting attempts to call back the church to

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***As believers of some maturity, we know that to take the blueprint of the 1890s and to place it over the 1990s engages in an exercise that gives way too much prominence to some transcendental force at work in every century.***

its theology and music (Klaus Harms and his new ninety-five theses, or the call back to the rhythmic chorale repertoire by Friedrich Layritz, and so on), most of the church music of the time centered in:

- excerpts from the great concert-hall tradition (George Frederic Handel, Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart);
- what my mentor called “second level” composers;
- products of editions of the Caecilian movement; or
- bland imitations of the simple, edifying music of Carl Heinrich Graun.

What to make of where we have been, and of what we might expect of that time to come—these are the questions that fuel the more serious projects of popular culture.

### Here and Now

We ask the questions a bit differently, for this is written for people who know that beyond 2000 there is still the One who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. As believers of some maturity, we know that to take the blueprint of the 1890s and to place it over the 1990s engages in an exercise that gives way too much prominence to some transcendental force at work in every century. That same maturity places on us the rather awesome responsibility that as the “washed body of the faithful” we get to steer this old world through whatever measures of time are left. Again, that same maturity asks of us to look down from the “space” of time, to look down upon this world of centuries past, there to see that every “new thing” is new precisely because it is measured against what was old. We are not the first to “have it all together,” just as we are not the first

***At the crossing—at the threshold—we shed what is old ... in order to traverse the years ahead, as lightly as possible but prepared for our difficult but blessed vocations.***

to be unfazed by what has come before. Mature leaders of the church's music not only know these things but they take it as a challenge to jettison what's not important, to treasure what is, and to set their brows firmly into what according to their best information is to come. Such tasks are paramount at this time, at the end of several ages—yes, also at this end of a millennium.

To that end, the following five observations invite us to what, I believe, is some century-end stock-taking, so that at the crossing—at the threshold—we shed what is old (recognizably formative and often dear) in order to traverse the years ahead, as lightly as possible but prepared for our difficult but blessed vocations.

### **Tools and Toys**

Apart from pitiful salaries, much of the church music *animus* in these waning years of the second millennium is taken up with wealth, technology, and particular fetishes. For purposes of this essay, I would like to comment on four things I have experienced or observed recently.

1. As an inducement to place an order for subscription, Theodore Presser has sent me a free copy of a periodical new to American readers. It bears the title *Choir & Organ*.<sup>2</sup> My interest in it should presumably stem from my profession as church musician, but I am led to think more seriously about that and its title. Inside, in a section called "Arena," one finds this notice:

"The Arts Council has awarded 4.3 million pounds of lottery money to a 93-million-pound project for an international performing arts centre at Bristol Harbour-side. A 2,300-seat concert hall and 450-seat dance theatre are amongst the facilities. ... The planners' intention is to transplant the organ from the Colston Hall in Bristol, but no further details have emerged as yet."

2. One of our candidates for a position in New Testament studies at the Lutheran School of Theology asked in the midst of a day of interviews whether I might have some time to chat about possible jobs for a spouse. Our conversation led to an observation from the spouse that Chicago is dreadfully pauperous when it comes to mechanical action organs, especially those with variable wind pressure. While the spouse was seeking a position in church music, this reputation of Chicago seemed to rise up as an insurmountable deterrent.
3. While planning the commencement exercises for the graduating class, a senior student responsible with several others to choose or suggest hymns came up with rather thoughtful nominations, showing considerable understanding of the many factors involved with such a task. Among those chosen were "We Are Marching in the Light of God" (*ELW* 855) and "I, the Lord of Sea and Sky" (*ELW* 574). Further conversation with her colleagues in this task led to an observation of mine regarding the very rich references to the forebears in the Te Deum. Question from all three: "What's that?"
4. In the same issue of *Choir & Organ*, an author writes in a column called "Performance Practice Matters":
  - "In Ex 2 there is no trill on the A sharp, but there should be one in parallel with bar 2.
  - Likewise, in bars 7 and 14, trills are required on both Ds. In this context trills would start on the upper note, and probably with the upper note held a little before the repercussions."

Lest I be misunderstood, my preparation of instrumental parts for the Bach cantata series at my parish includes suggestions for ornamentation, and my notes to these performances derive from careful study of musical rhetoric, key relationships, and so on. My fondness of mechanical action organs is strong, even though it is not my instrument, and

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***Fin de siècle a hundred years ago brought us eventually through interest in music of the past to the discipline of musicology and thence to performance practice. A wide spectrum of factors has led us to the production of new hymns and new tunes.***

I am fascinated by all the electronic gadgetry now available at the console of these musical SUVs. That my students didn't know the Te Deum is as much my fault as theirs, and organ transplants I recognize as a sign of public interest in that greatest of instruments (with exception of the oboe).

About a third of the way through the 20th century, Albert Schweitzer led the way to the famous "Praetorius Organ," a march that has brought us to a sizable bevy of worthy builders of organs who in one way or another are faithful to the instrument's history. In broad strokes, the study of Heinrich Schütz brought us Hugo Distler. *Fin de siècle* a hundred years ago brought us eventually through interest in music of the past to the discipline of musicology and thence to performance practice. A wide spectrum of factors has led us to the production of new hymns and new tunes, the likes of which can be found, I believe, only in the 16th century when, it is estimated, over 100,000 new hymns were written.

For me, the question amid this wealth and technology is, what do we leave at the threshold?

Does it make any difference to the new Saturday morning school for music essentials, a blessed project of a new Chicago parish just formed from eight dying congregations, whether or not the upper note is held a little before the repercussions? If all the new hymns make us forget about the Te Deum, or lead us to a point where there is no ritual connection with the past, have we in fact cut off our root system?

At a recent conference on evangelism, Walter Brueggemann pleaded for a church in the next century that has density and thickness, not unlike God's glory. He went on to say that the church, to carry out its evangelistic mission, needs "memory

COMPOSER AND ORGANIST GUNNAR IDENSTAM AT THE NEW YEARS CONCERT IN THE STOCKHOLM STATE HOUSE. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.



***If all the new hymns make us forget about the Te Deum, or lead us to a point where there is no ritual connection with the past, have we in fact cut off our root system?***

against amnesia” and “sacrament against a world of technique,” for a world of technique falls quickly into fear.<sup>3</sup> Behind technique is the fear that my musical SUV will soon be out of date, that my current understanding of “repercussions” may soon be displaced by new scholarship. Brueggemann’s prophetic foresight for the next century leads him to prescribe three centers of churchly activity: liturgy, potlucks, and diaconal ministry. What will church musicians leave at the threshold to rally behind this agenda?

### **Maestro Power**

The wizardry of Franz Liszt (when he wasn’t busy being a priest) and Chopin, the magnetism of Richard Wagner, the press that supported these unusually gifted people, and versions of early 19th-century Romanticism urging the faithful to look for pertinent revelation from the high priests of music all helped to redefine the role of the performer in the 20th century. Bestowing cathedras to the carnivalesque superstars only opened up the possibility for them to indulge in eccentric behavior. According to some reviews this tendency has seen its apogee in our own century. After the

First World War, conductors of major orchestras in this country began consciously to appropriate the image of the maestro, the “dazzling virtuoso,” according to one Sunday *New York Times* essay.<sup>4</sup> The recording industry nurtured these inclinations and the popular music enterprises turned it all into a booming business. Organists, especially those on the recital circuit, provided their own versions of maestro power. There was hardly anyone more popular at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis than Alexandre Guilmant who gave thirty-six recitals in about as many days.

On Ash Wednesday, church musicians in their more reflective moments are given opportunity to ruminate on the attraction maestro power had for them as they saw it operative in idols and teachers. They might even be tempted to confess their own misuse of a modern-day version of high-priestly influence. It doesn’t take a genius to know the power that resides in talent, in the position of leader at the keyboard, in conducting. Especially in conducting of choirs, a singer entrusts a voice with the leader—something quite personal, and behind that investment lies vulnerability and surrender of power. Such a sacred trust can turn into a surrender of accountability.

On the one hand, self-exaltation can serve as the means to reach goals related to our own advancement, a delusion brought on by predominant contemporary models. Add anger as the *modus operandi* and the stage is set for tragedy. Of course we can claim Bach as our mentor, pointing to his frequent outbursts as a productive way to expand the cantata orchestra, as it were. But that was then, and this is now. The cantor, as I have pointed out elsewhere, is primarily the one who gets others to sing.<sup>5</sup>

***Leave behind the seductions of music leadership and virtuosity for the sake of the poor of spirit, the poor of mind, the poor of voice, and the poor of the economy.***



ISTOCK/NINASHANNON

On the other hand, maestro power tempts us to believe that we are somehow excused from expectations of the Christian moral life, or that we—along with the special gifts of wiggling our fingers at the right moment—are bestowed with a kind of moral Gnosticism meant to set us apart.

These homiletical rantings are meant to stop us short at the threshold in order to make our entry more effective. The Saxon Church Order from the year 1580 specified that during the School Visitations in Saxony teachers and cantors were to offer proof that alongside their industry and dedication as teachers there should be evidence of faith and creedal commitment, coupled to a life of service and morality. Commenting, Christoph Wetzel writes that the practitioner of the church musical office fulfills that calling by combining music making and diaconal ministries.<sup>6</sup>

At this end of the 1900s Brueggemann, Saxon church orders, and Wetzel join hands, urging us to leave behind the seductions of music leadership and virtuosity for the sake of the poor of spirit, the poor of mind, the poor of voice, and the poor of the economy. Just how cantors can do that is the challenge ready to meet us on the other side.

## **Ecumenical Consensus about Church Music**

Surely one of the major religious stories of the century, if not *the* major story, is the Second Vatican Council. While its purposes and goals were meant to serve Roman Catholics across the world, the ecumenical impact of the Council continues to influence all Christians in their worship, their understandings of missiology, and particularly in the ways they relate to one another. Of course, the Council was not the only mark of interaction among Christians of the 20th century. Faith and Order studies from the World Council of Churches led to *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (Geneva, 1982); worldwide gatherings gave us the so-called Lima Liturgy; and most recently the Lutheran-Episcopal engagement, together with the Lutheran-Reformed

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courtships, look like some marriages are set for the very near future.

There is a modicum of controlled giddiness that arises from such prospects. Here we are, at this juncture, prepared and able to reverse centuries of division, a possibility that when you think about it seems achievable only because the Holy Spirit is paying attention to the changing mission of the church in this world. Already we come knocking on one another's doors planning liturgies together, amazed at our unisons and eager to get on with now-shared tasks and opportunities.

There is no way to reverse this reversal. Nor would many of us want to, I suspect, while we at the same time take the critical cautions of others seriously. Nor is the purpose of these lines to argue for reckless marriages of these kinds, though my own hunches lead me to believe that by the time someone takes on the task of looking ahead to the 22nd century, all Lutherans will be one, if not a faithful, confessing voice in the one church.

But here's the point. We ought not to be naïve about this growing family that we know as the organizational church. When it comes to church music, we share much: repertoires, common pre-Reformation history, common understandings about the shape of the liturgy, common mentors and common institutions of learning, and a common reconsideration of systems of church music long thought off-limits. Joyfully we carry these new leases on the cantorial life up to and through the threshold of the next century. Precisely because we carry them through the threshold together, however, we can expect that significant fundamental assumptions about the church musical task will continue to annoy us, perhaps should annoy us.

***Here we are, at this juncture, prepared and able to reverse centuries of division, a possibility that when you think about it seems achievable only because the Holy Spirit is paying attention to the changing mission of the church in this world.***

My good friend and colleague at Catholic Theological Union, Ed Foley, for instance, makes a strong case for the open musical form as the premiere model for liturgical music. Partly his argument has to do with the very eschatological nature of the church. Closed models, such as bar form (one of the chief structural models for early Lutheran hymnody), inhibit the assembly's openness to what is yet unknown. Also for theological reasons, Oskar Söhngen has thrown into question the suppositions of the *sonata allegro* form.<sup>7</sup> He points out that as it was projected by Beethoven and successors, the form claims as its purpose the unfolding of the internal human drama caused by the clash of ethical concerns and the tragedies of life. Söhngen notes that for Igor Stravinsky the fugue in contrast frees one from the exigencies of this life. Karl Barth held out for Mozart over against Bach. If the function of church music is in fact prayer or at most praise, as John Calvin held, does music from Taizé, as a steady diet, lead us down roads that put the linkage of proclamation and tone on our backside? After one has experienced the flurry of "church music" in a parish liturgy that includes several pieces by the handbell choir, the cherub group, and a choir anthem with prepared tape, Huldrych Zwingli's observations about silence and speech alone as the mode of worship strikes one with compelling veracity. Finally, not willing to dismiss the enthusiasts as quickly as our mentor Martin Luther, we will then have to deal with musical effusion as the measure of authentic worship and of the presence of the Spirit.

The terrain on the other side of the door is shared and common. We take off on our journeys with different roadmaps. Let us not be naïve about that nor reticent about examining the old assumptions, testing them in new neighborhoods, and about taking some side trips that may offer new perspectives.

## Technology and Perfectionism

Jacques Attali in his book *Noise* traces the great movements of music history through the eyes of a Marxist.<sup>8</sup> In the beginning were the music makers, then the patrons who through wealth and power controlled music's evolution, and then the technocrats who through mass production control artists and consumers, and then finally a return (he senses) to the music makers for which, I suppose, we can be particularly grateful.

What the recording industry has offered in this century is the possibility to achieve perfection, or at least to make its pursuit both achievable and seductive. Remastering of mono to stereo, linkage of two separate "takes" in order to excise an unwanted sneeze from the bassoon player, creation of pop *musique concrete* by the recording of different tracks at different times and different locations all assist us to produce musical events that are super-controlled.

The effects of the entire industry on music making are only slowly being recognized. On the one hand, doctored recordings have driven performers to ever higher levels of skill, in turn spawning a whole new series of recordings that ratchet the presentation up several notches by increasing tempos. Faster is better. Then, there is the search for recordings of older interpretations, now remastered, so that we hear what Toscanini's orchestra or Rachmaninov really sounded like. In the process we have come to learn that the reputation sometimes outdistanced the reality. That makes us feel good, just like when we hear a respected artist live, together with live imperfections. For the time being, think about that word "imperfection" as it is applied to musical presentation.

But let's take this discussion to another place. For most of us church musicians, choral sensibilities get linked to the perfect blend, to a sound that section by section is not blurred by vibrato or vibratos. We argue, rightly, that vibrato (apart from its Baroque definitions) is a technique from the bel canto tradition and not fit for the music that we mostly perform. The great boy choirs from King's, St. Thomas, the Dresden Kreuzkirche, and Vienna

lift up a sound we idolize. Learning how to induce others to sing in that way is an opportunity all of us might prize. At the core of this ideal sound and its use for the massive repertoires of church music, one can find unrelenting discipline, which transplanted north Europeans took on as vocation following the lead of the Christiansen artistic family, F. Melius himself having learned much of this discipline in Leipzig. Clear, unified sound and disciplined phrasing provide for us an experience that seems just this side of being perfect.

Come Christmas, our yearnings for these things seem to increase. Unbejeweled Nordic teens or angelic visages of young boys complement desires for relief from oppressing darkness with the hope that a new start (a sort of flat way to read the meaning of the Incarnation) might hold some promise for a more perfect world with peace everywhere. In their book on ritual and pastoral care, Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley—following the lead of John Dominic Crossan—propose that ritual, especially at times of passage but surely at any time, needs to include both myth and parable.<sup>9</sup> By myth, they mean the holding up of a vision that makes possible the mediation of life’s contradictions. By parable, they mean the rehearsal of persisting contradictions, things the way they really are. Both are necessary for Christian experience, especially in ritual. Can we say that both are necessary for Christian music?

Our temptation, however, with the abilities available to us, would have us believe that our task is about one side of the equation—the offer of perfection, the proposal that heaven’s music is already available here. The dreadful corollary of this unspoken offer is that anything shy of such perfection is unwanted, a message that many parishioners may be hearing quite clearly.

Attending to the parabolic in church music may require some realism and the embracing of what Charles Keil has called “participatory discrepancies.” Most ethnic music, he has observed, thrives on the notion that there are no two “performances” that are alike and that discrepancies of presentation are by definition the outcome of changes in time,

place, and circumstances. In fact, “music, to be personally involving and socially valuable, must be ‘out of time’ and ‘out of tune’ only in relation to music department standardization and the civilized worldview, of course.”<sup>10</sup>

Keil’s proposal has some detractors. Nevertheless, its spirit is parabolic, its tacit permission for including all voices—with vibrato and without—in the church’s “choir” a worthy agenda to be carried into the next century. With Michael Praetorius we can hear behind the loveliness of contemporary choral technique an echo of *chori coelorum*, but let us not be seduced by technological promise or by the temptation to believe that the parabolic no longer exists. In fact, next tasks of church music invite us to find new ways to give voice to the parabolic and to summon it into creative tension with the mythic.

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LEA/KATHRYN BREWER

### *Harmonia fascinans*

One way to understand 20th-century music derives from the century's continued interest in harmony. The legacies of Wagner, Max Reger, Gustav Mahler, and Strauss provided the early inhabitants of the 1900s a system of harmony that made possible all the dramatic implications of ambiguity. The uncertainty of just where you were tonally and structurally seemed to sign the uncertainties of the *fin de siècle*, just like serialism provided fresh paths for organization, mirroring the yearning for order amid the chaos of political megalomania. One by one, the giants of the first decades chose the way of order, Aaron Copland and Stravinsky with major conversions to serialism, others less dramatic.

Everywhere, it seemed, people were asking “what’s next?” For Paul Hindemith, and then for the church music revivalists between the two world wars and beyond, the “next” took many shapes, but like many colleagues both in non-church and church music the “next” was clearly anchored in the past. Armed with some new sounds Distler poured them into structures strongly reminiscent of Schütz. Stravinsky always seemed to try to distill a form from the past but with the blend of new sonorities.

Theorists defended these new sonorities by calling attention to the overtone series. That in turn birthed new interest in the age-old problems of the division of the octave and in alternate solutions to those problems posed by new information coming from ethnomusicologists. Bi-tonality, shifting polyphony, and the ability to transcend intervallic imprisonment (made possible by electronic sound generators) all posed new ways to receive and comprehend received notions of polyphony. Reactionary proposals made their mark through antistructure (aleatoric modes of delivery) and through retreat to silence. John Cage’s march away from complexity provided some fertile ground for latter-day minimalism, an attempt to let us hear once again the basic elements of sound in slow motion set within perceptible structures.

***Yet the century has left behind a history of fascination with sound, with the many ways sounds can be combined, and with systems that organize those sounds.***

There are, of course, a variety of ways to interpret the movements of music in the past one hundred years, and the above survey by no means is thorough. Yet the century has left behind a history of fascination with sound, with the many ways sounds can be combined, and with systems that organize those sounds. On the one hand, the super-organizational possibilities inherent to serialism gave 20th-century music fresh ways of structuring not only the succession of notes but other musical elements as well. Serialism afforded nearly unprecedented control and took the relationship of music and mathematics into places where only the mind felt at home. On the other hand, the prevailing search for harmonic alternatives underlines what Max Weber claimed in 1911 to be Western music’s most salient feature, that is, its tendency to transform musical product into a calculable affair.<sup>11</sup> His reading of the history of music theory provided him with what he believed to be a clear foundation for such claims. Hence it is that we should see the centrality of harmony in our quest for understanding music as a sign of the rational control mechanisms at work. Weber recognized the irrational affective energy as a foil to all this but saw it too as a potential object for rational control, a prophecy later fulfilled in serial control of all the elements of music.

Meanwhile, as the 20th century unfolded, popular music—while responding selectively to these musical meanderings—mostly continued to offer singable tunes. Church choir repertoires consisted of old favorites, or of new old favorites, or of tame ventures into the aleatoric or quartal harmony. This was what the people wanted, their desires a distinct response to the innovations being proposed. Orchestral programmers and composers are now hearing too and have begun to adopt the creed “anything goes,” especially a well-crafted whistleable tune.

To be left at the threshold, then, is a good chunk of our fascination with harmony and of our predilections to the rational. Ethnic church musics should teach us, if nothing else, that music in the church is primarily people's music, that it has been generated because pious (in a good sense) hearts have heard the word and embraced it, that it lives not from harmony but from rhythm (which is a matter of the heart), and that of such is the great heritage of music come our own way.

First steps out of the doorway should be towards tutelage in *tactus*. If the chorale is a measure for what church music might be, then let us look again at its rootage in *tactus*. The loss of the 16th-century chorale repertoire, which is happening right in front of our eyes, derives more from the uninteresting ways we are asked to sing these hymns than from any concerns with archaic metaphors or with outdated templates for meditation. What holds true for the chorale also holds true for metric psalmody and many of the tunes from the Cantional tradition. Victorian cathedral hymnody—or better, the Victorian style of hymnody—needs to be driven from the playing field for a bit, so that the ethnic energy of our own middle European traditions can have a space to play.

## Fin

These things may or may not be “what’s next.” We are called, however, to assess the moment and to plot for the future. Otherwise, we can do no better than to be musical couch potatoes, entertained by our own attempts to repeat safely what we already know. And when that is done, there will be nothing to hand on.

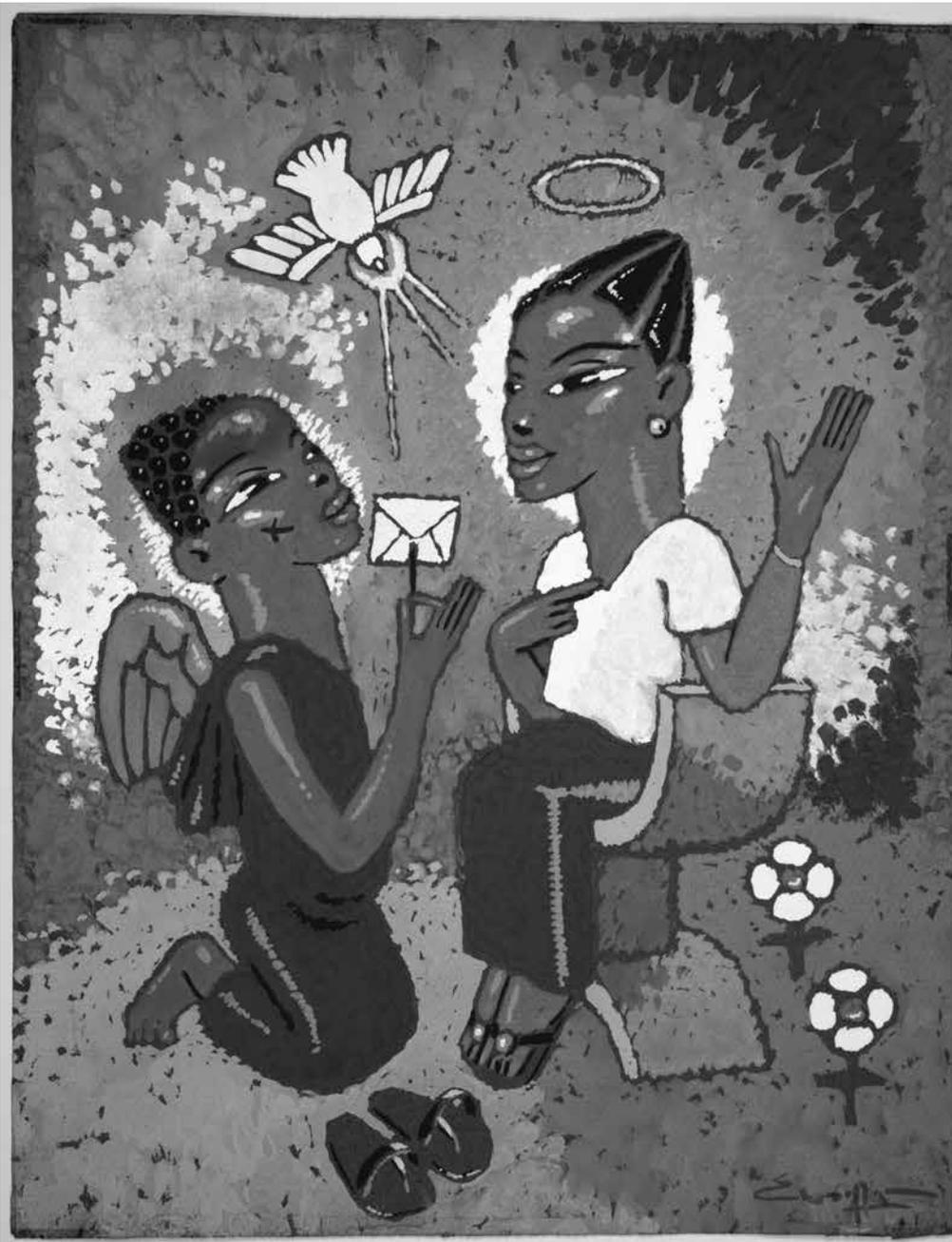


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Award (2009) from the Institute of Liturgical Studies and also received ALCM's Faithful Servant Award (2017).

## Notes

1. “When the music was over and he [Joseph Berglinger] left the church, he thought himself made purer and more noble.” Jean Paul, “The Remarkable Life of Joseph Berglinger,” in *Source Readings in Music History*, vol. 5, *The Romantic Era*, ed. Oliver Strunk (New York: Norton, 1965), 13.
2. *Choir & Organ* 6, no. 1 (January–February 1998).
3. Walter Brueggemann (lecture, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, IL, February 9, 1998).
4. Joseph Horowitz, “New York Concert Life,” *The New York Times*, March 29, 1998.
5. Writing of the medieval distinction between *musicus* and *cantor*, the two streams of influence that have flowed from these distinctions, and their significance for today’s church musicians: “cantor waters attract individuals who love music and people—they are the true amateurs; cantor waters caress the pastoral gifts, they flourish and bubble with joy when musical wizards get people excited over worship and devotion. Cantor waters were home for Luther and Distler, and for a host of unnamed small parish church musicians who faithfully seduced their people into praise.” Mark Bangert, “Ministers of the Merger” (keynote address, constituting convention of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians, Northfield, MN, August 14, 1986).
6. Christoph Wetzel, “Die Träger des liturgischen Amtes,” *Leiturgia* 4 (1961), 299, trans. mine.
7. Oskar Söhngen, “Theologische Grundlagen der Kirchenmusik,” *Leiturgia* 4 (1961), 118, trans. mine.
8. Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).
9. Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998; reissued, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019).
10. Charles Keil, “The Theory of Participatory Discrepancies: A Progress Report,” *Ethnomusicology* 39, no. 1 (Winter 1995), 4.
11. Max Weber, *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music*, trans. and ed. Don Martindale, Johannes Riedel, and Gertrude Neuwirth (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958), xxviii.



*Annunciation,  
by Paul Woelfel,  
Nigeria.*

## Whose Context Is It Anyway?

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**Editor's note:** First given as an address at the 2003 Institute of Liturgical Studies at Valparaiso University, this article was subsequently published in *CrossAccent* 12, no. 2 (2004): 4-10. It appears here with slight emendations and updated hymnal and bibliographic references.

*by Lorraine S. Brugh*

**M**usic shapes the worshipping assembly week by week. The liturgy we sing becomes both praise and proclamation in the mouths of the gathered congregation. So how are we to know what it is we should sing? Our worship books are now filled with music from around the globe, from perspectives not even known to most of us just a generation ago. Is that music part of our local expression, and if not, how are we to make it so? This address will outline a process—"responsive contextualization"—that invites a local assembly to enter into the process of engagement with worship materials from a variety of cultures and contexts.

I think a soft contact lens, the kind that is permeable, is a perfect image for describing how our worshipping communities could work. A contact lens in fact has a very defined surface, even though it may have some color or be completely clear. One of its primary properties is that it is permeable. A lens allows for the transfer of materials from its inside to its outside and from outside to in. The lens is flexible; it can be bent in many different directions. But ultimately it holds the shape of the eyeball to which it adheres. Taken a step further, it helps the eye to see outside of itself with clearer and more distinct vision than it could on its own. It helps define and, at the same time, expand the inherent limits of the eye.

Each of our worshipping communities also has a defined surface. It has particular boundaries: a church building, perhaps; a group of members and others loosely affiliated; a neighborhood; a particular location. All these things give that community its character and its definition.

Every gathering for communal worship is bound by the space, the time, and the people who gather there. The permeable nature of its borders acknowledges that it receives influences and also gives its own particular influences to others. Imagine that contact lens now with arrows pointing both into and away from it. Such sharing of influence happens through connection with larger expressions of the church: churchwide, ecumenical, and others. It can also happen through local sharing as specific communities come into relationship with one another.

Let us first consider the arrows pointing outward. Here, we are looking at a local setting influencing others outside itself. Let us see how that works in our own settings. If we had worshipped together recently, I could sing the greeting from that liturgy, and you would likely be able to reply with the correct response. What would have happened? I would have relied on the community that had already begun to form from our worship together and invited you to sing something we already had in our common memory. In other words, I would have known that we already have

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***Music's importance to the Christian assembly centers on its ability to convey text. ...***

***Music was so important to Luther because it was a means through which the gospel could be carried to others.***

our context together. Even as loosely as we are a worshipping body together, I could rely on those borders we had already experienced and recall us into them at a moment's notice.

I am going to proceed with caution. There are perils involved in participating in these arrows. Most of us can attest to the dread that we have experienced when a parishioner visited that really quaint church over vacation and brought back the bulletin as an example for our congregation's use. The judgments that we bring to bear at that moment are instructive. We can see how things in another context do not just automatically equate and transfer to our own setting, and so we feel justified when that summer bulletin just happens to fall off our desks into the wastebasket a few days later.

Lest we be a bit smug at this, we need to be wary of our own susceptibility here. One reason many people come to the Institute of Liturgical Studies each year is to consider what might be taken from there and used in the home setting. That is how the process works. Many of the things we say and sing at Institute work because of where we are; we, the hearty worship leaders who have survived another Lenten season; we, who come to worship in the marvelous space of the Chapel with the resources of a university. These things also do not necessarily transfer back to our home bases. I hear stories each year of things that people took from here, tried at home, and could not figure out why it did not work there. My response these days is that it takes a lot of our attention to really understand our own contexts.

I will attempt here to address this fluid process that healthy worshipping communities constantly undergo. This process relies on the basis of a common core that undergirds this whole endeavor. I call this responsive contextualization, a process of seeking meaning in the local community. It

*The interplay of a spoken text, a sung text, and a wordless piece of instrumental music creates multiple possibilities for word and music.*

is a process of observing, naming, and exploring deep meaning in each local context. Later I will lay out a five-step process that a local assembly can take up that will lead to informed and expressive choices in worship planning. I will use music as the prime candidate for this process. There are other candidates: visual art, dramatic presentation, and liturgical prayer come immediately to mind. Music is what I know best; it is also the most pervasive art form in Christian worship and one that—by its very nature—draws the whole community into participation.

Music’s importance to the Christian assembly centers on its ability to convey text. We Lutherans know the primary place that Luther gave to music’s

prominence in worship. Music was so important to Luther because it was a means through which the gospel could be carried to others. It was more uniquely suited to this task than any of the other arts. Luther wrote, “God is thereby praised and honored and we are made better and stronger in faith when his holy Word is impressed on our hearts by sweet music.”<sup>1</sup> Luther believed that singing the gospel not only edified the singer but also the hearer. The gospel is continued through this never-ending chain of proclamation and reception.

Music carries this continuous chain in oral form. In the *Worship and Culture Studies* produced by the Lutheran World Federation, Mark Bangert writes about the unique way in which music bears this role of proclamation in the Christian assembly. Bangert sees this combination as an essential link

*The Last Supper,  
by Sadao  
Watanabe,  
Japan.*



in the oral nature of the gospel: “this is at the heart of being Lutheran: that is, Word is taken to be an oral thing, an enfolded event, seeking a voice (*vox*), longing for fulfillment in song, hymn, or dance.”<sup>2</sup> Bangert’s own work examines various cultural musics and considers the various ways that cultures convey the same gospel in different musical forms.

As Gordon Lathrop has taught many of us in his book *Holy Things*,<sup>3</sup> Christian worship is built upon the pattern of juxtaposition, placing two different things next to each other. Music in the church is constantly juxtaposing text and tune, ritual and music, sound and silence. Music is the only art able to carry text within its form. It is this pattern of doing things in two ways that builds meaning in the Christian assembly. Word and music can combine in multiple ways in this juxtaposition pattern. The interplay of a spoken text, a sung text, and a wordless piece of instrumental music creates multiple possibilities for word and music. Because of this close relationship between word and music, music takes primary place among the arts in worship. Of all the arts, music is in the best position to convey the gospel.

Music provides connection in a community through its combination of word and organized sound. This combination serves to create meaning for those who join the song. As a community sings, so it may come to believe and live. Music connects individual feeling to communal expression and gives voice to unexpressed emotions.

The cultural anthropologist Victor Turner noted this effect of group meaning-making

through its communal gatherings. “*Communitas*” is what he calls that spontaneous, immediate form of relatedness that occurs when a group of people enters into a liminal experience. This might be as simple as an undefined period for a Taizé chant, a time of confession, or open prayer. It is an experience in which all people present have equal access and participatory ability. Turner notes the power that *communitas* engenders in a cultural context: “if the cultural form of *communitas*—as found in liminality—can correspond with an actual experience of *communitas*, the symbols there presented may be experienced more deeply than in any other context.”<sup>4</sup> Christian liturgy opens itself to *communitas* as it enacts the great stories of salvation history, as it gathers the assembly around the table for the meal, as it affirms the newly baptized into the whole community. Singing its way into the ritual action, the community affirms in a common voice the response to God’s actions to humankind.

When we take this notion of *communitas* and apply it to our Christian and Lutheran assemblies, we find music at the heart of the development of *communitas*. The ethnomusicologist Philip Bohlman notes the connection between a church’s worship book and the development of *communitas*. As many church bodies are currently in the process of developing new resources for our churchwide expressions, I thought Bohlman’s findings to be of particular interest.

In his study of German-American hymnals of the nineteenth century, Bohlman notes the connection that music makes with the religious lives of both Jewish and Christian German-Americans. The hymnals of these communities held an important place in the lives of the immigrants who used them. Hymnals were more than books for these German-Americans. They were the tangible connection of a community to its ritual and music. Bohlman writes, “the music that resulted from performing out of the hymnal was, in fact, a representation of the community, a representation animated through performance and animating because it brought the community into existence as they sang.”<sup>5</sup>

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***Christian liturgy opens itself to communitas as it enacts the great stories of salvation history, as it gathers the assembly around the table for the meal, as it affirms the newly baptized into the whole community.***

***The hymnal's music, moreover, perpetuated the community, giving it a chance to resituate the past in the present.***

Bohlman asserts that the hymnals functioned to establish the relationship of these specific communities to God and each other: “the hymnal shaped the sacred boundaries of ethnicity and ascribed identity.”<sup>6</sup> The performance of the music created the community in which these German-Americans could develop and solidify their identity as Christians, as Germans, and as Americans. Music was the medium for the creation of that communal identity. Music grounded the community in expression, giving it form and space in worship.

Thus music was the basis for the development of *communitas* among immigrant German-Americans. Bohlman notes that music allows the bringing together of the past into the present. This fusion creates a new present, bringing people together with a new sense of forged community. Bohlman builds on Turner's notion of *communitas* in describing the effect of the hymnals on these communities: “the hymnal's music, moreover, perpetuated the community, giving it a chance to resituate the past in the present, that is, to perform its history through a new sense of *communitas* immanent in the music of a religious body.”<sup>7</sup>

Bohlman points out the way music can engage multiple senses of time. As a community encounters its own past in a hymnal, it interprets that past through its own present context. This is the power the hymnal enables in the present community. If that is the case within a community with a long-standing tradition, might it also be a way one community can participate with another community? As a culture performs another's music, might it not in the same way encounter another community's history and, in performing it, reinterpret it?

I think this is key to understanding the way cultures influence one another. The German-Americans who sang the songs of their ancestors did not become their ancestors; rather, they were connected to them and enriched through their memory. So also, in performing another's music, one remains one's own community but enriched and enlarged through connection to another community.

Crossing cultural borders creates new connections with others. It neither eliminates nor duplicates any previous community. It is a process of enlarging one's local context.

When worship materials from diverse cultures are juxtaposed in a worship setting, they interrelate in a new and creative way. A prayer from Korea spoken before a hymn from South America will give both a new context. The contrast between them also creates the potential to interrelate in previously unknown ways. Now in this new context they are placed in a new and dynamic interrelationship. From this place, new meanings can begin to develop as close proximity yields heightened contrast.

All of us engaged in the inception of new worship resources can learn from Bohlman's findings. When we bring a hymn from a previously published hymnal into a new hymnal, it is no longer the hymn it was in the old hymnal. People and assemblies newly recreate the hymns as they sing from it. “Blessed Assurance” (*ELW* 638) comes to mind as such a hymn, one that holds deep meaning for many in our current generation, yet those who sing it today come from a completely different context than the one in which the hymn originated.

As music crosses from one time to another, or from one culture to another, we see its meanings and emphases shift. As music travels from one community to another, it shares both a commonality with other communities and also a uniqueness that it acquires in each new community. Responsive contextualization is the term I give this point of contact between cultures as a community engages. Lathrop sees music as a vehicle to enable a community's expression: “the time of the meeting comes to expression as musical time, as rhythm and meter enabling the common timekeeping of this moment.”<sup>8</sup> Music is the mode in which people gather and together present their praise and thanksgiving to God. Music's ability to express multiple layers of time recalls sacred time. It also calls forth the interaction of the community, with its invitation



Christian Chavarria Ayala, “Salvadoran scene,” detail from a large cross.

to join the church’s song. “The mysterious power of song, pulling heart and mind into harmony, proposing order, making room for dissonance and for single voices within a final resolution and a pervasive community, suggesting transcendence with its sometimes unearthly sounds, must be broken.”<sup>9</sup> What Lathrop suggests needs to be “broken” is the possibility of music’s becoming disconnected from a community and focusing attention only on itself. Lathrop is here suggesting that the power of music must be attached to the meaning of the assembly, to its ritual actions. Without this connection, music becomes detached from the community and no longer expresses its deep meanings.

Music that is contextualized within the local community remains engaged and connected to the worshippers. Through this deep connection in the community, worshippers also experience their connection to the sacred and to their relationship to God. “In Christ, Christians believe they have come into the harmony of God, with all its great room for dissonance and single voices, a harmony only suggested by any of our holy songs.”<sup>10</sup>

Lathrop here uses the language of music to say that religious experience can open us to the reality of God’s diversity as larger than even our most diverse human imaginings. Lathrop characterizes the harmony of God as including a range of dissonance and consonance, expressed by single and multiple voices. God’s harmony is greater than

***Music’s ability to express multiple layers of time recalls sacred time. It also calls forth the interaction of the community, with its invitation to join the church’s song.***

ours, encompassing a wider breadth of expression than our music can ever achieve or even imagine. This should encourage us to seek the widest diversity in our musical expressions, with the broadest range of symbolic expressions in order to approach God’s image of harmony in diversity.

It is due to Fr. Anscar Chupungco that we as North American Lutherans are even having such conversations as I have been relating. Lutherans Bangert, Bohlman, and Lathrop have all built upon the ideas that began in another time and in another church. Fr. Chupungco began many of these ideas as a result of the expanded expressions of worship following Vatican II and coined many of the terms we freely use today. In his book *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis*,<sup>11</sup> he articulates and distinguishes many of the terms we freely use today in Lutheran conversations. Chupungco defined the terms “indigenization,” “contextualization,” “adaptation,” “inculturation,” and “acculturation” to describe the various ways that culture intersects with the Western liturgical rites. In so doing, he has given the Western church

*Thunderbird with Dzunuk'wa (Wild Woman),  
by Ned Matilpi of the Kwakwaka'wakw people of  
British Columbia, Canada. Displayed in Duncan, BC.*

a lens for understanding the substantial changes in liturgical and ritual practice that continue to challenge the church's worship life.

Chupungco used the word "inculturation" to describe the process of bringing together the universal rites of the Roman Catholic Church and the newly invited, culturally specific practices. He raises an important issue for maintaining the integrity of cultures as interaction develops between them: "one important principle of inculturation is that it must neither debilitate nor damage the identity of any of the parties involved. Inculturation means mutual enrichment, not destruction."<sup>12</sup>

Chupungco's formula for this is  $A + B = C$ . He means that when two cultures come into contact through the liturgy, a new entity—C—is created, but C disestablishes neither A nor B. When two cultures interact, the result is something new, neither completely part of the former culture, nor entirely of the new culture. He saw this formula useful in understanding what happens when the Western rite intersects a local culture. Neither the rite nor the culture is subsumed, but each retains its character as they are combined and juxtaposed.

Chupungco believes that contextualization is part of the process of inculturation, writing that "context is a vibrant expression of human culture. If the liturgy is to be inculturated, it must also be contextualized."<sup>13</sup>

So how are we to develop these fluid communities, enable cultural sharing, and maintain one's own boundaries? I will suggest five steps and their rationale in a process called responsive contextualization. I challenge you to consider these steps in relation to your primary worshipping community. As far as possible, think through the implications of these steps in your community. Through the listing of this process, I challenge you to begin to consider ways in which your worshipping community might benefit from addressing some or all of these steps.



KATHRYN BREWER

## 1. Naming and Identifying the Contextual Location

The first step in responsive contextualization is the recognition of the specificity and the commonality of each worshipping community. Communities are often identified by denominational affiliation and connections to larger institutions. This process begins by claiming the specific nature of each community and its unique identity, in addition to larger unifying identities. This is also the time to name and identify the common core of the worshipping assembly: what it owns for itself and with wider expressions of the church.

Essential to this process is the contribution of each community member. A look at the networks and structures within the community is important before setting out. How is each member included in the formation, planning, and leading of worship? It is important that everyone have access to the worship service in a way that allows for participation in its formation. While each person need not participate in planning, it is important that the planning structure incorporates each person's gifts and abilities that relate to the community's worship. Is anyone excluded in the planning process? Are there any voices not heard? These questions can be a helpful corrective in developing an inclusive planning process.

Naming a congregation's location is a process of claiming its identity. It is a way of saying both

***What a community values in its worship expresses its beliefs about what is valuable in all of life. Because these meanings often go unnoticed or unrecognized in the community, this process brings to awareness deep underlying communal values.***

what it holds in common with other communities and what makes this community unique among others. It also places every community in a context. Every community will have its own way of answering who it is and what creates meaning within it. No one community is normative for another; each creates its own identity from its own members.

This process of naming works against the possibility of a congregation understanding itself as normative. It creates the possibility of mutuality between communities by giving specific identity to each. It works against the idea that one community can simply be duplicated in another location. Each community has unique characteristics giving it an identity. Context adds the unique and particular distinguishing elements from other communities.

## **2. Identifying Meaning in the Local Community**

The second step in responsive contextualization is the identification of meaning as it is expressed in the community. Worship expresses the deep meanings and values of its community. This step in the process brings those meanings into the conscious awareness of the community.

What a community values in its worship expresses its beliefs about what is valuable in all of life. Because these meanings often go unnoticed or unrecognized in the community, this process brings to awareness deep underlying communal values. The process reflects to the community who it believes itself to be under God and with God. The starting place is the word and meal. Then the particularities of accent, cultural expression, musical choices, and celebration add their particular mark on the community's identity.

A community can look to its own worship practices to see where and how it visibly expresses its truth-claims. Sacramental practices, variety

of worship leadership, vitality of congregational singing—all attest to a congregation's meaning. A community can look at the ways it prays, the logistics of communion distribution, and the way visitors are welcomed to discover what it communicates as important.

Further, the texts used in worship are important for their expression of the congregation's faith in the Christian gospel. How is God addressed and imaged in the liturgy? What images of God are present? Which are absent? What is the predominant relationship between God and creation? What kinds of ethical claims are made through the liturgy? Looking at worship texts in this light can show which truth-claims this congregation emphasizes. It can also give pause to consider omissions in a holistic conception of worship. What is not being said that could be? What aspects of the divine-human relationship are not being addressed? How does the community's language reveal what it believes about itself and God?

A community may need to probe to uncover its own meanings. Over time, a community may become unconscious about the nature of its expressions. The process of articulating its meanings may help to bring them again to the congregation's awareness. This can also be a time for looking at what a congregation has valued over its history and for evaluating it for the present community.

## **3. Encountering and Expression beyond the Community**

The third step in responsive contextualization is to engage worship resources from other communities, cultures, or traditions. A song, a prayer, a litany are examples that might be considered from another place. As it does this, a community invites into itself an expression that contrasts with its own identity. In this encounter, a community crosses its own borders and enters a new expression. In this exchange, a new presentation of the potential resource occurs in the community. The community interacts with the resource creating a new context for it.

*As one community learns about another, it enters an interdependent relationship with it.*

*This is a never-ending process, as one community can always learn more about others.*

It is here that issues of contact between communities arise. How much need one community know about another community's resource before it engages it? Issues such as languages, cultural practices, and performance practices will come to bear here. As one community learns about another, it enters an interdependent relationship with it. This is a never-ending process, as one community can always learn more about others. Relationships deepen and become more complex as a community engages more and diverse resources. This growing web of relationships becomes part of the identity of the community.

Care in preparation is an important step in this process. Planners should consider what would create an air of receptivity for new worship elements. If another culture is involved, how can the congregation learn about it? How could the community be introduced to the things that are highly valued in that culture?

Introduction of a new element also needs careful planning. If the element is a piece of music, issues of teaching and learning the piece are critical. Are there a variety of presentations possible that would increase the community's contact with the music and enhance its learning? What gifts within the community might be tapped for presenting and leading this hymn? Repeated presentations over an extended period of time, employing variety, will give a broader learning experience.

#### **4. Developing Meaning in the Contextual Community**

The fourth step is meaning-making. Now the community that has encountered and engaged a resource from another community asks itself if this resource carries meaning for its own community. Is the word proclaimed for this people in this place through the use of something new? Now the resource moves beyond being introduced and is presented a variety of times in a variety of ways. This raises the question of repetition. Will the resource be able to bear the repetition of a community over time? In the repetition of the song, does the congregation

engage it? Is this resource proclaiming the word in a way that this congregation can hear and respond? Is the congregation able to express itself through it? Where are the connections between the resource and the community? Did it develop an enlivened presentation by the community?

Here the question of previous omission in the contextual community arises. Can this new resource fill a space within the local community? Does it say something new or fresh, providing a needed contrast to the community's identity? If the answer to most of the previous nine questions would be yes, then this piece might find its way into the community's repertoire.

#### **5. Evaluation and Assessment**

Finally, then, the community must decide whether this resource will have a regular place in its worship. Often these decisions happen gradually and without conscious decision-making as an assembly takes up a new thing and owns it. I believe there is value, though, in assessing the use of the resource and considering the ways it contributes to the community's worship. There are values like connections with other communities, enlarging the scope of one's own community, proclaiming the word in fresh ways that can come to play here. This is a deeper question than whether or not the community likes it and is starting to take to it.

As communities engage new resources, a fusion of horizons between these communities occurs that may enlarge the local community. They gradually embrace a more diverse and enriching whole and expand their own identity in an ever-widening series of expressions. As with contrast in a work of art, greater contrast provides the greatest potential for a community's own expansion into greater wholeness.

A community that finds meaning in new and diverse expressions will be expanding its own meaning-making. In the contrast provided by a new resource, a community begins to incorporate new values as its own. Its own base of meaning becomes more complex as it engages an enlarging variety of meanings. Completing the circle with

a decision to retain or move on to other resources keeps a community fluid and dynamic, retaining its center and identity while expanding into new expressions. This cycle is continuous, returning to the very first step of naming one's own place as a regular part of congregational life.

## Conclusion

Chupungco might remind us that the contextualization of worship is important in order for worship to remain relevant to the contemporary world. Lathrop might remind us that as we juxtapose new elements with our cherished rituals, we are creating new patterns of proclamation for our contemporary assemblies. They, however, are not with us to remind us of these things on a daily basis as we work, so it is up to us to decide what to do with all of this.

It is up to you how you will contextualize events or continuing education topics in your own community. It is up to you how flexible and permeable you will allow your community's borders to be. It is up to you to discern how your community can best hear the proclaimed word in your place. The answer is different for each one of us, and only by being attuned and attentive to our community will we come to know how to proceed.

We are not left alone, however. We have the dependability of the word. We have the structure of the *ordo*. We have the nourishment of the sacraments. We have the living presence of Christ. None of these depends on our ability to get all the contextualized answers just right. In fact, those gifts of God often shine through our shabbiest efforts to produce them. Luckily, we are not responsible for those gifts of God's grace. God can see to them and will often use our meager efforts for a purpose beyond us. So we try with faltering steps, succeeding and failing, knowing we are merely earthen vessels. We are in good company here. Paul reminds us that "we have this treasure in clay jars" (2 Corinthians 4:7; NRSV) so that the glory of God might be revealed.



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## Notes

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3. Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 34.
4. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 258.
5. Philip V. Bohlman, "Ethnic Music/Religious Identities: Toward an Historiography of German-American Sacred Music" (unpublished manuscript, 1996), 2. [Editor's note: this manuscript was eventually published as a chapter in Philip V. Bohlman and Otto Holzappel, eds., *Land without Nightingales: Music in the Making of German-America* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002).]
6. Bohlman, 2–3.
7. Bohlman, 3.
8. Lathrop, 112.
9. Lathrop, 112.
10. Lathrop, 113.
11. Anscar Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis* (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992).
12. Chupungco, 120.
13. Chupungco, 21.



# With Mind in Heart Wholeness in Hymnmaking

by Susan Palo Cherwien

*[The heart] is the center of life, the determining principle of all our activities and aspirations. As such, the heart obviously includes the affections and emotions, but it also includes much else besides: it embraces in effect everything that goes to comprise what we call a “person.”<sup>1</sup>*

**I**n the Welsh countryside, master calligrapher **Donald Jackson** and four assisting artists were engaged in a monumental devotional task. They were scribing and illuminating the entire Bible on vellum with quills and handmade inks. They selected and sanded the calfskin smooth; they shaped and sharpened the goose quills; they ground the pigments by hand; they plotted the page layout on a computer using the special font Jackson designed; finally, they applied ink to vellum. And if attention wavered and they made a mistake, they resanded the vellum and began again.<sup>2</sup>

Tibetan Buddhist monks create large mandalas out of colored sand as an act of devotion. Mandalas are circular cosmographs, visual and ritual journeys of passage to the Center. The monks prepare the design, map out the coordinates on the ground,

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***A poet’s task is not to formulate some new truth but rather to remind people of what they already know to be true, to call people to remember what they may have forgotten or mislaid, to help call it forth from the depths of being.***

grind the pigments, mix the sand, and finally, tap the colors out through thin metal funnels to create the mandala. And, if attention falters and they make a mistake, they sweep up the sand and begin again.

In the crafting of hymn texts, the shaping of melody, the selection of hymns, the singing of praise to God, we are involved in a monumental act of devotion. We craft the text, weigh the words; we spin the tune, weave the harmony; we plot out the context to reading, liturgy; we consider mood and mode; finally we unite spirit and body, breath and flesh to sing the hymn out into the universe. And if somewhere in the journey our attention falters ... ?

*Always know before Whom you stand.*  
—traditional Jewish inscription  
before the Ark

What I am about to say to you, you already know. What I am about to describe, you have already seen. A poet’s task is not to formulate some

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**Editor’s note:** The following was originally published in *CrossAccent* 13, no. 1 (2005): 22–25. It is presented here with updated hymnal and bibliographic references.

new truth but rather to remind people of what they already know to be true, to call people to remember what they may have forgotten or mislaid, to help call it forth from the depths of being.

What I have to say to you is this: singing hymns to worship God is a miraculous and dangerous activity. It unites body with spirit, intent with action, breath with thought, individual with community, creation with God. It subsumes, it reorders, it transforms. It weds the fathomless power of music with the life-threatening power of word.

What I have to say to you is this: music is not benign; words are not neutral. They shape and form us in unseen ways, for weal or for woe, and we are engaged in a holy and dangerous undertaking when we put melody and word into people's mouths, their breath, their very bodies. We are devoted to a task that requires of us skill and understanding and, above all, humility and attention.

Hymns sung have the potential to shape not only individuals, but community: witness the role "Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich" played in the peaceful revolt in East Germany in 1989. Picture the strength drawn from the sound of "Steal Away" in the dark night of American slavery. Or the *Leisen* that united and focused pilgrims on their spiritual journeys in the late Middle Ages.

Hymns evoke memories, personal and communal. Once I saw the music of a hymn call back the spirit of a friend's father, stricken with Alzheimer's. A light of soul that had been absent for months reappeared when his wife put an old recording of his singing a hymn on the turntable.

Hymns elicit emotions. There was a hymn in the back of *The Lutheran Hymnal* that I loved as a child—"I'm but a stranger here, Heaven is my home" (*LSB* 748; *CW* 417; *TLH* 660)—and I sang it with great feeling. And now, this hymn still has the ability to bring tears to my eyes, even though I no longer believe it to be true. (And I know I am on perilous ground here: this may be your favorite hymn, and hymns elicit emotions.)

The singing of hymns can ignite the conversation between the hemispheres of our brains,

stimulating healing energy in the immune system and sparking human creative potential. Music is not neutral. Poetry is not benign. In the singing of hymns we are engaged in a holy and dangerous activity, which demands our careful craft and skill, with the mind in the heart.

*The trombones are too sacred  
for often use.*

—Felix Mendelssohn<sup>3</sup>

Music is, first of all, vibration, as is everything perceived by our five senses. In fact, if an organ could be tuned to vibrate at 390 trillion cycles per second (cps), instead of 20 to 20,000 cps (the range of audible sound), the organ would play—colors! Our bodies are also in vibration, as are the cells and atoms of which they are composed. The earth and the galaxy vibrate at their own unique frequencies. Everything in the universe is in vibrational interaction with everything else.

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**Music is not neutral. It is not benign.**

**And it is simply true that music, as vibration,  
affects our bodies and minds in specific ways**

whether we like the music or not.



One property of vibrating bodies is sympathetic vibration: a struck, vibrating tuning fork placed next to a tuning fork at rest will cause the still fork to vibrate. R. Murray Schafer conducted an experiment in the 1970s, in which he asked American and Canadian students after a period of still meditation to hum the tone that seemed predominant in them. Overwhelmingly, they hummed a B-natural. When Schafer conducted the same experiment with European students, they hummed a G-sharp. Schafer realized that the difference lay in the fact that the alternating electrical current in North American structures oscillates at 60 cps, whereas in Europe the electrical current oscillates at 50 cps, corresponding to B-natural and G-sharp, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

In the seventeenth century, Christian Huygens observed that two pendulums oscillating at different frequencies will eventually swing at the same frequency when placed next to each other. This property is called “entrainment.” John Diamond relates his observation upon playing a high-energy performance of the third movement of Beethoven’s Ninth:

If I play a performance of Beethoven’s *Ninth* conducted by Fürtwangler, I will see almost within seconds that the entire group is breathing synchronously, all their chests seem to be moving in unison.<sup>5</sup>

Alice Parker has often remarked that good congregational singing is not the sign of a good congregation but rather the forging of one.

Music is not neutral. It is not benign. And it is simply true that music, as vibration, affects our bodies and minds in specific ways *whether we like the music or not*. It is not a matter of taste, of likes and dislikes. It is a matter of physics, of vibration, of cell structure, and of brain chemistry.

Different musical keys and modes affect us in different ways. Plato knew this to be true.<sup>6</sup> The perfectors of Gregorian chant knew. Bach and his contemporaries knew. And we know. We really do. We know that singing “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (*ELW* 859; *LSB* 790; *CW* 234) in

the key of F is simply not as brilliant or jubilant as singing the hymn in the key of G. The key of F has a more lyric, softer edge to it, and it sets our bodies and spirits in a different level of vibration.

Rhythms and instruments and the shape of musical lines have an impact on us.<sup>7</sup> Some physically weaken us, some arouse passion, some stir us to action, some empty our brains, some draw us to the heart of being. Not all music can serve the same functions. Music for an evening of romance, for example, is usually carefully chosen, and it’s not generally a Sousa march, is it? No, the music has long slow lines, often performed by strings or human voice, like “Unchained Melody.” It fulfills a specific task: to arouse physical desire—perhaps not the most appropriate music to choose when we wish to pray with the “mind in the heart.” (And yes, yes, yes, God is God of the body also, and loves it and all that, but . . . )

*Poetry is the language of  
what is not possible to say. . . .*

*What the poem says  
is not present in its words.*

—Rubem Alves<sup>8</sup>

The language of hymns is poetry. It is not our everyday speech. It is multi-layered, symbolic language—metaphor, from which, like the parables of Jesus, various people will drink varied meanings at varied points in their lives. Poetry is the language of the land of shadows, the land of mists and hidden views. It is the language of uncertainty. Veiled shapes hint; outlines appear and dart from sight. Poetry is the language of the land of not-knowing. And so it is the perfect language to speak about God, for it speaks of the unspeakable, expresses the inexpressible, in language the heart can grasp.

We inhabit a time whose Enlightenment inheritance is the desire to explain—*ex-planare*—“to lay out flat,” free of shadows, free of folds and secret valleys and corners. We wish to “shed light” on everything. It is in itself no bad thing, this desire to explain, but some aspects of life defy our attempts

at explanation and remain partly in shadow, like God. Then we must step aside and cede to poetry to say what cannot be said.

The language of poetry is ambiguous. It uses incarnational, concrete imagery to leave meaning ambiguous, unfinished, inconclusive. For, to conclude—*concludere*—means “to shut,” and that which we think we understand we rarely again contemplate. A parable once explained is pretty much a dead parable. Whoever gives any thought to the parable of the sower, the only parable the gospels explain? We have drawn a conclusion, the door is shut, we are done thinking about it. That which we think we understand, we rarely again contemplate.

I live my life in growing orbits  
which move out over the things of the world.  
Perhaps I can never achieve the last,  
but that will be my attempt.

I am circling around God, around the ancient  
tower,  
and I have been circling for a thousand years,  
and I still don't know if I am a falcon or a  
storm,  
or a great song.<sup>9</sup>

***Poetry is ... the perfect language to speak about God, for it speaks of the unspeakable, expresses the inexpressible, in language the heart can grasp.***

I believe the least pleasing and least faithful hymn texts I have written are those in which I have tried to explain too much. The meaning is concluded, the ambiguity is lost, the well is dry, and not as many can drink there. Ambiguity *includes*.

The rhythms of hymnody draw us into the body—

praise *God* from *whom* all *bles-sings flow*  
lub-*Dub*, lub-*Dub*, lub-*Dub*, lub-*Dub*

—the *beat-ing* of the *hu-man heart*. The earliest and most common meter in poetry is the iambic, the replication of the heartbeat. Most poetic lines are roughly three seconds in duration—the time needed for the two hemispheres of the brain to coordinate pattern with meaning.

The shape of hymnic language is incarnational. It is not the vocabulary of theological discourse but of story. I do gravitate toward Anglo-Saxon words in hymn texts, as opposed to regular poetry. Anglo-Saxon words are elemental, earthy, rock and

stone words that our imaginations quickly grasp. (And imagination is, after all, the realm of faith.) Latinate words, although lovely, and often more euphonious, tend to be more conceptual than concrete, more intellectual than embodied.

With the mind in the heart: hymnic poetry is not mindless. It is deep and rich and carefully crafted. It is not sentimental, although it can stir profound feeling. The texts that we are willing to put into the mouths of worshippers, into the expanse of the universe, speak the deep, ancient truths again to that place in us where the best of our minds, the best of our emotions, the best of our earthly frames, meet in worship, with unfaltering attention and care.

*Who sings prays twice.*

—attr. St. Augustine

Singing together in worship is a conspiratorial act. *Con-spirare*. We literally breathe together. We vibrate together. The Spirit—breath, *ruach*, *spiritus*—flows through us and into each other, through the walls, into the city, into the meadows, into the galaxy. Our bodies resonate with word and melody carried on breath. The meaning and intent vibrates in us and is carried out into others, vibrating, creating a body for praise. What shall these words be that we send out into the universe? What shall these sounds be that we send out through the bodies of other people?

*Always remember before Whom  
you stand.*

God is most excellent. God is perfect; God is true. God is mystery, love. God is beauty. It is not enough when we stand in worship before God to scratch something out. The people of God need more than that from us. God, the Sacred Mystery, deserves more than that from us. What we consciously participate in will incarnate itself in us. Shall we participate in mediocrity? Shall we participate in shallowness? Shall we participate in untruth?

Listen to Exodus 31:

See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, ... and I have given skill to all the skillful, so that they may make all that I have commanded you. (Exodus 31:2–3, 6b; NRSV)

God gives skill and asks for skillfulness. God gives knowledge and asks for craft. God is supremely excellent, and since we are made in God's image, we strive for excellence, for what is true, for what is beautiful.

Each summer for 15 years I used to work at a greenhouse. The farm grew the plants in greenhouses at low temperatures, slowly, and they were more costly than others. There were other large volume greenhouses that grew their plants hot, with all the moisture and humidity and food they wanted, and they grew fast and they grew tall and they looked lovely at first glance. But there was a great difference. When the fast, hot-grown plants encountered the wind, and the cold of northern spring nights, when they experienced scarcity of water and intensity of sun, they wilted and they withered, for their roots were shallow, and they could not reach into the depths for what they needed to survive.

Now, who will say, “stop growing your plants with so much heat and fertilizer” if not the farmers and botanists who know about the plant systems and what plants need to grow well?

Who will say, “stop pouring chemicals into the rivers” if not the geologists and hydrologists who know about the dynamics of the watershed?

You know about the power of music, the potential of word, the life of breath. You know what is true, what is worthy of praise, what is excellent. Now, who will say, “stop putting shallow and untrue songs into the mouths and spirits of worshippers,” if not the musicians and poets who know how music and words shape a person?

Somewhere in the Welsh hills, a band of scribes is attentively praying with ink and quill. Somewhere in the mountains of Tibet, monks are attentively praying with sand and tint. Here in walls made with hands, we gather to pray with melody and word. We are engaged in a holy and dangerous undertaking, for we are joining body and spirit, breath and thought, intent and action in worship, in the singing of hymns before God. May we be attentive. May we pray with mind in heart.

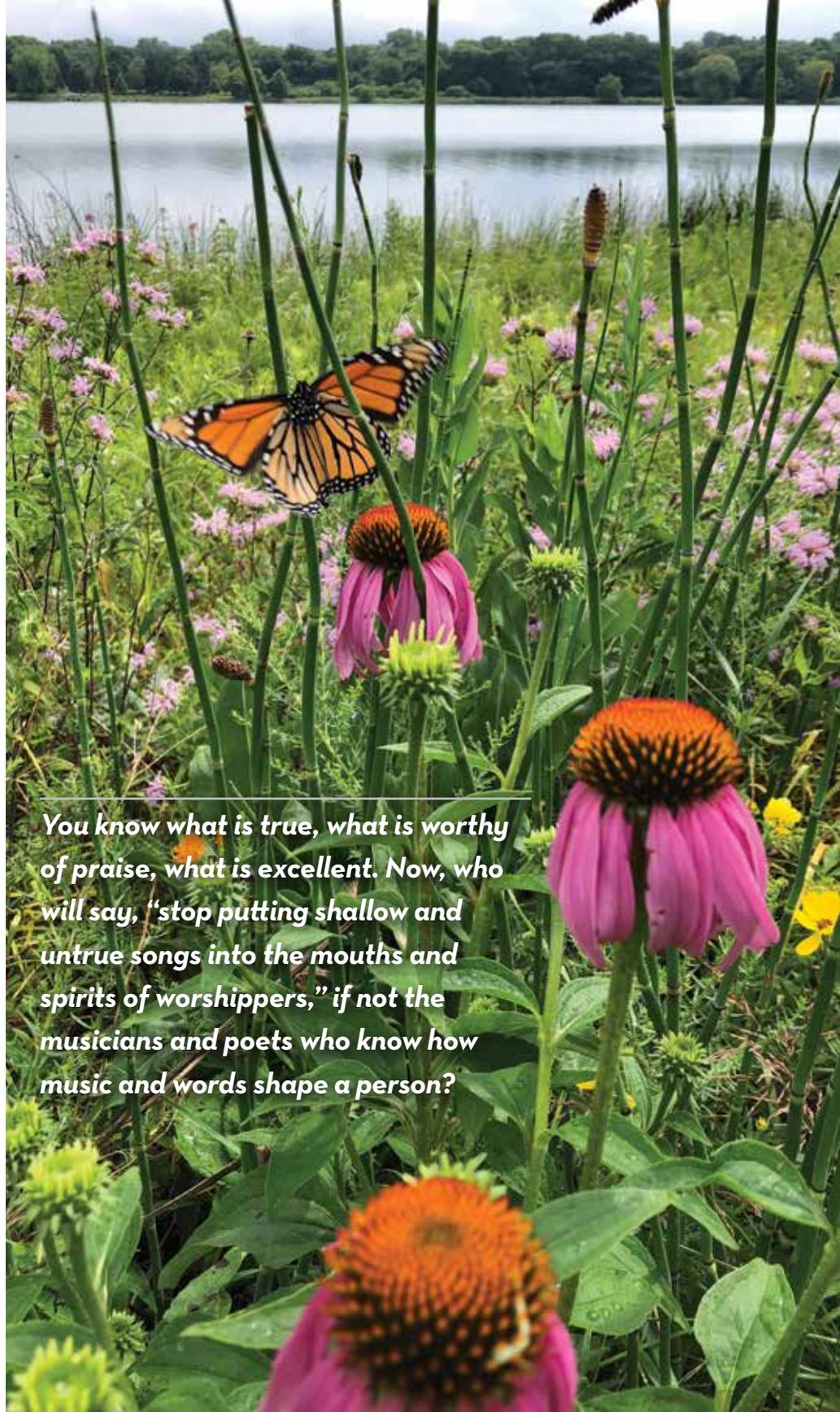


**Susan Palo Cherwien** is a poet and musician. She has composed numerous hymn texts that appear in

denominational hymnals in the United States, Canada, and Europe and has written for *The Lutheran*, *Christian Century*, *Gather*, and *Word and World*. She is the author of three hymn text collections and three volumes of hymn festival reflections. She was a member of the ELCA Language Consultation, whose work set language guidelines prior to the development of ELW.

## Notes

1. Timothy Ware, introduction to *The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology*, by Igu-men Chariton of Valamo (London: Faber and Faber, 1966; reprinted 1997), 18.
2. See [www.stjohnsbible.org](http://www.stjohnsbible.org).
3. Felix Mendelssohn, quoted in *The Gift of Music*, ed. Louise Bachelder (Mount Vernon: Peter Pauper Press, 1975), 17.
4. Steven Halpern with Louis Savary, *Sound Health: The Music and Sounds That Make Us Whole* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 7–8.
5. John Diamond, quoted in Halpern, 127.
6. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett (New York: Vintage Books, 1941, reissued 1961), 101.
7. Manfred Clynes, *Sentics: The Touch of the Emotions* (Dorset: Prism Books, 1989).
8. Rubem A. Alves, *The Poet, the Warrior, the Prophet* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 96.
9. Rainer Maria Rilke, quoted in *Waking Up! In the Age of Creativity*, by Lois B. Robbins (Santa Fe: Bear, 1985).



**You know what is true, what is worthy of praise, what is excellent. Now, who will say, “stop putting shallow and untrue songs into the mouths and spirits of worshippers,” if not the musicians and poets who know how music and words shape a person?**

LAKE PHALEN, MN, KATHRYN BREWER



# Holy Fishes and the Tuning of the Heart

by Frederick Niedner

**H**ymnody provided my siblings and me our first memorable image of what it meant to be part of the church. We went to Sunday school and also listened carefully enough when our father preached, of course. My mother provided special encouragement: she pinched us whenever we appeared inattentive. Still, I don't remember much of anything dad or any other preacher said from the pulpit before I reached the age of 10 or so.

By then, however, the congregation's hymns had long since taught me what a friend I had in Jesus. They brushed me up against the herald angels' wings, took me to Calvary's holy mountain, and inducted me into the army of Christian soldiers marching as to war. They also took us to a few unintended places. My sister and I shared a special affection for "Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing" (*ELW* 545; *LSB* 924; *CW* 329) and long before

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*Thanks to the power of this hymn, I can still go there to sing with the other scaly, wriggling saints amongst whom I learned to cross life's barren desert.*

either of us could read we sang it lustily whenever it took its turn in the rotation at the close of the liturgy:

Lord, dismiss us with thy blessing,  
fill our hearts with joy and peace.  
Let us each thy love possessing,  
triumph in redeeming grace.  
*Holy fishes, holy fishes,*  
traveling through this wilderness!  
(*LSB* 924; st. 1)

Now there was a powerful image! Holy fish crossing a vast desert—ah, we were a miracle people indeed! I was crushed when I learned to read and discovered the adults really sing, "Oh, refresh us, oh, refresh us." How perfectly dull this official version seemed, but I grudgingly complied with the printed text. Some years ago, however, I returned to singing it my old way. I don't think anyone else has noticed, but whenever I do this the rapture arrives. For just a moment I'm back in West Point, NE, in the old St. Paul's church, second pew from the rear, in the middle section, right in front of where the "hushers" gather to start the collection.

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**Editor's note:** The following was first published in *CrossAccent* 6, issue B (July 1998): 23–35. It is presented here with updated hymnal references. The author notes that the organist who played *SEELLENBRÄUTIGAM* at the long-ago wedding recounted here was Tom Leeseberg-Lange, then on staff at Valparaiso University, and *CrossAccent* editor from 1997 to 1999. In preparing this manuscript for this issue, Niedner further recalled, "Tom eventually taught me that Zinzendorf had indeed written the text of this hymn for a wedding, so it wasn't first of all a funeral hymn."

The old church is gone now, as are many of the people. But thanks to the power of this hymn, I can still go there to sing with the other scaly, wriggling saints amongst whom I learned to cross life's barren desert. (Recently I shared this secret with my sister. She said she's been doing the same thing most of her life.)

Eventually I began to remember sermons, even to love and delight in them. But the hymns kept preaching and shaping me, too. On Maundy Thursday of our third year of college my dear friend and classmate died in an auto accident. We buried him on Easter Monday. I cannot recall the sermon. The service opened, however, with trumpets and "The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done" (*ELW* 366; *LSB* 464; *CW* 148). I've sung that hymn many more times in the 30-odd Easters I've celebrated since then, and each time I'm taken back to that funeral. Always I find anew that the risen Christ has once more closed the yawning gates of hell that had swung open when the phone rang on that Good Friday morning.

I'm continually amazed at the grace that weaves its way through the interplay of the sermon, readings, prayers, meal, and hymns in the liturgy. The other elements most always complete the sermon and sometimes must compensate for it. Occasionally songs or hymns sire the sermon or act as midwife in birthing it.

Once, during an Easter season, I struggled with a gospel lesson from Jesus's last supper discourse in John, the paragraph in which Jesus gives the new commandment that from now on his followers love one another as he has loved them (John 13:31–35). "When he had gone out," says John, then Jesus gave the new commandment. By chance, in the midst of my stewing over that text, I attended an event that included a choir singing a medley of Gospel songs. As they wound their way into these familiar lines, I knew what I had to preach: "may the circle be unbroken, by and by, Lord, by and by."<sup>1</sup> The circle at that last supper was broken even before Jesus was taken from the disciples. The "he" who'd gone out was the traitor and his place at the table sat empty.

That's why the old commandment that we love our neighbor as ourselves wouldn't do any longer and all us disciples needed a new one. Now we must learn love for those who'd betrayed us after sharing our bread, our secrets, even our beds.

As it happened, that sermon about Judas, whose place remains vacant at our tables, too, changed me and altered the course of my life. I've chased after the infinitely merciful Christ ever since, seeking to fathom the depths to which the cross took him on his restless journey of seeking out lost souls. I often wonder what I'd have preached, or how my life would be different, had I not heard that choir or had they sung another song.




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***That's why the old commandment that we love our neighbor as ourselves wouldn't do any longer and all us disciples needed a new one. Now we must learn love for those who'd betrayed us after sharing our bread, our secrets, even our beds.***

Marriage ceremonies present some of the biggest challenges facing preachers and church musicians alike. The culture wars most people talk about pale in comparison to the battles waged over many elements of church weddings, but especially over the music of Wagner, the Carpenters, Kenny Rogers, and sometimes even Elvis. Even when they concede a battle, however, resourceful church musicians often find a way to win the war.

The most wonderfully memorable musical experience of all the weddings I've performed over the years occurred several months ago in the splendor of Valparaiso University's Chapel of the Resurrection. As the congregation waited for a more-than-fashionably-late, 20-something bride to show up for her nervous, young groom, the organist kept playing pre-service music well beyond the appointed starting time. I paced the floor as I waited alone in my out-of-the-way spot. At one point I realized the music from the organ had brought these words to my lips: "if the way be drear, if the foe be near." The organist was playing a setting of SEELENBRÄUTIGAM, "Jesus Still Lead On" (*ELW* 624; *LSB* 718; *CW* 422). I snatched a hymnal from the rack and found the text:

When we seek relief  
from a long-felt grief,  
when temptations come alluring  
make us patient and enduring;  
show us that bright shore  
where we weep no more.  
(*LBW* 341, st. 3)

A funeral hymn! Ordinarily, I'd have taken this for a musician's subtle joke played on a tardy bridal party. However, just prior to this occasion, I'd presided at a wedding for a bride and groom who were marrying almost 50 years to the day after they'd ended their high school romance. Following high school, though much in love, they'd considered themselves too young to marry, what with the young man heading off to college and the woman staying behind. Eventually, they'd each



***If the Holy Spirit is around that day, the couple, older now and more ready for songs that can hold grief and pain, will finally receive the musician's gift.***

wed another, raised families, and lived faithfully through long marriages.

Both had known heartache and tragedy as part of married life, but there they'd stood, this old widow and widower, looking into each other's eyes and speaking their vows as tenderly as though their senior prom had just taken place.

Jesus, still lead on,  
till our rest be won;  
and, although the way be cheerless,  
we will follow, calm and fearless;  
guide us by your hand  
to our Father's land.  
(*LBW* 341, st. 1)

Yes, this was a wedding song. And here I was, for the second time in succession, in tears before the wedding had even started.

I don't know if anyone else in the chapel that day realized what we'd heard. Maybe that hymn tune vanished as so many words and other gifts do on such a day as that. Then again, it just might happen on some distant anniversary that the couple will get out the videotape of their big day, and if they don't fast-forward through the pre-service music, they'll hear SEELENBRÄUTIGAM. If the Holy

Spirit is around that day, the couple, older now and more ready for songs that can hold grief and pain, will finally receive the musician’s gift.

Then they, too, will taste the tears of all the ages and ages of brides and grooms who have fallen in love as children and sung songs the meanings of which they could hardly fathom. This hymn will lift them up and transport them to wherever they need to go in that moment.

And wherever that place might be, it’s always within the embrace of the Spirit who gives all those songs—complete with sighs too deep for words—to God’s musicians, so they can give them to us, and we can learn from them to swim through the wilderness, make room at the table for Judas, have the courage to marry, and hear heaven’s trumpet sound as we process to the cemetery.



*Frederick Niedner, now senior research professor in theology at Valparaiso University, taught in the University’s department of theology from 1973 to 2014. He has been a grateful member of ALCM since 2000.*

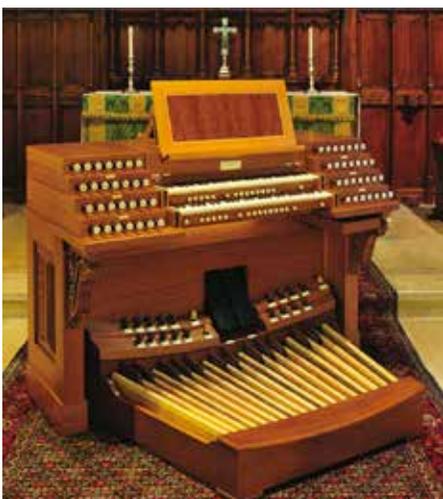
**Note**

1. Ada R. Habershon, “Will the Circle Be Unbroken?” (1907).

IMAGES ARE DETAILS FROM THE STAINED GLASS AT GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, RIVER FOREST, IL.



*It’s always within the embrace of the Spirit who gives all those songs—complete with sighs too deep for words—to God’s musicians, so they can give them to us, and we can learn from them.*



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# Jack of All Trades?

## Musings on Baseball, Church Musicians, and Appliance Repair

by Jennifer Baker-Trinity

**S**pring training is underway, and this baseball fan is so looking forward to opening day. During a recent conversation while washing dishes, my spouse and I made an interesting connection between baseball and church musicians. Hmm ... where could this be going?

A church musician is often asked to be a jack of all trades: play the organ, direct choirs, plan worship, manage a music budget, recruit instrumentalists, and more.

Now in the spring of 2021, the trades church musicians are asked to acquire is ever-expanding and diversifying. The “more” here would include leadership skills for multiple musical styles, knowledge of audio-video recording and broadcast technologies, expertise in social media and communication strategies, fluency in copyright and licensing requirements, and familiarity with the physiological, psychological, and liturgical intersections of such topics as trauma and lament—and yes, still “more.”

If you're curious about what is asked for these days in a full-time church musician, check out the job descriptions on the ALCM website.<sup>1</sup> After reading a couple of these, I wondered if Jesus would qualify. Indeed, I think congregations are seeking a



savior of sorts, because so many believe (and rightly so) that quality music is key to vital congregations. But what they are looking for is one person to bring the skills of a whole team. Which brings me back to baseball.

Very rarely do you have a baseball player who excels in everything, at least at the professional level. Teams shell out millions of dollars for a good pitcher, for a home-run hitter, for a superb short-stop. They will spend what is necessary to get the right total package. Churches, on the other hand, often want a musician to be a dynamic people person, an excellent keyboardist, and a skilled choir director—but often for meager pay.

This situation will only become more prevalent in both the ongoing pandemic and the yet-to-be post-pandemic times. The skills and tasks church musicians are required to perform will increase, yet pay may not reflect these changing expectations. While this can be true for clergy and other church leaders, church musicians have regularly experienced such challenges. For an extended discussion, consult the trilogy of prescient reflections by Paul Westermeyer about the church, its music, and its musicians.<sup>2</sup>

Yet even those churches that have many part-time positions miss out on having one person to oversee them, to be the manager with the vision for the entire music ministry. In most places, the manager and the team are one and the same.

The reasons churches need or want one person

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**Editor's note:** The following appeared in *CrossAccent* 21, no. 3 (March 2013): 4–5. It is reprinted here with additional reflections and resources supplied by the author.

***I think congregations are seeking a savior of sorts, because so many believe (and rightly so) that quality music is key to vital congregations. But what they are looking for is one person to bring the skills of a whole team.***

to do so much are varied. To be clear here, I value churches that understand the benefit of having one musician who is responsible for the leadership of the people's song, that is, to be the cantor. And this works well in various settings. Yet in other settings, one person is simply asked to be responsible for too much; the musician's health and the congregation's health may be what bears the brunt of such high expectations. Congregations are not financially able or, perhaps, willing to support multiple church musicians. So they ask one person to do it all. (Pastors, too, burn out from similar expectations.) At the other end of the spectrum, employing even one paid musician is a stretch in some faith communities. Many congregations that are not able to afford a full-time pastor come up with other solutions, such as multipoint parishes and the utilization of more lay leaders. Have we considered how a cantor could serve multipoint parishes? Which brings me to the next unlikely partner in these thoughts, the small appliance repairman.

Today Bill came to replace a faulty valve on our fridge. He has been a small appliance repairman for decades. He is also a preacher in a Christian tradition that rarely has full-time pastors; being bi-vocational has always been the standard practice.

In the years since this was first written, the matter of bi-vocational ministry has only received more attention. As part of a recent panel about the future of church music hosted by Lutheran Summer Music, five young participants voiced that full-time music ministry is not something they anticipate.<sup>3</sup>

After Bill fixed our fridge (taking a risk on a new model he wasn't too sure about), he started talking about family and faith. He talked about the many homes he has been in while fixing appliances and about the conversations he's had with grieving spouses. He's fixed things for three generations in many instances, seeing what goes on in the homes of parents, children, and their children's children. He talked about the need for families to be with their children, to be home after school for them, to give them just a few minutes of their time. He sees too little of this when he's in people's homes.

Bill is not a specialist. He's not spending his days becoming the most coveted, up-to-date repairman in town. This was obvious when he looked at the back of our fridge. It said, "blowing agent: cyclopentane." He had never seen it and seemed a little confused, so I did what we young folks have been trained to do: I Googled it. Once I read the description to him from Wikipedia, he understood and went about his work. He was successful, and the loud screech our water filter made every time water flowed into the valve was finally silenced. (As a mom of three, any extra moment of silence is most welcome!)

By some standards, Bill may not be the most highly rated repairman. But he is also a pastor, and I've always gotten the sense that he views his small appliance business and his ministry as intrinsically linked, his work being a way to minister and his ministry benefiting from what he encounters in everyday business. What I valued most was his presence. He knows who he is and what he can do. And he does so with a care for the people whose homes he's been entrusted to care for.





**Quality music can be a sign of health in a congregation but not at the expense of a musician who is trying (as it were) to bat, pitch, and catch at the same time, often without a seventh-inning stretch.**

Church musicians can be like Bill, knowing what is needed, interacting with people, and honing their craft. The request on job descriptions for church musicians to work well with people could be viewed as getting people to do stuff, even asking them to manipulate others. We sometimes believe it is this “getting people busy” that makes one successful. Instead, churches need to seek out a church musician who is present with the people, accompanying them, nurturing the gift of music for their life of faith. Ultimately such a musician cares for the health of the congregation’s song. As Bill has served generations in his work, church musicians tend to the music across the generations, being faithful to the gospel in music from many eras. Quality music can be a sign of health in a congregation but not at the expense of a musician who is trying (as it were) to bat, pitch, and catch at the same time, often without a seventh-inning stretch.



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ISTOCK/KARANDAY

## Notes

1. Association of Lutheran Church Musicians, “Jobs and Employment,” <https://alcm.org/job-listings/>.
2. Paul Westermeyer, *Rise, O Church: Reflections on the Church, Its Music, and Empire* (2018); *Church Musicians: Reflections on Their Call, Craft, History, and Challenges* (2018); *A High and Holy Calling: Essays of Encouragement for the Church and Its Musicians* (2018), all published by MorningStar in St. Louis.
3. Lutheran Summer Music, “‘Remember Well the Future’: Preparing a New Generation of Church Musicians” (webinar, April 19, 2021), <https://youtu.be/1d6tcFVMRnU>.

# The Musician as Artist, Pastor, and Prophet: Rethinking Vocation in Troubled Times

by Samuel Torvend

## PART 1

### The Artistic Calling of the Lutheran Church Musician

**CLAIM 1.** Whether they know it or not, church musicians participate in the art of faith formation.

#### What does this mean?

Whether a musician works five or fifty hours each week, much of the work involves selecting music, planning and practice, rehearsal, tending to schedules, going to meetings, dealing with conflicts, and encouraging volunteers. At times, this work can bring a sense of deeply felt satisfaction and gratitude. At other times, we may feel frustration and even anger or despair. There are moments when we may ask ourselves: does this craft, this work, this vocation make any difference in the lives of these people?

On the other hand, our labor may begin to feel so natural, so secondhand to us that we don't give it much thought. The steady rhythm of selecting music, rehearsing, and performing can have its own life over the year—heightened by September's beginnings, intensified by the cycles of Christmas and Easter, and eased by the coming of summer. We can be carried along by the regularity of our work, if not the confidence we gain in doing it well and faithfully again and again.

In all of this, whether with a sense of satisfaction or frustration or both, we may unwittingly accept the common stereotype that musicians care for music, educators for education, pastors or priests for guidance and presiding at public celebrations. But I would argue something else: that church musicians, through the very ordinary activities of choosing music, gathering the volunteers,



ISTOCK/IMAGINEGOLF

**There are moments when we may ask ourselves: does this craft, this work, this vocation make any difference in the lives of these people?**

playing or directing, participate in the art of faith formation. By this I mean to suggest that *our daily and weekly actions are a primary means through which the Spirit shapes the identity and purpose of the singing Christian assembly*. Yes, our daily work, our ordinary work, is a primary means through which the Spirit forms the singing Christian assembly in faith.

Now, the theologically astute among us might argue that formation in faith takes place through the “means of grace,” that is, through the proclamation of the gospel in word and sacrament. In other words, preaching and baptism and supper are the means through which the Spirit continually awakens us to and forms us in faith.<sup>1</sup> At best, music and musicians serve this proclamation.

**Editor's note:** This article originated as a lecture at the 2002 ALCM Region IV conference in Hawaii and was published in *CrossAccent* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 10–27. It is presented here with minor revisions alongside updated hymnal and bibliographic references.

But, says the mischievous historian in me, *the ritual actions* of proclaiming the gospel and sharing a meal—what Lutherans name the “means” through which the Spirit awakens and cultivates faith—are *to be sung*. Thus, Martin Luther counsels that both the gospel reading and the institution narrative of the Lord’s Supper, the central proclamations of the liturgy, are to be sung so that the words sink into the consciousness of the gathered assembly, so that in hearing these ordinary human words sung clearly, the Spirit might awaken people to faith in God and to love for the neighbor in need.<sup>2</sup> Or as Luther says with clear and equal force, “the Holy Spirit honors [music] as an instrument for [its] proper use [since], as Scripture asserts, through music the Spirit’s gifts [are] instilled.”<sup>3</sup> Or, as a colleague of ours has written, “since our breath and the Spirit’s breath meet in song, we train our breath to give voice to the Spirit. It is our most natural, physical calling.”<sup>4</sup>

What am I suggesting here? The calling of the Lutheran church musician is, certainly and deeply, the call to lead congregational song, but in the very leading of this song, this infusion of word with melody, the church musician also participates in the Spirit’s work of awakening and cultivating faith. But, of course, we should recognize that there is nothing new in what I am claiming here, since the central mystery of Christian faith is this: God’s intentions for the world are embodied in an ordinary human being who spoke ordinary words, sang a hymn with his friends, healed bodies, shared meals—and through these ordinary physical “means” awakened faith anew in the merciful mystery at the heart of all existence. The corollary to this incarnational insight is that through the art of making music we participate in the art of faith formation. For instance, the authors of the 1997 ELCA statement on word and sacraments write that “congregational song gathers the whole people to proclaim God’s mercy.”<sup>5</sup> But do you see where I am going with the argument? I would claim that singing forms the assembly in their sacramental identity as a people called to think and act mercifully, to embody mercy, in a culture that does not

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***Martin Luther counsels that ... the central proclamations of the liturgy are to be sung so that the words sink into the consciousness of the gathered assembly.***

readily cherish mercy. Indeed, I ask us to consider who or what else in our culture will “strike the heart, charm the senses, and captivate the mind”<sup>6</sup> with the promise of mercy?

### ***What are some practical implications?***

Perhaps you think of yourself as an accomplished—or at least a hardworking—choir director, organist, cantor, or instrumentalist. Or perhaps you think of yourself as a musical administrator or coordinator. Or this: the musician who simply has to deal with increasing expectations of musical diversity alive in our culture and in our congregations. Maybe a “job description” defines the manner in which you “embody your calling” as a church musician. Perhaps all or some of this is true for each of us. I am simply suggesting that we see ourselves as participants—as collaborators—in the Spirit’s work of forming faith through and with the singing Christian assembly.

Though called to a particular vocation, church musicians are in need of being awakened to and nurtured in faith, that is, trust in God, again and again. Some of us accompany, direct, and coordinate music and musicians all at the same time. While we serve the assembly with and through our musical skill in an active posture, when are we *attentive* to the need to be receptive, open to the formative power of church music in our lives?

The work of church musicians is not value-free or neutral. *We do not* engage in generic praise or disinterested thanksgiving. Through the selection of word and melody, through the making of music, musicians propose particular understandings of Christian identity and shape a sonic environment. We can shape a sonic environment captive to or wider than white middle-class musical tastes, be they elite or popular, an environment that welcomes the sound of Asia as well as Europe, the sound of the suburb as well as the barrio. We can sound forth, sing forth the figure of Christ as a monarch

who demands obedience from his subjects, or as a wandering prophet who invites people, especially outsiders, into an unexpected table fellowship. There is a difference between the two.

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,  
and with fear and trembling stand;  
ponder nothing earthly-minded,  
for with blessing in his hand  
Christ our God to earth descending  
comes full homage to demand.

At his feet the six-winged seraph,  
cherubim with sleepless eye,  
veil their faces to the presence,  
as with ceaseless voice they cry:  
“Alleluia! Alleluia!

Alleluia, Lord Most High!”  
(*ELW* 490; *LSB* 621; *CW* 361—sts. 1, 4)

When twilight comes and the sun sets,  
mother hen prepares for night’s rest.  
As her brood shelters under her wings,  
she gives the love of God to her nest.  
Oh! what joy to feel her warm heartbeat  
and be near her all night long;  
so the young can find repose,  
then renew tomorrow’s song.

One day the Rabbi, Lord Jesus,  
called the twelve to share his last meal.  
As the hen tends her young, so for them  
he spent himself to seek and to heal.  
Oh! what joy to be with Christ Jesus,  
hear his voice, oh! sheer delight,  
and receive his servant care:  
all before the coming night.  
(*ELW* 566, sts. 1–2)

**CLAIM 2.** The church musician is called to serve the singing Christian assembly as an artist.

### *What does this mean?*

Throughout July 2002, the Tacoma and Seattle newspapers were filled with stories about the dedication of the Museum of Glass and International Center for Contemporary Art in Tacoma, a project inspired by the work of the Tacoma native and internationally acclaimed glass artist, Dale Chihuly. In the contemporary art world, Chihuly is a celebrity, his glass installations found in Jerusalem, Venice, Monte Carlo, London, Kyoto, Singapore, Honolulu, at Saint Peter’s [Lutheran] Church in Manhattan, and at Pacific Lutheran

*Through the selection of word and melody, through the making of music, musicians propose particular understandings of Christian identity and shape a sonic environment.*



***The genius of the Lutheran reform movement, it seems to me, was that it took education found only in universities that catered to the nobility and made it available democratically to all the baptized.***

University's Russell Music Center. He enjoys a worldwide following of admirers who range from American janitors to Italian nobility. The wealthy buy his works for astonishing amounts of money. Indeed, the elite of the Pacific Northwest and the international art world attended the dedication of the Glass Museum, all present to admire and applaud what personal and corporate wealth can accomplish. To say the least, Chihuly is a star who can command the largest of fees for his work.

Yet there is another Dale Chihuly who doesn't make the front page or the Arts section of the newspapers. This is the artist who, with his colleague, Kathy Kaperick, has organized and funded a glass-blowing program for at-risk youth who live in the Hilltop section of Tacoma, an area on the edge of downtown marked by poverty, violence, and slow decay. Here, in close proximity to the Lutheran Volunteer Corps House, Lutheran Social Services, and other church-related social agencies that serve the poor and marginalized, Chihuly the artist teaches at-risk young people to blow glass, to create works of art. I wonder: does he think that glass blowing is an endangered art form? Perhaps. My guess, however, is that he recognizes something of far greater importance: that this art-making is saving the lives of these endangered human beings, that this unusual skill may well provide them with a quality of life they could not have previously imagined.

I have no access to the inner thoughts of Dale Chihuly. I don't know if he values his celebrity as an art star more or less than his teaching young people how to blow beautiful glass. I do know that he does offer two models of being a church musician for our consideration.

There is the musician who simply but secretly enjoys being the local star in the congregation or the region. Such a musician may play Charles Widor's "Toccata" with utter perfection or lead

the praise band in heart-pounding songs and yet remain utterly indifferent to the sobering possibility that the assembly sings poorly. Among church musicians there is the ever-present temptation to use much religious musical language to mask what is a patronizing attitude toward "the folks in the pew" who are not capable of singing the more "difficult literature" but will be satisfied, even deeply moved, by the choir's performance of it.

It goes without saying that we live in a culture that worships daily if not hourly the Church of Celebrity. In such a cultural atmosphere, whose air we breathe in and out every day, it seems utterly ludicrous to hear that, for the first 1400 years of Christian history, artists, architects, musicians, poets, and composers rarely signed their names to their works of art. Why? It would seem that for them, it was enough that *God* could hear and see their work.

Chihuly the art star or Chihuly the mentor? The musician as local celebrity or the musician as servant of the assembly's voice?

You see, I must confess that I become unsettled around the church musician who talks about the choral program, or the size of the band, or the concert series but can't seem to speak with much knowledge or concern about the congregation's song, who can't diagnose the health of the assembly's voice and know how to awaken, cultivate, and train that communal voice. I feel unsettled because of historical and theological ideas that contain very practical implications. The genius of the Lutheran reform movement, it seems to me, was that it took education found only in universities that catered to the nobility and made it available democratically to all the baptized. Thus, one of the greatest leaps in learning took place in the sixteenth century when the early Lutheran reformers insisted that every household of the baptized be able to read the Bible, learn the catechism, and sing from a vernacular hymnal. The genius of the Lutheran reform movement, it seems to me, was that it took elite music, previously performed for the assembly by choirs and paid soloists, and placed it on the lips of all

the baptized. We have little if any evidence that excellence in music was lost. Rather we have much evidence that an unprecedented flourishing of congregational song emerged across Europe, inviting church musicians to let their arts serve *a newly egalitarian and a newly literate Christian assembly*.<sup>7</sup> In other words, we have a reconfiguration of the musician's vocation: from director of choral elites to director of the baptized assembly's voice.

Luther proclaims a wondrous but odd metaphor worthy of our consideration when he calls music both queen *and* servant.<sup>8</sup> But how can that be? How can music be imagined as both the royal elite and the little person, because—logically—music can't be both at the same time? The clue, it seems to me, can be found in a hymn that governs much of Luther's thought, a hymn quoted by Paul in his letter to the church at Philippi:

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,  
but in humility regard others as better  
than yourselves. Let each of you look not  
to your own interests, but to the interests  
of others. Let the same mind be in you  
that was in Christ Jesus,  
who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,  
but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.

(Philippians 2:3–8; NRSV)

The key, of course, is that the ruler becomes the servant for the good of his people; the celebrity shakes off the need to hear the crowd's adulation and pours out his or her charisma for those in need; the one who possesses power does not impress with that power but gives it away, shares it so that

others have life, or beautiful glass, or singing. Thus, Luther writes that “when each person has forgotten himself and poured out God's gifts, he should conduct himself as if the neighbor's weakness . . . were his very own. . . . For thus no member of the body serves itself; nor does it seek its own welfare but that of the other.”<sup>9</sup>

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***The one who possesses power does not  
impress with that power but gives it away,  
shares it so that others have life,  
or beautiful glass, or singing.***

CHIHULY GLASS AT THE MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDENS, ST. LOUIS. KATHRYN BREWER



***When our artful skill is poured out first for this endangered voice, we have become artistic mentors at the service of the assembly's song.***

Not long ago I was at a Seattle Mariners baseball game with members of my family. The announcer invited us to stand and join the sextet from the local air force base in singing the national anthem. So, my sister and I joined in, loudly, only to have the woman standing in front of us turn around and tell us to tone it down or to shut up because, she said quite loudly, "I can't hear the choir singing!" To say the least, I was stunned. This is, after all, *our song*, our national anthem to be sung by all Americans in this democratic society! Yet celebrities now sing our national anthem for us. But, perhaps, you see where I'm going: *singing, as many of you well know, is itself an endangered art form.* In a culture that increasingly relies on professionals to sing for it, who but church musicians will continue to cultivate communal song? Singing is the most natural, portable, and, I would argue, the most democratic—the most egalitarian—of art forms. Assembly song, I would argue, is inextricably bound up with the implicit criticism of any hierarchy—religious, artistic, or political—that attempts to marginalize or silence the voice of the many.

The temptation will always be present to use our art, our skill, to impress the crowd under the guise of offering it to the glory of God alone. The temptation will always be present to think that growing a "music program" is the mark of faithful ministry. Now this may be true for some Christian musicians, even expected of them. But I would argue that the vocation of a *Lutheran* church musician finds expression first and foremost in the voice the assembly, in the sound of the congregation's song. Frederick Buechner writes that we discover our vocation in the convergence of our greatest passion and real human need.<sup>10</sup> Without disciplined passion, we are useless in the face of human need. Without real human need, we are simply artful elitists. But when our artful skill is poured out first for this endangered voice, we have become artistic mentors at the service of the assembly's song.

***What are some practical implications?***

Do we know the voice of the assembly? Many musicians are located at some distance from the bulk of the assembly or invested in the coordination of ministerial leaders, choral or instrumental groups, and congregational song, all at the same time. Church musicians might find it helpful, if not surprising, to sit among the people, in different locations, throughout one or two entire liturgies to hear and take notes on what they observe.

*July 28 is the commemoration of composers Bach, Handel, and Schütz. What do you do in light of your artistic calling?*

1. Ignore the commemoration.
2. Play organ works and perform choral works by these composers.
3. Select canticles of the liturgy and hymns by these composers for assembly singing.

What are the strengths and weaknesses in each of these three scenarios?

While many of us struggle with increasing expectations for a diverse musical palate rooted in different tastes in music, the deeper issue, it seems, is offering encouragement and training people to sing. Can reliance on instrumental accompaniment or trained voices actually diminish the congregation's capacity to sing? Since the human voice is the natural instrument of song, when does unaccompanied singing take place in your congregation? Does it take place regularly or is it too frightening to imagine?

PART  
2The Pastoral Calling of the  
Lutheran Church Musician

**CLAIM 3.** In a culture of forgetfulness, the church musician is called to cultivate memory for the future.

*What does this mean?*

One of the most amusing ideas I encounter in many college students is the deeply held notion that history began on the day they were born. John Kennedy? Ronald Reagan? The Cold War? Vietnam? The collapse of Soviet communism? Electric typewriters? The freshmen and sophomores in my classroom seem utterly and pleasantly free of the past. The fact that I'm the same age if not a bit older than many of their parents places me in that misty time before their glorious births. I do not advertise Old Navy, the Gap, or Abercrombie. My body is neither pierced nor tattooed here, there, or everywhere. While I may appear knowledgeable, even humorous, to many of them, I am nonetheless marginally out of style. That I teach history in a culture founded on forgetting history, on leaving the past behind, only adds to their initial suspicion that I might be nothing more than an antiquarian.

Of course, I lead them to see that the study of history is one of the most *subversive* disciplines in a university and in this forgetful culture. It is subversive because it brings to consciousness that what we perceive as “normal” or as the status quo has not always been so. To remember the past, to let the voices of the past speak to us today, is to be faced with other options for thinking and acting in the present. To encounter different models of imagining God, humanity, and the world can be one of the most liberating tasks, because we begin to recognize that we are not alone, that we do not have to reinvent the wheel every day, that there is

wisdom available to us from the other side of our birth dates. True, we should never be so naïve as to imagine that we could live in the first, or fourth, or sixteenth century. Though much religious educational curricula, preaching, and anthem and hymn texts suggest otherwise, we can *never* return to the past. But we can let voices of the past speak to us today. We can come to the sobering realization that the way we think and act, or the ways we imagine humanity or this world, are still being shaped by the living ideas, movements, and songs of the dead, whether those dead be our parents or grandparents, pastors, artists, political leaders, scientists, or musicians.

Of course, this is a deeply Jewish idea received gladly by Christians—that the past is shaping our present and our future, that we are if anything, Jews and Christians alike, *communities of memory*. For instance, we begin the liturgy not in our names—“Good morning, everyone! Glad to have you here!”—but with an ancient Christian greeting—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”—that names a person from the past who is yet with us today (2 Corinthians 13:13). We conclude the liturgy with an ancient Jewish blessing spoken by Jerusalem priests in the Temple, recovered by Luther in his reform of the Mass and heard today by Lutheran Christians throughout the world (Numbers 6:24–26). In between this greeting and this blessing, we proclaim what the liturgy calls “the mystery of our faith”: “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.”

I would argue that we are communities of memory, tellers and singers of ancient stories because the stories name and give expression to the hopes and dreams of every generation. “Let the vineyards be fruitful, Lord.” Perhaps the text

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***We are communities of memory, tellers and singers of ancient stories because the stories name and give expression to the hopes and dreams of every generation.***

is right when it says, “gather the hopes and dreams of all.” That is, the song speaks of *our* hopes and dreams. But I would turn the meaning of the canticle upside down. *I would suggest that we tell and sing the ancient stories today because they reveal God’s hopes and dreams for us.* And if they are God’s hopes and dreams for us, embodied in one like us, then we have no other choice but to care about and for the stories as they come to expression among us in song.

Why? In a culture of forgetfulness and increasing biblical illiteracy, why should we care about the ancient stories? So ask my students, so ask people in our assemblies. Why? I would say we care for these stories emerging in song because *God’s hopes and dreams for this world have not yet come to fruition.* If you do not believe me, pick up the newspaper and read it; turn on the evening news tonight and listen.

The pastoral musician, I want to argue, is the guardian, treasurer, and steward of the ancient dreams coming to expression in song: the voice of the prophet Miriam who cries out the oldest song in our history, “Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously” (Exodus 15:21), the voice of God urging Moses, leave no one behind in the exodus (see Exodus 12:29–39). Yes, *leave no song behind*, because in that song is God’s hope, God’s dream for us. If it is forgotten, how will we know who we are? But the pastoral musician is also the voice of Amos who says, “Take away from me the noise of your songs. . . . But let justice roll down like waters” (Amos 5:23a, 24a).

When historians speak about the liturgy, they inevitably bump into the Greek word *anamnesis*, a term employed by Luke and Paul (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24), a word loosely translated as “memorial” or “remembrance.” Such English translations, however, fail to grasp the verbal and dynamic sense of the word. We hear it this way in the Eucharistic Prayer: “Remembering—calling to mind—then, his death and resurrection, we lift this bread and cup before you, giving thanks.”<sup>11</sup> The “remembering” of God’s gracious act in the past is



GILABRAND, SEDER TABLE, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

***Jews and Christians engage in anamnesis, cultivate memory at the heart of the Passover meal and the Christian Eucharist, so that we do not forget who we are.***

the grounds upon which we give thanks today. Of course, the antonym of *anamnesis* is amnesia. Those who suffers with amnesia have forgotten who they are, the assumption being that at one time they *knew* who they were. Jews and Christians engage in anamnesis, cultivate memory at the heart of the Passover meal and the Christian Eucharist, so that we do not forget who we are. Or, if we have forgotten who we are, the act of remembering, of being “re-membered” into a body that remembers, a community of memory, can be an awakening that in the end is life-giving. Is there nothing more terrible than not knowing who you are?

So here I ask you to consider the difficult task of caring for our communal memory, for the ancient stories that hold God’s hopes and dreams for us, in the most effective way it can be cultivated: through song.

**What are some practical implications?**

Hymnals tend to include texts and tunes from different historical periods. The authors of the ELCA document *Principles for Worship* note that “congregational song handed on across time and place links the memory of individuals and particular communities to the longer corporate memory of the church.”<sup>12</sup> They continue by suggesting that an established core of music be repeated along with the introduction of new songs. In addition to texts drawn directly from or closely inspired by the Bible, do our assemblies sing songs drawn from early Christian, Byzantine, Medieval, Reformation, and Romantic communities?

***In your preparations for Trinity Sunday, you are free to select the hymn of the day. Seasonal planning guides suggest a number of appropriate hymns. Two come to your attention: on what grounds do you select one over the other?***

Praise to the Father for his  
 lovingkindness,  
 tenderly caring for his erring children;  
 praise him, all angels; praise him in the  
 heavens;  
 praise to the Father!  
 (LBW 517, st. 1)

Mothering God, you gave me birth  
 in the bright morning of this world.  
 Creator, source of ev'ry breath,  
 you are my rain, my wind, my sun.  
 (ELW 735, st. 1)

***You are planning a hymn festival for the evening of Pentecost Sunday. This is a musical event but one that could also have educational undertones.***

***You are contemplating two possible themes:***

- (A) introducing members to the historical range of Christian music; or
- (B) celebrating the multicultural dimension of Christian music.

Plan A might lead you to focus on a range of images for God. Plan B might lead you to focus on multicultural interpretations of Spirit in creation (fig. 1).

There is not one univocal voice in the Christian tradition, either theologically or culturally.

**A**

Blessed be the God of Israel  
 Luke 1:68, mid-1st c., *WOV*725  
 This is the feast of victory for our God.  
 Revelation 12:10, late 1st c., *LBW*, p. 60  
 Father, we thank you that you planted  
 The Didache, 2nd c., *WOV*704  
 O Trinity, O blessed light, O Unity  
 Ambrose of Milan, 4th c., *LBW*275  
 Holy God, Holy and strong  
 Byzantine, 5th-6th c., *WOV*603  
 O holy Wisdom, soaring Power  
 Hildegard of Bingen, 12th c., *WOV*688  
 A mighty fortress is our God  
 Martin Luther, 16th c., *LBW*229  
 Come, thou Fount of ev'ry blessing  
 Robert Robinson, 18th c., *LBW*499  
 O Sea, mystic Source, relentless and fathomless  
 Susan Palo Cherwien, 20th c.

**B**

American, *LBW*463  
 God, who stretched the spangled heavens  
 American, *WOV*684  
 Spirit, of gentleness, blow through the wilderness  
 Dakota Indian, *WOV*794  
 Many and great, O God, are your works  
 English, *WOV*767  
 All things bright and beautiful  
 Hebrew, *LBW*, p. 69  
 Holy, holy, holy Lord (Isaiah 6:3)  
 Ikalahan/Filipino, *WOV*727  
 Lord, your hands have formed this world  
 Italian, *LBW*527  
 All creatures of our God and King  
 Mexican, *WOV*726  
 Oh, sing to God above  
 Nigerian, *WOV*681  
 Come, O Holy Spirit, come

**Figure 1.** A list of hymns that accompanied themes (A) and (B) in the original publication of this article.

**CLAIM 4.** The church musician is called to exercise pastoral care over the music that shapes Christian identity.

### *What does this mean?*

We know that the word “pastor” entered the English language from the Latin. A “pastor” is, literally, a feeder, one who “gives pasture,” that is, makes it possible for others to find food and thus live. The second understanding of this word highlights another meaning of “pastor,” that is, one who exercises protecting care or offers guidance. A pastor, then, serves others by pointing to that place where they may find nourishment and thus live *and* also protects or alerts others to dangers that would threaten their lives.

While I would agree with Paul Westermeyer that it is appropriate to speak of the Lutheran church musician as “cantor,” since this term emphasizes the musician’s primary role of leading congregational song, I would suggest that we also think of the church musician as a pastoral musician and let such words as “pastor” or “pastoral” illuminate the calling of the church musician.

I have already suggested that whether we know it or not, and whether we want to claim it or not, the church musician does participate in the ongoing work of the assembly’s formation in faith. I would like to extend that notion and suggest that our ministry challenges us to point the assembly toward music that will nourish faith and, just as importantly, to alert—we may even say, to protect—the assembly from music that can diminish,

harm, or contradict the proclamation of the gospel through word and sacraments.<sup>13</sup>

Now one might argue that this is properly the work of ordained ministers: it is their responsibility to ensure that the congregation is nourished with the word and sacraments and alerted to ideas, images, or practices that could diminish or deform faith. My point is this: the moment a pastoral musician selects a hymn, song, canticle, anthem, tune, or form of accompaniment, that musician has engaged in the act of pastoral care of the assembly’s song. This act of pastoral care for the assembly’s music possesses two dimensions: saying Yes to music that supports the “center” of Lutheran Christian worship, and saying No to music that does not accord with this center. That center is this: a *participating Christian assembly* gathered with its leaders around the *water-washing of baptism* in the name of the Trinity, around the *Scriptures proclaimed* and prayed as the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ for this whole world, and around the *thanksgiving over bread and cup shared* by the assembly for the life of the world.<sup>14</sup> To say it clearly, these things that constitute the center of Lutheran Christian worship are not optional. But to speak of Yes and No is also to say nothing new. It has always been the practice of the Christian community. Let me offer a few examples in which Christians have sorted through competing claims, saying Yes to some and No to others. The Christian community has said:

1. Yes to the affirmation that the earth is God’s, and No to the notion that the earth—the land or seas—intrinsically belongs to any individual or group;
2. Yes to the claim that every human being is created in the image of God, and No to the idea that some people are created “less” in that image than others (e.g., women, Gentiles, Africans, the mentally ill, the poor);
3. Yes to the Jewish claim that a human is an inspired body, and No to the Gnostic assertion that the human is a good spirit dwelling in the prison of an insignificant or corrupt body;

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***Our ministry challenges us to point the assembly toward music that will nourish faith and, just as importantly, to alert—we may even say, to protect—the assembly from music that can diminish, harm, or contradict the proclamation of the gospel.***

*Traditional djembe drum with animal skin being played by a drummer at a wedding celebration in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.*



ISTOCK/WILPUNT

4. Yes to the humanity of Jesus, and No to the persistent claim that he is a divine spirit disguised in an earthly body;
5. Yes to the water washings of first-century Palestine, and No to the exclusive nature of these washings (e.g., only for males, only for observant Jews, only for celibate Jews);
6. Yes to the claim that baptism welcomes one into the diverse communities of the Trinity and the church, and No to the claim that through baptism one enters into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ alone;
7. Yes to Scripture as the proclamation of good news, and No to Scripture as a book of moral, economic, or churchly obligations (e.g., you must tithe, you must always be obedient to the government);
8. Yes to the meal practice of the ancient world, and No to invitation lists that welcome only male guests, the healthy, those with rational capacities, or the religiously observant; and
9. Yes to the assertion that the gifts of the meal are to be shared equitably and without discrimination, and No to the practice of refusing, hoarding, or disparaging these good gifts of God and this earth.

This practice of saying Yes and No is, for Lutherans, guided by the central teaching of the faith: there is nothing one can do to win, achieve, or produce God's grace and love just as there is no human failure that can mitigate, shorten, or erase that grace and love. This teaching on justification insists that God's grace, or merciful regard for the creation, or life-giving presence, is free—radically free, without conditions attached to it. Indeed, the church cannot give the impression (though it often has and does) that anything humans create, or believe, or do will somehow win or achieve this radically free and gracious presence. The corollary to this central teaching is that nothing we humans create can be made into a new law, a legalism, and so give the impression that it comes from

***So while we make the theological claim that music itself is a creation and gift of God, ... we cannot command its use, or insist that a particular voice, instrument, or musical style is somehow “Christian” or conducive to Christianity.***

God or is innately “Christian” and thus must be obeyed or followed if we are to live in the gracious environment of the gospel. So while we make the theological claim that music itself is a creation and gift of God, while we enjoy this gift and seek to employ both reason and faith in nurturing this gift, we cannot command its use, or insist that a particular voice, instrument, or musical style is somehow “Christian” or conducive to Christianity.

Thus, many kinds of artistic, ritual, and musical gifts may be welcomed as ways of proclaiming the gospel of grace, but none of them are intrinsically “Christian.” Consider these words of Gordon Lathrop: “Western patterns of hierarchy, of androcentrism, of the valuing of wealth, of [intimate community] or of musical and artistic standards *are not* to be identified . . . as ‘Christian.’”<sup>15</sup> There is no one musical genre or instrument commanded by God or required by Christianity. There are only a variety of human musical traditions—some perhaps better suited than others—that enable the community to gather and sing around the word and sacraments.

**What are some practical implications?**

There is nothing sacred or special about a pipe organ, guitar, drum, flute, or piano. There is nothing sacred or special about plainsong, chorales, praise songs, folk melodies, or cantatas. For instance, to suggest a “true” or “authentic” Lutheran liturgy is to be understood and experienced as worship accompanied by the organ is to make the organ into a new law, to rob the word and sacraments of their centrality. On the other hand, to claim that people are attracted to a Christian community only through an informal leadership style with drums and guitars is to make a particular style and form of accompaniment into a new law.

So-called “high church” formality or “low church” informality (and their attendant musics) cannot be insisted upon. Neither a throne room nor a living room will do. There is only a room with the baptized doing the Spirit-inspired actions that constitute the radically free center.

The calling of the Lutheran pastoral musician is to be clear on why we say Yes and No. For example:

1. We say Yes to an organ because it is useful in the accompaniment of the congregation’s song around word and sacraments. We say No to the use of that powerful instrument when it overwhelms or silences the congregation’s song, even when members of that congregation prefer listening to the sound of the organ rather than the sound of their own singing.
2. We say Yes to the use of a guitar and a flute descant when that accompaniment highlights the meditative and plaintive voice of the psalm being sung. We say No to the insistence that guitar and flute are the only instruments that create a feeling of intimacy in our community.
3. We say Yes to hymn texts that underscore the communal and Trinitarian character of baptism, and No to texts that speak of either individual choice or “me and Jesus” alone.

4. We say Yes to anthems that affirm the enduring goodness of creation, and No to texts that disparage this world or speak of flight from the world.
5. We say Yes to a diversity of images that name God, and No to the insistence that God must be named only in masculine or only in feminine metaphors.
6. We do say Yes to the heritage of European and North American liturgical, choral, and instrumental music as it serves the singing Christian assembly, and No to that music when its use overwhelms, stifles, or suppresses indigenous expressions from around the globe.

**PART  
3**

**The Prophetic Calling of the  
Lutheran Church Musician**

**CLAIM 5. The prophet’s song envisions the victory of God over silence, injustice, and violence.**

**What does this mean?**

If you ask my students what comes to mind when they see the word “prophet,” you’ll hear these two typical responses: a prophet is a person who is angry or who predicts the future. There you are: the prophet as a ranting kook who warns people to repent before the day of judgment catches them unprepared *or* the prophet as the privileged person who has knowledge of the future unavailable to ordinary people. The current success of the Left Behind series of novels and films is an indicator of the first view’s liveliness in North American culture: unless you “get Jesus” *now*, you will be royally screwed *later*. On the other hand, the much-anticipated “forecasts” of Alan Greenspan are a sign that, even in a deeply secularized version, many people

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***Miriam ... the previously voiceless slave now leads her people as a singing, dancing prophet. Her song is filled with a hope rooted in the memory of the exodus.***

expect someone to predict the future. Indeed, for those who have the funds to invest, the “future” can be seen at any hour of the day streaming on the bottom of the television screen as the current stock report emerges from Wall Street.

Biblical scholars, however, paint a quite different picture of a prophet. Prophets emerge in times of social or cultural crisis. They are not at all interested in the distant future but in “the immediate present of their people and the immediate future that flows out of that present.”<sup>16</sup> The prophet rarely nags or reprimands. Rather, the prophet speaks or sings two “words,” two messages as it were, not necessarily in this order. First, the prophet brings to public expression God’s intention to free the world from those forces that can destroy the health and well-being of God’s creation. Miriam the prophet stands by the sea and exhorts her sisters to sing in thanksgiving to God who liberates slaves and gives them a future beyond their previous misery. The previously voiceless slave now leads her people as a singing, dancing prophet. Her song is filled with a hope rooted in the memory of the exodus.

But the prophet also brings to public expression the human propensity to be both turned away from this life-giving God and turned inward on the self. Christians express this double turning away from God and others when they state, “We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.”<sup>17</sup> Here the prophet exposes the illusion that humans are somehow self-made, the only vital subjects in a universe of their own imagining. The liturgy’s rite of confession and absolution expresses this truth: “we confess that we are in bondage and cannot free ourselves.”<sup>18</sup> That is, we are in bondage to the self-deception that the world revolves around us. The prophet is often painfully aware that such illusions can lead individuals or communities to imagine that other humans exist simply to serve the self, the group, or the nation.<sup>19</sup> Thus the prophet Amos, standing before religiously



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*Miriam plays the tamborine, mosaic at the Dormition Church on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.*

observant Israelites who believe their personal and national prosperity is a sign of God’s favor, calls them “cows”—big, fat, grazing cows (Amos 4:1). Why are these words so sharp? Is it not so because the pampered and overweight people of suburban Samaria who sing to God in the assembly also support the oppression of the poor and neglect the widows with their silence or their actions? “Take away from me the noise of your songs,” God cries through the prophet (Amos 5:23). I will not listen to those “who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,” who “improvise on instruments of music” (Amos 6:5).

One of the most widely held understandings of religion rests on two “words” rather than one. Through speech, ritual, and song, a religious community can bring *strength* (the original meaning of the word “comfort”) to people who are anxious, distressed, or lonely. Through the same means, however, religion can also *challenge* the complacent and name the injustice and violence present in our communities and society. This is to say that both, the word of strength as well as the word of challenge, need to be sung; for when we hear both, we begin to hear the fullness of biblical witness.

While much historical writing has consistently invoked the name of David, the lover of music, as the biblical model for church musicians, I suggest we consider Miriam and Amos, both poets, both

singers. The suggestion is quite simple: let us welcome Miriam who sings of God's continuing liberation of all things from the death-dealing forces of silence, injustice, and violence. But let us also welcome Amos who is mindful of *our* tendency to fashion idols of our own prosperity, success, and comfort while the hungry cry for bread, the sick languish, the widow is neglected. What do both Miriam and Amos long to hear in our music? It is nothing less than the sound of justice rolling like a cleansing and life-giving stream through the land (Amos 5:24). Both of them sing of water: the water that drowns the evil of slavery and the water that is filled with God's justice, both images emerging, unsurprisingly, in Luther's great prayer over the waters of baptism.

I would suggest that our prophetic calling, flowing from baptism, invites church musicians to offer lyrics and tunes that honestly speak the truth of human suffering and violence. Such a project will lead us again and again to the psalms, where we encounter the genuine voice of lament, abandonment, and grief. There we find Psalm 22, that great song of loss and trust, quoted by Amos and spoken by Jesus in his own lonely death. But our calling also invites us to offer poetry and melodies that enable the singing assembly to imagine life in this world being transformed by God's justice and peace. Such a project may lead us to the Magnificat, the song of a Jewish peasant girl, living in a land occupied by foreign soldiers and controlled by Judean religious elites, who calls out to God as the merciful Savior who brings down the powerful, lifts up the lowly, and fills the hungry with good things. But as you may well know, all this is easier said than done in our current cultural and churchly climates.

What of our current cultural climate? It is a situation in which the rapid rate of change in technical advances, the current movement to a global American economy, and increasing demand for options in our cultural life are compounded by environmental and military threats. Is the tap water safe? Can we be sure that Al-Qaeda or the

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***If we live in a culture that values strong family ties, supports extended families, and places great emphasis on the common good ... , we can enjoy and rely on companionship, strengthen each other, recognize that we are not alone, and share a common purpose greater than ourselves.***

Aryan Nations will not bomb us? To say the least, such a situation creates a sense of anxiety and helplessness, and an uneasiness that rests below the surface of consciousness. And when we are anxious or helpless, when we feel threatened, we can easily become preoccupied with ourselves, with the self, with me. The church and its music can become an escape from this world.

Such a sense of anxiety or self-centeredness is not necessarily debilitating, that is, *if* we live in a culture that values strong family ties, supports extended families, and places great emphasis on the common good. In this kind of atmosphere, we can enjoy and rely on companionship, strengthen each other, recognize that we are not alone, and share a common purpose greater than ourselves. The difficulty *for us* is that in American and in most Western societies, we are "baptized" at the cultural font of individualism and "communed" at the altar of individual rights. We are told that it is our duty to make it on our own, to leave our families and never return, to compete aggressively with our colleagues. We are expected to be mobile and rootless because this is how corporate life in a global market economy is managed.

Theologian Edward Farley writes that "individuals [in] church communities spend most of their time and energy in non-church environments. As they pass from childhood to adulthood and as they pursue leisure activities, work in business, and exist in other [small groups] ... they imbibe the anxieties, narcissism, and individualism [of this culture]." Consequently, "church communities [today] are filled with anxious individuals ... dominated—dominated—by the need for consolation, reassurance, and entertainment."<sup>20</sup>

What is the point here? I think Farley is arguing that contemporary Americans expect, even demand, that the Christian assembly offer reassurance to the helpless and distracting entertainment to the anxious. Of course, religious communities have always sung songs of *strength* and *comfort* in times of cultural change or crisis. But to sing a song of strength and comfort is not the same thing as using music to make people feel merely comfortable or numb to the changes or crises alive in the larger world. Miriam shouts out that in God there is liberation from the slavery of helplessness so that one can live a courageous life in the world. God doesn't respond to injustice and violence with a narcotic. God strengthens greatly for life in the world.

What, then, of our churchly climate? It goes without saying that many Christian congregations in North American cities are held in thrall, often unwittingly, by the ethos of consumer capitalism. For instance, a "healthy" congregation is expected to be warm and welcoming, growing in members and staff, reaching for that magical but arbitrary number of 500 members to qualify as a "growing" congregation, committed to an expanding endowment fund, and eager to enlarge its programmatic offerings. Solomon, who built a temple more splendid than any other and filled it with an enormous staff and countless musicians, might welcome such an ethos or program.<sup>21</sup> But, I wonder, would Jesus? In one lyrical description, the Lukan Jesus expressed the prophetic utterance of both Miriam and Amos when he set forth his mission in the words of another prophet, Isaiah.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release  
to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.  
(Luke 4:18–19)

You see, it really doesn't matter if there are 50 or 5000 people in the congregation. It really doesn't matter if there are 15 or 50 people in the choir. There is no equation of health with programs or musical statistics in either the New Testament or the confessional vision of early Lutheranism. There is no talk of maintaining or growing congregations as if they were modern temples that impress with their size and vitality, yet so subtly and tragically subvert the authentic center: Jesus Christ who, through word and sacraments, brings good news to the poor, lets the oppressed go free, and proclaims God's favor for the little ones of this earth. Since we are perennially tempted to confuse our ego-driven achievements with God's intentions, we need to hear the voice of Amos who says: leave the temple and "establish justice" in the gates of the city (Amos 5:15).

Indeed, Miriam and Amos don't ask us merely to maintain an institution where we simply accompany the stages of life with a winsome Christian song. No, they invite us to sing into the assembly—the body of Christ, the voice of the elderly, the mentally ill, the poor, the chronically ill, the homeless, the children, the alien who are considered neither vital nor productive in the ethos of consumer capitalism but are deemed precious in the eyes of God and marked with an eternal dignity by their Creator. The authors of *Principles for Worship* say it this way: "a community remembers and sings for those who are absent or unable to sing, including those who have been silenced by abuse, racism, sexism, homophobia, mental illness, violence, tragedy, or any form of exclusion."<sup>22</sup>

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***Miriam and Amos ... invite us to sing into the assembly—the body of Christ, the voice of the elderly, the mentally ill, the poor, the chronically ill, the homeless, the children, the alien who are considered neither vital nor productive in the ethos of consumer capitalism but are deemed precious in the eyes of God.***

***Our singing ... is intended to free the assembly from self-preoccupation and strengthen the baptized so that they can go about their proper mission of serving the neighbor in need.***

But are we called only to sing for those who have been silenced? Perhaps that is all we can do on some days. But I want to claim that our singing as one body around the gospel proclaimed through word and sacraments is intended to free the assembly from self-preoccupation and strengthen the baptized so that they can go about their proper mission of serving the neighbor in need in the world. But to do this, the truth about our life and the larger world that shapes our lives always needs to be sung in the assembly. To imagine that the congregation, its liturgy, and its music are a flight from this real world and its serious problems, and to accede to the demand for an inward-looking or world-escaping entertainment, would be to compromise the very heart of the gospel. God is not a refuge from the world; rather, God is our refuge in the world. Or we may say it this way: *God is with us all together for the life of this world.* “In the midst of injustice and human brokenness, music in the assembly by God’s grace can break open a space that helps us perceive God’s design for a [just and merciful] creation.”<sup>23</sup>

***What are some practical implications?***

Be attentive to psalms, hymns, and anthems that honestly express the reality of suffering. Resist the temptation to ignore texts that express the biblical calls for justice in society. It is easy to edit out what may be troublesome yet deeply truthful. Paul Westermeyer offers a trenchant example when he asks why all major hymnals and hymn collections (with the exception of *The Hymnal 1982*) have omitted a troubling stanza of “O Little Town of Bethlehem”:

Where children pure and happy  
 pray to the blessed Child,  
 where misery cries out to Thee,  
 Son of the mother mild;  
 where charity stands watching  
 and faith holds wide the door,  
 The dark night wakes, the glory breaks,  
 and Christmas comes once more.<sup>24</sup>

***You are preparing music for the last Sunday of the liturgical year, Christ the King. The festival can be interpreted in various ways, depending on the hymn texts, anthems, and instrumentation selected by the musician.***

Rejoice, the Lord is king!  
 Your Lord and king adore;  
 rejoice, give thanks, and sing,  
 and triumph evermore:  
 Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;  
 rejoice, again I say, rejoice!  
 (LBW 171, st. 1)

[Refrain]  
 Jesu, Jesu,  
 fill us with your love,  
 show us how to serve  
 the neighbors we have from you.

Kneels at the feet of his friends,  
 silently washes their feet,  
 master who pours out himself for them.<sup>25</sup>  
 (LSB 980, accompaniment edition;  
 WOV 765—st. 1)

A quick “test” for texts: God is with us for the life of the world. Does the text speak of God’s initiative toward life in this world (rather than ethical work we do on our own)? Does the text speak about God with us (rather than the individual alone with God)? Does the text speak about this world or creation (rather than an other-worldly focus)? Take a look at “Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service” (ELW 712; LSB 848) and “Where Restless Crowds Are Thronging” (LBW 430), two texts that fit the bill.

**Conclusion**

On the day she would die, my maternal grandmother lay unconscious in a hospital bed at a nursing home in western Washington state, her hip

broken and inoperable because of the weakened state of her heart and lungs. For many hours, my mother sat with her until my father arrived so that she could leave and get a bite to eat. As he sat by the bed of his dying mother-in-law, my father began to sing hymns as if to surround her with their letters and words—the alphabet of God’s grace. After singing a number of what he knew to be her favorite songs, he began this familiar hymn:

Children of the heav’nly Father  
safely in his bosom gather;  
nestling bird nor star in heaven  
such a refuge e’er was given.

God his own doth tend and nourish,  
in his holy courts they flourish.

From all evil things he spares them,  
in his mighty arms he bears them.

(ELW781; LSB 725; CW 449—sts. 1, 2)

My father was able to sing this tender Swedish lullaby because a church musician taught him the song while he was in Sunday school as a child. My grandmother knew the song as well because her husband, a Lutheran hymn composer, taught her the song after their marriage. At my grandmother’s funeral, we sang this hymn as her casket was lowered into the grave. We were led, unaccompanied, by another church musician, James Holloway. As the assembly finished receiving communion at my sister’s wedding, she stood next to her husband—two “children of the heavenly father”—as Erik Floan led the assembly in singing this hymn.

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*With love, our skill becomes art and our talent useful to the neighbor in need.*

On May 17, 2002, as a small group of family and friends gathered in Pacific Lutheran University’s Tower Chapel to celebrate the Eucharist on the anniversary of Jim Holloway’s death, Stephen Crippen, another Lutheran church musician, accompanied the assembly in singing these words of poignant trust in a loving God who promises to nourish us and our beloved dead at the great and promised feast.

Dear colleagues, this simple song of God nourishing God’s children was taught by church musicians to four generations in classrooms, dining rooms, and worship rooms; it was led or accompanied by church musicians who sang at gravesides and bedsides, hummed the melody at night to crying babies, and played organs or pianos in chapels and churches. From birth to death, church musicians have taught us to sing a story of such astonishing mercy and honesty that none of us, left to our own devices, could have ever created. They have not only proclaimed the faith through song but have formed us in the faith through word and melody. At their best, they have pointed to the gospel’s own discomfort with the ways things are and have placed on our lips and played in our ears the sound of what might yet come: “a life,” as Luther writes,” full of integrity and justice, freed from sin, death, and misfortune.”<sup>26</sup>

What is the calling of the Lutheran church musician, of any church musician—why, even of musical pastors? It is, quite simply, to bring forth musical treasures old and new, that is, to cultivate the memory of who we are so that we might serve this world and the neighbor in need with love. For this, at the beginning and in the end, can be the only source of our calling. “For Love,” writes Susan Palo Cherwien,

for Love sought out the place of humble birth  
that humble kindness mark our life on earth.  
Grant love, O God; grant love, O God,  
that humble kindness mark our life  
on earth.<sup>27</sup>

Yes, for with love, our skill becomes art and our talent useful to the neighbor in need. Yes, not one without the other: we exercise our powerful art at the service of the living and the dying, the island and the continent, the poor and the prosperous, the ukulele and the organ, the queer and the conservative, the mother of many and the widow of none.



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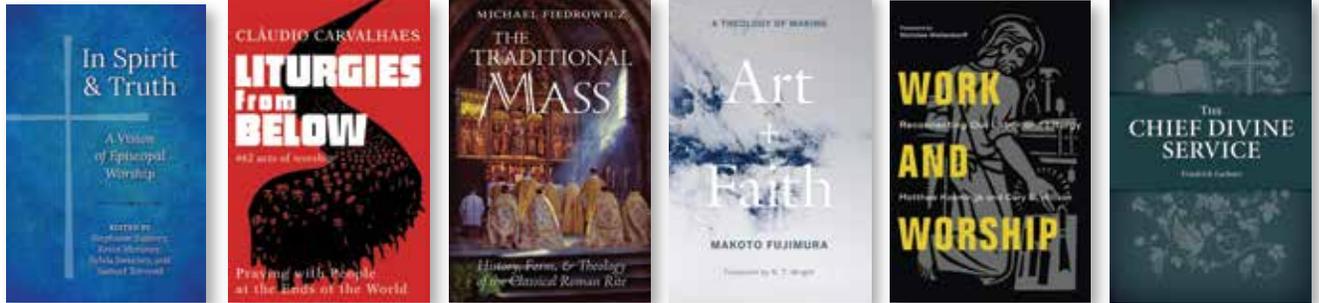
## Notes

1. “To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel.” Augsburg Confession, Article V, in *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 40.
2. Martin Luther, “The German Mass and Order of Service,” in *Luther’s Works*, American edition (hereafter LW), vol. 53, *Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. Ulrich S. Leopold (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 74–78, 80–81.
3. Martin Luther, “Preface to Georg Rhau’s *Symphoniae iucundae*,” in Luther, *Liturgy and Hymns*, 323.
4. Stephen Crippen, “The Way Music Functions in Lutheran Spirituality” (Lutheran Heritage Lecture, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA, 2001).
5. ELCA, *The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement*

- on the Practice of Word and Sacrament (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), 16.
6. Nicholas Brady, "Ode for St. Cecilia's Day," 1692.
  7. "Indeed, the papists possess a lot of splendid, beautiful songs and music, especially in the cathedrals. ... But we have unclothed these lifeless and foolish texts and divested them of their beautiful music. We have put this music on the living Word of God in order to sing. We want the beautiful art of music to be properly used to serve her dear Creator and his Christians. [God] is thereby praised ... and we are made stronger in faith." Luther, "Preface to the Burial Hymns, 1542," in Luther, *Liturgy and Hymns*, 327–328.
  8. Luther, "Preface to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae iucundae*," 323.
  9. Martin Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," in LW, vol. 31, *Career of the Reformer*, vol. 1, ed. Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 302–303.
  10. Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).
  11. "Holy Communion V," in *With One Voice* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 38.
  12. ELCA, *Principles for Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 26.
  13. In his reform of the ordination ritual, Luther includes this admonition to ministers of the word: "You hear that [pastors] are called not to watch over geese or cows, but over the congregation God purchased with his own blood that we should feed them with the pure Word of God and also be on guard lest wolves ... burst in among [us]." Luther, "The Ordination of Ministers of the Word," in Luther, *Liturgy and Hymns*, 125.
  14. Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 43–53. The church "is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel." Augsburg Confession, Article VII, in *Book of Concord*, 42. "Jesus Christ is the living and abiding Word of God. By the power of the Spirit, this very Word of God, which is Jesus Christ, is read in the Scriptures, proclaimed in preaching, announced in the forgiveness of sins, eaten and drunk in the Holy Communion, and encountered in the bodily presence of the Christian community. By the power of the Spirit active in Holy Baptism, this Word washes a people to be Christ's own Body in the world. We have called this gift of Word and Sacrament by the name 'the means of grace.' The living heart of all these means is the presence of Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit as the gift of the Father." In *Use of the Means of Grace*, 6.
  15. Gordon W. Lathrop, "A Contemporary Lutheran Approach to Worship and Culture: Sorting Out the Critical Principles," in *Worship and Culture in Dialogue*, ed. S. Anita Stauffer (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994), 147, emphasis mine.
  16. See Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus, a New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1987, reprinted 1991), 150–177, and Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 39–79, on the Hebrew prophets, but especially 81–113 on Jesus the prophet.
  17. "Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness," in *Lutheran Book of Worship*, 56.
  18. "Brief Order," 56.
  19. Thus, the distinction between subject and object. If the illusion posits the self as the real subject, then others become objects; they are objectified, deprived of their distinct otherness, disallowed their unique subjectivity. We are aware now that this is not only a personal illusion but also a social or communal illusion: individuals as well as groups are implicated in the deception. "Many in our time are deprived or depriving, abusing or abused. All humanity, indeed all creation, is threatened by sin that erupts in greed, violence, and war. In the midst of isolation, lovelessness, and self-absorption, the Church is tempted to turn in on itself, its own needs, and preferences." In *Use of the Means of Grace*, 7.
  20. Edward Farley, *Deep Symbols: Their Postmodern Effacement and Reclamation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 68.
  21. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 21–37, on the dark side of Solomon's project and his silencing of the Mosaic and prophetic voice in Israel.
  22. ELCA, *Principles for Worship*, 37.
  23. ELCA, *Principles for Worship*, 39.
  24. Phillips Brooks, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," st. 4.
  25. [Editor's note: Because this article originally appeared before the publication of *ELW*, the text from *With One Voice* is shown here. In *ELW*, the last phrase of the first stanza, "master who acts as a slave to them" (*ELW* 708), is the original form of the hymn as transcribed and published in Tom Colvin, *Free to Serve: Hymns from Africa* (Glasgow: Iona, 1968).]
  26. Martin Luther, The Large Catechism, in *Book of Concord*, 438.
  27. Susan Palo Cherwien, "Teach Us to Seek," in *O Blessed Spring: Hymns of Susan Palo Cherwien* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), 111.

# BOOKSHELF

## New Titles



Budwey, Stephanie, Kevin Moroney, Sylvia Sweetney, and Samuel Torvend, eds. *In Spirit and Truth: A Vision of Episcopal Worship*. New York: Church Publishing, 2020.

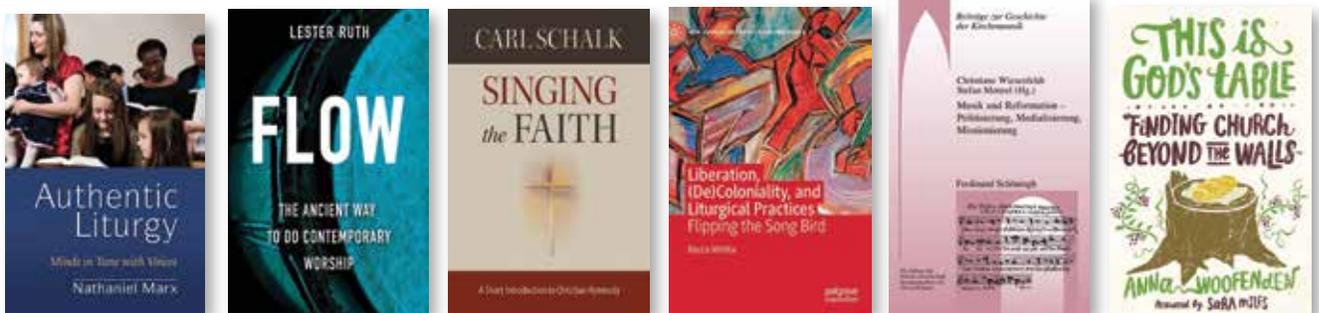
Carvalhoes, Cláudio. *Liturgies from Below: Praying with People at the Ends of the World*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2020.

Fiedrowicz, Michael. *The Traditional Mass: History, Form, and Theology of the Classical Roman Rite*. Trans. Rose Pfeifer. Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2020.

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# REVIEWS

Chad Fothergill.

## *Sing with All the People of God: A Handbook for Church Musicians.*

Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2020.

128 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-1-5064-6923-2.

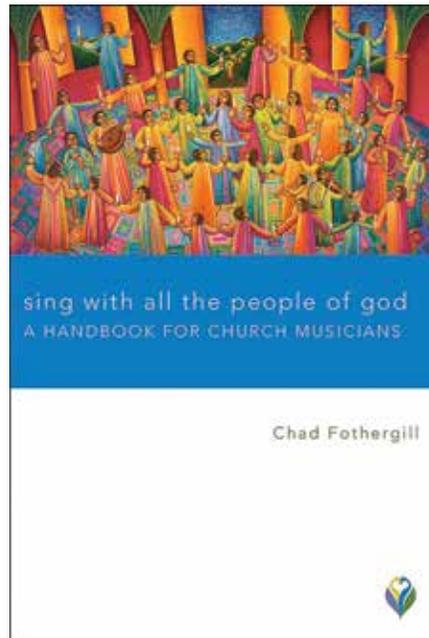
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**Y**ou who lead the song of the people, you who lead worship, you who nurture the voice of the assembly and interact with the assembly—cantors, directors of music, choirs, worship committees, clergy: this book is for you.

“It is not I who sing, but the church.” Fothergill quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer to begin the journey into a discussion of principles and leadership skills pertaining to the cantor as the leader of assembly song.<sup>1</sup> Fothergill offers contextual questions for the reader to ponder, such as the physical properties of the assembly, the spaces in which the gathering takes place, the musical abilities of the people, and the way the assembly gathers. He reminds us that these considerations affect the voice of the people, and that the cantor needs to pay attention to these issues as well.

This handbook is an accessible read about the calling and vocation of the cantor. It is terse—“smoothly elegant,” as one of Webster’s dictionary definitions states. It is pithy—concise, and expressive. It is succinct—compact and to the point. This handbook is filled with questions, suggestions, abundant examples of practical applications, and resources for leading the church’s song.

Throughout the book, Fothergill uses the word “cantor” extensively as a synonym for the many titles of church musicians. He refers to the gathered people of God as the “assembly,” a group of people brought together for a common purpose. He consistently reminds us of the importance of the assembly’s context in time, space, and place. The chapters address three main points relevant to the assembly’s song: (1) principles and applications about the cantor’s role in selecting these songs; (2)



the cantor’s leadership of assembly song; and (3) the cantor and the community. A final chapter addresses the selection of a new cantor by a congregational search committee.

In the section on principles for leading song, Fothergill stresses the importance of beginning with the appointed lectionary texts and images for the day and their implications for assembly song. He suggests beginning with selecting the hymn of the day (or sermon hymn as some designate it) and analyzing its relationship to the lectionary. The hymn of the day can then become the basis for all other hymn choices, with consideration for the breadth and depth of song and the church year.

The chapter on “Leading Assembly Song” is one of the highlights of this handbook. There are recommendations for preparation alongside illustrations for tactus, tempo, and breath. There are ideas about introductions, the use of instruments, hymn interpretations and accompaniments, *alternatim* practice, and the use of choirs to support assembly singing.

On the topic of psalmody, Fothergill illustrates how these texts abound in imagery and emotion and are adaptable or suitable for any liturgy. Psalmody is given extensive treatment in its own section, beginning with an explanation of the structure of texts. Multiple ideas for singing these texts to life are given, including simple unison melodies, punctuating phrases with handbells, use of antiphons, use of hymn phrases as antiphon and refrains, and more. Resources for psalm collections are included at the end of the chapter.

Music during communion distribution is addressed, giving attention to the balance between song and silence. Ideas for assembly song are given according to the church year and include the use of short repeating refrains and the use of paperless song.

Fothergill offers guidelines for approaching assembly song at weddings and funerals, as planning for these liturgies can be very emotional and sensitive. He offers ways to guide practices away from what can become overly personalized expressions toward liturgies that point to Christian witness. He advises advance preparation, conversation, and education with both the participants and with the service industries involved, so that the liturgy may truly reflect the love of God in Christ Jesus.

The chapter on “Cantors and Community” contains thoughts to hold in the heart, mind, and being as the cantor works with and among the assembly. Themes of relationship and context are intertwined throughout this handbook. This chapter calls attention to the importance of the relationship between the cantor and the community, echoing an earlier observation that one “must love the people *more* than [the] music” (19; emphasis original). Fothergill reiterates Mark Bangert’s words that the “leader in the church’s worship will strive to get congregants to repeat week by week what will be true and helpful for a lifetime.”<sup>2</sup> The cantor must “attend to” or reach toward the community of all ages, to the administrative staff, and to the clergy.

Numerous quotations throughout the book lead to discussion about the vocation of the cantor and about all aspects of worship. One of the pertinent quotations is that of Susan Palo Cherwien in which she asks seven questions that are applicable to the cantor’s work:

- Is it true?
- Is it beautiful?
- Is it excellent?
- Does it give God glory?
- Can it bear the weight of mystery?

Is it appropriate?

Does it replace something of greater worth?<sup>3</sup>

The final chapter, “Calling a Cantor,” contains a wealth of considerations for committees entrusted with calling a church musician. The resources include relevant information for the search process, available publications, and ALCM’s recently revised “Employment Resources” page.<sup>4</sup>

This book is about proclamation, prayer, and praise and not about performance. While noting that “the choir’s ability to lead is more important than its ability to perform” (79), Fothergill does embrace choirs and ensembles that have the musical artistry and ability to present complex music and anthems, noting that these offerings and gifts are also an important part of worship.

This handbook is an invaluable resource for any church musician, worship committee, clergy, choir member, seminary, and those who are in the formative years of their vocation. Experienced cantors want to buy a copy to read and then pass the book along to an aspiring cantor in order to nurture them that they may faithfully lead the song of God’s people.

*Linda Kempke*  
Deacon (retired), ELCA  
Rocky River, OH

## Notes

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together; Prayerbook of the Bible*, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 68.
2. Mark P. Bangert, “Rehabilitating the Vocation of Cantor with the Help of the Early Church and Johannes Bugenhagen,” in *Subject to None, Servant of All: Essays in Christian Scholarship in Honor of Kurt Karl Henkel*, ed. Peter Vethanayagamony and Kenneth Sawyer (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2016), 86.
3. Susan Palo Cherwien, “The Sieve of Seven Questions,” *CrossAccent* 27, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 40.

Blake R. Henson and Gerald Custer.

***Arranging: A Beginner's Guide: Step-by-Step Instructions and Exercises.***

Chicago: GIA, 2016.

xxiv, 253 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-1-62277-174-5.

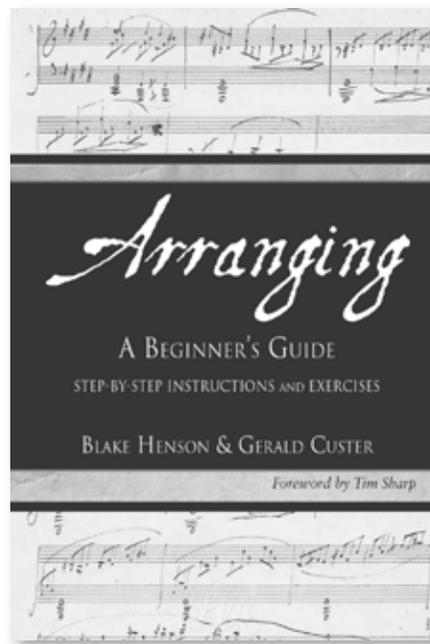
\$29.95, spiral-bound.

**T**his is the third in a series of books by Blake Henson and Gerald Custer that provides ideas for aspiring composers and arrangers. It is evident that Henson and Custer are good teachers; their easygoing prose and welcoming approach to the subject make this volume quite easy to understand. This is not a stuffy, theoretical tome with deep excursions into chord structure. It is more of a “come-along-with-me” approach that shows the reader how a composer or arranger thinks, providing a systematic method to creativity.

One of the key ideas the authors demonstrate is the need to plan and map out a musical arrangement. Just as writing an essay or thesis requires an outline, plan, and direction, so does musical arrangement. The careful step-by-step approach (as the title states) is demonstrated nicely, taking some of the mystery out of musical arrangement and replacing it with hard work and knowledgeable ideas.

Any such book has its limitations, of course. Learning how to arrange music by simply reading about it is akin to learning how to drive by reading the pamphlet from a department of motor vehicles. It's good information, but one really needs to practice with a teacher to grasp the concepts completely. And it takes a long time to master both arranging and driving! While *Arranging: A Beginner's Guide* initiates the creative process with the help of hands-on assignments, any serious student will seek one-on-one feedback, instruction, and coaching from a mentor.

Each chapter focuses on a specific topic, such as transcriptions, texture changes, obbligato instrumental lines, and orchestration. Church musicians



will feel right at home in chapter one, where the hymn “Come Down, O Love Divine” (*ELW* 804; *LSB* 501) is used as the basis for discussion. Just as an organist varies the registration for successive stanzas of a hymn, or how hymn stanzas might be assigned to treble or lower voices, different tonal design ideas are offered in this chapter to spur creativity. For readers of this journal, the most useful ideas probably are in chapter seven, where the authors address musical introductions, interludes, and modulations. Some basic discussion about harmonic analysis is included—useful for those readers with some working knowledge of Roman numerals and other symbols used in tonal analysis. Overall, the ideas in this chapter are not focused on hymns, but the concepts could be useful for hymn intonations and other sacred music.

In fact, let the reader understand that the musical focus of the book is not strictly church music. There are a couple hymns, some Bach chorales, and other snippets of sacred music, but most of the assignments involve folk tunes (such as “Beautiful Dreamer” and “Loch Lomond”), and many of the annotated examples are standards from chamber and symphonic music. These are all good examples to learn from, to be sure, but church musicians should be aware of the differences and limitations in transferring such ideas to the unique characteristics of sacred music for corporate worship. While there are many good ideas in the book, few church musicians will find themselves arranging for a woodwind quintet or full symphony orchestra.

Quite puzzling about this volume is its objective. The description on the publisher’s website begins with a question: “Need to adapt an SATB work for your small SAB choir?” However, nowhere in the book is this concept addressed or taught. Yes, there is an assignment at the end of a chapter to arrange “America, the Beautiful” for three-part voices. Strangely, however, this assignment follows a discussion about arranging countermelodies for instruments.

Further, the extensive foreword by Tim Sharp, executive director of the American Choral Directors Association, concludes with words expressing hope that this book “will assist in honing the skills of more and more musicians toward choral arranging” (xv). *Choral* arranging, however, seems not to be the focus of the book. There are seven arranging

assignments in total; only two include arranging for choir in some manner. (The best of these is to adapt a hymn for choir and piano; the other assignment, for “America, the Beautiful,” is mentioned above.) There are also assignments to arrange for such combinations as brass quartet; piano, clarinet, and solo voice; solo voice and piano; and full symphony orchestra.

One other issue with the volume does not involve the content or objectives but its editing and layout. No single music engraving style or template is used; instead, varying degrees of sizes, fonts, barline styles, and line thicknesses prevail. Some of the music examples are quite small, resulting in tiny lyrics of about 5 or 6 point size. Misspelled or missing lyrics, errant symbols, missing rests, and an incorrect attribution to a work by Handel are also quite perplexing.

Arranging is an art, and no single volume or assignment can teach the topic completely. There are always new ideas to discover. This reviewer, for example, picked up some nice perspectives about the *clarino* range of the clarinet. Although any musician could find some useful nuggets here, perhaps this book would be most useful for middle or high school instructors who have active instrumental programs and ample opportunity to arrange for a wide variety of instrumental forces and textures.

But can the average church musician benefit from this book? Perhaps, depending on one’s circumstances but with fair warning that the advertised objective of the book—how to adapt an SATB work for SAB—is regrettably absent.

*Kevin Hildebrand  
Concordia Theological Seminary  
Fort Wayne, IN*

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W I S C O N S I N

Richard Leach.

***Soul Becomes a Song:  
New and Selected Hymns.***

Pittsburgh: Selah, 2020.

80 pp.

125-432.

\$17.50, spiral-bound.

**R**ichard Leach’s hymns are definitely “Martha hymns”—according to the two categories identified by hymn writer Carl P. Daw, Jr.: “Martha hymns” call us to specific action, while “Mary hymns” invite us to sit at Jesus’s feet and listen (cf. Luke 10:38–42).

*Soul Becomes a Song* includes 35 different hymns; around half are tied to psalms, the rest to New Testament texts.<sup>1</sup> Four hymns have more than one tune, yielding a total of 40 tunes by nine composers; 13 of these are by Amanda Husberg, who, as Leach notes in his introduction and this reviewer agrees, “is always willing and able to create strong and singable tunes” (for example, see *ELW*736). As a bonus, all of Husberg’s tunes in this collection are supplied with optional instrumental descants. The collection has a variety of musical styles—as different from each other as are *Scottish Psalter* melodies, folk songs, spirituals, and music from the Iona and Taizé communities—but all are still recognizable as, for lack of a better term, “standard” hymns with more or less “standard” harmonies that are playable on keyboard.

According to the collection’s description (on the back cover), Leach strives to make use of “traditional forms to create striking new texts with biblical and theological integrity,” to which he also adds elsewhere, “The poetry of faith ... should be surprising because much received wisdom is false.”<sup>2</sup> So hymns can be prophetic witness—useful for teaching, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16), even for telling “truth to power.” In Lutheran terms, hymns are not only prayer and praise but can also preach law.

Consider for example Leach’s hymn “When I



Speak of Peace,” based on Psalm 120. Of three different tunes included for this text, *TIME FOR PEACE* by Patrick Michaels and *SPEAK PEACE* by Amanda Husberg both have the ferocity to be a good match for this text. So let’s just imagine a congregation singing the first stanza:

When I speak of peace,  
I hear the answer come,  
“It is time for war.”  
Yet this is a lie.

Are we all paying attention now? This “surprise” also begs the question: “Where in the world did *that* idea come from?” Answer: “From Psalm 120, don’tcha know?” Leach’s careful attention to Scripture is also clear in “The Stone the Builders Cast Away,” which, like Jesus’ parable of the wicked tenants (Mark 12:1–12), indicts us for our rejection of God’s repeated offers of mercy.

Of course, “surprises” can proclaim gospel too. For example, “How Can It Be, the Life of Jesus” brings to life the mission promise of Jesus’ mustard seed parable (Mark 4:32–34) and “How Far Away is Heaven” reveals the father’s grace as he goes out to meet not just one but both of his errant sons (Luke 15:11–32).

The collection’s namesake hymn, “As Her Soul Becomes a Song,” presents Leach’s paraphrase of Mary’s Magnificat and is reminiscent of both Rory Cooney’s “Canticle of the Turning” (*ELW*723) and

Marty Haugen’s familiar paraphrase from *Holden Evening Prayer*, in part because Leach’s text likewise invokes God as “Holy One.” Because eight of Leach’s other hymns also invoke God as “Holy One” (one text even asks rhetorically, “Whose side is holiness on?”) and because eminent theologians have written whole books on this subject, we pause for a brief summary.

It is Mary herself who magnifies the Lord by singing “holy is his name” (Luke 1:49; NRSV). Holy, holy, holy is all that is pure and just and uniquely proper to God, and this supreme holiness consumes that which is unholy (Isaiah 6:1–4). But God also cleanses a faithful remnant of people to be holy and to keep covenant (Isaiah 6:5–8). Though Jesus shuns the title “Holy One of God” uttered from the mouth of a demon (Mark 1:24–25), he is the One who accomplishes this cleansing, who bestows the Holy Spirit, who gives the new

relationship with God the Father (Ephesians 2:17–18). Redemption is for sure a Trinitarian endeavor, but Jesus is uniquely holy (Luke 1:35), the “Holy One of God” (John 6:69).

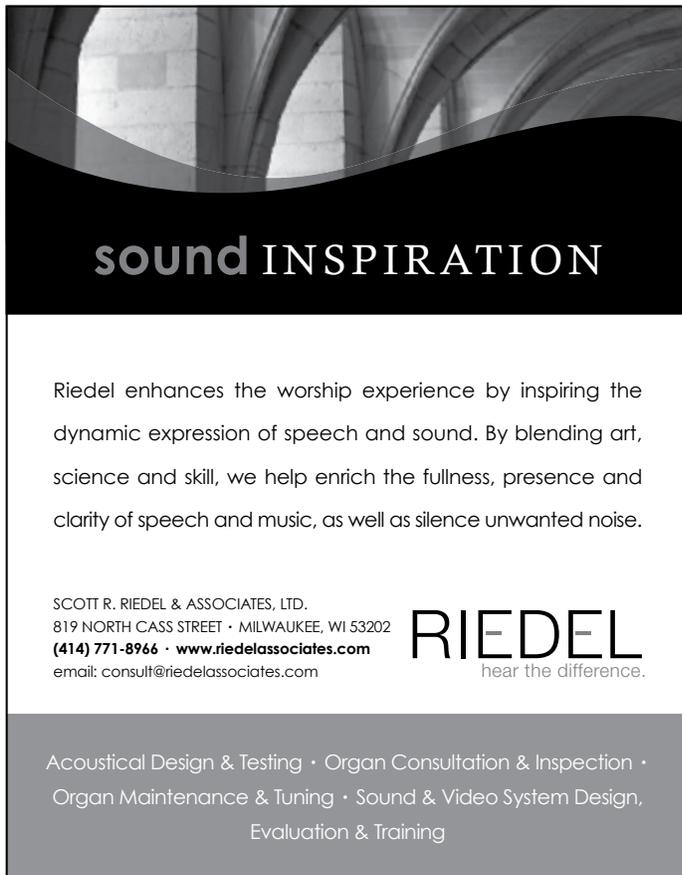
Given Leach’s aim to instill surprise, this reviewer was slightly disappointed with no. 27, “What Did You Find While Plowing,” and no. 29, “How Many Pearls,” texts that reference two of Jesus’s parables in Matthew 13:44–46. The two hymns are good and serviceable, but by identifying the *kingdom* with the both the *treasure* (v. 45) and the *pearl* (v. 46), Leach misses that the second one compares the kingdom to the *merchant*, not the pearl. Jesus is indeed the treasure that we find and strive to make our own (v. 45), but the next verse tells the other side of the relationship: that in God’s sight each of us is a “pearl of great value” and the buyer is Jesus, who in love “went and sold all that he had” (Matthew 13:46) to make us his own.

*Soul Becomes a Song* is well edited; it is comb-bound to lie flat, with all the necessary listings and indices to facilitate worship planning. Beyond congregational singing, most of these hymns would be suitable for adult choirs. Some could also work well for children’s choirs, including “Sing of a Shepherd”; “The Donkey’s Song”; or “Imagine, Said Jesus,” for example. In any case, every hymn in the collection deserves to be sung: for the praise of God, to nurture God’s people in faith and life, to see how well these hymns will “wear” over time.

*David J. Susan*  
*Retired pastor*  
*Immanuel Lutheran Church, Madison, WI*

**Notes**

1. See *ELW* 412 and 709 for two earlier hymns by Richard Leach; there are none in *ACS*, *LSB*, *CW*, or *WOV*.
2. Richard Leach, “Ten Facts about the Towers,” <https://www.rattle.com/ten-facts-about-the-towers-by-richard-leach/>.



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Mark S. Bighley.

***The Chorales of the Organ Works,***  
The Complete Organ Works,  
series II, vol. 2.

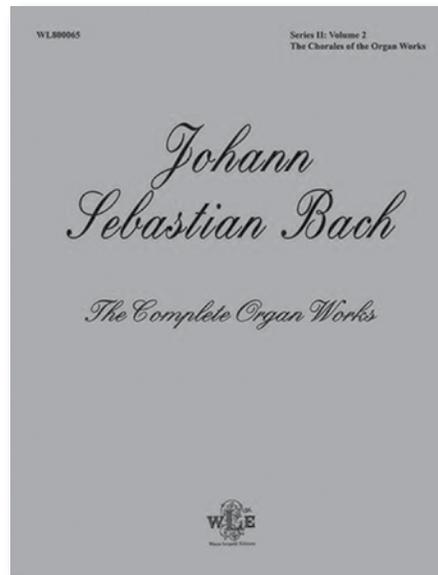
Colfax, NC: Wayne Leupold Editions, 2018.  
xx, 263 pp.  
WL800065.  
\$59.00, comb binding.

**T**his extensively researched reference volume presents the 127 chorales used by J. S. Bach in his organ works. For each chorale, a full German text is given along with a literal line-by-line English translation. In addition, the following are included for each chorale: author, text source, text basis, date, categorization in hymnals, and a transcription of the melody in modern notation with the first stanza underlaid.

Organized alphabetically by German first line, the book especially focuses on understanding the meaning and context of each chorale. Bighley consulted 27 different hymnals from the 17th and 18th centuries, in addition to other reference books, in order to compile and present all known stanzas of each chorale. In choosing which version to include, he prioritized hymnals known to be in Bach's possession or those that contained the most chorales. Variations among sources are explained in the footnotes, often referring to the number of syllables per line and grammatical differences.

Occasional notes emphasize texts that were influential during Bach's time or before, poetic features such as acrostics, and contextual information that gives insight into Bach's usage of the chorales. For example, the entry on "Gott, durch deine Güte" explains, "The placement of this chorale in the Advent and Christmas section of the *Orgelbüchlein* can be explained from the two headings listed above" (102).

This is an updated edition of Bighley's *The Lutheran Chorales in the Organ Works of J. S. Bach* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986). Compared to the earlier publication, this volume adds 17 chorales that



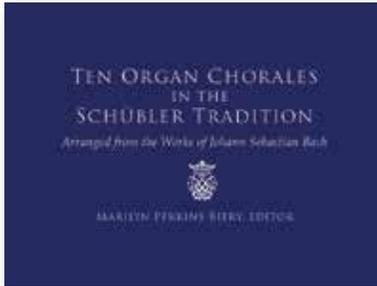
account for recent changes in the canon of Bach organ works. In addition, chorales from the *Neumeister* collection, a manuscript rediscovered in the 1980s, have been incorporated into the main body of the work instead of an appendix as they were in 1986. A shift to line-by-line translation rather than a paragraph format helps clarify the meaning of each line of German text. New information includes the melody and categorization in hymnals for each chorale. Bighley referred to 23 more hymnals in this edition and chose to prioritize a different hymnal as the main source of texts, based on its inclusion of all Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* chorales. Several pages of facsimiles from the hymnals consulted help the reader to understand challenges encountered in the editorial process.

This volume is attractive, with the same cover design as the other volumes in Leupold's complete Bach edition. Occasional artistic page divisions taken from early hymnals break up the pages of text. It includes a brief but thorough introduction and an extensive bibliography but does not include an index or indication of which organ works use each chorale. When two or more chorales share the same melody, this is indicated for those that "borrowed" the melody later but not indicated on the chorales originally associated with that melody. Overall, it is an interesting and useful reference work for any organist who plays chorale-based music by Johann Sebastian Bach.

Lara West  
Organist, Trinity Lutheran Church  
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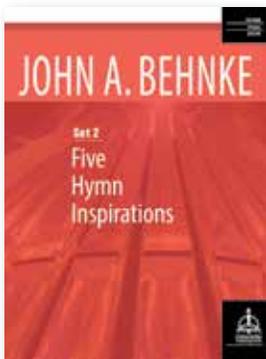
# SOUNDFEST

## ORGAN



Johann Sebastian Bach.  
***Ten Organ Chorales in the Schübler Tradition.***  
Ed. by Marilyn Perkins Biery.  
Augsburg Fortress  
(978-1-5064-6921-8), \$30.

Biery has arranged 10 chorale-based cantata movements by Bach for organ, following the pattern that Bach himself established in his beloved “Schübler” chorales (BWV 645–650). The editing is pristine, true to Bach’s models, and continues the practice established in previous collections; for example, editors Carl Pfatteicher and Archibald Davison included a smattering of transcribed cantata movements in *The Church Organist’s Golden Treasury* (Oliver Ditson, 1951). However, Biery has the benefit of modern scholarship, so her efforts sound more authentically Baroque. The volume is laid out cleanly, spiral-bound, and sturdy. Of special note are settings of more well-known chorales, among them VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN; JESU, MEINE FREUDE; and LOBE DEN HERREN, DEN MÄCHTIGEN KÖNIG DER EHREN. *KO*

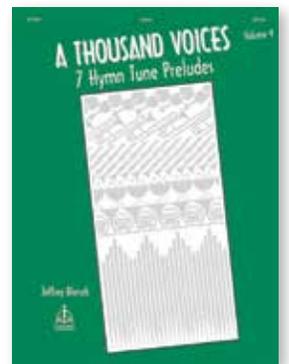


John A. Behnke.  
***Five Hymn Inspirations*, set 2.**  
Concordia (977908), \$24.

Behnke set six familiar hymn tunes for this collection, with one setting featuring the unexpected pairing of ERHALT UNS, HERR and HEAVEN IS MY HOME. A meditative treatment of DIX utilizes augmented seconds that evokes Middle Eastern sounds, as well as a ground bass that calls to mind the sages journeying on their camels. LOBE DEN HERREN features upbeat rhythms that toggle between simple and compound meters; settings in both F major and G major are provided. CLOSER WALK uses syncopated rhythms

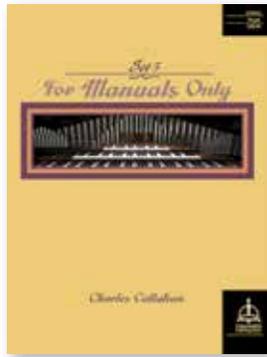
and an active pedal part, signifying the believer’s walk with Christ. REGENT SQUARE is written in a robust voluntary style. The pieces are designed for a two-manual instrument, with dynamic markings often taking the place of specific registration suggestions. The collection is highly accessible, arranged at or slightly above a sight-reading level of difficulty. *CP*

Jeffrey Bleresch.  
***A Thousand Voices: 7 Hymn Tune Preludes*, vol. 4.**  
Concordia (977827), \$20.



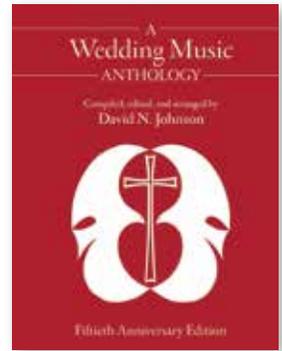
Each of the arrangements in this collection effectively captures the musical essence of its hymn tune and associated text. The introductory chords of “Water, Blood, and Spirit Crying” (FILTER) immediately grab the listener’s attention as Bleresch utilizes elements of the Toccata in D Minor by Gaston Bélier (1863–1938). The lovely and transparent setting of “Come, Follow Me” (MACHS MIT MIR, GOT) is a well-crafted trio with the cantus firmus in the pedal. Other tunes included in this volume are ELLACOME; LIEBSTER JESU, WIR SIND HIER; NUN DANKET ALL; and REPTON. You may have difficulty deciding which arrangement is your favorite. *JRB*

Charles Callahan.  
***For Manuals Only***,  
 set 5.  
 Concordia (977914), \$28.



This set offers fine compositions for organists who do not use pedals, including a set of variations on WONDROUS LOVE. The tune appears in the alto voice in the second variation and the bass voice in the third variation. The final variation is a legato setting that includes creative harmonies over open fifth chords in the left hand. The other 14 short preludes are settings of the tunes BALM IN GILEAD; BEACH SPRING; BRADBURY; DETROIT; FOUNDATION; HAMBURG; HOLY MANNA; JEFFERSON; JESUS LOVES ME; LAND OF REST; NETTLETON; OLIVET; RESTORATION; and THE SAINTS' DELIGHT. *MS*

David N. Johnson.  
***A Wedding Music Anthology***, fiftieth anniversary edition.  
 Organ, with optional B-flat or C instrument.  
 Augsburg Fortress  
 (978-1-5064-6598-2), \$39.

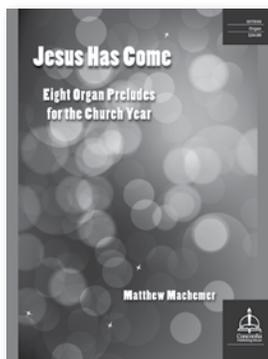


This fiftieth-anniversary edition unites Johnson's five volumes of *Wedding Music*, originally published between 1970 and 1990. The new spiral-bound book retains the order of the original publications, with new engravings and updated scholarship; in addition, some hymn-based works have been transposed to match current hymnal keys. The collection is a pleasing and useful mix of arrangements of classic pieces along with free and hymn-based compositions by Johnson. Some selections appear in two versions, one with pedals and one for manuals alone. Many pieces allow for an optional melody instrument; these reproducible B-flat and C instrument parts fill the last 58 pages. Unless they already own the complete original publications, most organists will discover something new and useful in this collection. *LW*

Text: Psalm 133:1; Israeli traditional  
 Music: Israeli traditional; arr. hymnal version  
 Arr. © 2020 Augsburg Fortress

This three-part song may be sung consecutively with the option of repeating each phrase. It may also be sung as a round.  
 Translation: How good and how pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!  
 Approximate pronunciation of the Hebrew: hin-nay mah tov oo-mah na-ve! a-shim gam ya-kehad.

*All Creation Sings, Accompaniment Edition* provides the full accompaniment to the liturgies and hymns in the new supplement to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. It also provides guidance on leading various genres of music, including narrative notes on many of the hymns.

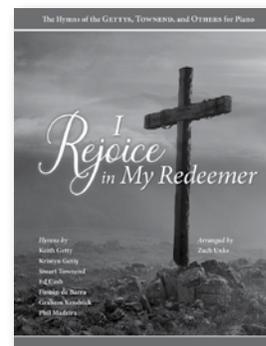


Matthew Machemer.  
***Jesus Has Come: Eight Organ Preludes for the Church Year.***  
 Concordia (977919), \$24.

This attractive set of eight organ preludes features a variety of settings characterized by craftsmanship, economy of means, and accessibility. In FORTUNATUS NEW, an effective ritornello is used to introduce the cantus firmus and separate its successive phrases, which migrate from soprano to alto to tenor. Contrasting duple and triple subdivisions of the beat provide rhythmic interest. An energetic setting of HAF TRONES LAMPA FÄRDIG features arpeggiated figures in 12/8 that contrast with phrases of the cantus firmus in 4/4. Most effective are the “boundaries” between cantus firmus phrases that contain polyrhythmic measures combining 12/8 and 6/4 meters. However, it would be helpful to know whether the tempo of the beat is to be maintained throughout (the dotted quarter-note beat in the 12/8 sections and the quarter-note beat in the 4/4 sections) or whether the eighth note is the unit that is held constant in both 12/8 and 4/4 sections. The exuberant setting of JESUS IST KOMMEN, GRUND EWIGER FREUDE, is animated by driving melodies in the manuals in 9/8 that accompany the cantus firmus in the pedal; occasionally the pedal has duplets against the triplet figures in the manuals, creating a compelling rhythmic effect. The dancelike setting of LOBE DEN HERREN incorporates a paraphrase of the hymn tune melody through extensions and development of an eighth-note motive. O DURCHBRECHER effectively combines pre-imitative entrances of the chorale phrases with an extended ornamented soprano chorale melody. *JB*

## PIANO

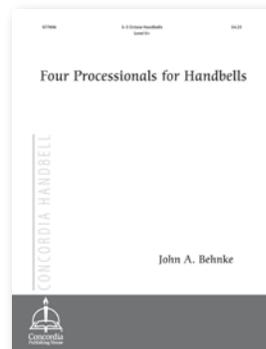
Zach Unke.  
***I Rejoice in My Redeemer.***  
 Northwestern (OL-2700082), \$24.



This powerful collection is based on modern hymns written by Keith and Kristyn Getty, Stuart Townend, and their collaborators. The arrangements use the full compass of the piano, with melody lines that weave through outer and inner ranges. These selections are specifically worth considering for communities that worship in various styles. The arrangements are strong, ever-evolving, and will please listeners in various worship settings. *ALL*

## HANDBELLS

John A. Behnke.  
***Four Processionals for Handbells.***  
 3–5 octaves handbells.  
 Concordia (977896), \$4.25.



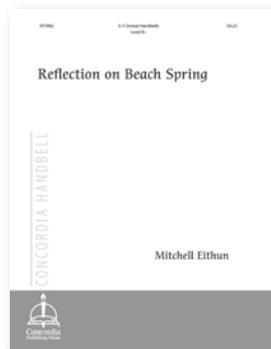
These original pieces are written in the keys of D, F, E-flat, and B-flat. They are layered ostinatos, designed to be played from memory, each with a coda. With only two bells per position and no bell changes, they can be rung from tables, from music stands, or while processing. The composer advises choirs to “repeat as often as necessary to reach the destination.” Level 2+. *ML*

Lauran Delancy.  
***Go, My Children, with My Blessing.***  
 3 octaves handbells.  
 Concordia (977894),  
 \$3.95.



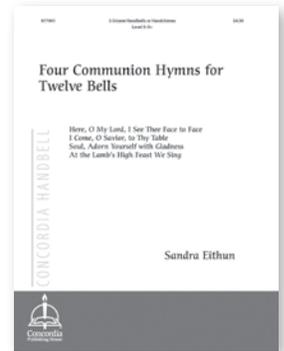
This lovely arrangement of AR HYD Y NOS is simple enough for beginning ringers; it employs quarter notes, half notes, dotted half notes, and whole notes, with thumb damp as the only technique beyond ringing. This selection provides an excellent opportunity for ensembles to practice shaping legato lines. Level 2. *ML*

Mitchell Eithun.  
***Reflection on Beach Spring.***  
 3–7 octaves handbells.  
 Concordia (977892),  
 \$4.25.



Using the *Sacred Harp* tune BEACH SPRING, the arranger has fashioned a lovely, flowing accompaniment, with an exciting key change for the final stanza. The techniques are limited to LV, echo in the bass, and one meter change. Ensembles will find that this makes a bigger sound than the standard Level 2+ bell arrangement. Level 2+. *ML*

Sandra Eithun.  
***Four Communion Hymns for Twelve Bells.***  
 3 octaves handbells  
 or handchimes.  
 Concordia (977901), \$4.50.



With a range of F5 to C7 and written completely in the treble clef, this collection assigns each position only two bells and no bell changes. Tunes included are ICH STERBE TÄGLICH; FARLEY CASTLE; SCHMÜCKE DICH; and SONNE DER GERECHTIGKEIT. Several meter changes and tempo changes are included. These accessible arrangements would be a welcome addition to any communion service. Level 2–2+. *ML*

Linda R. Lamb.  
***Let All Things Now Living (Sent Forth by God's Blessing).***  
 3–5 octaves handbells.  
 Concordia (977893), \$4.25.



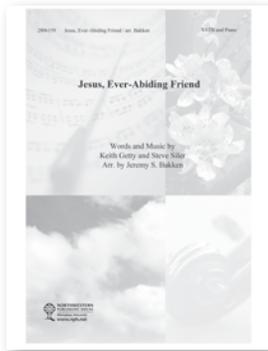
A wonderful calypso rhythm meets THE ASH GROVE. Pleasing for ringers and listeners alike, this piece will keep bass ringers involved with mallets on the table, clave rhythms, and meter changes. Level 2. *ML*

Cathy Moglebust.  
***Ring We Joyfully.***  
 3–5 octaves handbells, optional  
 3–5 octaves handchimes.  
 Concordia (977899), \$4.50.



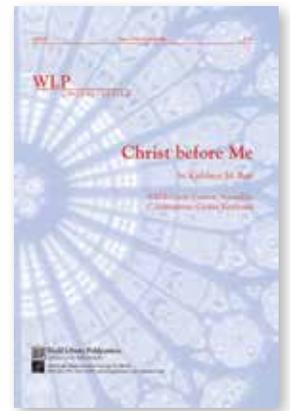
Written in rondo form with mixed meters, key changes, mallets, and chimes, this joyful and challenging piece will keep even advanced ringers on their toes. The timbre of optional handchimes in the middle of the piece is a lovely addition. Level 4. *ML*

**ADULT CHOIR**



Jeremy S. Bakken.  
***Jesus, Ever-Abiding Friend.***  
 SATB, piano.  
 Northwestern (OL-2806159P), \$2.75.

Bakken has created an emotive four-part choir arrangement based on the modern hymn by Keith Getty and Steve Siler. The writing evokes a sense of peace and calm, turning hearts and minds to the underlying theme of Jesus as joy in all circumstances. Premiered in February 2020 by the Wisconsin Lutheran Choir, this setting uses the full range of all four voice parts. The piano accompaniment is supportive yet independent from the part writing and adds to the sense of calm assurance. For those in worship settings who use various music resources or styles, this is a chance for a more classically oriented SATB choir to share a modern hymn setting not often found in a four-part arrangement. *ALL*



Kathleen M. Basi.  
***Christ before Me.***  
 SATB, keyboard,  
 assembly, C instrument,  
 guitar.  
 World Library Publications (009072), \$2.25.

With text based on the prayer known as St. Patrick's Breastplate, this beautiful piece is appropriate for various times in the church year, especially on days when lectionary themes emphasize hope, trust, creation, and eternal life. Both the vocal range and straightforward four-part harmonies make it accessible for SATB choirs of any size. *CD*

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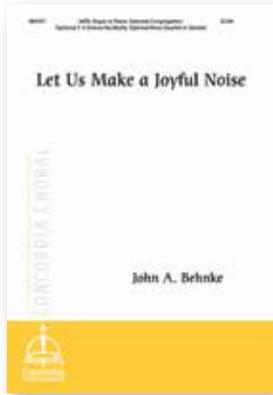


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John A. Behnke.  
***Let Us Make a Joyful Noise.***

SATB, organ or piano, with optional congregation, 3–5 octaves handbells, brass quartet or quintet.

Concordia (984357), \$2.80.

This festive setting of Psalm 95:1–7 effectively adapts the KJV translation and invites congregational participation in an antiphon (part included). Although composed for the dedication of a new edifice, this would be well-suited for any worship occasion of praise or as the Venite in liturgies of morning prayer (Matins). Most of the setting is in 6/8, which gives it rhythmic drive. The choral verses alternate between hymnlike chords and contrapuntal, fugue-like sections; alternation between major and minor verses add interest. The sopranos and

tenors sing a descant above the antiphon, adding zest and sparkle. A resplendent “alleluia” section completes this thrilling psalm. *JG*

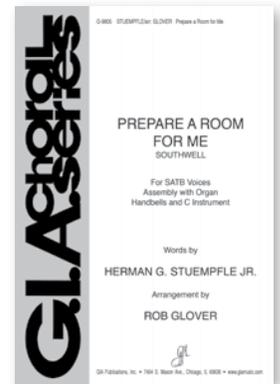
Rob Glover.

***Prepare a Room for Me.***

SATB, organ, assembly, with optional C instrument, handbells/handchimes.

GIA (G-9805), \$2.10.

Theologian and hymn writer Herman G. Stuempfle’s Maundy Thursday text is paired here with the tune SOUTHWELL in a setting that is both easy to learn and versatile in its voicing and instrumentation. The six stanzas provide an alternating dialogue between Christ and those gathered for the eucharistic meal. During a week in which the congregation’s musical forces can be stretched thin, this simple setting will be easy to prepare. *CD*





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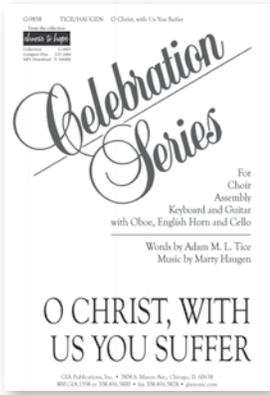


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Marty Haugen.  
***O Christ, with Us You Suffer.***

SAB, keyboard, assembly, guitar, with optional oboe, English horn, cello. GIA (G-9858), \$2.10.

The publisher describes the text of this piece: “Within three short verses, [Adam

Tice’s rich, evocative, and complex text expresses the breadth of the paschal mystery, the suffering and sacredness of creation, human greed, and the Christian call to servanthood.” Haugen’s melody pairs beautifully with the text, moving back and forth between E minor and E major. Melody and text together form a powerful but very accessible piece, appropriate at various times throughout the year. *CD*

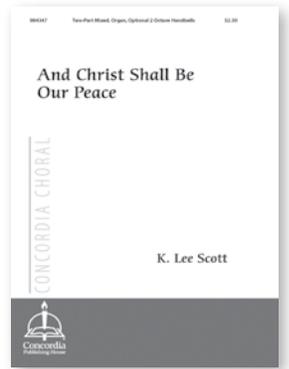


Michael Joncas.  
***Shelter Me (Protégeme).***

SAB, keyboard, assembly with optional guitar, flute, oboe. GIA (G-10306), \$2.55.

This interesting and useful piece is based on Psalm 23. While the meter for both the refrain and verses (8.12.8.12) is one not commonly seen in choral pieces, the text and melody—both by Joncas—fit together perfectly. Although it has a lot

movement, the refrain is quite lyrical and will be easily learned by the assembly. As an added bonus, the full text also appears in Spanish, so it can be sung in either or both languages. *CD*

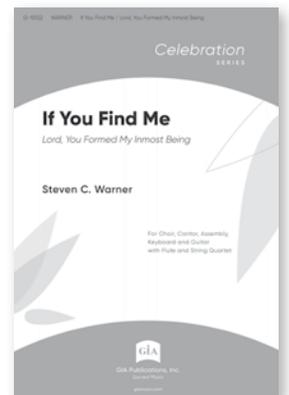


K. Lee Scott.  
***And Christ Shall Be Our Peace.***

Two-part mixed, organ, optional 2 octaves handbells.

Concordia (984347), \$2.30.

This is a tender, two-part mixed anthem based on Micah 5:2–5 and themes from Psalm 80, making it a suitable choice for any Sunday focusing on Christ, the Good Shepherd. The handbell part uses 11 bells from G4 to C6 and is composed so that singers could also ring some of the notes. The organ accompaniment calls for some pedal but is written on two staves, making it playable on manuals alone if needed. This would be a good piece for a small choir, as it contains a great deal of unison singing. *MS*

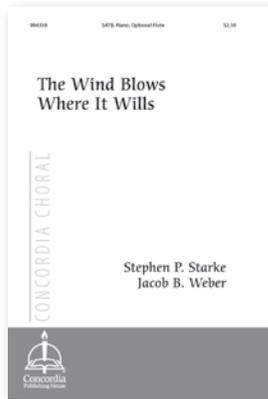


Steven C. Warner.  
***If You Find Me (Lord, You Formed My Inmost Being).***

Two-part mixed, keyboard, assembly, with optional guitar, flute, string quartet. GIA (G-10122), \$2.10.

Based on Psalm 139 and offering two refrain text options, this simple but lovely piece has a Celtic flavor, especially with the addition of the optional flute part. Reflecting the strong images of the psalm, each verse emphasizes God’s faithfulness and inescapable presence. *CD*

Jacob B. Weber.  
***The Wind Blows  
 Where It Wills.***  
 SATB, piano,  
 optional flute.  
 Concordia (984358),  
 \$2.30.



This text by Stephen P. Starke is a hymn to the Holy Spirit that incorporates familiar Biblical references, including John 3:8, Isaiah 42:3, and 2 Timothy 1:6. As such, it is an appropriate selection for Pentecost, baptism, or any other service where the work of the Holy Spirit is proclaimed. Set in E minor, Weber's flowing setting is evocative of folk song and is enriched by the flute writing—the free movement of air is given both metaphorical and literal representation. Unison choral lines may be too high for some lower voices, but the four-part writing is otherwise accessible and lovely. The arpeggiated accompaniment is best suited for piano, and the flute part is included in the printed music. *DR*

Deanna Witkowski.  
***We Walk in Love.***  
 SATB, piano.  
 DeannaWitkowski.com,  
 \$2.



Walk in love! Witkowski and Lemuel Colon wrote a passionate text that Witkowski set to music as part of the Justice Choir movement ([www.justicechoir.org](http://www.justicechoir.org)). This Gospel-style setting is approachable for almost any age level or for combined adult and children's choirs. The composer shares on her website that "the idea was to have accessible, easy-to-learn songs that speak into the moment that we are living in now, and to provide opportunities for all to create community by singing together." During a time of palpable divisiveness, this anthem of unity reminds us of grace and the chance to walk in love. As congregations and choirs begin to plan for larger gatherings and more singing, this selection will help us not only to celebrate but also to remember why we do what we do—both individually as musicians and collectively as communities of faith. *ALL*

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**Jim Rindelaub**  
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