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Editor: Clayton Faulkner
SoundFest Editor: Matthew Frable
Reviews Editor: Clayton Faulkner
Copy Editor: Anne-Marie Bogdan
Graphic Designer: Kathryn Hillert Brewer

EDITORIAL OFFICE
Clayton Faulkner, Editor
2522 Lakefield Way, Sugar Land, TX 77479
crossaccent@alcm.org

EDITORIAL BOARD
Julie Bedard
Joseph Herl
Jennifer Phelps

ADVERTISING OFFICE
Cheryl Dieter, Advertising Coordinator
810 Freeman St., Valparaiso, IN 46383
800-624-2526 and 219-548-2526
ads@alcm.org

ALCM BUSINESS OFFICE
Cheryl Dieter, Business Manager
Association of Lutheran Church Musicians
810 Freeman St., Valparaiso, IN 46383
800-624-2526 and 219-548-2526
office@alcm.org

www.ALCM.org

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Clayton Faulkner
Editor, *CrossAccent*

Lift Every Voice *Spiritual Songs in Lutheran Worship*

Psalms. Hymns. Spiritual songs. The last category is the broadest and most difficult to pin down. It’s the catch-all for everything that doesn’t fit into the first two categories. Spiritual songs are the melodies of the heart, sometimes improvised, spontaneous outpourings of devotion. They are the songs of other cultures and languages, bonding the church into global fellowship. Spiritual songs come from the past, present, and future. They may not have the longevity of psalms and hymns, but that doesn’t invalidate their usefulness as assembly song.

I’m sure you’ve seen the cartoon C2it by Daniel Nuckols. Character one asks, “So what do you do for a living?” and character two responds, “I write modern worship choruses, I write modern worship choruses, I write modern worship choruses, I write ... [ad infinitum].” It’s a hilarious jab using the old trope of contemporary songs being light on content, heavy on repetition. There is certainly some truth to that, especially when harkening back to the early days of the Jesus movement, Calvary Chapel, and Maranatha! Music. But to dismiss this category of music entirely would topple the three-legged stool the New Testament encourages the church to sit on when dwelling in the word of Christ.

Here are some additional resources I encourage you to explore regarding spiritual songs:

- TheMany (<https://www.themanyarehere.com>): “an uncommon, intentionally diverse collective making music for people to sing together about peace and justice and a world where all belong.” Their music and liturgies are a breath of fresh air and invite the worshipper into authentic response.
- Common Hymnal (<https://commonhymnal.com/>): “a virtual library to help Christ



ISTOCK/PEOPLE IMAGES

followers navigate the uncertainty of the world today.” They share songs, stories, and ideas that mix praise and protest while embracing diversity and inclusion.

- Kelsey McGinnis (<https://www.instagram.com/kelseykmcginnis/>) is a worship and music correspondent for *Christianity Today*. She is researching and writing articles that explore the current state of modern worship music in the church.
- Convergence Music Project (<https://www.convergencemp.com/>): a collection space for modern worship songs with progressive theology. It includes a subscription membership with access to songs by Christopher Grundy, Ana Hernandez, Ken Medema, Mark Miller, Bryan Sirchio, and many others.

Spiritual songs are the melodies of the heart, sometimes improvised, spontaneous outpourings of devotion.

- Worship Leader Research (<https://worshipleaderresearch.com/>): “the home for articles and news related to a collaborative study focused on the behaviours of the primary contributors to contemporary worship and the attitudes and behaviours of local worship leaders towards them.”
- The Porter’s Gate (<https://www.youtube.com/@ThePortersGate>): “a sacred ecumenical arts collective reimagining and recreating worship that welcomes, reflects, and impacts both the community and the church. The group was founded in 2017 by Isaac and Megan Wardell with a mission to be a ‘porter’ for the Christian Church—one who looks beyond church doors for guests to welcome. It started as a group of 50-plus songwriters, musicians, scholars, pastors and music industry professionals from a variety of worship traditions and cultural backgrounds who gathered to discuss challenges in the church and write songs in response.”

*Sugar Land, TX
Time after Pentecost*

ALCM Covenant Society

The Covenant Society honors individuals who have included the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians in their will or estate plans, as well as congregations that have included ALCM in their asset disbursement plans. Please consider joining those who have included ALCM in this way:

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Thomas and Kathleen Schmidt
Sounds of Faith Endowment
David S. Thoresen

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Abbreviations frequently used in this journal include:

ACS	<i>All Creation Sings</i> (2020)
BWV	<i>Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis</i> (“Bach Works Catalog”)
CW93	<i>Christian Worship</i> (1993)
CW21	<i>Christian Worship</i> (2021)
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
ELW	<i>Evangelical Lutheran Worship</i> (2006)
LBW	<i>Lutheran Book of Worship</i> (1978)
LCMS	The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
LSB	<i>Lutheran Service Book</i> (2006)
TFF	<i>This Far by Faith</i> (1999)
WELS	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
WOV	<i>With One Voice</i> (1995)

TAKENOTE

ALCM News

Editorial Board Farewells

The journal is grateful for the contributions of two people who served on the *CrossAccent* Editorial Board and have completed their service: Adán Alejandro Fernández and Paul Damico-Carper.

Adán is director of music/organist at Holy Family Catholic Church (Glendale, CA), associate conductor for the National Children’s Chorus, and university organist/adjunct instructor at California Lutheran University (Thousand Oaks, CA). He leaves the board to focus on publishing and performing over the next few years.

Paul was the assistant director of music and worship production at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church (St. Paul, MN). He leaves the board to focus on pursuing a career in healthcare as a physician assistant.

Thank you both for the contributions to the journal, and we praise God for your gifts and service.

ALCM Returns to Valparaiso in 2024

Continuing our now-established pattern of holding a conference at Valparaiso University in even-numbered years, we will meet July 22–25, 2024, on the VU campus under the theme “From Generation to Generation: Ponder Anew.” This conference provides opportunities for attendees to strengthen their gifts and explore new skills through workshops, discussions, and hands-on learning experiences. In addition, the 2024 conference will celebrate the 300th anniversary of Johann Sebastian Bach’s St. John Passion, including a performance led by Dr. Christopher Cock. (The performance is made possible through a generous gift from Pauline and John Kiltinen.) Registration for the conference will open in the near future.

Welcome Newly Elected ALCM Board Members

The following ALCM members have been elected to the board of directors:

President-Elect: Karen Black

Directors (3-year term): Tony Cruz, Wallace Horton, Carol McDaniel

Directors (1-year term): Kim Cramer, Omaldo Perez

Many thanks to the following out-going board members for their service on the board:

- Jeremy Bankson
- Kevin Barger
- Karen Foote
- Jim Hild
- Tom Mueller
- Valerie Stone



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PROGRESSION

WORSHIP IN A NEW KEY

Techniques for Band-Led Worship Learned from My Thirty-Year Journey

by Brian “Chris” Clay

As I reflect on my journey of leading both contemporary and band-led worship (for the better part of thirty years now), I see that I’ve developed techniques that have enhanced the worship experiences for the congregations I’ve served and have also deepened my connection with God in the midst of my music ministry. Let me share some of these with you.

Song Selection and Arrangements

One of the most important and most fundamental aspects of leading band-led worship is selecting the right songs. Over the years I’ve found that a balanced mix of contemporary music and traditional selections can resonate with a diverse congregation, but the key is to choose songs that are *doctrinally sound* and *emotionally engaging*. Additionally, arranging these songs to fit the capabilities and unique style of your worship band and volunteers is crucial. Finally, taking the time to tailor arrangements can create a more meaningful and participatory worship experience. Playing a song exactly like it’s been previously recorded is great—but taking a song and giving it a personality that fits the gathered community can be *amazing!*

Worship Flow

One of my *singular focuses* regarding worship is *flow*. Creating a seamless flow during worship is vital for maintaining a sense of continuity and



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reverent worship. Over the years I’ve learned to structure my worship sets thoughtfully, ensuring that transitions between songs and elements are smooth. This enables the congregation to stay focused on worship rather than feeling distracted by abrupt changes. Also, rather than just picking a few really great songs or congregational favorites for worship, I consult with the pastor about what will be preached and try to ascertain what the overall theme of the day will be; then I choose songs that speak to that theme. My hope is that

I’ve found it essential to spend time in prayer and spiritual preparation.

My hope is that folks who worship that day will leave with one message that came from all directions: the Scriptures, the prayers, the preached word, and the music!

folks who worship that day will leave with *one message* that came from all directions: the

Scriptures, the prayers, the preached word, and the *music!*

Dynamic Leadership

It's essential to exhibit leadership on the platform. This includes effective communication with the band as well as the assembly. This leadership *must include* being spiritually present in the moment. Rather than refer to myself as a "worship leader," sometimes I flip it to "lead worshipper," to acknowledge the importance of actually being a *worshipper*. Leading by example can inspire a sense of unity and authenticity among everyone present.

Technical Excellence

Sound and visual elements play a significant role in contemporary worship. Ensuring that your band and technical team are well-rehearsed and equipped is crucial. This means having the right sound equipment, skilled sound engineers, and prepared musicians who can deliver a good musical performance. Don't misunderstand: there is something to be said for the heart of a volunteer, who may not be as proficient vocally or on an instrument. However, technical excellence (regarding the operating of equipment and the performance of band members and singers) can definitely enhance the overall worship experience by eliminating distractions and allowing the assembly to engage more fully.

Prayer and Spiritual Preparation

Before stepping on the leader's platform, I've found it essential to spend time in prayer and spiritual preparation. This not only helps me connect with God but also provides a sense of confidence and calmness. It's during these moments that I seek divine guidance and inspiration, trusting that God will work through me to facilitate a meaningful

worship experience. Furthermore, I have regular worship workshops for my team to speak to the spiritual side of leading worship—not just focusing on singing and playing well. *It's about more than music!*

Flexibility and Adaptability

Worship experiences can be unpredictable. Being flexible and adaptable to changes—whether that means shifting to a different song, altering the worship order, or addressing unexpected technical issues—is a valuable skill. As I prepare for worship, in the days prior I try to think of some of the major things that could occur (slides won't appear on the screen, an instrument stops working, someone who was to lead a song isn't present, and so on), and I work through the contingencies for each. If things happen, I can move to the contingency quickly, and the flow of the service isn't impaired.

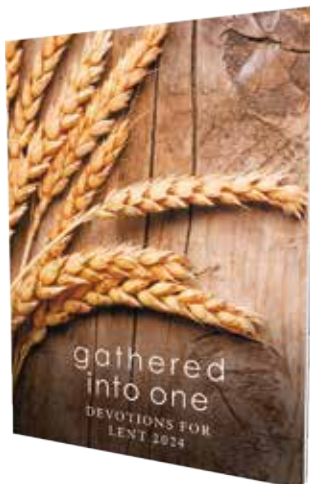
Here's the coda: over the past thirty years, my journey as a leader for band-led worship has been a continuous learning experience. Effective techniques have evolved and adapted to the changing dynamics of contemporary worship. Song selection, worship flow, dynamic leadership, technical excellence, prayer, congregational engagement, and adaptability are all essential elements that contribute to creating meaningful and transformative worship experiences. Through these techniques, I have witnessed the power of music and worship to touch the hearts and souls of countless individuals, and I am grateful for the opportunity to continue serving as leader. As I look to the future, I am excited to see how worship leadership will continue to evolve and inspire deeper connections with God for everyone.



Brian "Chris" Clay is a lifelong Lutheran, a worship leader, and a musician serving in the ELCA's Southeastern Synod in Knoxville, TN.

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SPIRIT AND TRUTH

Stay in the Water

by Michael L. Burk

Marching band is a big deal in many Chicagoland suburban high schools. I remember my son and his bandmates suiting up and coming to attention under Friday night lights throughout the fall. Before taking the field, they warmed their instruments by playing a lovely rendition of “Amazing Grace.”

One particular year’s routine is lodged in my memory. Marching and music come together in a show titled “H₂O.” It is all about water, both musically and visually: the band in dress blues; the color guard with rippling flags; the whole bunch of them moving in and out through intricate patterns—usually

moving rapidly, making it appear that they’re caught up in currents of rushing water.

There is a surprising shift in the middle of it all when the rush gives way to a calm that settles in. The movement is slow in its precision. The harmonic undercurrent is intense and soft as if, for a moment, a mighty wind has given in to a comforting breath whispering, “be still.”

In this seeming chaos, “Deep River” sounds more urgent and intense, a reminder that it is easy to overlook the layered meaning of songs born out of slavery.



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A trumpet player stands apart from all the others and solos on the spiritual, “Deep River.”

The trumpet is singing, “My home is over Jordan. Lord, I want to cross over.” It sounds like the plea for deliverance I’ve always assumed the song intends. Somehow, when the quickened pace resumes, that plaintive cry still hangs in the air, maintaining a tension between the calm and the rhythmic agitation, revealing that, somehow, they are bound together.

At season’s end comes the annual Band-arama. People crowd into the school gymnasium to witness the band perform their award-winning routine one last time. In full dress uniforms. This time, indoors.

Imagine it: sound meant for open skies now amplified by the containment of a high school gym. A mostly fast-paced show designed for the length and breadth of a football field compressed to fit onto a basketball court. With the ins and the outs of intricate patterns, musicians and instruments are at risk of becoming intertwined.

Soon enough they make necessary adjustments. Full steps cut by more than half. Bending this way and yielding that way just enough to avoid colliding. Riding the waves. Navigating the currents. Together.

In this seeming chaos, “Deep River” sounds more urgent and intense, a reminder that it is easy to overlook the layered meaning of songs born out of slavery. Dr. James E. Mumford¹ claims that spirituals are “primary sources of the real experiences of enslaved Africans,” telling how they endure and adapt to it, hate it and fight against it, and eventually, how they come out of it.²

Whether “crossing over Jordan” is about transitioning from this life to the next or traversing the Ohio River to acquire freedom, or both at once, it is always about deliverance. And the crossing is lived out in the tension between hope and despair, joy and sorrow, death and life.

Mumford insists that the spiritual “Wade in the Water” is an admonition. “Whatever you do,” the song cautions, “stay in the water where the bloodhounds can’t get your scent. Whatever you do, no matter how cold, how miserable, stay in the water. God’s gonna trouble the water.” And the best time “for enslaved Africans to escape was during a storm.”³

Warming their instruments on a tune associated with a hymn text born of the storm-tossed conversion of a slave trader⁴ leads immediately to rushing water, shifting rhythms, hope and danger both at once, with a spiritual plea for deliverance at the center of it all.

Consider Jesus’ admonition at the end of Matthew’s gospel, directing followers to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them” (28:19; NRSV). In other words, get them into the water.

There is an urgency to it. A “God’s gonna trouble the water” sense to it. And there is the promise that riding the waves and navigating the currents is never a solo endeavor. Jesus is in the crossing. Always. Till the end of the age.

There is the promise that riding the waves and navigating the currents is never a solo endeavor. Jesus is in the crossing. Always.



Michael L. Burk served as bishop of the Southeastern Iowa Synod from 2008 to 2020. Prior to his election to bishop, he was the ELCA executive for worship and liturgical resources.

Endnotes

1. Professor Emeritus James E. Mumford was director of Indiana University’s African American Choral Ensemble for more than two decades.
2. WFIU Arts, introduction to “Deep River: The African American Choral Spiritual,” a broadcast by WFIU (Indiana University), posted April 16, 2012, <https://indianapublicmedia.org/arts/deep-river.php>.
3. James E. Mumford, in the broadcast “Deep River.”
4. There are many accounts describing the origins of the text to “Amazing Grace” (see, for instance, Melissa Petruzello, “John Newton: English Clergyman and Writer,” <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Newton>, updated July 20, 2023). This much is common to most: Newton was engaged in the slave trade on March 10, 1748, the date he marks as having experienced the first stirrings of a conversion or renewal of faith in God as a result of the challenge of steering a ship through a fierce storm. The experience is said to be the inspiration for “Amazing Grace.”

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THE PASTORAL MUSICIAN

The Songs of the Spirit

by Meghan A. Benson

As you may have noticed, this year's *Cross-Accent* journals have focused on psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. In his letters to the churches in Ephesus and Colossae, Paul instructed the young Christians to always sing these pieces so that they could make melody to the Lord with all their heart (Ephesians 5:19) and so that these pieces could be used to teach and admonish each other in all wisdom (Colossians 3:16). Psalms and hymns are fairly straightforward: they are easy to define and we know what they are. But what constitutes a spiritual song? Is this simply a catch-all term for all the other pieces of music that we offer during worship that don't meet the definition of a psalm or that are not a strophic hymn from our hymnals?

Although I absolutely *do* think that the term "spiritual song" can be used to support the offering of our choral anthems, handbell pieces, and all our modern worship songs, I would encourage each of us to take a deeper view of the idea of a spiritual song. If we continue with the writings of Paul,

we see in his letter to the Romans (8:22–27) that the Holy Spirit is with us not only during all the joys of life but is also present during all of life's trials and tribulations. When nothing seems to be going right or we are in the middle of deep despair, it's sometimes hard to think of the words to pray. We have all been in this sort of situation during one time or another. A doctor has just left the exam room after telling you a diagnosis you didn't want to (or didn't expect to) hear. A loved one has just been in a car accident or worse. How

The Holy Spirit is with us not only during all the joys of life but is also present during all of life's trials and tribulations.

The music that we select for worship each week will become the library from which our people find themselves singing or whistling during the ups and downs of life.

could this happen? It's hard in these moments to come up with anything other than, "Please, God. No." And sometimes it's also just as hard to find sufficient words to thank God when things go really right in life!

You've just been married to the love of your life, you welcome the birth of a child, you finally close on your first house. Or perhaps you've just finished a glorious morning of Easter worship, and everything has gone as it should—everyone was where they were supposed to be, the brass were in tune, and your musicians really stepped up to the plate and gave their best. In tired gratitude, our prayer is often just, "Thank you, God."

In these moments—both high and low—Paul tells us that the Spirit intercedes on our behalf when our feelings are just too deep for our words. I think this is the most important type of "spiritual song," the song that each of our souls sing to God in times of grief and in times of joy. Our spirits have been created by God to respond with song. It's not mere coincidence that families often sing hymns or songs with their loved one when they are gathered around the hospital bed for that final time, or that we find ourselves whistling a tune when we are happily going about our work during our day. Our spirits have been tuned by God to sing to God.

As pastoral musicians, we each have a unique role to play in the lives of our congregants when it comes to spiritual songs. The music that we select

When you are called on to assist a family in planning one of these services, really listen to the words of their hearts. Hear what they are thinking about in that moment

for worship each week will become the library from which our people find themselves singing or whistling during the ups and downs of life. But over the course of a career, we will also be there—right alongside the clergy and the rest of the ministerial staff—to provide pastoral support to our people during times of grief and joy. We will be there to provide music for the services that mark the high points of life (weddings, baptisms, First Communion, confirmations) and the low moments, too (funerals). It's often easy to dismiss these services as simply "extra" things that get added to our weekly calendars or that take up more of our time. But when you are called on to assist a family in planning one of these services, really listen to the words of their hearts. Hear what they are thinking about in that moment and the thoughts they have for their loved one, and help them to choose (or choose for them) those songs that will allow their spirits to turn to

their Lord in faith. In addition to providing pastoral care to the family, you are providing care to all in the congregation, giving them the words and melodies they need to give proper voice to their joys and sorrows.

When you think of spiritual songs in this way, you see that we have a tremendous responsibility as church musicians because we are the stewards of our congregation's songs to God. As you look to yet another musical year and start making plans for which anthems and works to program, I encourage you to keep this expanded idea of "spiritual songs" in the back of your mind. Your congregation will be strengthened and your worship glorified by the songs that you give their spirits to sing.

In addition to providing pastoral care to the family, you are providing care to all in the congregation, giving them the words and melodies they need to give proper voice to their joys and sorrows.



Meghan A. Benson currently serves as lay minister at Trinity Lutheran Church (NALC) in Warrenton, VA. She earned her DWS degree (with distinction) from Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies in Jacksonville, FL.

ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

Best Practices for Rostered Leaders

by Tim Getz

I ended my last column by mentioning that this time I might have some practical suggestions for how pastors, rostered leaders, and others “up front” can best support musicians in their leadership of assembly singing. Here we go.

Create a culture where the congregation knows that their collective voice is essential, that the music of the church cannot happen without them. Find ways to work this into written and verbal communication regularly (though cheerleading at the moment a song is to begin is perhaps not the way to do it—this may be a counterproductive distraction in worship!).

Stay focused on the act of worshipping, join the assembly, and be a part of what we are all doing together.

Be a visual model of this important thing we are doing together as a community. Let people see you singing every time the assembly is invited to sing. Seeing you participating illustrates to the congregation the significance of assembly song. This time (during singing) is not a good time to communicate last-minute instructions to other leaders or chat about something you might be observing in the moment. Stay focused on the act of worshipping, join the assembly, and be a part of what we are all doing *together*.

If you don't consider yourself a good singer, don't worry! (See my previous columns and recognize that you are in the same boat as most of your congregation.) You aren't the leader of the music; you don't need to sing louder or better than anyone else. Continue to provide that good visual model for what we are inviting everyone present to do.



KATHRYN BREWER

Pastor Bradley Schmeling, Gloria Dei (St. Paul, MN) singing with the assembly.

Keep your microphone turned off and do not sing louder than anyone else. A pastor's voice that is louder than everyone else's can confuse the congregation as to whom they should follow. The acoustics of the space or even the physical setup can make people hear the pastor's voice either ahead of or behind the music leader, and that can lead to confusion. A single loud voice (whether a pastor, a cantor, or a small group with microphones) can subtly create the perception that only the voices at the mics are needed to carry the song.

A single loud voice can subtly create the perception that only the voices at the mics are needed to carry the song.

Recognize the moments when you should get out of the way and let the people have responsibility for their own voice.

If you are a strong musician yourself (and many pastors are), you may find it very tempting to try to “train” or “coach” your music leader to do things in a specific way, according to your own musical preferences. Please avoid this temptation! You might privately share resources you know of (including wonderful ALCM recordings, webinars, and in-person events) that will aid a church musician’s professional development. Exciting and productive conversations about the leadership of assembly song can happen behind the scenes. But do *not*, under any circumstances, attempt to lead the music according to your own preference during worship. The assembly may or may not actually perceive the conflict, but they *will* be confused about whom to follow, and singing will suffer.

Recognize the moments when you should get out of the way and let the people have responsibility for their own voice. These moments include both spoken and sung parts of the service. For example, the Great Thanksgiving customarily begins:

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

This is a dialog, intended to be sung back and forth between presider and assembly like lines of a play. Resist the urge to sing the people’s parts with them. Quite the opposite of being helpful, doing so releases them from their responsibility to take an active part in worship, and—pushed to an extreme—makes their presence unnecessary; Luther would have something to say about that!

The same is true of responses as seemingly small as the Amen at the ends of prayers. Amen does not mean “Here endeth the prayer.” It is an enthusiastic assent, the gathered people’s opportunity to say, “Yes! We agree with and stand by everything that was just said. Let it be so!” Saying it for them takes away their opportunity to be active participants in worship. So when you reach these moments, stop, look up expectantly, and trust people to do their part.

The community gathered at this summer’s ALCM biennial conference demonstrated magnificently the power and beauty of assembly song. Some of the greatest historical treasures of the church’s song appeared alongside music written and published only recently. We sang with organ and brass, we sang with a jazz combo, and we sang unaccompanied. Especially after the silence of the pandemic years, the sound was glorious, as was the energy in each room as we raised our voices in God’s praise. As this summer’s conference chair, I say to all those who attended: thank you! See you next time! *Soli Deo gloria.*



Tim Getz is director of music at Grace Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Palo Alto, CA. He was conference chair for ALCM’s 2023 biennial conference in Philadelphia, PA, and serves on the steering committee for the 2024 national convention of the American Guild of Organists in San Francisco, CA.

Saying [Amen] for them takes away their opportunity to be active participants in worship.

CADENCE

205. Gott ist mein Lied! Er ist zc.

Oder siehe No. 204.

J. J. Kolbe,
Kantor und Musikdirektor zu Potsdam, 1763.

(V. 8.) Er kennt mein Flehn und al, len Rath der See, le. Er weiß, wie oft ich Gu, tes
thu und seh, le, und eilt, mir gnä, dig bey, zu, stehn.

206. Sollt ich meinem Gott nicht singen?

Oder siehe No. 102.

G. G. Boltze,
Kantor und Schullehrer bey dem Königl. Waisenhause zu Potsdam, 1788.

Melody's Triumph over Darkness The Life of G. G. Boltze

by James R. Eggert

Introduction

The hymn “Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus,” with text by Sigismund von Birken (1626–1681) and melody by G. G. Boltze (1721–1794), is one of the top twenty-five favorite hymns sung in Lutheran congregations in the United States.¹ It has been included in many Lutheran hymnals in the US for over a century.² Yet despite his tune’s endearing line and enduring use, Boltze’s biography is largely unknown and even his name is partly forgotten. This is unfortunate, because Boltze overcame considerable adversity to give the world his melody. This essay tells his story.

Boltze’s well-known 1788 melody is shown above (# 206) as printed in Johann Christoph Kühnau, Vierstimmige alte und neue Choralgesänge, pt. 2 (Berlin: 1790), 230–31. This tune is used for the hymn “Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus,” included in many Lutheran hymnals in the US for over a century.



Generally available information about Boltze has derived solely from two sources: the books where his melodies first appeared and an unsourced note in a history of hymns. Boltze's three known melodies³ were first published in a volume of chorales printed in 1790 in Berlin by Johann Christoph Kühnau. Kühnau's book tells us only that Boltze was cantor and schoolteacher at the royal orphanage in Potsdam, and that he produced the three melodies in 1788 and 1789. To this source can be added a problematic 1834 history of hymns by Johann Ernst Häuser,⁴ which asserts that Boltze was a cantor in Potsdam in 1750, though it gives no source for this information. Subsequent authors have relied on Kühnau and Häuser directly or indirectly, and sometimes imperfectly, for all biographical information about Boltze.⁵

Boltze overcame considerable adversity to give the world his melody.

Even Boltze's name has long been a mystery. His given names appeared at first only as the initials "G. G." By 1872 the composer's name was claimed to be "G. Gottfried Bolze."⁶ By 1941 his name was fully spelled out as "Georg Gottfried Boltze."⁷ Today many refer to him as "Georg G. Boltze." But these expansions are entirely inventive: records from five churches in Berlin and Potsdam uniformly show that his name was in fact Gabriel Gottlieb Boltze.

Boltze was termed an “invalid orphan”; the nature of this disability, however, is unknown.

Birth and Early Life

Boltze’s parents, Andreas—a career soldier garrisoned in Berlin—and Anna Dorothea, had five children, born 1705 to 1723. Gabriel Gottlieb was their fourth. Andreas died in 1744, but the fate of Anna Dorothea is unknown. She probably died when Gabriel Gottlieb was still a child. Her death likely set the boy’s future course.

The young Gabriel Gottlieb was consigned to the royal military orphanage in Potsdam, probably by 1733. This would have occurred after the death

of his mother. The orphanage accepted boys and girls up to the age of twelve who had lost both parents or, if space was available, only one parent. Boltze was termed an “invalid orphan”;⁸ the nature of this disability, however, is unknown. Most orphaned boys in this institution were trained to become soldiers or tradesmen.⁹ Boltze, perhaps because he was an invalid, took a different path.

In those days, the orphanage had its own church (Waisenhauskirche, “orphan’s church”). The orphanage church organ was built in 1737 by the renowned Joachim Wagner; it had a single manual, eight registers, and no pedals.¹⁰ It is likely that this instrument was the one on which Boltze learned to play.

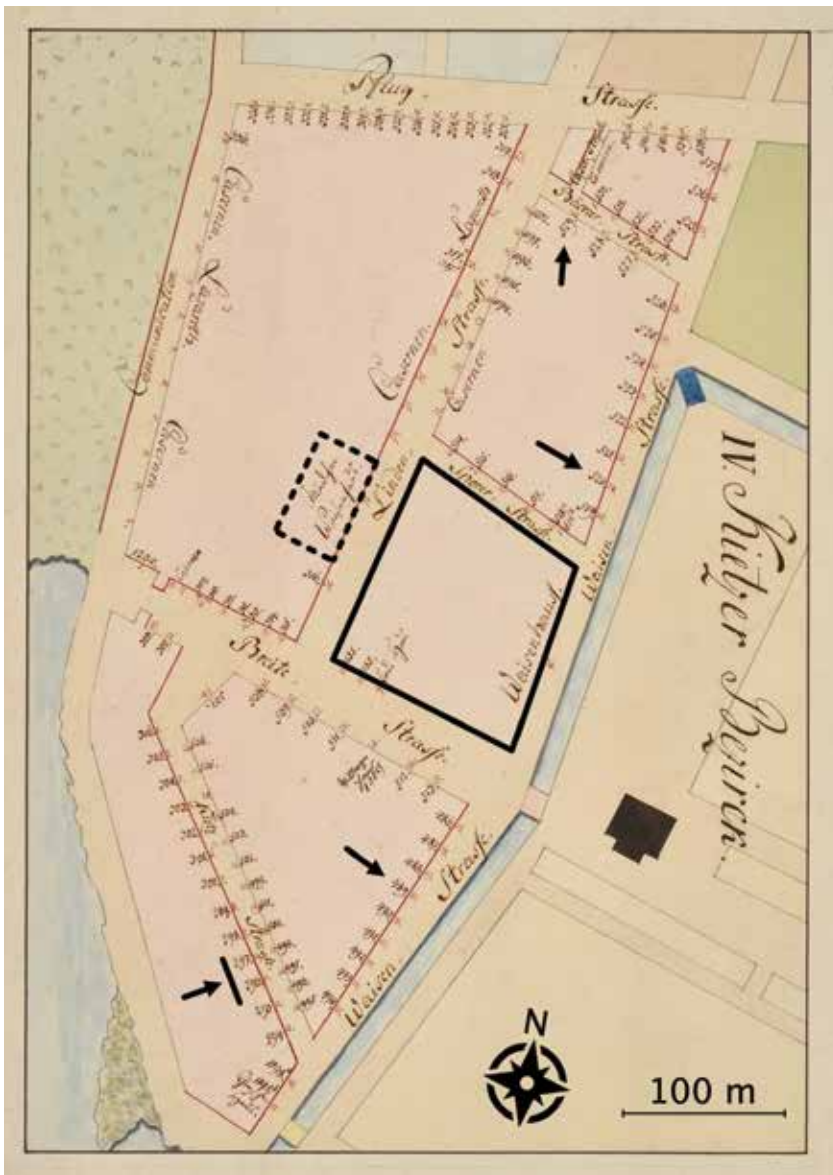
Career

Boltze assumed the role of organist at the orphanage church in 1741; he was then about twenty years old. In 1757 he also became an assistant teacher. Starting in 1761, Boltze was listed as cantor for the orphanage church. Then by 1768 he became a regular teacher in the girl’s school of the orphanage and, as such, he was required to be married.

Boltze was indeed married, three times. He married his first wife, Anna Sophia Pose, in 1745. They were blessed with eight children between 1746 and 1763. During these years, Boltze was a contemporary in Potsdam of one of J. S. Bach’s sons, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, who was serving as court musician to Frederick the Great. Boltze may have met the elder Bach when J. S. Bach toured the organs of Potsdam in May 1747¹¹ in the days after J. S. Bach’s famous first encounter with the Prussian king. J. S. Bach also played an organ concert on May 8 to a large crowd in Potsdam, and Boltze may have attended.¹²

Boltze’s first wife apparently passed away

The Potsdam Kiez district, with the orphanage (center) and its girls’ school (dashed), the Boltze residences Waisenstraße 34 (on canal north of orphanage), Waisenstraße 40 (on canal south of orphanage), Kiezstraße 10–11 (south), and Bäckerstraße 6 (north), and the garrison church (solid black, east).



Potsdam Museum - Forum für Kunst und Geschichte / Michael Lüder (CC BY-NC-SA)



Geschichte des Königlichen Potsdamschen Militärwaisenhauses ... (Berlin: 1824), Fig. 1

during or shortly after her last childbirth in 1763, because he married his second wife, Anna Sophia Schellhorn, in the fall of 1763. They were granted three children between 1764 and 1768. His second wife then passed away also.

Boltze married his third wife, Anna Sophia Wilhelmina Sabina Brückman, in early summer, 1771. This union produced five children between 1772 and 1780. His last known child was born when Boltze was fifty-nine years old.

A double crisis upended Boltze's life in this period. At some point between 1768 and 1771, he retired from the position of cantor and organist for the orphanage church and was thereafter listed in the church records as the cantor emeritus. He would have been somewhat shy of fifty years old. He had become blind while serving in his office, and it is likely that his retirement was at least in part due to this blindness, which must have compounded the disability he had suffered from childhood. It is notable that his last wife married him in 1771 and that his melodies are dated 1788 and 1789, when he was already retired and likely blind. She reportedly had to guide him to church to attend services; even so, as cantor emeritus he still had duties, which he served *“mit Fleiß, Geschicklichkeit und Treue”* (“with energy, finesse, and diligence”).¹³

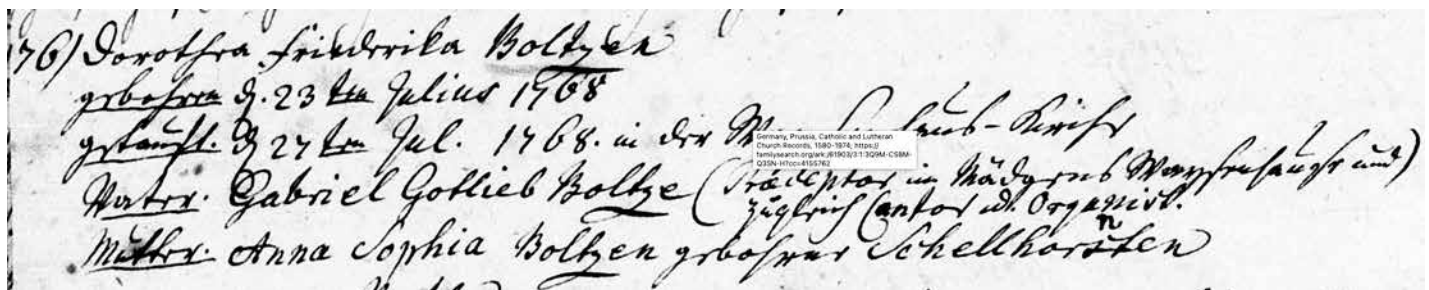
The second component of the crisis occurred when the organ that Boltze had played since at

The front of the boy's section of the royal military orphanage in Potsdam.

least 1741 lost its home. The orphanage, including the orphanage church, was torn down in stages from 1772 to 1777 to make way for a new edifice. The organ was dismantled and put into storage with the hope that it would find later use. Church services for the orphanage were transferred in 1771 across the street to the royal garrison church. The larger organ there was built 1731/1732, also by Joachim Wagner. That organ was judged by Johann Sebastian Bach in 1747 as a *“gar prächtig Werck”* (“quite a nice piece”) and described in 1757 by Karl Gottfried Meyer.¹⁴ It is unknown whether Boltze, then blind, could have played the larger Wagner organ, and perhaps the move contributed to his retirement.

The small Wagner organ from the orphanage church did indeed find later use, not in Potsdam, but in the small town of Pritzerbe, whose church had been badly damaged in a fire in 1773.¹⁵ The Pritzerbe pastor at the time knew the Boltze family, having been a baptismal sponsor for one of Boltze's granddaughters. Whether this acquaintance seeded the idea to transfer the Potsdam orphanage church organ to Pritzerbe or arose from

The 1768 baptism record of Dorothea Friederika Boltze lists father Gabriel Gottlieb Boltze as teacher, cantor, and organist in the orphanage and mother Anna Sophia nee Schellhornen.



Militär-Waisenhaus Potsdam Lutherische Gemeinde, Kirchenbuch 1728-1834



Keyboard of the Wagner organ from the Potsdam orphanage church, now in Pritzerbe.

Photo courtesy of the Evangelischer Kirchenkreis Mittelmark-Brandenburg.

it is unknown. In any case, the organ was installed in the rebuilt Sankt Marien “Unser lieben Frauen” church in Pritzerbe in 1789, with added registers and now with foot pedals. The augmented version of the organ that Boltze played for thirty years is still in use in Pritzerbe today.

Boltze composed his enduring melody in 1788 for Paul Gerhardt’s 1653 text “*Sollt ich meinem Gott nicht singen?*”¹⁶ This text was widely known, even appearing in a hymnal published for the royal military orphanage in Potsdam in 1776.¹⁷ The melody commonly used for Gerhardt’s text, the one cited in the orphanage hymnal, was Johann Schop’s *LASSET UNS DEN HERREN PREISEN* of 1641.¹⁸ Schop’s melody is also used for von Birken’s popular text “*Lasset uns mit Jesu ziehen,*” which appeared about the same time as Gerhardt’s text.¹⁹ Boltze’s new melody, easier than Schop’s, was paired with von Birken’s text already by 1803.²⁰ The two melodies by Boltze and Schop, sharing meter but not tonality, are both used for both texts by Gerhardt and von Birken.

Death and Legacy

Six years after he wrote his now-familiar melody, Gabriel Gottlieb Boltze died of old age, in 1794. He was seventy-two years old. But Boltze’s influence did not end at his death. Of his sixteen listed children, nine are known to have survived childhood, and six of these to have married. His first two sons, Johann Gottlieb Lorenz and (somewhat confusingly) Gabriel Gottlieb Boltze,²¹ were cantors, and his grandson Heinrich Friedrich Ludwig Boltze was a cantor, organist, and teacher. Another grandson,

Carl Leopold Wilhelm Boltze, was given national recognition in 1874 for fifty years of service as cantor and schoolteacher in a nearby town. A great-grandson, Heinrich Ludwig Boltze, was a teacher, rector, and author. Boltze was thus the progenitor of a veritable dynasty of cantors,

organists, and schoolteachers.

An 1812 review²² of J. C. W. Kühnau’s book on blind musicians explains the usual fate of these artists thus:

Normally, with the want or loss of one sense, the power of the others is all the more sharpened; hence it is no wonder if the number of the blind, driven by need of bread or work, that have taken up music and become masters of their art, is not small. Usually, however, the life of such unfortunates, confined to their place of residence, passes quietly; one meets them individually, takes pity on them, and forgets them.

Now, more than two centuries after his demise, Boltze has been rescued from such an ending.

Conclusion

Gabriel Gottlieb Boltze, born the son of a soldier garrisoned in Berlin, faced considerable adversity as an invalid orphan in Potsdam. Undaunted by his circumstances, he learned to play the organ and served as organist, schoolteacher, and cantor, dedicating himself to the Potsdam orphanage church and school for thirty years. Tragically, he lost his sight while fulfilling these duties. Despite his physical challenges, he married three times and fathered sixteen children. Notably, even though blind, he composed melodies for publication, one of which is sung in Lutheran churches to this day as “Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus.” Boltze’s story shows that neither the dimness of history nor the darkness of blindness can restrain the beauty of melody.

Boltze was thus the progenitor of a veritable dynasty of cantors, organists, and schoolteachers.

Neither the dimness of history nor the darkness of blindness can restrain the beauty of melody.



James R. Eggert, a physicist retired from MIT, is an elder at Lutheran Church of the Savior in Bedford, MA, where he also teaches Bible study and confirmation classes. His interests include genealogy and mathematics. His recent research has rewritten the history of the Common Table Prayer.

Endnotes

1. Scot A. Kinnaman, *Lutheranism 101* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2010), 233.
2. *Wartburg Hymnal* 344 (1918), *American Lutheran Hymnal* 220 (1930), *The Lutheran Hymnal* 409 (1941), *LBW* 487 (1978), *Lutheran Worship* 381 (1982), *CW93* 452 (1993), *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* 236 (1996), *LSB* 685 (2006), *ELW* 802 (2006), and *CW21* 704 (2021).
3. Boltze’s first melody is the chorale SOLLT ICH MEINEM GOTT NICHT SINGEN?; it is now often used for “Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus.” His other two melodies form the appendix of children’s songs: KINDER, GEHT ZUR BIENE HIN! and HERR MEINER JUGEND, DANK SEY DIR!
4. Johann Ernst Häuser, *Geschichte des christlichen, insbesondere des evangelischen Kirchengesanges ...* (Quedlinburg: 1834), 192. This work is problematic because it has sometimes been misinterpreted to produce a fictitious birth year for Boltze.
5. See, for example, F. M. Böhme, “Beitrag zur Hymnologie,” *Urania* 11, no. 8 (1854): 113–18; Johannes Zahn, *Die Melodien der deutschen evangelischen Kirchenlieder*, vol. 5 (Gütersloh: 1892), 451; and Peter C. Reske, “Boltze, Georg Gottfried,” in vol. 2 of *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns*, ed. Joseph Herl, Peter C. Reske, and Jon D. Vieker (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2019), 228–29. Böhme also erroneously claims a death date for Boltze of 1788.
6. Hermann Mendel, *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexicon*, vol. 2 (Berlin: 1872), 126.
7. *The Lutheran Hymnal* 855.
8. *Geschichte des Königlichen Potsdamschen Militärwaisenhauses ...* (Berlin: 1824), 222.
9. Friedrich Nicolai, *Beschreibung der Königlichen Residenzstädte Berlin und Potsdam ...* (Berlin: 1769), 544–47.
10. Institut für Orgelforschung Brandenburg, “Pritzerbe (ev. Kirche),” <https://www.orgellandschaftbrandenburg.de/orgelinventar/potsdam-mittelmark/pritzerbe/>.
11. Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Ueber Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke* (Leipzig: 1802), 10; and Benjamin Lassiwe, “Wie zu Zeiten Bachs: Die bedeutendste Orgel Brandenburgs wird 300 Jahre alt,” *Tagesspiegel PNN* (June 21, 2023), <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/potsdam/brandenburg/wie-zu-zeiten-bachs-die-bedeutendste-orgel-brandenburgs-wird-300-jahre-alt-10019830.html>.
12. Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: 1880), 711.
13. Johann Christoph Wilhelm Kühnau, *Die blinden Tonkünstler* (Berlin: 1810), 29–30. Though the text gives his name only as “Boltze,” the table of contents lists him as “G. G. Boltze in Potsdam.”
14. Karl Gottfried Meyer, *Sammlung einiger Nachrichten von berühmten Orgel-Wercken in Teutschland* (Breslau: 1757), 78.
15. Willi Blasek, *Chronik der Stadt Pritzerbe, 948–1998* (Pritzerbe: “Pritzerber Kulturerben” e.V., 1998), 63.
16. Johann Crüger, *Praxis Pietatis Melica* (Berlin: 1653), 422–26. The Gerhardt–Boltze pairing is still used, for example, in *CW21* 611.
17. *Sammlung erbaulicher Lieder zum gottesdienstlichen Gebrauch des Königlichen Großen Waisenhauses zu Potsdam* (Potsdam: 1776).
18. Johann Rist, *H. P. Himmlischer Lieder* (Lüneburg: 1641), iv.
19. Sigismund von Birken, *Geistlicher Weibrauchkörner ...* (Nürnberg: 1652); and Johann Michael Dilherr, *Heilige Karwochen* (Nürnberg: 1653), 412–14. The original melody for von Birken’s text was JESU, DU MEIN LIEBSTES LEBEN, also by Johann Schop, which appeared in Johann Rist, *H. P. Himmlischer Lieder*, part 5 (Lüneburg: 1642), 4.
20. Carl Martin Franz Gebhard, preface to Georg Peter Weimar, *Vollständiges, rein und unverfälschtes Choral-Melodienbuch ...* (Erfurt: 1811 [Gebhard’s preface dated 1803]), xix.
21. The younger Gabriel Gottlieb may have been named not after his father but after his cousin Gabriel Gottlieb Boltze who had died of smallpox.
22. Chr., “Literaturgeschichte,” in *Jenaische allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 137 (July 10, 1812): 63–64; my translation.

Evaluating the Top 100 CCLI Songs for Use in Lutheran Assemblies

by Clayton Faulkner

Introduction

Copyright licensing for houses of worship is a begrudged part of many musician’s responsibilities. With the advent of modern licensing firms to assist churches, many of the complications of securing copyrights are removed. Regardless, it remains a tedious chore and is often ignored by those responsible for it. Many church leaders lack an understanding of copyright law and the implications that accompany it. Enter companies like Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI), which declares it can enable “real-time access to licensed Christian music and media while at once easing the burden of administration in the many complex issues related to copyright.”¹

What started as a desire to stay clear of legal action has evolved into generating an influential list of the most-covered songs.

The model on which CCLI operates is fairly simple. Through CCLI, a church can purchase a licensing contract that gives them the legal coverage to display song lyrics, print song files, record and stream music within a worship service, make custom arrangements, and translate song lyrics into other languages for music created by any of the thousands of songwriters, publishers, and recording labels with whom CCLI holds agreements. License holders submit a song-copying activity report once every two-and-a-half years that allows CCLI to distribute royalties to the copyright owners.² Having been in the business of copyright licensing for nearly forty years, they have gained a prominent position as the one-stop-shop for procuring the rights to most contemporary Christian music (CCM) and specifically the praise and worship genre.

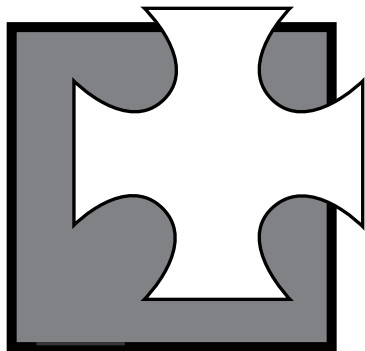
There is much that can be said about the use of CCM in worshipping assemblies, more than can be contained in the scope of this article. Also beyond this scope are interesting associations between the rise of licensing for Christian music, the Church Growth Movement, and the charismatic movement in North America. It is also critical to recognize that CCLI, which claims to serve more than 250,000 churches worldwide³ (a relatively small sample of the millions of worshipping communities in the world), tells its origin narrative as seeking to avoid a lawsuit such as the one that was brought against the Archdiocese of Chicago by a copyright holder in 1984.

What started as a desire to stay clear of legal action has evolved into generating an influential list of the most-covered songs. CCLI publishes its Top 100 song list online twice per year. It is a list that many church musicians notice and refer to when searching for new song selections. CCLI’s website states that the Top 100 list is “based on reporting data from a broad cross-section of small to large US churches across all denominations licensed with CCLI.”⁴

UMC Project

Beginning in 2015, the United Methodist Church (UMC) through their resource arm Discipleship Ministries sponsored a project to vet the Top 100 CCLI song list for their denomination. The goal was to be able to pass along to pastors and worship leaders guidance on which songs from within that canon of songs work well in the UMC context. The initial phase of the project⁵ was followed by an additional step of seeking out songs that would fill in the theological and representational gaps that the Top 100 CCLI list contained.⁶

After the UMC shared their findings, the project was picked up by Brian Hehn, director



of The Center for Congregational Song, the

resource and programmatic arm of The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada. Hehn stated, “I believe that the project was done very thoughtfully and has revealed a process by which other denominations and traditions could duplicate. If enough groups duplicated the effort, what we could then approach is an ecumenical consensus on which songs within the modern ‘praise and worship’ canon could have staying power for the broader church.”⁷

The team for the UMC project developed guidelines that centered on three areas of evaluation: UMC/Wesleyan theology, language, and performance practice.⁸ They also created an evaluation spreadsheet that was shared and used as a template for other denominational participants.

ALCM Project

In November 2021, ALCM began the process of contributing its own evaluation of the Top 100 CCLI songs. Interest from within the association was solicited and a team was formed, including Clayton Faulkner (project lead), Matthew Frable, Lisa Carlson, Omaldo Perez, and Lisa Griffin. Recognizing that ALCM is a pan-Lutheran organization, there could be variation in the consensus of what is suitable for assembly song. Songs that some Lutheran denominations would find acceptable may not be consistently acceptable across the board. Perhaps a group of church musicians from each representative Lutheran denomination would come to different conclusions. The results of this project represent all of ALCM, although it should be noted that the majority of our project team served in ELCA contexts. The next step in the

“If enough groups duplicated the effort, what we could then approach is an ecumenical consensus on which songs within the modern ‘praise and worship’ canon could have staying power for the broader church.”

ALCM project was to develop a rubric for evaluating the songs.

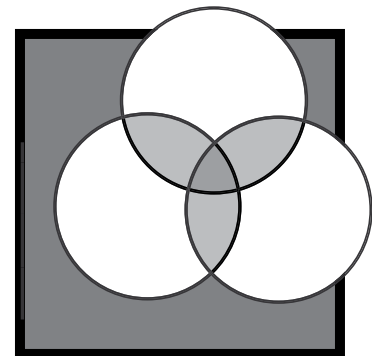
Rubric

Starting with the UMC template, the ALCM project team used the same three categories as the UMC project for evaluating the songs: theology, language, and music (which equates to performance practice). The team considered the following guidelines (and supporting quotes) when evaluating songs in these three categories.

Theology

Trinitarian

- God’s Three-in-Oneness is named.
- God is described as relational.
- God is perceived as mystery.
- God is experienced as trans-rational.
- God is portrayed as dynamic, active, or interbeing/interconnected.
- The triune God is revealed at Jesus’ baptism as descending Spirit, speaking Father, and Beloved Son: “And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased’” (Mark 1:10–11).
- “God gives the Word and the sacraments to the Church and by the power of the Spirit thereby creates and sustains the Church among us” (*The Use of the Means of Grace*⁹ [hereafter *UMG*], Principle 2).

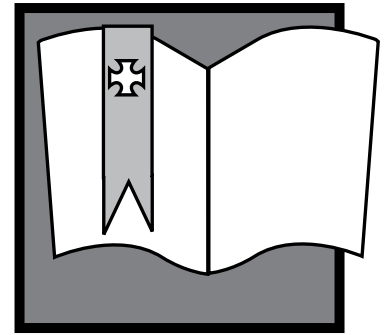
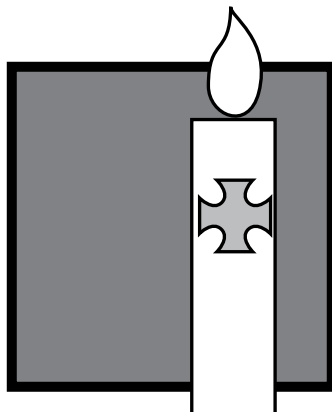


The communal participation of all in the assembly is a reflection of the communal life of the triune God into whom we have been baptized.

- “Christians believe that the triune God is both One and Three-in-One, that within the very unity of God there is also the dynamic of relationship and community. The communal participation of all in the assembly is a reflection of the communal life of the triune God into whom we have been baptized” (*Principles for Worship*¹⁰ [hereafter *PW*], Background L-10A).
- “Because God is beyond the capacity of human speech fully to express, the Christian community frequently speaks about God in metaphor” (*PW*, Background L-5B).

Grace

- God’s action, not ours, is the cause of our hope and salvation.
- “Likewise, they teach that human beings cannot be justified before God by their own powers, merits, or works. But they are justified as a gift on account of Christ through faith when they believe that they are received into grace and that their sins are forgiven on account of Christ, who by his death made satisfaction for our sins” (Augsburg Confession IV 1–2).
- “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

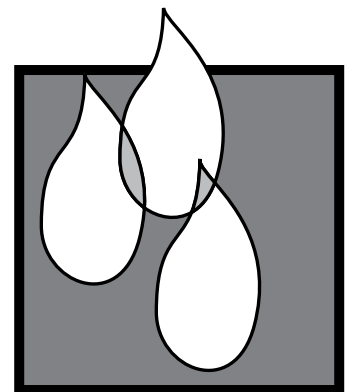


Law and Gospel

- God’s word comes to us as both law and gospel, convicting us of sin and promising us new, abundant life.
- God’s word is not separated into a law part and a gospel part. It is entirely always both. Similarly, we are always both sinner and saint, always both redeemed and in need of redemption.
- “For these are the two chief works of God in human beings, to terrify and to justify the terrified or make them alive. The entire Scripture is divided into these two works. One part is the law, which reveals, denounces, and condemns sin. The second part is the gospel, that is, the promise of grace given in Christ” (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XII 53).

Sacramentality

- Baptismal imagery and language signify God’s saving action through water and word.
- Eucharistic imagery and language signify God’s immanent presence through bread and wine.
- God’s presence transforms the ordinary things of life.
- “In Holy Baptism the Triune God delivers us from the forces of evil, puts our sinful self to death, gives us new birth, adopts us as children, and makes us members of the body of Christ, the Church. Holy Baptism is received by faith alone” (*UMG*, Principle 14).
- “At the table of our Lord Jesus Christ, God nourishes faith, forgives sin, and calls us to be witnesses to the Gospel” (*UMG*, Principle 31).



Language for worship and singing should draw upon the full diversity of story, metaphor, and images of God found in Scripture, tradition, and human experience.

Liturgical Time

- Liturgical time bases the church’s calendar in the story of God’s action and redemptive love, which are different than secular holidays and memorials.
- Many churches move through time in a cyclical pattern that roots worship in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Songs with liturgical-season connections are helpful in planning worship using a calendar.
- Liturgical time connects individual congregations to other churches and ecumenical partners.
- “The service of Word and Sacrament is also celebrated on other great festivals of the year, according to the common Christian calendar received in our churches” (PW, Application 6A).

Language

Inclusive language for God’s people

- Where the intended references of nouns and pronouns in the texts is to all people, gender-neutral terms should be used.
- It is appropriate to retain gender-specific nouns and pronouns when the intended reference is to a specific gender and when referencing Jesus, Mary, or other historical people of known gender.
- Language that stereotypes people according to such categories as gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, age, or disability is to be avoided.
- The “generic masculine” (“man,” “mankind,” or use of masculine singular pronouns to refer to both females and males) is no longer universally understood to include people of all genders and should generally be avoided.

- “The language of worship reflects God’s love for all persons regardless of gender” (PW, Application L-15C).

Expansive language for God

- The Bible contains a wide range of images for God and God’s gracious acts. Language for worship and singing should draw upon the full diversity of story, metaphor, and images of God found in Scripture, tradition, and human experience. These include references to female and male human characteristics as well as elements of God’s creation.
- Songs should reflect the diversity and breadth of the biblical, traditional, and poetic language for God from across Christian and human experience.
- “The language of worship invites us to see the world from the perspective of God, to envision the world in a larger way and strive to discern God’s purpose at work within it” (PW, Background L-15A).



Music

- Musical considerations are based on the primacy of the assembly’s voice in worship.
- “In the church, the primary musical instrument is the human voice, given by God to sing and proclaim the word of God” (PW, Principle M-2).
- The rhythms contained within the melody can be followed and replicated by an untrained singer.
- The pitch range of the melody is typically within an octave.



- The melody is naturally accessible, easy to sing, and can be followed by an untrained singer.
- The musical accompaniment is strong yet versatile, able to be supported by a single instrument or an entire ensemble, or perhaps sung a cappella.
- “The crafts of composition, improvisation, appropriate performance practice, and excellence in building and maintaining of instruments are encouraged” (PW, Application M-13D).

Based on this rubric, the project team divided up the Top 100 CCLI song list into equal portions and worked individually to evaluate the songs. The evaluations included comments on theology, language, and musical practice for each song. Also, a “Recommendation for Use” with a yes/no response was provided for each song, determined by weighing all pieces of the rubric together. There is a subjective nature to this evaluation; another

There is a subjective nature to this evaluation; another project team might reach different conclusions.

project team might reach different conclusions. All individual team evaluations were compiled, edited, and are presented as a companion to this article. The evaluations are also available as a downloadable Excel file from the ALCM website.

Observations

The Top 100 CCLI song list is updated and published twice per year. The list that our team evaluated was released on December 1, 2021. The most updated list available at the time of publication was released on June 1, 2023. It is notable that in the eighteen months between the two lists, twenty-three new songs have made their way into the Top 100. In other words, 77 percent of the top one hundred songs remained consistent over the course of a year and a half (although their position on the list did fluctuate). This points out the relative stability of the most sung songs in evangelical churches. There is not a great degree of turnover, and churches engaged in the reporting process sang the same songs consistently over this

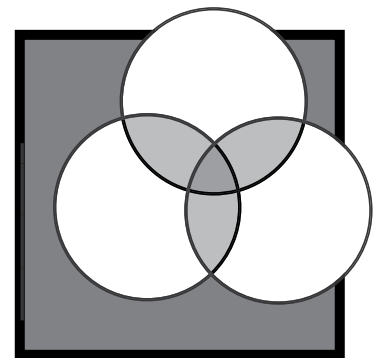
The doctrine of the Trinity is a critical piece of Christian theology that has mostly disappeared from the content that is sung in CCLI’s representative reporting churches. That should be cause for alarm.

span of time. Of the twenty-three songs that were bumped off the list by the arrival of the new ones, the majority were positioned in the 80–100 range on the list.

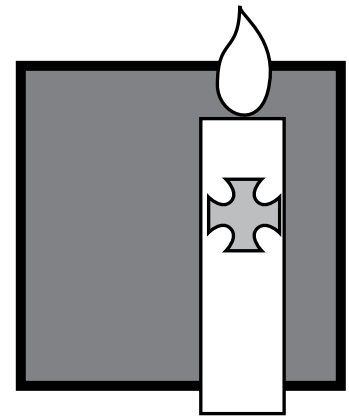
Regarding the theological evaluation category, the following can be observed:

- 13 songs qualified as trinitarian by including the three-in-oneness of God;
- 67 songs qualified as grace-focused by mention or allusion to the concept;
- 45 songs qualified as containing law and gospel by allusion to the concept;
- 17 songs qualified as sacramental by including baptismal or eucharistic references; and
- 63 songs qualified as relating to liturgical time by lyrical connection to at least one season or feast.

The evaluation reveals stark findings in two areas: the Trinity and the sacraments. Finding songs in the Top 100 list that make mention of the Trinity or that name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is difficult. The doctrine of the Trinity is a critical piece of Christian theology that has mostly disappeared from the content that is



[There is a] need for a continued renewal of music for worship written with an emphasis on Lutheran theology.



sung in CCLI's representative reporting churches. That should be cause for alarm. A central theological framework for understanding God that has been our bedrock for centuries should be more prominent in what we sing and thus what we believe.

The second area low in representation is songs that reference sacramentality as existent in our Protestant tradition: baptism and eucharist. This is largely related to the sacramental nature that music plays in the worship services of churches that employ a praise and worship model. In said churches, the presence of the divine is often sensed and experienced during the music, particularly when presented as a set of songs that connect. However, in mainline Protestant churches that follow a traditional order of service, the divine is often sensed and experienced more in the tangible actions of baptism and eucharist. If the set of praise and worship songs *itself* is providing the primary experience of the sacred, it would explain why there is a low representation of songs in the Top 100 that make mention of baptism and eucharist. It comes down to where the assembly is led to encounter the divine in their worship.¹¹

Songs that focus on grace or make mention of it ranked the highest in number among the five theological areas evaluated. Also, many of the songs could find a home in various seasons of the liturgical calendar. One could probably make the argument that every song on the list fits into liturgical time at some point, if the lyrics were scrutinized and matched with lectionary readings in a more detailed way. Nearly half the songs contained

Songs that focus on grace or make mention of it ranked the highest in number among the five theological areas evaluated.

some allusion to the concept of law and gospel, even if in an indirect manner. An example is "You Are My All in All" (#92), second stanza: "When I fall down You pick me up. When I am dry You fill my cup." Realizing that we have fallen while simultaneously being picked up, and feeling empty and being filled, are tangentially akin to the command and promise understood in law and gospel.

When evaluating the language of the songs, seventy-six songs on our list were thought to be inclusive of God's people, and thirty-six songs were thought to use expansive language for God. It is more likely for the lyrics to be inclusive in relation to humanity than for the lyrics to describe the divine in diverse and thought-provoking ways.

In general, the musical-performance aspects of the songs are achievable by the average ensemble and vocalist. The most common remarks include the need to transpose the key, the sometimes wide range of notes in the melody, and the complexity of rhythms contained in the melody.

The number of songs that were overall not recommended for use was twenty-three. Determining a song's suitability is highly subjective and varies from context to context. Ultimately it is a decision that worship planners need to make for themselves guided by the Spirit's discernment. What makes a song not recommended for use is some combination of perceived deficiency in the three areas of theology, language, and musical performance. Conversely, many of the songs on the Top 100 list are sung in Lutheran churches on a regular basis.

This speaks to the need for a continued renewal of music for worship written with an emphasis on Lutheran theology. When church musicians select music for band-led worship styles, they often turn to the Top 100 CCLI list. The suggestions they find there will also be sung in most every evangelical

Church musicians are entrusted with the role of shepherding the congregation's sung theology.

and nondenominational church on a given Sunday. Why aren't Lutheran churches singing songs distinctive to our theological outlook? Is there a risk of losing our unique voice and the perspective our church offers? As popular praise and worship music continues to be homogenized by a few centralized publishing outlets,¹² the time is ripe to create and share music from within our own denominational branch.¹³



music. Evaluating songs based on theology, language, and musical performance is complex enough. Add to it the need to carefully distinguish where the songs are sourced from and the ethics behind such publishing entities is an even deeper layer of complexity. Not only that, but it

also includes making judgments over things that perhaps only God can know: the intentions of the heart of each songwriter. Regardless, as in the case of Haas, songs from the Hillsong repertoire may need to be reconsidered.

Perhaps the best example of a song from the list that fits the Lutheran viewpoint is “This I Believe (The Creed)” (#54). The song’s strength comes from its lyrical inspiration as a paraphrase of the Apostles’ Creed, hence its alignment to a strong theological center. The song fared well under the parameters of the evaluation rubric. However, it is a song published by Hillsong Music Publishing Australia, which brings up concerns not contained in the rubric.

Theological debates arise when discussing whether the actions of a song’s composer should impact its use in worship. While an argument can be made for the separation of the song from the composer, others contend that the lived experiences of victims cannot be ignored. An obvious example is David, the biblical shepherd king, and the numerous psalms attributed to him still employed in the church’s worship. While David’s actions were far from perfect, his songs remain an integral part of worship. It begs the question, “If we did not cancel David’s psalms, why should we cancel Haas or Hillsong?”¹⁶

Hillsong, Haas, and the Ethics of Sourcing Congregational Songs

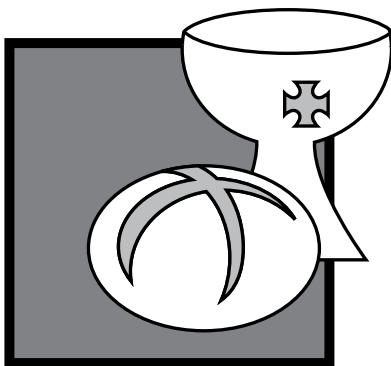
Recent documentaries on Hillsong Church have exposed scandals, misconduct by leaders, and a history of covering up abuse within that church.¹⁴ With the truth exposed, questions have been raised about the integrity and ethical use of the praise and worship music produced by such a church organization. The dilemma over ethical use cannot be separated from the church’s harmful activity. It is a systemic issue, as the source of the music is the church. The size of Hillsong makes it more akin to a corporation than a church, which possibly explains why such misconduct can remain intact. These questions of integrity are not unlike the questions raised over music composed by David Haas, who has been implicated in a sexual misconduct case.¹⁵

The answers have to do with proximity and perpetuation. The difference between David’s psalms and the music of Haas is proximity of time. Thousands of years have elapsed since David’s misdeeds, and we use his words with a reminder of the brokenness inherent in all of us. Haas’ victims are still with us and anyone who knows of his allegations or suffered from abuse could be triggered by singing his words. Perhaps after some length of time the memory of his actions will expire and his music will be sung again. The difference between David’s psalms and the music of Hillsong is perpetuation. To sing David’s psalms is to echo the words of a person after God’s own heart. To sing music from Hillsong potentially perpetuates an abusive culture and feeds its growth through copyright royalties.

Drawing parallels between Hillsong and David Haas, it becomes evident that the church must weigh the ethical implications of supporting these organizations through the use of their

These are not new quandaries for Lutherans. One of the earliest questions of the Reformation dealt with what happens when “evil men” administer the sacraments. Are the water and word of baptism and the body and blood of Christ null and void when they are administered by sinful clergy who cause harm to others? The answer is no. What gives the sacraments their power is Christ. They function because of his authority, institution, and commandment. The effectiveness of the sacraments is not dependent on what any person does (see Augsburg Confession VIII 1–2). Could the same be true of the effectiveness of music? Perhaps. But in the same way that “evil men” are not permitted to continue administering the sacraments, so ought songs of questionable origin be discontinued.

There are no easy answers. In the ever-evolving landscape of church music, one question looms large: how do congregations select the songs they sing together? It is more than a question of theology, language, and music. There are ethical considerations surrounding our choices. It’s important that church leaders tasked with the selection of songs have a decision-making process in light of recent



revelations discussed here. All of this elevates the important role that church musicians play. Church musicians are

As popular praise and worship music continues to be homogenized by a few centralized publishing outlets, the time is ripe to create and share music from within our own denominational branch.

entrusted with the role of shepherding the congregation’s sung theology. This responsibility carries a significant weight, as the songs chosen can have a profound impact on individuals throughout their lives. The process of selecting songs for congregational worship is a pivotal aspect of a church musician’s role. It sparks questions about where to find songs, how to ensure their theological integrity, and the ethical implications of our choices. Recent events prompt a need for careful consideration in the selection of worship music.

Mykayla Turner encourages the use of these reflective questions when making such choices: “What kind of community do I wish to create through song? What are its characteristics? Who does it include or exclude? What kind of research, relationships, and rehearsals must ensue for our songs (or the songs of others) to shape our future for the better?”¹⁷ Selecting songs for worship is prayerful, thoughtful, vigilant ministry. Broad consideration of the songs’ origins, authors, and the organizations they support is required. It is not a task to be taken lightly but should be approached with the gravity it deserves. Ultimately, the responsibility falls on church musicians to shepherd the congregation’s sung theology with the utmost care and discernment.

Further Recommendations

Songs not in the Top 100 that were recommended for use by our project team:

- Ancient Words (CCLI # 2986399)
- Behold the Lamb (CCLI # 5003372)
- Christ in Me Arise (CCLI # 5917286)
- May the Peoples Praise (CCLI # 7063739)
- The River Is Here (CCLI # 1475231)
- Gifted Response (CCLI # 4301570)
- Grace Is Not Earned (CCLI # 5971167)
- Even So Come (CCLI # 7036288)
- Triune God (CCLI # 4727594)

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“What kind of community do I wish to create through song? What are its characteristics? Who does it include or exclude?”

Notes

1. “CCLI: About Christian Copyright Licensing International,” <https://us.ccli.com/about-ccli/>.
2. “CCLI: Church Copyright License Manual,” <https://us.ccli.com/manual/>.
3. “CCLI: History,” <https://us.ccli.com/about-ccli/history/>.
4. “CCLI Top 100,” <https://www.worshipfuel.com/ccli-top-100/>.
5. “CCLI Top 100,” <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/ccli-top-100>.
6. “CCLI Top 100 + Beyond Project,” <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/ccli-top-100-beyond-project>.
7. Brian Hehn, email to author (September 20, 2021).
8. Diana Sanchez-Bushong and Nelson Cowan, “CCLI + Beyond Vetting Project Guidelines,” <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/ccli-beyond-vetting-project-guidelines>.
9. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), also available at http://download.elca.org/ELCA Resource Repository/The_Use_Of_The_Means_Of_Grace.pdf.
10. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Principles for Worship* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), also available at https://download.elca.org/ELCA Resource Repository/Principles_for_Worship.pdf.
11. This idea stems from the research of Lester Ruth and Lim Swee Hong. For further reference, see their book *A History of Contemporary Praise & Worship: Understanding the Ideas that Reshaped the Protestant Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021). See also Center for Worship Leadership, Concordia University Irvine [CA], “A History of Contemporary Praise and Worship Part 1 (Lim, Ruth)” (June 28, 2022), an episode of the Theology in Motion podcast, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THoGr24xkZA>.
12. David Bjorlin, “Consumerism and Congregational Song”: “Of the 100 songs on the CCLI list, eighty-one are administered, at least partially, by just two companies: Capitol Records (71) and/or Bethel (14). Further, only ten songs are not administered by Capitol, Bethel, or Essential Music (a subsidiary of Sony). Obviously ... there is something resembling a monopoly in contemporary praise and worship music.” Blog post on “Sing: The Center for Congregational Song,” <https://congregationsong.org/were-not-called-to-sing-everything/>.
13. See Kelsey Kramer McGinnis, “Putting Christian and Missionary Alliance Theology in Song,” *Christianity Today* (Sept. 11, 2023), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2023/october/denomination-worship-music-theology-alliance-cma.html>.
14. *The Secrets of Hillsong*, directed by Stacey Lee, on FX (2023); and *Hillsong: A Megachurch Exposed*, on Discovery+ (2022).
15. On November 2, 2020, the ELCA Worship Blog published a post (<https://blogs.elca.org/worship/2979/>) that contained the following: “Musician David Haas has been accused of sexual misconduct by several women spanning many years. Although Haas is not a member of an ELCA congregation, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* includes four hymns by him: “Blest Are They” (ELW 728), “Now We Remain” (ELW 500), “We Are Called” (ELW 720), and “You Are Mine” (ELW 581). Several institutions have requested congregations to no longer sing works by Haas pending an investigation. Those who plan worship in the ELCA are strongly encouraged to discontinue use of these hymns and other compositions in worship. Both the ELCA and 1517 Media/Augsburg Fortress have taken steps to discontinue suggesting hymns by Haas in worship planning resources for this church and to amend existing resources currently available online. The ELCA and 1517 Media have no plans to include his works in future resources and publications.”
16. See also Nelson Cowan, “When a Brand Is Tainted: The Ethics of Song Selection in Corporate Worship,” *Liturgy* 38, nos. 2–3 (2023): 39–48.
17. Mykayla Turner, “We’re Not Called to Sing Everything,” blog post on “Sing: The Center for Congregational Song,” <https://congregationsong.org/were-not-called-to-sing-everything/>.



Song,” <https://congregationsong.org/consumerism-and-congregational-song/>.

Top 100 CCLI Songs as of December 1, 2021

The ALCM project team worked in 2022 to evaluate the CCLI Top 100 list that was released on December 1, 2021. Although this evaluation is published two years after the list first appeared, and the list continues to be updated by CCLI twice every year, there is still usefulness. Seventy-seven percent of the songs from December 1, 2021, still remain in the Top 100 list at the time of publication. Also, the criteria used for evaluating this 2021 list can be used in evaluating any praise and worship song, including those on the most current CCLI Top 100 list. This evaluation list is also available as a downloadable Excel file from the member's section of the ALCM website.

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance	Recommendation?	
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacramentality	Urbirginal Time	Theology Comments	Inclusive of God's People			Expansive for God
1	Build My Life	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=232HCdFZLU	NO	NO	NO	NO	Yes	Somehow repetitive anthem of praise and worship that lacks significant theological depth. Its main fault is being somewhat individualistic ("fill me," "my life," "my trust"). The "worthy" and "no one like you" lyrics make it appropriate for Christ the King and general praise.	Yes	Does not specifically mention God's people. Its lyrics include both "we" and "me" language (corporate and individual). "Jesus" is the only name used for God. The song is lyrically directed to Jesus.	Simple chord progression that is easy to learn and a catchy melody that is easy for assemblies to sing. The recorded key (G) is perhaps too high and would be more accessible for most singers by lowering a minor third to E.	Yes
2	Graves Into Gardens	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwx1f2gYKZ4	NO	Yes	Yes	NO	Yes	Speaks directly of grace and God's ability to overcome obstacles. While there is not as clear a connection to law, there are several dialectical aspects ("beauty for ashes," "shame into glory"). Would fit well in the Easter season.	Yes	The phrase "man's empty praise" is problematic. The titles for God in this song are "You," "God," and "Lord."	Simple chord structure that would be accessible to many bands. The recorded key (B) would likely need to be lowered by two whole steps to G.	Yes
3	Way Maker	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4XVfWlHelM	NO	Yes	NO	NO	No	Simple, repetitive song that speaks of God's healing presence and the response of worship. There is some triumphal theology in the idea of God always being the "miracle worker." God's presence and love are realities even when miracles do not occur.	Yes	The language of worship is direct: "I worship you." God is given several titles, including "miracle worker," "promise keeper," and "light in the darkness," the latter of which could be problematic for predominantly white assemblies to sing.	This ballad has some irregular rhythms in the melody that could be challenging for some assemblies to sing. The recorded key of B seems to be attainable for most voices.	Yes
4	Goodness of God	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDFB66hwwTo	NO	Yes	NO	NO	No	The lyrics center on the goodness of God. There is mention of God's mercy, but the word "grace" is not used specifically. The theology in this song is fairly shallow: "All my life you have been so, so good." It has no direct connection to any liturgical season but could serve in any season or perhaps evening prayer.	Yes	God is addressed directly with lyrics such as, "I love you, Lord." Names for God include "Lord," "God," "father," and "friend."	Simple chord structure; would be easy for most ensembles to replicate. The recorded key (A-b) seems to be accessible for most voices.	Yes

*Based on theology, language, and musical performance, is this song recommended?

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance		
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacramentality	Urgential Time	Theology Comments	Include of God's People	Expansive for God	Explanation/Notes	Comments
5	Living Hope	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-L1WZIKJSM	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	The lyrics reflect a vertical relationship between God and the singer, with "me," "my," and "I" of the Trinity mentioned but does get referred to broadly as "God of ages," "King of kings," and "roaring lion."	This song has a hymn-like structure, with three full stanzas and a repeated refrain. The melody is easy and accessible. The recorded key (E ^b) puts the melody in an accessible range during the stanzas, but the chorus will be out of range for some. Lowering the key by a minor third to C would be helpful.	Yes
6	What a Beautiful Name	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQWfZMVcLE	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	The lyrics are horizontal in their relationship to God, with "us" and "our" language (and use of "my" as well). The lyrics focus on the wonderful, powerful name of Jesus but only refer to him as "Jesus Christ my King" and "Word at the beginning."	The recorded key (D) seems to be accessible by most singers. Could be presented by a simple ensemble or even a solo instrument. The bridge section builds in dynamics for a dramatic effect.	Yes
7	Great Are You Lord	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHzDw-HG4U	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	The language is directed to God in the second person, "You give life." The response is from "our lungs" and "our praise," providing a horizontal connection between worshippers. "Lord" is the only title for God used in this song.	The recorded key (A) is high for some voices on the chorus. Lowering it by one or two whole steps (to G or F) would make the chorus melody more accessible.	Yes
8	Who You Say I Am	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kw6uqtGFbD	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	The language contains "I" and "me," giving the lyrics a vertical relationship to God. God is referred to as "He," and the lyrics only use male pronouns for God.	Recorded in F#, and that key makes the melody accessible for most voices without needing to be modulated. The melody is quite singable, with easy, repeated notes throughout the chorus.	Yes
9	This is Amazing Grace	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFRjP_xYxU	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	The lyrics are directed from "I," "me," "my," and "us" making the song multidirectional (sung from the perspective of the individual and the assembly). The first stanza begins with, "Who breaks the power of sin and darkness." The equation of sin to darkness can be problematic for primarily white assemblies to sing.	The recorded key (B ^b) is too high for most voices and would need to be lowered by at least a minor third (to G). The chord progression is simple and the melody is quite memorable.	Yes

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance		
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Secre- mentality	Liturgical Time	Theology Comments	Inclusive of God's People	Expansive for God	Explanation/Notes	Comments
10	King of Kings	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4f9PlXU	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	The language is both horizontal and vertical in its direction to God ("for our sake you died" and "resurrected me").	The recorded key (D) seems to be accessible for most singers. The chord progression of this song is simple and easy to learn. It would work well with a full ensemble as well as with a single instrument leading it.	Yes
11	Battle Belongs	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvQDNyPHn-w	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	The divine is referred to as "God," "Jesus," and "You." Humans are referred to as "me/my" and "us."	The recorded key (D \flat) is too high for most assemblies to sing the chorus and the bridge. The second half of the second stanza is also sung up one octave, which will be difficult for many. The key should be lowered by a half step (to C) or a minor third (to B \flat).	No
12	In Christ Alone	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16KXvflC2BE	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Christ is identified by a variety of attributes ("light," "strength," "song," "cornerstone," "solid ground").	Hymn-like structure and feel, with four stanzas that repeat the same melody (and no chorus or bridge). The original key of D is typically suitable for a wide range of singers, given the strong melody with a large range.	Yes
13	Glorious Day	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1z3p6rPUD0	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Directed toward Jesus and sung from the perspective of "me/my/I." God and Jesus are not described in any expansive way.	The melody is fairly static, sticking to one central note throughout the chorus. The recorded key (D) is probably too high for most assemblies and would need to be lowered to C or B \flat .	No
14	10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xxw1T8jiddM	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	The lyric "worship His holy name" contains the masculine pronoun for God. You can train the assembly to substitute "worship God's holy name" instead.	The recorded key (G) is best lowered by a full step (to F) or a minor third (to E).	Yes

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance				
			Timberian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacramentality	Liturgical Time	Theology Comments	Inclusive of God's People	Expansive for God	Language Comments	Explanation/Notes	Comments	Recomm- ended**
15	How Great Is Our God	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKBD18rSVJHK	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Contains exclusively male pronouns for God without explicitly identifying the recipient as Jesus.	The recorded key (D ^b) is too high and should be lowered to A or G to be singable in a comfortable range.	Yes
16	Great Things	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4CY3nF1Mvow	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Includes the title "King" for God and includes male pronouns. The melody is simple and repetitive.	The recorded key (B) would need to be lowered by at least two whole steps to G to be singable, particularly on the bridge.	No
17	Raise a Hallelujah	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GS2XtRuPfaAU	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Neither God, Jesus, nor the Holy Spirit are named in this song. God is only referred to as "King."	The recorded key (D ^b) needs to be lowered at least a minor third (to B ^b). The melody is repetitive.	No
18	Lord I Need You	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rR_Rd_b1CTE	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Sung directly to God/Jesus. Primarily identifies God as being "my one defense, my righteousness."	Provides a challenge in the way that it is recorded. The second stanza is sung an octave higher than the first. Choices include omitting the octave change and leaving it in the recorded key (B) or lowering the key by two whole steps (to G), perhaps making the octave change more attainable.	Yes
19	O Praise the Name (Anástasis)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqB9tIDpNKc	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Jesus, the direct focus of this song, is named "Savior," "Messiah," and "King" in these lyrics.	This song is originally recorded in C and would likely need to be lowered to G to make the chorus singable for most assemblies. There is a long instrumental section after the fourth stanza that could be skipped in an arrangement, making the song flow.	Yes
20	Cornerstone	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izrk-erhdok	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Titles for Jesus in this song include "Christ," "Cornerstone," "Savior," and "Lord."	The recorded key (C) is too high for the chorus but singable for the stanzas. Lowering by one whole step (to B ^b) or more would be helpful. There is a long instrumental section that can be skipped to maintain a focus on assembly singing.	Yes
21	Good Good Father	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwvbaieSbuA	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	The text is inclusive in that it primarily talks about self and God using words like "me" and "I." It is a personal message between the singer and God, appropriate for one's own devotions and less appropriate for corporate worship.	The range is an octave. The melody is somewhat repetitive and not overly complex. The default key (A) is somewhat high for congregational singing.	No
22	Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibz2DrULk8I	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	The text is inclusive, mainly focusing on the individual receiving God's grace.	The range is fairly wide (an octave and a fourth). Nice bridge between traditional and contemporary in that it takes the familiar hymn and adds a more contemporary refrain. The default key is a little high for congregational singing. A third lower is suggested.	Yes

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology						Language		Musical Performance		
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacramentality	Unliturgical Time	Theology Comments	Inclusive of God's People	Expansive for God	Explanation/Notes	Comments	Recommended?
23	Holy Spirit	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9JIKm98	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Seeks the presence of God's Spirit during a time of worship. One could potentially use this song to lead an assembly into intimate expression during corporate worship.	Yes	Yes	The lyrics talk about experiencing the glory of God's presence.	The limited range is fine for congregational singing, but the default key is high and should be sung in a lower key for most people's comfort.	Yes
24	How Great Thou Art	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C00VWzCv9k	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Gives praise for God's greatness through creation and the gift of God's Son.	Yes	No	Humble response to our awe of God's greatness.	The range of an octave is fine for congregational singing, and the default key is the same key as found in most hymnals.	Yes
25	Lion and the Lamb	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9uJ8oUd26k	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	The lyrics talk about God as a "lion," a "lamb," and "King of kings." The lyrics "open up the gates" and "make way before the King of kings" make this song suitable for Palm/Passion Sunday.	Yes	Yes	The language is understandable and relatable in this time.	The range is an octave, but the default key is either too high or too low for most people. Transposing to a more typical vocal range would be helpful. Some assemblies may struggle with the rhythms, which contain quite a bit of syncopation.	Yes
26	The Blessing	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6n6mgmzIM4	No	Yes	No	No	No	Asks for God's blessing on us now and throughout the day. Uses the Aaronic benediction from Numbers 6 and parts of the St. Patrick's Breastplate prayer.	Yes	No	The text is inclusive of all people but has many male references to God ("He" and "His").	The range is within an octave and is in a comfortable key for most singers. May be used during a service or as a way of concluding and sending forth from a time of worship.	Yes
27	O Come to the Altar	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYQ5XCC-CA	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Invites us as broken people to the altar to receive forgiveness and comfort. The bridge includes praise of God, and the song concludes encouraging us to share our experience with others.	Yes	Yes	God is referred to as "Jesus," "Father," and "savior." There are a few male pronouns for God.	The range is within an octave, but the default key is high for most singers and also awkward for instrumentalists. Lowering a third to G might work better in most situations. The rhythm may seem awkward and rough at first glance, but it is fairly easy to learn after listening to the song.	Yes
28	King of My Heart	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ep65kYd8Y	No	Yes	No	No	No	The theology is fairly shallow as it provides several images of God's presence in our lives.	Yes	Yes	The primary references to God are male in nature. The lyrics of the bridge and chorus are repetitive and somewhat trite and shallow.	The range is large at almost two octaves, not really conducive to corporate singing. There is much melodic repetition, particularly in the chorus and bridge.	No
29	God So Loved (Live at the Wheelhouse)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TmEU8GE9s	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Invites us all to a closer experience of God's love. Praise is offered for all God has done.	Yes	No	References to God include "Jesus," "God," and a few male pronouns.	The range of an octave and the default key should be comfortable for most people. A slightly lower key may be helpful in some situations. The syncopated rhythms may be a struggle for some.	Yes
30	Reckless Love	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5r6SSHUzVQE	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Focused on the personal experience of what God has done for "me."	Yes	No	Inclusive in that it only refers to "me." This song may be appropriate for an individual's personal time of worship, but due to its self-centered focus it is not appropriate for corporate worship.	The range is an octave, but the default key is too high for most singers. Transposition down would be needed. Some of the rhythms are syncopated and tricky.	No
31	How Deep the Father's Love for Us	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtGj2XvKFMA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	God's love for us is evidenced by Jesus' death and resurrection.	No	No	There are male references for Jesus, but also for God. There is one use of "sons" referring to all believers.	The range is an octave, and the default key is comfortable for most. Some may desire to raise the key a step or two. This song is hymn-like in that the same melody is used for all three stanzas. The melody is accessible, with an AABA structure.	Yes
32	Yes I Will	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrTV9S-IG4M	No	Yes	No	No	No	About giving praise to our God who is always there "in the lowest valley" and "when my heart is heavy."	Yes	No	References to God ("You") and to people are direct without using pronouns.	The range is less than an octave, but the default key is high for most singers. Transposing down a third would be helpful. The syncopated rhythms may be a struggle for some congregations.	Yes

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology						Language		Musical Performance		
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacramentality	Liturgical Time	Theology Comments	Inclusive of God's People	Expansive for God	Explanation/Notes	Comments	Recommended?*
33	Revelation Song	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-Gx1deWVp4	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	There are a couple male references, but these are for Jesus. All other references to God are gender neutral.	The default key is a good key for the octave range of this melody. The stanzas could work best being sung by a soloist, due to the subtle changes for the lyrics. The assembly can join on the chorus.	Yes
34	Blessed Be Your Name	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TPTQ4kBLVA	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	References to God include "Lord" and "Your."	The range is slightly over an octave, and the default key is comfortable for most singers. A few rhythms may be a struggle at first, but most of the melody will be easily learned.	Yes
35	See a Victory	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNd-PbVhmvA	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	There are a couple of male pronouns for Jesus. The lyrics are repetitive.	The range of the melody is less than an octave. The default key may be a little high for some situations, and lowering the key a step or two might be better. The melody includes quite a bit of syncopation that may be challenging. The lyrics are somewhat limited, but if the message or theme refers to God's battle, this song would work.	No
36	Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwz5dLXt8gM	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	There are several male references for God, but the song is primarily focused on Jesus Christ, so the male references make sense.	The range is a little more than an octave, and the default key is in a good range. The rhythms of the melody are quite singable, and the song is hymn-like in that all four stanzas use the same melody.	Yes
37	No Longer Slaves	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TRQUMJKSk	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Although inclusive language is used, the lyrics are personal, speaking of what God has done for me.	The range is a sixth, but the default key is too high for most singers. Transposing down several steps would be needed. Some of the rhythms are quite syncopated and may be challenging. This song is more appropriate for individual worship as opposed to corporate worship.	No
38	Death Was Arrested	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM5MlUCUJl	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	There are only a couple of male references for God; most references are gender neutral.	This song has a wide range (an octave and a sixth). The song is in 6/8 time and has some complex rhythms. Many congregational singers may struggle with the range and rhythms. The song would work better as reflective music and not congregational song.	No
39	His Mercy is More	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1G1ZL6Gc80	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	There are several male pronouns used in reference to God.	The melody has a range of an octave, and the default key should work in most settings. A step or two lower might be better for some groups. The rhythm is flowing and easily learned.	Yes
40	Do it Again	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0B-INQlITkU	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	The lyrics are inclusive and relatable for all believers.	The melody range is an octave. The default key is too high for most singers and transposing down a third would be helpful. There is quite a bit of syncopation, which may be a struggle for some congregations.	Yes

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance			
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Secr- mentality	Uturgical Time	Theology Comments	Incluse of God's People	Expansive for God	Explanation/Notes	Comments	Recom- mended*
41	House of the Lord	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18u8u8UPE	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	The song is singable, with a memorable melody, and is suitable for assembly singing. It has a simple chord progression accessible for bands.	No
42	Because He Lives	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4M-zWE337HA	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	The lyrics make it particularly suitable during Easteride. The lyrics have a certain sentimentality, especially in stanza 2. There is strong substitutionary atonement language that needs to be carefully included in worship with an awareness for balance.	No	No	Yes	This song has a singability that makes it easy to follow. The chord progression has some interesting turns that will require attention for most bands. The chorus contains an emotional lift as the melody ascends.	Yes
43	Jesus Paid It All	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0W/XUdF_BfQ	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	The main concern in these lyrics is the "washed it white as snow" imagery that equates whiteness with purity and being saved by Jesus. Churches and denominations with a historical pattern of white supremacy ought to avoid these words. Baptismal imagery and language of Jesus' death make a connection to Good Friday. There is strong substitutionary atonement language that needs to be carefully included in worship with an awareness for balance.	No	No	No	This is a traditional hymn known by many, with an added interlude and chorus. The recorded key (B \flat) makes the original stanza and chorus easy to sing. However, the newer chorus is in a higher range. Some may find it helpful to lower the key.	No
44	Here I Am to Worship	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86v2ZE5EKW8	No	No	No	No	Yes	Has a strong incarnational emphasis, making it appropriate during Christmas and Epiphany. There is strong substitutionary atonement language that needs to be carefully included in worship with an awareness for balance.	Yes	No	Yes	Easy to sing, accessible to band-led worship, and has a memorable melody.	Yes

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance		
			Timberian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacramentality	Liturgical Time	Theology Comments	Inclusive of God's People	Expansive for God	Language Comments	Explanation/Notes
45	Mighty to Save	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8BrTtU8_Y	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Individually centered, with lots of "me/my/I" language.	The original recording of this song has some complexity to the instrumentation. However, this song can work just as well with simple accompaniment by one or two instruments. The range of the melody in the bridge is high and will likely require the song to be lowered in key.	Yes
46	We Praise You	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tD5OMtUuWIA	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Lyrics include "we" instead of "I/me/my," making it horizontal in focus. There is not much imagery for God, other than the "God of breakthrough."	The recorded key (A) is probably too high for some singers in the chorus section. It would be better suited for the assembly by lowering at least one or two whole steps (to G or F). The melody in the stanzas is somewhat syncopated and uninspiring.	No
47	Jesus Messiah	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbqSC1tHjIn0	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	There are some references to Jesus as "Emmanuel," "Rescue," "Ransom," and "Messiah" that offer a broad range of images for the Son.	The recorded key (B) is too high for many assemblies and needs to be lowered at least two whole steps (to G). The syncopation present in the stanzas will be challenging for some singers. Care needs to be taken that the lead vocalists are clearly matching and modeling a single rhythmic interpretation.	Yes
48	Victory in Jesus	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eq0j9lGmKQ	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	The language centers on Jesus and the use of masculine pronouns. The lyrics use "I/me/my," creating an individualistic interpretation of salvation.	The original key (G) is probably suitable for most assemblies. This song is typically presented in a Southern Gospel style but can be adapted to different styles.	No

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance		Recom- mended?*			
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacra- mentality	Liturgical Time	Theology Comments	Inclusive of God's People	Expansive for God	Explanation/Notes		Comments		
49	Christ Be Magnified	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbUcmQZ2EeI	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	The repeated lyric "Christ be magnified" is worthy to be sung repeatedly. The bridge lyrics will require deeper reflection: "I won't bow to idols / I'll stand strong and worship You / And if it puts me in the fire / I'll rejoice 'cause You're there too / I won't be formed by feelings / I hold fast to what is true / If the cross brings transformation / You can hang me there with You / 'Cause death is just the doorway / Into resurrection life / If I join You in Your sufferings / Then I'll join You when You rise / And when You return in glory / With all the angels and the saints / My heart will still be singing / My song will be the same."	Yes	No	The language for God is centered on "Christ." There is both "I" and "we" language sung corporately and individually.	The recorded key (F) is appropriate for most assemblies. The rhythmic notation for the melody is quite complex and will likely be better learned from a listening example than notation.	Yes
50	My Testimony	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Nvd19mDYeCK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Starting a song with the lyric "I saw Satan fall like lightning" is a bold choice. It's commendable to include a quotation of Jesus; however, I'm not sure any human can sing this lyric with authenticity. "My name is registered in heaven" is another odd lyric that is strange to sing. It implies an escapist theology where earth is abandoned for its sinfulness.	No	No	Stanza 3 includes the lyrics "come together sons and daughters," which promotes a gender binary. "God will finish what He started" also implies God is male.	The recorded key (G) will probably serve most assemblies. The syncopated rhythmic notation will be challenging for many to follow.	No
51	Our God	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfJ9Ks17YI	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	The lyrical tone makes it especially appropriate on Christ the King Sunday. The references to water and wine, although reflective of the wedding in Cana, also have sacramental overtones.	Yes	No	Only references the generic name "God," although it describes aspects of Jesus' life and ministry. Claiming God as "our" God can be problematic if it makes God into a private deity only accessible by Christians.	The recorded key (B) is too high for many assemblies and needs to be lowered at least two whole steps (to G). This melody is quite accessible and includes frequent step-wise melodic movement.	Yes
52	Open the Eyes of My Heart	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idQ1u3c6f6o	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	This well-known song is taken from a passage in Ephesians. The reference to seeing God "shining in the light of your glory" makes it applicable in the Epiphany season. The bridge with "holy, holy, holy" could be adapted and used as the liturgical Sanctus in the Eucharistic Prayer.	Yes	No	Only references God as "you" and "Lord."	The original key (E) is well suited for most assemblies. The progression in the chorus avoids the tonic chord, which makes it interesting.	Yes
53	Open Up the Heavens	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ef9pvcDHN_4	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	The references to fire make this appropriate for Pentecost. The references to the Lord descending like a cloud make this also appropriate during Advent.	Yes	No	"Lord" is the only name used for God.	The recorded key (D) is probably appropriate for most singers. The melody of this song is somewhat uninteresting, and the chord progression is equally uninteresting.	Yes
54	This I Believe (The Creed)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1UJGpUz2b7Q	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	The trinitarian content of these lyrics follows the Apostles' Creed. The lyric "our judge and defender" captures the idea of law and gospel.	Yes	Yes	All three persons of the Trinity are mentioned in this song.	This song, recorded in the key of F, is perhaps too high and needs to be lowered to D. The syncopated rhythm of the melody in the bridge section will be challenging for some.	Yes
55	Your Grace Is Enough	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wN-fpK6eLQ	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	There are baptismal images present. The choice to name God as the "God of Jacob" provides a rich, complex biblical backdrop.	Yes	Yes	"God of Jacob" is a title for God that comes from the Bible and includes the narrative of Genesis as a background.	The original key (G) is well suited for assembly singing. The syncopated rhythmic melody in the stanzas will be challenging for some.	Yes

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance				
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacramentality	Urgency Time	Theology Comments	Include of God's People	Expansive for God	Explanation/Notes	Comments	Recommender*	
56	Is He Worthy	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oiahtc83Kvq4	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	<p>Theology Comments</p> <p>Has some unique imagery in combinations that would make it fitting during Advent, Lent, Christ the King, and other seasons. Law and gospel are presented through the brokenness of the world (stanza 1) and coming new creation (stanza 2).</p>	Yes	<p>Language Comments</p> <p>The language of this song has both positive features and drawbacks. There is expansive language for naming the second person of the Trinity ("Messiah," "David's root," "Lamb," "Lion of Judah"). However, the lyrics also apply masculine pronouns to both the first and third persons of the Trinity (God and Spirit are referred to as "he").</p>	<p>Musical Performance</p> <p>The recorded key (B) sung by Andrew Peterson allows the melody to sit lower than most songs, making some singers more comfortable. The stanzas of the song are written in a call and response style. A worship leader could sing the phrases and a choir and/or the assembly could sing the "we do/it is/he does" responses. However, this would keep much of the song's content out of the mouths of the assembly.</p>	Yes
57	Stand in Your Love	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHEZZV4ZtI	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	<p>Theology Comments</p> <p>The simple lyrics proclaim the power of standing in the love of God. There are no direct references to the sacraments or liturgical time, but this could be sung any Sunday.</p>	Yes	<p>Language Comments</p> <p>Tragically, neither God, Jesus, nor the Spirit are mentioned in this song. There is also frequent "I/my" language, giving this song a self-centric focus.</p>	<p>Musical Performance</p> <p>The recorded key (C) puts the highest parts of the melody consistently at E and F, likely too high for many singers. The key would need to be lowered perhaps by a minor third (to A). The chord progression is simple and adaptable to any size ensemble.</p>	Yes
58	Tremble	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dL_d2mBvZNA	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	<p>Theology Comments</p> <p>The water imagery makes connections to baptism. The reference to bringing peace to storms would tie into any gospel reading that references that story.</p>	Yes	<p>Language Comments</p> <p>"Jesus" is the only name used for the divine in this song.</p>	<p>Musical Performance</p> <p>The key (C) places the melody in a comfortable range for most singers. The chord progression is simple and easy to adapt to a variety of ensembles. The rhythmic syncopation throughout the song will make this difficult to sing for some singers who are used to emphasizing downbeats.</p>	Yes
59	Shout to the Lord	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr5SCMSSAX_c	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	<p>Theology Comments</p> <p>The lyrical content has connections to several psalms, with references to "shelter," "refuge," and "mountains bow down." As an early representative of the contemporary worship movement, this song focuses on the response of the singer in worship of Jesus.</p>	Yes	<p>Language Comments</p> <p>There are several descriptive titles for Jesus, the only member of the Trinity named in this song.</p>	<p>Musical Performance</p> <p>The original key (A) places the song in a familiar, comfortable range.</p>	Yes
60	There's Nothing That Our God Can't Do	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MJCJgCgHJg	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	<p>Theology Comments</p> <p>Some might find the double negative ("nothing that our God can't do") off-putting. There is a slight triumphalistic tone in these lyrics.</p>	Yes	<p>Language Comments</p> <p>There is reference to God and Jesus but not the Spirit.</p>	<p>Musical Performance</p> <p>The recorded key (A ♭) is perhaps too high and is better lowered a minor third (to F), which is where SongSelect has it. The melody is singable and the chord changes are minimal.</p>	Yes
61	Another in the Fire	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDokmDZK9XC	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	<p>Theology Comments</p> <p>The juxtaposition of Old and New Testament references (fire and water) in the chorus are meant to convey trust in God's promise: "Lo, I will be with you always." The bridge, however, seems to pull in the opposite direction by asserting that "even if he doesn't, I will praise Him," which for this listener causes some friction in the general thrust of this song. The works of salvation are alluded to but almost minimally. In general, the song falls more in the "witness" and "assurance" category than anything else.</p>	No	<p>Language Comments</p> <p>We assume from the outset that the "other" in the fire refers to Jesus, but it takes a while for the listener to receive confirmation of that. Jesus and the cross are mentioned in the song, but there is no other development in this regard. The whole message seems one of gratitude from deliverance and trust in God's steadfast solidarity (in times of trouble and during challenging situations).</p>	<p>Musical Performance</p> <p>The melodic material of the stanza makes sense, and the chorus is singable. Pitchwise, though, it should be lowered to accommodate congregational singing. Additionally, care should be taken to minimize the soloistic affectations displayed in the recordings. Ultimately, this listener is on the fence regarding the use of this song. I could recommend it as a solo piece or special music during worship.</p>	No

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance Explanation/Notes	Recommended?>		
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacramentality	Liturgical Time	Theology Comments	Inclusive of God's People			Expansive for God	Language Comments
62	Run to the Father	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrgeLDp0F00	NO	Yes	Yes	NO	Yes	A casual listening may lead one to believe the lyrics are about a self-involved personal narrative. This song, however, is not about personal merit and works but about God's mercy. Overall, it has a confessional quality that is framed in gratitude. It brings to mind the story of the Prodigal Son.	NO	NO	The song is addressed to "the Father." Jesus is mentioned obliquely and in passing ("Your son for redemption, the price for my heart"). It is a song of personal devotion and introspective quality.	The song's refrain has charm and is memorable. The 6/8 lift adds interest. It needs to be pitched correctly to suit the congregation's needs.	Yes
63	Oceans (Where Feet May Fall)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0j9nwe9_x2w	NO	Yes	NO	NO	Yes	Has two parts: the first is an acknowledgement of God's power to save (to keep one above the deep waters), while implying that Christians are called into the deep unknown (where God can be found). The second part is a chorus addressed to the Spirit: it is a prayer for strength and for a more expansive trust in the Savior.	NO	NO	Apart from the address to the Spirit; and the use of the word "Savior," there are no other forms of address. There is no "we" in the song either. I appreciated the reciprocity and relational nature of the first part ("You call me out / so I call upon your name"). The second part is successful in giving voice to a desire to live more fully into the Christian vocation. To paraphrase, "take me further than I could ever go." The themes of commitment and trust are treated creatively, and this makes it an attractive addition to a congregation's repertory.	Pitch to your needs. Some sections are too high for comfortable singing, while the opening is too low. The two parts of the song work well together, but they could also function independently. If one uses the song as two independent sections, the challenge of extended vocal range can be overcome easily.	Yes
64	Promises	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mD9Fq00vE	NO	Yes	NO	NO	Yes	The lyrics take their inspiration from Psalms (34:1; 113:3; 117:2, among many others). The focus is on God's faithfulness ("You will never let me down") and the anchoring effect of this foundation on one's faith journey (no matter how difficult the situation). It is, first of all, an unbridled and sturdy expression of praise and joy: it celebrates God's deeds and mighty works.	NO	NO	"God of Abraham, God of covenant and faithful promises," and "I put my faith in Jesus" are the only two direct references addressed in the text.	This song's recording benefits from having strength in numbers but can be done successfully with a small group of committed and well-rehearsed singers who can lend their support to the congregational voice. It seems to this listener that harmony and texture are very important to the successful rendition of this song, so a higher degree of preparation is necessary before its use.	Yes
65	Everlasting God	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSHrThP100	NO	Yes	NO	NO	Yes	Enumerates several attributes of God: everlasting, defender, comforter. Its language is reminiscent of the Old Testament (Psalms in particular). Its themes are trust, deliverance, and praise. It would be appropriate for use during Advent ("waiting" and "defender of the weak") or as part of an extended gathering song line-up as the assembly prepares for worship.	Yes	Yes	The multiple attributes of God mentioned here make it a refreshing addition to the repertory of any congregation. It's also notable in (and commendable for) its use of the first person plural.	This is a catchy and upbeat congregational song that can be taught easily by imitation. I believe it is quite user friendly and also easy on the congregation. Care should be taken to choose a key that caps the range at D5.	Yes

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance		
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Secr- mentality	Uturgical Time	Theology Comments	Include of God's People	Expansive for God	Explanation/Notes	Comments
66	Man of Sorrows	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ1B0uH8XFE	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	The arc of the narrative presents us with Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, as well as its effect on the individual who is delivered from sin by Jesus' sacrificial atonement. The text ingeniously covers a lot of ground and is successful in presenting a broad vision of the relationship between Jesus and the reconciled sinner.	This is a comfortably paced country ballad. Adjustments can be made to tailor it to the congregational voice: after pitching it appropriately, stanzas could be sung by a solo or a small group, and the assembly can be invited to sing the chorus and the bridge. As with any song of comparable vocal demands, confident and sensitive leadership can facilitate the learning and the singing of this song.	Yes
67	Christ Our Hope in Life and Death	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lbf1Tz7mw	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Rhetorically, this is quite engaging with its question and answer structure (during the stanzas). Lyrically, it embodies a sense of wonder and awe at God's great faithfulness. I appreciated the use of the possessive pronoun "our," used here to express the assembly's confessional disposition. This song would be appropriate during Reformation or any baptismal celebrations.	In its melodic layout, this song reminds me of an Irish power ballad. It is not too dissimilar to "In Christ Alone" in its organization. However, this song had a dialogical design shaping it from the outset (as opposed to being declarative like "In Christ Alone"). Call and response, question and answer, alternating styles could provide added variety.	Yes
68	Resurrecting	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rf8Zn4nOxc	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	The lyric "The resurrected king / Is resurrecting me" seems to place the song in an Easter or post-resurrection context. At the same time, "your name / Is victory! / All praise / Will rise / To Christ our king" seems to suggest this song would be more at home during the Incarnation cycle (Name of Jesus, Epiphany). "By your Spirit I will rise" could take us to yet another part of the liturgical calendar. While the main focus seems to be God's mercy and salvation, the other images and ideas seem to dilute or distract from the main point. I am not convinced this song coheres at the textual level.	The small melodic bursts of the refrain are catchy. Other than this, the melodic material does not seem to hold one's attention for long and might become tiresome after a while. It is perhaps not worth the time required to teach it to an assembly.	No
69	Forever	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6xwVjWpaUQ	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	The song takes into account the assembly's collective voice (as opposed to speaking from a personal voice).	This song has been around for a while, and even after all these years, it has not lost its appeal. Stanzas, bridge, and chorus all lend themselves to playful treatment with or without a band.	Yes

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance Explanation/Notes	Recom- mended?>	
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacra- mentality	Liturgical Time	Theology Comments	Inclusive of God's People			Expansive for God
70	Forever (We Sing Hallelujah)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56duYU5M6E	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Yes	Yes	The lyric "The Lamb has overcome" suggests the song might be a good fit as a meditation (music during communion or during the season of Easter). By summarizing the resurrection narrative, this song may provide an opportunity for "reviewing" where we have been and where we are, as preparation for worship.	Can be rendered as a great solo or a band number. This reviewer is not convinced this song can find a permanent place in a congregation's repertoire.	No
71	At the Cross (Love Ran Red)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6v5HjCB_5	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Theologically speaking, this song seems to inhabit a contemplative space somewhere between "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" and "At the Cross! At the Cross! Where I First Saw the Light." There are hints of baptismal imagery with words like "flood" and "flowing down."	Devotional songs that explore the sacrifice at Jesus' cross and the sentiments of the singer (wonder, amazement, humbleness, and reciprocity) abound. This particular example has its strengths, but before teaching it to an assembly, it might be worth comparing it with other songs that have a more memorable melodic profile and that do not sound mass-produced.	Yes
72	Holy Water	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xhHG1HYos	NO	Yes	NO	Yes	Yes	NO	NO	Can find a home in the liturgical calendar in many places: during the remembrance of baptism or during baptismal festivals (Baptism of Our Lord, Pentecost, Reformation), for example.	Has a strong rhythmic profile. Having either a drummer or a strong rhythmic ensemble will be helpful. Also, do not use the original key: the song needs to be pitched lower for congregational singing.	Yes
73	Before the Throne of God Above	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LULK2nZ65EC	NO	Yes	Yes	NO	Yes	NO	Yes	Themes related to atonement, the events that took place on Good Friday, and the personal gratitude they elicit.	Reminiscent of Christian pop (imitation Amy Grant). For this listener, it is too saccharine, and overall the song seems to disappear into the background. For that reason alone, I could not recommend investing time teaching it to a congregation.	No
74	How He Loves	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCunul58o4Q	NO	Yes	NO	NO	NO	NO	Yes	Works with a couple of interesting images but quickly runs out of steam and resorts to cliché ("I just realize how beautiful you are and how great your affection for me.").	This song seems to overstay its welcome. I do not think this song contributes anything new to the repertoire. I question whether it will have any longevity in the realm of congregational song.	No

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance			
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacramentality	Urgency/Time	Theology Comments	Include of God's People	Expansive for God	Explanation/Notes	Comments	Recomminded*
75	Glorious Day (Living He Loved Me)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vp6b6cY5tLU	No	No	No	No	Yes	Sung creedal statement. More specifically, it is a recasting of the second article of our main creedal formulas. The song takes us from the incarnation to the second coming, from which the title is derived.	No	No	Successfully combines creedal articles with end time/apocalyptic concerns. There seems to be an affinity between the message of this song and the territory covered by some traditional material ("Soon and Very Soon" and "Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending" come to mind). However, the glorious day of the song "Glorious Day" does not seem as imminently close as in these other examples.	A good addition to the congregational repertoire: it has a memorable melodic line and excellent structure. Sensitive musicians can take advantage of its shape, be creative and play with texture, and create levels to the delight and benefit of all.	Yes
76	The Heart of Worship	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-Zp586pvZg	No	No	No	No	Yes	Can provide a congregation with a practical confessional vehicle. To paraphrase: we do not need entertainment or outlandish spectacle to worship God. While I agree and do believe that, yes, Christianity differentiates itself from the other monotheistic traditions by affirming the central belief in Jesus as God, I have trouble overcoming what seems to be a unitarian outlook (focused on the second person of the Trinity), which is in fact, heretical. "It is all about God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)," would be the correct statement.	No	No	This raises some interesting thoughts. It reminds us that our songs are insufficient by themselves as a form of worship. It also brings to mind the issue of outward appearance vs. true intention ("You look into my heart"). In that sense, it reminds us of the seventeenth-century hymnic piety (of Paul Gerhardt, for example) that stressed an intimate personal relationship with God over elaborate "worksy" demonstrations. The song reinforces this personal relationship in its use of singular pronouns.	Musically speaking, this song falls easily in the assembly's voice. It is melodically pleasant and memorable. My quibble with it is theological in nature. Nevertheless, I would recommend it on the condition that sufficient care, context, and balance be given to its presentation.	Yes
77	You Are My King (Amazing Love)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MA_cSFdUMrk	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Has language that lends itself easily to the confession and forgiveness portion of the service. The great exchange is the departing point of this song but it quickly focuses on God's love and our response, which is always gratitude and joy. One could view this song as attempting to capture the complex sentiments experienced in ecstatic rapture (or what is commonly referred to as a mountain-top experience: "sitting here in this holy moment"). Or it could be simpler than that: in Luke 10:42 Jesus says Mary chose the "better part." At this level, this song works well as an attempt to describe true discipleship ("sitting at Jesus' feet") and repentance ("I am sorry for coming with my own agenda"). These two thoughts seem to be the twin engines driving the lyrics' development.	No	No	Traditional biblical names are used: "King," "Spirit," "Amazing Love." This is an older song that should not be judged too harshly for not being au courant.	Lyrical and gentle melodic gestures put this song easily within the assembly's grasp (and voice).	Yes
78	Nothing Else	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUBVCTV23qW	No	No	No	No	No	Unfortunately, the repeated lyric "nothing else, I just want you" of the chorus and the "bridge make the song fall into the "Jesus is my boyfriend" category.	No	No	This extended ballad in not well-suited for congregational singing. I would not invest time and energy teaching it to a congregation. It could work as an anthem or special music.	No	

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology					Language		Musical Performance			
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacramentality	Liturgical Time	Theology Comments	Inclusive of God's People	Expansive for God	Explanation/Notes	Comments	Recommended?>
79	Evidence	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lDvD-C9XUg	NO	Yes	NO	NO	Yes	Yes	No	No	The stanzas function as either prayers of trust or exhortations to open our eyes ("see the cross, the empty grave"). The last line seems to sum up the whole song: "Why should I fear? The evidence is clear." The first person singular is the only agent in the song.	The chorus is an example of excellent text setting. Its melodic contour reminds one of music from the highlands of England, and one could imagine traditional instruments joining in at the climactic moments (with a bodhran---a typical Irish hand drum---and bagpipes).	Yes
80	Hosanna (Praise Is Rising)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Aa0SEEXicE	NO	Yes	NO	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The message seems to be beautifully and enthusiastically embrace the excitement we read in John 12:13, which makes the song an ideal fit for Palm Sunday. It is also a devotional song that can "set up" the beginning of worship quite well: "We welcome you here, Lord Jesus," "Come have your way with us," "Its sunny outlook presents a message of encouragement and a grounded faith that is vibrant and positive."	This seasoned praise song is elegant in its form and melodically appealing. It can be done simply (led by one person with an instrument) or with more elaborate instrumentation and larger musical forces.	Yes
81	Agnus Dei	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVFzazTQNM	NO	NO	NO	Yes	NO	NO	Yes	Yes	There is reference to the Lamb, implying Christ's sacrifice. The "holy, holy" lyric in the chorus could make it adaptable as a Sanctus. The use of Alleluia in the stanza precludes its use during Lent.	CCLI uses "For the Lord God Almighty reigns," but some publications use "For our Lord God Almighty reigns."	Yes
82	Because He Lives (Amen)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbuU7a-rNHQs	NO	Yes	NO	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Would most easily be used on Easter and following, but it would not be appropriate during Lent.	The range of the song is tricky. The stanza is too low for most singers, but raising the key would make the chorus too high.	Yes
83	Only King Forever	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FV96WUkcoME	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Yes	Yes	There is no connection to a specific season. The lyrics are centered on the praise of the steadfast name of God/Jesus. The line "In love and justice you will reign" hints at a law and gospel dynamic.	The key of C is probably too high for most singers during the chorus. Lowering it to A would help. Some of the syncopated rhythms could challenge some teams.	Yes
84	Rattle!	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rAdbH28RgE	Yes	NO	NO	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	God is called our rock and firm foundation.	There are some multi-meter sections that might trip up some teams. The vocal range is easy. It would work well as an up-tempo gathering or sending song for worship.	Yes
85	Days of Elijah	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9Luz1npIQ	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Yes	Yes	"Friday's disappointment is Sunday's empty tomb" is an interesting turn of phrase.	The song builds effectively to describe the grave bursting open in victory over death. The title of the song seems juvenile and sensationalist.	Yes

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology						Language		Musical Performance		
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacramentality	Unliturgical Time	Theology Comments	Inclusive of God's People	Expansive for God	Explanation/Notes	Comments	Recommended?
86	Good Grace	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHKSRVjDFt0	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Jesus is referred to as Light of Heaven and a friend forever.	This would be an easy song to pull together with a small ensemble or full band.	No
87	Build Your Kingdom Here	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbdXKqV6E	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	God's power is referred to as a mighty hand, and the idea of God as King of the church on earth permeates the whole song.	This is a fun, foot-stompin' and hand-clappin' song with a few stops here and there to rebuild back to the simple but snappy chorus.	Yes
88	Here Again	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rlcdBuB7NY	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	God's love is described "like the sun shaping the shadow," which is a lovely image.	The melody is accessible and effective. It would be easy to lead this song with an assembly during a quiet time in the service.	Yes
89	Lord, I Lift Your Name on High	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CO0c0nL_T08	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	As is common in most of the praise music from this era, the language is mostly about the worshipper's response to the sacrifice of Christ.	The melody is interesting and easy to sing. Many generations of worshippers will be able to sing this song together.	Yes
90	He Lives	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gF6aBD53drA	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	The song focuses on Christ the Risen Savior as "He walks with me and talks with me."	This style of song seems out of place on this list, as it is scored as an SATB hymn in 6/8 time.	No
91	Champion	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOX8EP9caDc	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Jesus is referred to as "my champion."	The melody in the stanza might be challenging because of the 2 against 3 rhythm.	Yes
92	You Are My All in All	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zC617kE1maU	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Jesus is referred to as the "Lamb of God." There is no mention of God or the Holy Spirit.	This is a classic praise chorus that is easy to sing even as a camp song.	Yes
93	Yes and Amen	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZ2G5VpVMS	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Jesus is addressed as "Beautiful Savior" and "Blessed Redeemer."	The melody lines are easy to sing. The choruses build well from a quiet contemplative stanza.	Yes
94	Behold Our God	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gerrf3Lkfs8	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	The idea of God as King is present throughout. "Bearing the guilt of sinful man" is not inclusive.	The use of an a capella chorus at the end of the song is very effective.	Yes
95	He Will Hold Me Fast	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=936W8APRFHoQ	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	The lyrics describe a vertical relationship with God.	This would be easy to use as a solo during a quiet part of the service or with harmonies during the chorus.	Yes
96	Holy is the Lord	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVW8t8BfmcS	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	The use of "we" describes a horizontal response to God's glory.	The vocal range is easy for congregational singing.	Yes
97	I'll Fly Away	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BPOmlQHWp0	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	There is only reference to heaven after life on earth is over.	This one would be enjoyable with a band playing in bluegrass style.	Yes

#	Song Title	Resource Link	Theology						Language		Musical Performance	
			Trinitarian	Grace	Law & Gospel	Sacramentality	Liturgical Time	Theology Comments	Inclusive of God's People	Expansive for God	Explanation/Notes	Comments
98	Surrounded (Fight My Battles)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xv6m1A8HDSY	NO	Yes	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The name of "God" is not used; God is referred to as "You." God/Jesus is personified as a protector during life's battle with sin.	The song starts quietly and builds, only to end quietly with opportunity for open praise.	Yes
99	I Thank God	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LM1cX0Huds	NO	Yes	Yes	NO	NO	NO	NO	Jesus/God is referred to as "a man I didn't know" and "He" in the first pre-chorus.	This is an energetic song that would be an effective sending song.	Yes
100	One Thing Remains (Your Love Never Fails)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_KXsM-CjgBQ	NO	Yes	Yes	NO	Yes	Yes	NO	God/Jesus is referred to as "You/Your" throughout.	While many have commented on the repetitive chorus as what's generally wrong with praise music, I find the repetition merely underscores the theme of the consistency and constancy of God's love in the lives of believers.	Yes

This evaluation list is also available as a downloadable Excel file from the members section of the ALCM website.

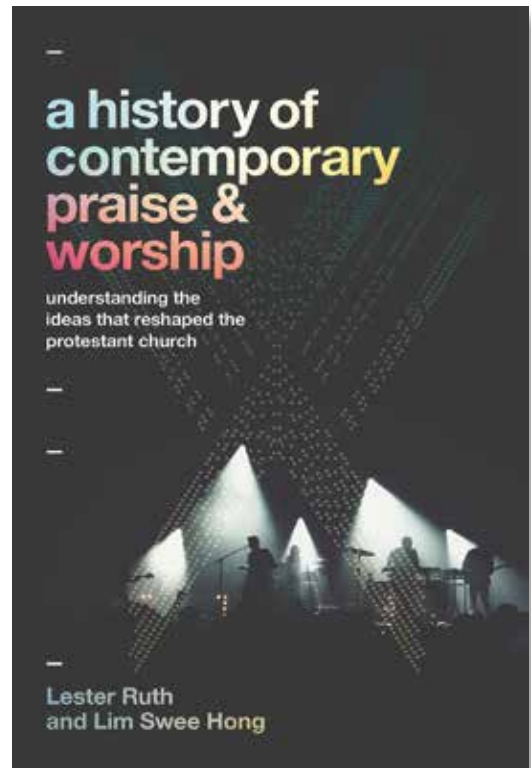
REVIEWS

Lester Ruth and Lim Swee Hong.
A History of Contemporary Praise and Worship.

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021.
xvii, 350 pp.
ISBN 978-0-8010-9828-4 (hardcover);
978-1-5409-6753-4 (paperback).
\$44.99 (hardcover); \$42.00 (paperback).

Quick: where and when did praise and worship music emerge? If you said the Jesus People of southern California developed it in the late 1960s and early 1970s (or you had no idea), then this book is for you. Ruth and Lim trace its origin to British Columbia and Saskatchewan in the 1940s, where the Latter Rain movement was beginning to make its presence felt in the Pentecostal world. Latter Rain adherents accepted Psalm 22:3 (“But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel”; KJV) as God’s promise to be present whenever God’s people praise God, and their worship services typically began with an hour or so of congregational singing, with an emphasis on the praise of God that often led to more intimate worship (thus praise *and* worship). With this already in place by the 1960s, the Jesus People then added the use of guitars and popular music styles, an emphasis on intimacy in worship, an informality in dress and conduct, and the recording and publishing of the music (104–6). These are certainly not an insignificant contribution, but these clearly are not foundational.

The authors trace the use of praise and worship music from its obscure beginnings to the worldwide phenomenon it became by the late 1990s, citing and evaluating a great many primary and secondary sources, supplementing written accounts with interviews of important figures, and explaining in exquisite detail the movement’s theological underpinnings. They enumerate five common practices that characterized praise and worship by the late 1980s: (1) the use of a musical worship leader to direct worship, (2) the development of the “worship set” as an extended period



of singing, (3) the sequencing and performance of worship songs to create a “flow” that allows people to experience God’s presence, (4) the responsibility of the musicians not only to lead the people into God’s presence but to keep them there, and (5) the desire for worshippers to move their bodies while singing (132–38).

Half the book is spent on praise and worship. The second half traces the development of contemporary worship, a completely different stream with its own history and theology that merged with praise and worship in the 1990s. Contemporary worship was founded in an attempt to reach as many people as possible with the gospel. It originated in the camp meetings and revivals of the early 1800s, with their emphasis on “new measures” (as nineteenth-century American Presbyterian minister Charles Finney called them) to jolt people out of their spiritual complacency and confront them with their sin and need for a savior. By the late nineteenth century, churches and other movements were using such “pragmatic worship” regularly; the authors describe the efforts of the Salvation Army, Aimee Semple McPherson’s International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and various youth movements of the 1940s through ’60s to reach nonbelievers through worship and music.

This is the scholarly book I have been waiting for on this topic.

The most important names of the 1960s through 1980s are included and their contributions analyzed (not merely described): Ralph Carmichael, Pierre Berton, James F. White, Robert Schuller, Dean M. Kelley, Donald McGavran and the Church Growth movement, George Hunter III, Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, Bob Buford, and Lyle Schaller. Nor are the Lutherans forgotten: Walt Kallestad, Timothy Wright, David S. Luecke, and David Anderson. If few musicians are listed here, it is because most of them were covered under “praise and worship” in the book’s first half.

The research by Ruth and Lim is thorough and, as far as I can tell, unbiased. They present the various players in the genre’s development sympathetically, allowing them to speak for themselves; but they also include critical voices. After reading the book, I cannot tell where the authors stand personally on the matter under discussion, and that is doubtless a good thing. In summary, this is the scholarly book I have been waiting for on this topic.

*Joseph Herl
Concordia University, Nebraska
Seward, NE*

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Gracia M. Grindal.

***Jesus the Harmony:
Gospel Sonnets for 366 Days***

Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2021.
xxiii, 369 p.
ISBN: 978-1-5064-6455-6. \$24.99, paperback.

What a delightful surprise this book is! Though small in size, it is rich in content: a scholarly compilation of 366 beautifully written sonnets that harmonize the gospels in informative and inspirational ways.

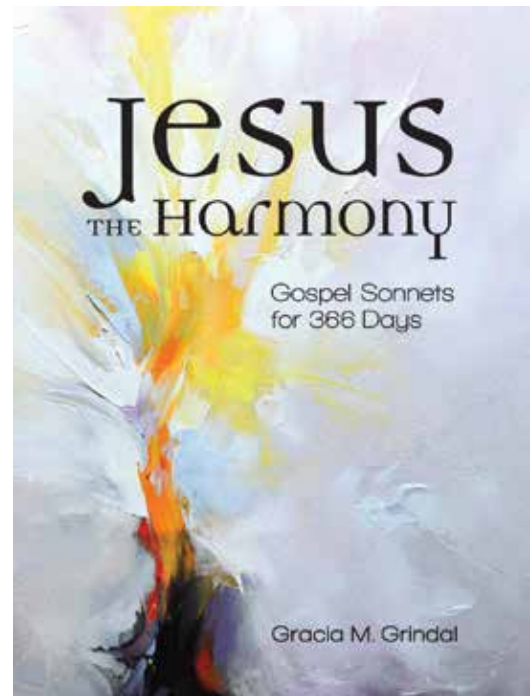
I confess that this concept of “harmony” was a new one to me. Although I was familiar with *The Story*, the abridged, chronological Bible by Max Lucado and Randy Frazee, I was unfamiliar with the academic history of theologians “harmonizing” the gospels to provide continuity and eliminate redundancy in the story of Christ. Grindal, professor of rhetoric emerita at Luther Seminary (St. Paul, MN), describes the extensive research she did into the historic gospel harmonies in the preparation of this unique book that offers a poem for each day of the year.

She begins with an invocation:

Sing, Holy Spirit, and teach my pen
To write the harmony of Jesus Christ
Showing in miniatures how God loved men
And women. (xxiii)

These “miniatures,” fourteen-line poems, guide the reader through the life of Jesus in titled sonnets divided into the time before and during his public ministry. Each parable, each miracle, his teachings, trials, and resurrection are chronicled in sonnet form, one per page. At the end of each sonnet, Grindal provides the biblical reference, citing book, chapter, and verses that provided the source material for her poetry.

The sonnet is an unforgiving poetic form, with strict rules regarding format: number of lines, rhyme scheme, meter, and thematic structure. It is no small task to compose 366 such poems in a



unified volume that adheres to strict chronology and a close reading of the gospels and various texts of harmonies. Yet this is the task that Grindal set for herself in 2019, writing one sonnet per day about the life of Jesus. Ideally, the reader should read one sonnet per day. As such, this book could be a perfect guide for a year-long Bible study, if one were to read the sonnet and then the Bible verses associated with it.

As the form dictates, it is the closing couplet of each sonnet that contains the powerful theme of the poem or sometimes a plaintive prayer, as the reader asks for grace in Christ’s teaching. In “The Cursing of the Fig Tree,” for example, Grindal closes the sonnet this way:

Abandon all your doubt and let him show
How much a tiny mustard seed can grow.
(241)

But despite my referencing the scholarly research and stringent poetic form, the truly wonderful thing about *Jesus the Harmony* is that each of these sonnets is deceptively simple in language, with modern expressions that keep the text fluid and relatable and contemporary. One doesn’t need to be a theologian or an English major to approach these sonnets. They are little stories, the “miniatures” she referred to in her “Invocation,” and as such, each sonnet stands alone as an accurate depiction of a gospel lesson told in a new and

This book could be a perfect guide for a year-long Bible study, if one were to read the sonnet and then the Bible verses associated with it.

abbreviated format. After all, that is the definition of poetry, an art form that takes a big idea and puts it into a few words, utilizing imagery and poetic devices to create a strong impression. Indeed, each page of this book contains good poetry.

As exemplar, the sonnet 344, “Into Your Hands, Father, I Commend My Spirit,” is stark and painfully descriptive, but it is most effective because it identifies the emotional responses of each of the people who experience this tragedy.

Bowing his head, Jesus handed over
His Spirit to his Father. A faithful Son
Obedient unto death, his calm composure
Trusting in God to raise him. The victory
won.

All of nature stops, stunned by the scene,
Gasping for breath, filling all flesh with dread.
The priests go home for dinner, the women
keen

Over his body stiffening with pale death.
We wanted to shut him up, to keep the peace.
Now that he has breathed his last, the shock
And horror stop us, we see his breath cease,
Its consequence begins to dawn, we balk
At our complicity, his body cold,
His mother weeping, cannot be consoled.

(347)

The sonnet is vivid and accusatory as we witness Jesus’s death and consider our own “complicity.” We can easily relate to the phrase, “We wanted to shut him up,” and yet, it is we who are stopped by the horror of his death.

Like any art form, poetry is subjective. It stands to reason that with the self-imposed regimen of writing a sonnet a day for a full year, not every poem will resonate with every reader. In any volume of poetry, there can be those poems that

“work” better than others. Some rhymes here seem forced to fit the form. And occasionally, the final couplet relies on a previous line for meaning, making the phrasing a bit awkward. Such is the case in the ending of sonnet 236, “The Anointing of Jesus”:

Judas sees figures, calculates how much
She spends to worship him. Jesus tells
The world her lavish gift cannot be sold,
His purse too small for all her love to hold.

(239)

But most of the sonnets read effortlessly and conclude with a stunning sentence, such as this one that ends the poem “Judas”:

Another kingdom rumbled in Judas’s head
That would not come until this lord was dead.

(151)

That final word “dead” hits the reader like a sucker punch and succinctly illustrates the betrayal by Judas.

One doesn’t expect to see the words “poetic” and “academic” used to describe the same literary work, but *Jesus the Harmony* is, indeed, a book of sonnets that flows and breathes the Word of God in language that touches one’s heart while providing textual references to appease the biblical purist. Christ’s life is revealed in the gospels. His life is sung in *Jesus the Harmony*. While “harmony” refers to the literal compilation of the gospels, there is certainly a musical harmony and lyricism to this volume. The reader is lulled into the predictable meter of the sonnets, just as one is with the singing of a multi-stanza hymn. But it is the words, always the words, that convey the message. In *Jesus the Harmony*, Grindal has composed a masterful and harmonious telling of the gospels that sings the story of Christ. It’s a book that is destined to be dog-eared and notated as readers return to reread their favorites.

*Laura F. Petrie
Gethsemane Lutheran Church
Hackettstown, NJ*

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**Recorded submissions deadline: January 16, 2024
All voice parts and instruments welcome.**

Made possible through the generous financial support of Pauline and John Kiltinen

Find more information at <https://alcm.org/virtual-chorale/>

BOOKSHELF

Recommended Spiritual Song Resources



Boesenecker, Andrew, and Jim Graeser. *A Field Guide to Contemporary Worship: How to Begin and Lead Band-Based Worship*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2011.

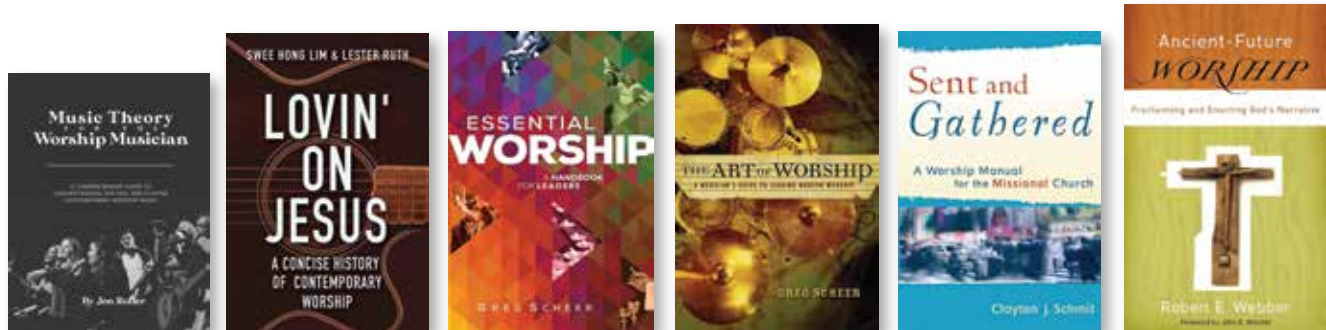
Cherry, Constance M. *The Music Architect: Blueprints for Engaging Worshipers in Song*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.

Cherry, Constance M. *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021.

Hicks, Zac. *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.

Navarro, Kevin J. *The Complete Worship Leader*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001.

Opstal, Sandra Maria Van. *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015.



Roller, Jon. *Music Theory for the Worship Musician: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding, Writing, and Playing Contemporary Worship Music*. Independently published, 2020.

Ruth, Lester, and Swee Hong Lim. *Lovin' on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2017.

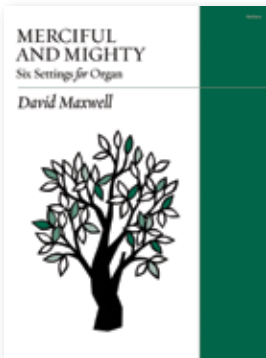
Scheer, Greg. *Essential Worship: A Handbook for Leaders*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016.

Scheer, Greg. *The Art of Worship: A Musician's Guide to Leading Modern Worship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006.

Schmit, Clayton J. *Sent and Gathered: A Worship Manual for the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009.

Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008.

SOUNDFEST



KEYBOARD

David Maxwell.

Merciful and Mighty: Six Settings for Organ.

Augsburg Fortress (978-1-5064-9604-7), \$20.

This collection contains three original compositions and three hymn-based compositions. The hymn tunes represented are NICAEA; LOBE DEN HERREN; and MIT FREUDEN ZART. The latter is a spirited setting of the well-known Easter hymn; it concludes with a toccata-style arrangement featuring triplets in the hands and rhythmically elongated cantus firmus in the pedal. It would serve well as a festival introduction to the hymn and also a postlude. The original compositions included are “Arioso,” “Pastorale,” and “Seeking Resolve.” This collection of medium difficulty pieces is useful for a variety of seasons in the church year. *MS*



Bob Moore.

Lead Us On: Ten Hymn Settings for Piano.

Augsburg Fortress (978-1-5064-9605-4), \$23.

Moore does a wonderful job of interpreting the mood of the hymns in this collection. The setting of SINE NOMINE begins very quietly with segments of the tune woven into an imitative section between the hands. The free harmonization helps increase the intensity of the selection to a climax near the center, with hints of the concluding Alleluias from the hymn. The piece then begins to wind down and ends softly on an octave whole note. The other tunes represented in the collection are ARIRANG; CANDLER; CEDARWOLF; COE FEN; LOST IN THE NIGHT: SUO GÂN; THIRD MODE MELODY; WHERE THE PROMISE SHINES; and WILD MOUNTAIN THYME. (All tunes are found in

ACS). The collection is of medium difficulty and will work well in various times of the church year. *MS*

Karl Osterland.

Sweet Is the Calm: Organ Settings on Hymns of Comfort.

Augsburg Fortress (978-1-5064-9607-8), \$24.

These are wonderful, artistic settings of hymn tunes suitable for funerals and memorial services,



Lent, and Easter. The collection opens with a setting of “Abide With Me” (EVENTIDE). It is a soft, *adagio* setting of the hymn that utilizes a decorated presentation of the tune played softly over the left-hand and pedal accompaniment. The style presents a feeling of comfort for those who are mourning. The other tunes in this collection are BALM IN GILIEAD; CANDLER; DUKE STREET; PROSPECT; SINE NOMINE; ST. COLUMBA; VICTIMAE PASCHALI LAUDES; VICTORY; VILLE DU HAVRE; and WER NUR DEN LIEBEN GOTT. The collection is of medium difficulty. *MS*

HANDBELLS

Anne Krentz Organ.

***Four by Four
Easter: Easter
Hymns for Piano
and Four Ringers.***

Augsburg Fortress
(978-1-5064-9606-1), \$21.00.

This new collection for handbells could also be rung with handchimes. There are no techniques that would require one or the other, and most could be accomplished while ringing without tables. There are many meter changes but not very many bell changes, and the rhythms are not challenging. This would be a perfect addition to any



church music library if you are just building your program, or if you have the opportunity to ring with small ensembles at any time during Easter. The ringers do not need to be able to ring four-in-hand. The four hymns are EASTER HYMN (“Jesus Christ Is Risen Today”); NOËL NOUVELET (“Now the Green Blade Rises” and “Build a Longer Table”); PUER NOBIS (“That Easter Day with Joy Was Bright” and “O Holy Spirit, Root of Life”); and VRUECHTEN with EARTH AND ALL STARS (“This Joyful Eastertide” and “Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen!”). Handbell parts as well as full scores are provided. Level 2–3. *ML*



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VOCAL | CHILDREN'S CHOIR



Beth Kenreich.
Advent Carol.

Unison, piano, with optional congregation.

Choristers Guild (CGA1704), \$2.25.

Kenreich has created this piece as an Advent canticle for children that can include the congregation. One stanza could be sung each week of Advent, especially for lighting the Advent wreath, with the appropriate theme word used (“hope,” “peace,” “joy,” “love”); or it could be offered as an anthem for the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Published as part of the Rote to Note series, the melody will be readily learned by ear while using the printed music to enhance literacy. Leaders can download a “discovery page” from the publisher’s website, which includes explanations for dotted half note, repeat signs, and coda. Children can sing by themselves or help lead the congregation in learning the song—or both. A reproduceable congregational page is included for use in the bulletin. This is an effective way to involve children in worship and refresh an Advent tradition. *DLR*

ADULT CHOIR

Matthew Armstrong.
Come Unto Me.

SATB, piano, with optional violin.

Choristers Guild (CGA1686), \$2.60.



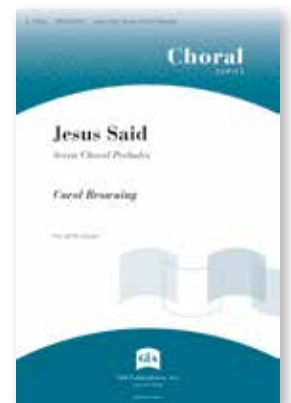
Based on Jesus’ comforting words from Matthew 11:28–29, this piece echoes Jesus’ promise in a song that you wish would never end. A solo voice, violin, and soprano line take turns with a memorable musical phrase as they all are interwoven seamlessly. Arpeggiated climbing chord clusters in the piano accompaniment create a sense of peace, gently moving the text along. The lush choral harmonies include suspensions and sevenths, adding harmonic interest, yet they are easy enough to learn because of Armstrong’s excellent voice leading. The optional violin part could also be played by a flute. *JRB*

Carol Browning.
Jesus Said: Seven Choral Preludes.

SATB, a cappella or accompanied.

GIA (G-10506), \$2.40.

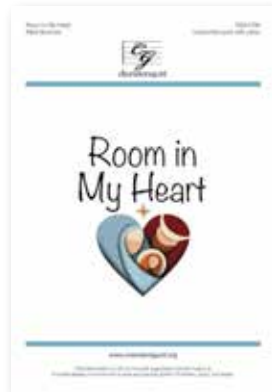
Sometimes less really is more, and Browning’s set of seven brief anthems proves that. Based on seven familiar messages of Jesus, these short pieces (1–2 pages each) can be used in a variety of places during worship. Some of the pieces have specific lengths; others could be repeated as needed or desired. *CD*



Mark Burrows.
Room in My Heart.
Unison/two-part,
piano.

Choristers Guild
(CGA1706), \$2.25.

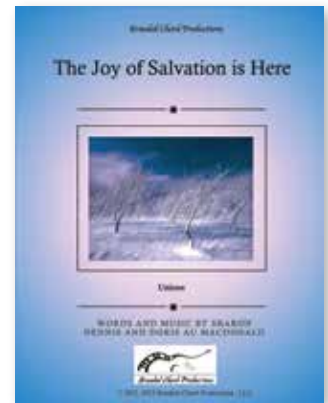
This Gospel-style anthem for Advent is an upbeat way to sing about waiting for the birth of Jesus. The simple text says “I’m making room in my heart for love,” followed by stanzas for “peace” and “joy.” The third stanza provides an optional Part II (something of a doo-wop bass line). Soloists could also be featured on any of the stanzas. The piano accompaniment is quite accessible, but there is also an accompaniment track available from the publisher. The piece would be a joyful addition to music for the Third Sunday of Advent. *DLR*



Sharon Dennis and
Doris Au MacDonald.
The Joy of Salvation Is Here.

Unison, piano or guitar.
Braeded Chord Productions.
Free download from website:
braededchordproductions.com.

This is a recent addition to the Braeded Chord Productions website and would be a welcome addition to a contemporary praise band’s Christmas repertoire. The catchy syncopated rhythm and limited range make the song easily accessible. The contrasting middle section appropriately uses long note values to create a sense of awe and mystery as the invitation is extended to join the shepherds and kings at the manger. Braeded Chord Productions is affiliated with CCLI and provides free downloadable music from their website. *JRB*



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Colloquium led by Kate
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Scholarly exploration of congregational
song in African American, Latin
American, Indigenous, Coptic, and
seminary communities, beginning in
October 2023

Interview Series:
“100 Years of Song,” Series III
Conversations with Paul Westermeyer,
Simeí Monteiro, Robin Knowles Wallace,
I-to Loh, John Thornburg, Felicia Patton,
Brittney Stephan, Robert Batastini, Jan
Kraybill, and Fred Graham, beginning in
September 2023

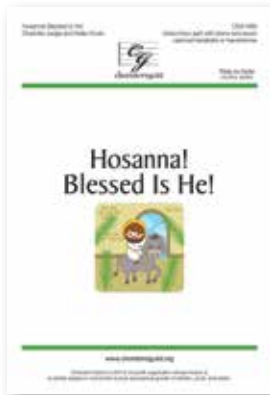
Details and registration at www.thehymnsociety.org



Zebulon M. Highben.
What Joyous Song Unfolding.
SATB, organ, with optional assembly.

Augsburg Fortress (979-8-8898-3054-2), \$2.50.

This beautiful setting was “commissioned by University Lutheran Church, East Lansing, Michigan, in honor of [ALCM member] Kristie W. Wiggert and her 50 years as organist, 1971–2021.” The text by Susan Palo Cherwien was commissioned by ALCM in celebration of its twenty-fifth anniversary. What joy indeed! Filled with texts and images of music and song, God’s voice sings a call to us, inviting us to join creation’s praise. The first three choir stanzas set the stage for the fourth, which invites the assembly to join the song. A reproducible page for the assembly is included. *CD*



Charlotte Judge and Katie Houts.
Hosanna! Blessed Is He!
Unison/two-part, piano, with optional seven handbells or handchimes.

Choristers Guild (CGA1685), \$2.45.

Part of the Choristers Guild Rote to Note series, this piece may be learned by rote and is a great way for beginning music readers to gain confidence in their musicianship. There are just four melodic phrases that make up this joyful song in 6/8 time. The optional handchime or handbell chord clusters add a festive note. *JRB*



Love Consecrates the Humblest Act.

Arr. Robert J. Powell.
SATB, organ.

Augsburg Fortress (979-8-8898-3051-1), \$2.25.

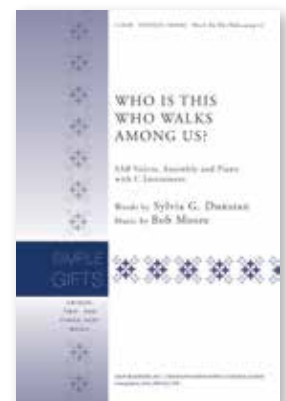
Both text and tune of this hymn are familiar to many, which might cause it to be overlooked. Despite its familiarity, those congregations having foot-washing as part of their Maundy Thursday liturgy will find this piece useful for two reasons: (1) it allows this very appropriate text to be heard at a time when the assembly’s focus is likely to be on the foot-washing itself, not on singing the hymn, and (2) it is a relatively easy piece for the choir to learn at a time when they are being called upon to provide music for a number of services during the week. Simple choral music during the Holy Week services allows for more difficult music to be prepared and sung during the Easter celebration. *CD*

Bob Moore.
Who Is This Who Walks among Us?

SAB, piano, with optional C instrument, assembly.

GIA (G-10248), \$2.20.

The text by Sylvia Dunstan was originally written as a response to Peter’s profession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). Moore notes that this piece is also “appropriate as musical commentary on the mystery of the transfiguration.” The music is based on the “Chorale” from Moore’s *Five Liturgical Meditations* and would work well as a hymn, SAB anthem, or solo piece. The text includes a third stanza that is itself a powerful profession of faith. *CD*

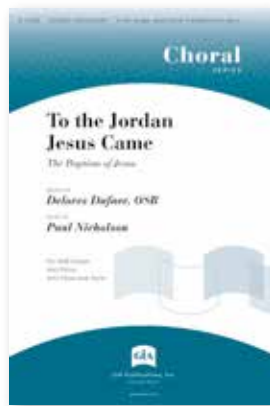


Paul Nicholson.

To the Jordan Jesus Came: The Baptism of Jesus.

SAB, piano, flute, violin.

GIA (G-10638), \$2.20.



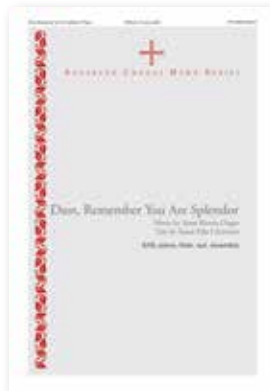
It can sometimes be difficult to find music for Baptism of Our Lord that is simple enough to be put together in the one or two rehearsals following Christmas. This piece, with text by Delores Dufner, is one such. The flowing accompaniment mimics the movement of a river. The SAB choral writing is not difficult but includes just enough syncopation to make it interesting. Although written to include flute and violin, it can be done with just piano accompaniment. *CD*

Anne Krentz Organ.

Dust, Remember You Are Splendor.

SAB, piano, flute, with optional assembly.

Augsburg Fortress (979-8-8898-3049-8), \$2.75.



An extraordinary text by Susan Cherwien and eloquent setting by Anne Krentz Organ make this the perfect piece for imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday. Arranged with four stanzas plus choral refrain, it would work equally well as either a choral anthem or a hymn for choir and assembly. Cherwien's text turns traditional thoughts about ashes on its head (no pun intended), replacing the notion of dust as a reminder of our inevitable—and not altogether welcome—death with that of something glorious, magnificent. Cherwien's poetry is as always captivating and transforming, and Organ's haunting setting brings the text to musical life. Assembly and flute parts are available for download at augsburghfortress.org. *CD*

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Organized and hosted by ALCM members, these one-day workshops are opportunities to learn new skills, share best practices, and build relationships and support systems among musicians in your area.

Host a workshop!

We are now scheduling 2024 workshops across the country. If you have an idea for a workshop, would like to offer your congregation as a host site, or would like more information, contact Adam Lefever Hughes at education@alcm.org.

Register for an event!

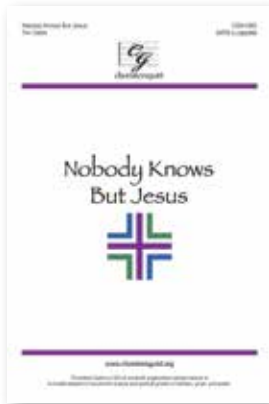
New events and locations will be added throughout the year, so check the website regularly to see if an event is scheduled for your area.



For more information or to register for an event, go to alcm.org/hhv-events/.

Check for locations and event information at alcm.org/hhv-events.

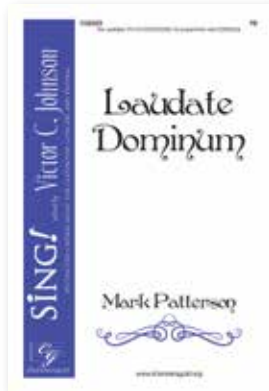
2024



Tim Osiek.
Nobody Knows But Jesus.

SATB, a cappella.
Choristers Guild (CGA1682), \$2.25.

In the spiritual oral tradition style, Osiek creates a sense of vocal improvisation using just a few words, “Nobody knows but Jesus.” At times a solo voice sings over a quiet SATB choir; other times the soloist joins the soprano line of the SATB ensemble. Sometimes phrases are repeated, with the chorus simply singing on “ooh,” allowing time for prayer and reflection. The piece climaxes with an extended “glory, hallelujah” section and ends slowly and softly as the soloist joins the chorus singing “nobody knows, but my Lord.” *JRB*



Mark Patterson.
Laudate Dominum.

TB, piano.
Choristers Guild (CGE523), \$2.25.

If you are looking for a way to feature men’s voices, especially high school singers, this is a fine option. The Latin text (from Psalm 117) is not translated in this edition, but the publisher has provided a free, downloadable rehearsal resource page that includes translation, pronunciation guide, and other musical information. This piece creates an opportunity for young men to sing a common choral text in classical style. The tenor and bass ranges are under an octave and generally move in two-part harmony. The piece is well suited to the spring seasons of Easter and Pentecost but could be used as an anthem of praise any time of year. *DLR*

REVIEWERS

Jean Boehler (JRB)
Cantor
Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church,
The Bronx, NY

Cheryl Dieter (CD)
ALCM Business Manager
Valparaiso, IN

Marilyn Lake (ML)
Handbell Director
Southminster Presbyterian Church,
Prairie Village, KS
Music Educator,
Shawnee Mission School District, KS

Deborah L. Reiss (DLR)
Minister of Music
Village Lutheran Church,
Bronxville, New York

Mark A. Schultz (MS)
Kantor
Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Dearborn, MI

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Jim Rindelaub
Executive Director, ALCM

The Spirit's Fire Burns Brightly in the Song

When I think of spiritual songs I think of all the moments music invokes a spiritual experience. For me that's a long list that includes my college days singing with the hundreds of choral voices and instruments during the St. Olaf Christmas Festival. That was a glorious and spiritual experience for me. I recall some students finding it to be a burden in the middle of preparation for finals. That was always a surprise to me. You can study anytime, but singing in the Christmas Festival was a rare opportunity that would end forever with graduation.

Other spiritual song experiences when I was young included singing the Messiah with the Jacksonville Symphony Chorus and singing Masses and requiems with the Westminster Symphonic Choir. As I got older, my spiritual song experiences continued when singing hymns with the mighty chorus of musicians attending ALCM conferences, the Institute of Liturgical Studies, Lectures in Church Music, the Good Shepherd Institute, and the annual hymn festivals at Lutheridge Worship and Music week and Lutheran Summer Music, along with the years in which the St. Olaf Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts occurs. In those moments, which happen a few times a year at most, the people to whom God has given special musical gifts come together to sing the song of God's people. That is a spiritual song experience for me!

I also observe times when others have spiritual song experiences, including people in my home congregation. The singing may not be as robust as at the big music conferences, but when the people who have non-music vocations come together on Sunday morning and sing, they have as deep a spiritual experience as any I have when singing with my conference musician friends. A fascinating reality is that on Sunday morning a percentage

of the people don't really carry a tune that well, but yet the Spirit is in that singing as powerfully as ever. The Spirit's fire burns brightly in the song regardless of the assembly's musical abilities. God does work in mysterious ways!

The choir experience is equally Spirit-filled. I always like the description of the choir representing the congregation in worshipping God with music they have spent time rehearsing and preparing. The congregation and the choir are linked as one even though not all actually sing in the choir. You don't have to sing or play to experience the Spirit through the choir's song.

I see equally powerful spiritual song experiences in traditional, classical, global, and worship-band-led musical experiences. In my nearly forty years as a church musician, I only led a praise band for four of those years while at my last full-time church position in Glen Ellyn, IL, twenty years ago. The talented volunteer musicians in that church didn't require my help playing or singing, so I often stood at the front of the worship space as they rehearsed from the balcony, to better hear the ensemble balance. I recall weekly thinking what an excellent sound they produced and remember witnessing Sunday morning worshippers being moved by the Spirit from their musical offering.

In my experience, spiritual song happens in many and various ways wherever the Spirit is present, which is in all your churches on Sunday mornings and always. It isn't the song or the talent of those playing and singing. It is the mystery of God that passes all understanding. My deep gratitude to you for being the vessel that allows the Spirit to move in God's people through God's gift of music. With your guidance we sing our "Glory to God" with all the saints of all times and places. That truly is spiritual song.



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