

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Summer 1989

Vol. 23, No. 2

"CONTEMPORARY"
WORSHIP:
DARE WE
APPLAUD?



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"Contemporary" Worship: Dare We Applaud?

3 Reflections
by Ralph L. Reinke, President

4 Editorials

7 And How Shall The People Sing?
by David Held

10 Let The People Sing A New Song!
by Daryl Wildermuth

15 Tension and Release
by Barry Bobb

18 Book Reviews

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CIRCULATION POLICY - *ISSUES* . . . in *Christian Education* (ISSN0278-0216) is published three times a year by the faculty of Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska 68434. *ISSUES* is sent free to each church, school, district and synodical office in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Copies are also sent to high schools, colleges and universities affiliated with the Synod.

Individuals wishing personal copies may obtain them as follows: Single copy @ \$2.00 each; Subscription @ \$6.00; 10 or more copies mailed to the same address @ \$1.20 per copy.

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reflections

REFLECTION

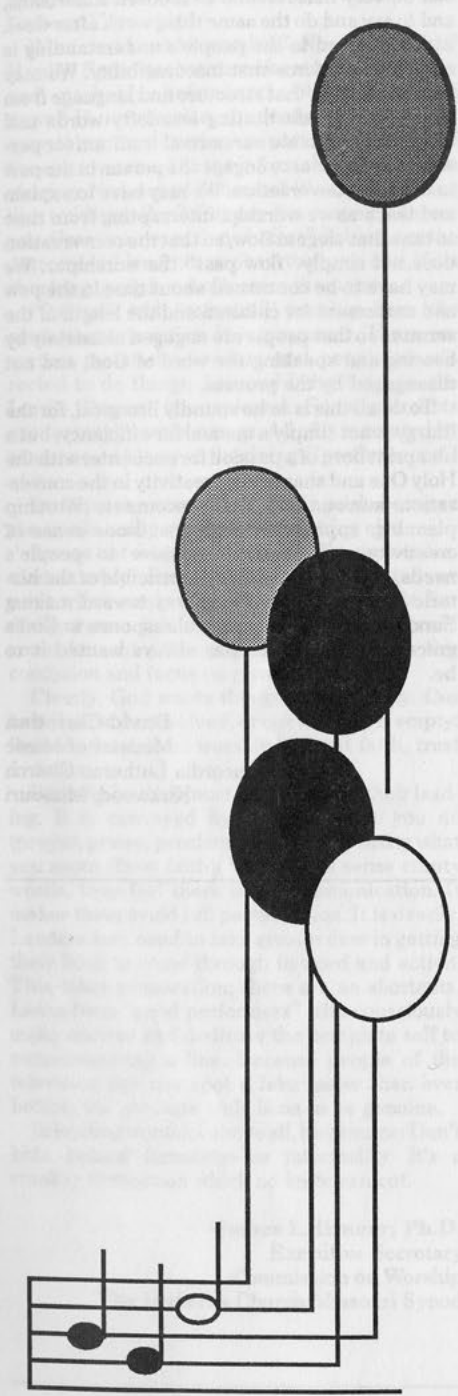
In introducing "Liturgy and Hymns" of *Luther's Works*, Ulrich Leupold reminds us that while Luther's liturgical writings constitute only a small part of his literary works, these writings have had a powerful impact in the life of the church. Many became part of the church orders of the Lutheran Church and served as norms for Lutheran worship.

The key motivation in Luther's reform of the mass was a commitment to the Word of God and the sacraments as the heart and center of worship. Aware of confusion in many forms of worship, Luther was convinced that the proclamation of the Word of God was to serve as the sole guide in worship. He saw the Word as the center that prompted responses of praise and adoration, believing that one cannot give God anything but praise and thanks.

Another point of interest was Luther's insistence that any liturgical revision needed to begin with the worship practices of his day rather than with worship in apostolic times, for instance. In making such revisions, Luther's perspective was grounded in Christian freedom as a response to the Gospel which seeks to nurture faith through liturgy. In this spirit, he preserved the essentials of the liturgy and eliminated what was anti-Gospel and non-helpful. He also refused to sanction any one order of service. At the same time, Luther, after considerable delays, provided "The German Mass" as a liturgy for the people, emphasizing that order is needed to nurture faith and to help those who are becoming Christian.

In his revision of the liturgy, Luther's motivation was clear, that of giving glory to God and serving the good of the neighbor as a response to the Gospel. It is in this spirit that the authors of the editorials, book reviews, and essays offer a stimulating discussion of public worship in the church today.

Ralph L. Reinke, President



Meaningful, Exciting, Memorable Worship

The Church Growth Movement has, if nothing else, raised our consciousness about the importance of Sunday worship. Even for those who would minimize the Church Growth emphasis on statistics, there is no denying the reality that worship, especially on Sunday morning, is the place where we gather the largest number of our people on the most frequent basis. And while we would all like to see more and more of those at worship also in Bible study, prayer, and service groups in our congregations throughout the week, the truth for most churches is that for the majority of our people the Sunday experience is the only significant faith encounter that they will have. Their spirituality is being formed by what happens in that precious hour of worship each week.

Thus the concern that has been gathering momentum in our churches regarding the form of worship is not only justified, but long overdue. An ever-growing stream of ideas and materials is finding a market among an ever-increasing number of worship leaders who at last are asking the question: "How can we make worship a meaningful, exciting, and memorable weekly event?" Inevitably, in our quest to be more contemporary, more creative, and more responsive to our perceived local needs, we are tempted to consider abandoning (and many would encourage us) the historic liturgy of the western church as a vehicle which no longer engages the contemporary American heart or mind.

To abandon the liturgy, however, is to fail to see it for the treasure that it is. Embedded in this centuries-old structure are the heart and soul of the people's encounter with their God. The liturgy recognizes that the Bible not only reveals God to us, but also provides us with the content for our response to him. By its very structure, the liturgy compels us to listen to God as the One who initiates our worship in the first place, and it keeps us from the "contemporary American" tendency to talk too much about ourselves. In the liturgy we have a feast of expression and a wealth of material with which to converse with God and with each other.

It is not the task of the worship leaders to lead the people of God to abandon such a gift. Rather, it is our task to help people unwrap the treasure and appropriate it for their use. Such unwrapping, however, is not done through dull repetition. The language of the liturgy, beautiful as it is, can be very inaccessible to modern Americans, and to say and do the same thing week after week without regard to the people's understanding is simply to reinforce that inaccessibility. We may have to reshape that structure and language from time to time, substituting less lofty words and using music outside our normal tradition (or personal preference) to engage the person in the pew in the holy conversation. We may have to explain and teach as we worship, interrupting from time to time that elegant flow, so that the conversation does not simply "flow past" the worshiper. We may have to be concerned about time in the pew and movement for children and the length of the sermon, so that people are engaged ultimately by hearing and speaking the word of God, and not disengaged by the process.

To do all this is to be soundly liturgical, for the liturgy is not simply a manual for efficiency, but a blueprint born of a passion for encounter with the Holy One and shaped for creativity in the conversation surrounding that encounter. Worship planning, approached with that same sense of creativity and passion, sensitive to people's needs, and refined within the crucible of the historic liturgy, will go a long way toward making Sunday morning the powerful response to God's grace that the church has always wanted it to be.

David Christian
Minister of Music
Concordia Lutheran Church
Kirkwood, Missouri

It's Not Formality Vs. Informality

In talking about contemporary worship many argue for informality. But there may be little help in trying to distinguish between "formal" and "informal" worship.

What is informal worship? No preparation? Hardly. Someone has to make some decisions—and probably beforehand. Nothing written down? If no one else, the leader probably has something. No directions to participants? Only if they just watch—like the informality of television viewing. No learned behavior? We'd all be acting like toddlers. Fun? But my fun may not amuse you. Creative, never done before? Seldom are the patterns hidden from an observant eye, and, if it's shocking, people usually miss the point.

"Formal" and "informal" worship have the same characteristics. It is prepared. There are written materials. Leaders and people are directed to do things. Learned behavior, e.g., the Lord's Prayer, is employed. Some elements excite; maybe some amuse. All of it is created by someone—at least in the doing ("performance") of it.

Perhaps the attempt to distinguish between the two is really getting at something else.

Are we not desirous of "genuine" (communicative) worship? Empty words are not wanted; we want what comes from the heart. It is not formality versus informality, for a "How are you?" could be said either way. It's best to drop this confusion and focus on genuine.

Clearly, God wants this genuine quality. Our hearts must be involved, or our worship is empty! Indeed, there is no worship without faith, trust in Jesus.

Worship leaders must be genuine in their leading. It is conveyed by meaning what you do (prayer, praise, proclamation) and by doing what you mean (from faith). When folks sense empty words, they feel there is no communication. It makes them avoid full participation. It is deadly. Leaders may need to take greater care in getting their faith to come through in word and action. This takes preparation; there are no shortcuts. Learn from "good performers" who consciously make choices and dedicate the complete self to communicating a line. Because people of the television age can spot a fake faster than ever before, the pressure truly is on to be genuine.

In leading worship, above all, be genuine. Don't hide behind formality—or informality. It's a smoky distinction which no knife can cut.

James L. Brauer, Ph.D.
Executive Secretary
Commission on Worship
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Reflections: The Grass-Roots Liturgical Movement

Even a casual observer will note the proliferation of contemporary liturgies, a grass-roots liturgical renewal, cropping up in the church. Today's trend is towards an evangelical style of informal and non-traditional worship. Many of our church leaders applaud this change, claiming that if the church is to grow, it must rid itself of our traditional Lutheran liturgy.

But what kind of growth? Growth as another form of American Protestantism with its Methodistic and Arminian roots, or growth as a Lutheran church with its catholic and Reformation heritage? Is it really possible to maintain, as a recent LCMS author suggests, our Lutheran substance with an evangelical style? We think not!

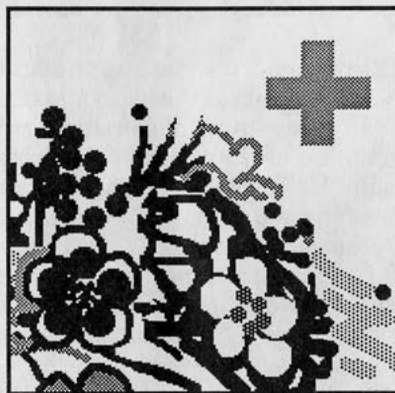
There are two fundamental liturgical principles ignored in this shift toward contemporary worship services. First, our Lutheran liturgy of the Gospel and the Sacraments is the primary means by which the church hands down its Biblical and Confessional faith from generation to generation and nurtures its members. Until the 20th century, liturgies were the most conservative documents in the church. The worship of the people changes more slowly than theologians or church leaders do. Our forefathers were careful to reject all worship forms that do not reflect a distinct Lutheran ethos. They knew that what a church believes is found in its liturgies and hymns. Lutheran worship is objective worship—the Gospel is proclaimed through the objective means of grace. Here the congregation stands in God's presence to receive God's gifts, and it responds in faith and love. Even an informed layman recognizes that most contemporary liturgies and hymns foster subjective worship and crass emotionalism.

Second, liturgy serves to transform the culture and not vice-versa. The church exists to convert the culture, not be converted by it. Although liturgy is sensitive to the culture, it transcends

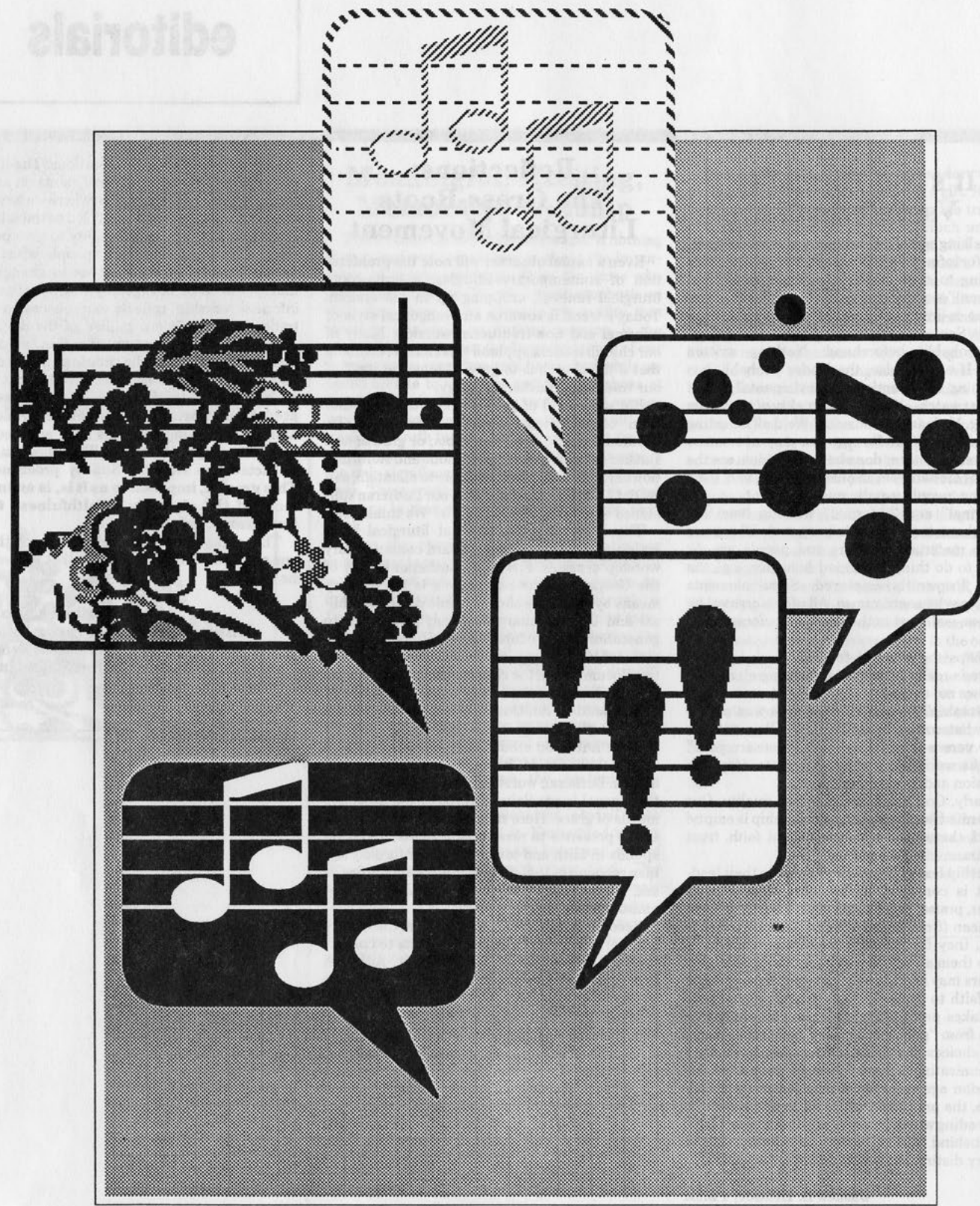
culture as it transcends generations. The liturgy places us as the communion of saints on an historical and eschatological line where we have the same status in the kingdom of God as the saints in glory. It is not our responsibility to give people what they want, but to give people what they need. Visitors do not visit us to change our liturgy, but to be changed by it. Contemporary, informal worship reflects our obsession with trends in the religious milieu of the day. Our American Protestant culture (i.e., evangelicalism) is hostile to the theology of the cross and to our Lutheran Christology that proclaims that salvation may never be separated from Christ's sacramental presence. Many fast-growing churches have adopted this evangelical style of worship. This allows culture to dictate the church's Sunday proclamation. This growth, impressive as it is, is an indictment of the church's unfaithfulness to its Lutheran substance.

This grass-roots liturgical movement threatens and will destroy everything that it means to be Lutheran.

Arthur A. Just, Jr.
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editorials



And How Shall The People Sing?

Introduction

For hundreds, even thousands, of years God's people have been singing His praises in worship. Music also has played an important role in the proclamation of God's Word. With the progression of time it is only natural that the materials used by the people to voice their praise to God should be examined and evaluated for their effectiveness in worship.

In recent years questions have been raised about the choice of hymnody used in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The advent and explosion of televised worship services have exposed many parishioners to a wide variety of worship styles and music. The appearance of new hymnals in the Lutheran Church has forced congregations to examine their worship practices. Concern for the assimilation of new worshippers in the LCMS has caused some to question whether musical resources in current denominational hymnals meet the needs of people with a non-Lutheran background.

Leaders involved in the Church Growth Movement have indicated that high quality and an energetic vitality in worship have a profound influence in attracting and keeping worshippers. However, in many LCMS churches, the level of congregational participation in music and the general tone of the worship services are quite dull and uninspiring.

What is the reason for this and how can the situation be improved? Because worship in Lutheran churches has been identified as being liturgical and because much of its hymnody is historical, some have said that the problem is in the materials being used in worship. Others have claimed that the problem is in the manner in which worship is planned and executed. However, before looking at ways to improve the musical aspect of Lutherans' worship life, it would be appropriate to review the reasons music is used in worship.

The Role of Music in Worship

Music has long been recognized as an important component of worship. Martin Luther had a high regard for music; he placed it next to theology in importance. He worked hard at making it possible for the people of his time to participate heartily in singing at worship services. Luther also recognized the importance of choral music; he had strong words of praise for a musical leader of his time, Josquin des Prez. Thus, Luther emphasized not only the great choral music of his time, but also the music of the people.

Music used in worship is first and foremost the music of the people in the pew. Organists, choir directors, instrumentalists, and soloists need to keep this in mind as a music program is planned for a parish. The contribution of each of these entities should be used to reinforce and assist the hearty participation of the worshippers.

Since worship in the Lutheran Church is recognized as being a corporate entity, music used in worship services should reinforce this concept. When the people of God gather in worship, they should have the feeling of being part of a group. That is one of the unique features of corporate worship. While one comes to worship as an individual, there is a person-to-person interaction that occurs in the worship service.

The primary goal of music in worship is not to entertain the listeners. People become part of a group through active participation in the group. When a person goes to a concert, the result may be a satisfying musical experience. However, little lasting kinship with the attendees at the concert develops. Through active participation in a group, people feel they are part of that group and necessary to its functioning.

In worship services, music is used to reinforce the day's emphasis. The choice of hymnody, choral music, organ music, instrumental music, and music of soloists should be determined by the lessons and propers.

The texts of music used in a denomination's worship services must be consistent with the theology of that denomination. Just because a tune is very singable and appealing, one cannot justify its use when, for example, the

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text is highly synergistic. When people leave the worship of some evangelical services, they are happy and feel good. However, just as one would not change the theology of the LCMS in order to achieve a similar feeling of happiness, so also care must be exercised in the choice of music used to support the teachings of the LCMS.

While emotion is an integral part of church music, the music used in worship should not be employed in such a manner as to manipulate the emotions of the worshipper. A special danger to the church is to use pietistic texts and practices in worship. History has shown that these may produce a short-term gain in singing, but result in a long-term loss in the understanding and practice of corporate worship services of Word and Sacrament.

Improving the Participation of the People

One need not visit many LCMS churches to discover that some worship services, and especially the music in them, are very dull, lifeless, and uninspiring. Because the singing of the people is quite poor, it is tempting to suggest that the reason for this is that the liturgical service, with its attendant service music and the historic hymnody as found in the denominational hymnals, is beyond the capability of most people and therefore needs to be replaced. Furthermore, because most people respond positively to an experience which makes them feel good, it is easy to suggest the use of music with an emotionally charged, individualistic text as a suitable substitute for some of the historic hymnody. But is the problem of poor musical participation due to difficult music? Or are there other mitigating factors which negate the people's participation?

The following observations are based upon the author's experience in working with the liturgical service and historic hymnody over a period of thirty years. The LCMS has been labeled as a liturgical church because its service books contain structured services of Word and Sacrament based on a series of preassigned lessons. However, the fact of the matter is that while the structure of the liturgical service has been observed in the LCMS, the spirit and manner in which it has been conducted in the past thirty years have been lacking in vitality. In most parishes the amount of time spent in worship planning and the financial resources allocated to worship have been small. The majority of time spent by pastors in worship preparation has been in the area of sermon preparation. The result is that the liturgical and musical aspect of worship has been badly neglected. In those instances where adequate planning and resources are available, a vibrant worship is present. In far too many parishes, however, such is not the case. In the long run, changing the type of hymnody and the service structure used will not solve the problem of poor participation on the part of the people. The root of the problem lies deeper.

First, the clergy of the LCMS must become better informed about the planning and conduct of worship. Already in their seminary training, future pastors must be taught the historical background and structure of the liturgical service. They must not only be informed about

the liturgical services, but also experience the possibilities of developing their content. Furthermore, they should be exposed to the principles involved in the cooperative planning and conduct of worship. Pastors must comprehend the importance of Word and Sacrament in the life of the church. They must know fully the background of the liturgical service and understand the functioning of each portion of such a service. Pastors must know the many ways in which a liturgical service may be varied; they need to be aware of the vast array of musical possibilities for involving the parishioners in worship. Finally, if pastors are to be effective leaders in worship services, they must have an enthusiasm for what they are doing. This is difficult to achieve if the pastors do not have the proper background, understanding, and experience with the liturgical service itself.

Preparing a worship service means paying close attention to detail which will assist the person in the pew to participate fully in the service. Pastors and worship committees must know how to prepare a service bulletin which ably assists the worshippers, both new and experienced, in following the flow of a worship service. Parishioners should never be confused about what they are to do in the sequence of worship.

Pastors and worship committees must know and recognize the needs of organists and choir directors as they work to assist worshippers in their musical participation in the service. When hymns are given to organists and choir directors a few days or even only a few weeks before the worship service occurs, not much can be done to help the organist and the choir assist the congregation in the singing of service music and hymns.

Organists must see their role as being that of assisting the congregation. The worship service is not a time to display technical proficiency for its own sake. Hymn introductions and hymn settings must be chosen for the purpose of assisting the congregation to sing well and to interpret the hymn text. Preludes, voluntaries, and postludes should be chosen to amplify further the theme of the service as demonstrated by the propers, the readings, and the hymns.

Choir directors need to view their leadership of the choir with the needs of the congregation in mind. The choir's foremost role is to lead the congregation in the singing of the hymns and the service music. Anthems, when sung, should be related to the thrust of the worship service. Church choirs need to function as service choirs, not as little concert choirs.

In far too many instances, congregations are willing to get by with the least possible investment in personnel to serve as organists. In some cases people are hired who have minimal skills in playing the organ; in other instances congregations compound the difficulty by having only a tiny budget to assist the organists to grow in their skills and to purchase adequate amounts of music.

Even when an organist has sufficient skills, in many instances the organ used by the congregation is simply

incapable of leading the congregation. An inadequate instrument in an acoustically poor environment makes it nearly impossible for the hymn singing of people to succeed.

In a related area, congregations at times try to get by with only a small investment in the area of choral music. They don't recognize the importance of having a trained choir director, nor do they see the importance of having a choir which assists congregational singing. In some instances this is the fault of the choir itself for failing to assume such a role.

Perhaps the greatest impediment to full musical participation by a congregation is the acoustical environment found in the church's worship space. The unfortunate situation in the LCMS is that by far the majority of church buildings have acoustical settings which impede the sound of the congregation. When one attempts to worship in such a building, one immediately gets the feeling of isolation. Only a few people in the immediate vicinity can be heard speaking and singing. Sound absorbing materials such as soft porous walls, lush carpeting, padded pews (sometimes both on the back and top of the pew), and acoustical tiles in the ceiling serve to stifle the sound of any congregation. There is no corporate musical style that can survive in such a setting.

Is the picture so dismal that no hope is possible? No! There are instances where congregations, both large and small, urban and rural, have a thriving musical participation of worshippers. It is possible for most pastors, musical leaders, and congregations to make modifications necessary for the improvement of singing by the people.

Can the music of historic hymnody and the liturgical service appeal to the first-time worshipper? Yes! However, for that to happen, the first-time worshipper must come into an atmosphere of enthused, vibrant, corporate participation on the part of the people in the pew. The enthusiasm for such a service is contagious.

Can the music found in *Lutheran Worship* and *Lutheran Book of Worship* appeal to the first-time worshipper as well as the experienced worshipper? Yes! Time after time it has been the author's experience to see congregations quickly respond positively, not only to the old, but also to the new materials in these hymnals. With proper leadership and a positive acoustical environment, people sing the hymns with great energy and enthusiasm. It also has been most gratifying to hear children singing not only the hymns, but also the service music, in these books.

The quick fix of using a simplistic type of hymnody in a non-liturgical service will not solve the problem of poor musical participation in the long run. Rather, pastors, congregations, and musical leaders must commit themselves to a position in which they will make it possible for all to participate fully in worship. This means pastors, musical leaders, and congregations must do all they can to improve the capability of the worship leaders and the physical environment in which they work. It means that all must take time to plan worship far in advance so that much energy,

imagination, and resourcefulness may be directed to enabling the people in the pew to participate heartily in the service.

Great things are possible with the current worship services and musical materials found in *LW* and *LBW*. A vibrant worship life, one which appeals both to the new and the experienced worshipper, may be built using these resources.

For Further Reading

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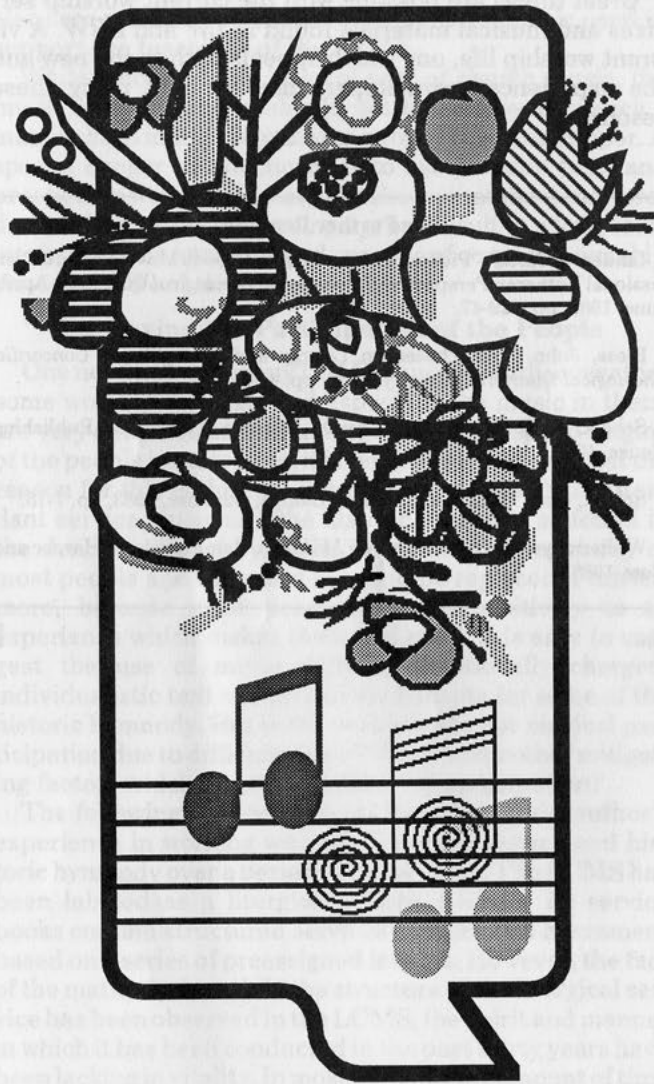
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by Daryl Wildermuth

When the Reverend Wayne Pohl spoke as a Circuit Convocation in Tacoma, Washington, he related an incident in an address presented by Lyle Schaller to the Council of Presidents of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He reportedly told them that no church body did a better job of gathering together the immigrants as they came to our shores than the Lutherans. They sought out fellow Lutherans, offered them the worship and the language of the old country, and most effectively gathered them into congregations throughout the nation. Because of this effort, Lutheran churches experienced rapid growth in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

"However," he is supposed to have said, "I have some news for you. The boats stopped coming."

The point is valid. The boats did stop coming. But although the Lutherans did adopt the English language, they are still by and large gearing their outreach to people by using European music and worship forms developed between 1400 and 1900 A.D.

The boats stopped coming. And now it is time for the Lutheran Church to take a new look at the worship style we are offering to the people of America, both our members and those whom we are hoping to win for the Lord.

It is no secret that Lutheran churches, including The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, are in a zero growth pattern. Some souls are being won, but barely enough to cover losses to other denominations. When we ask questions about why people are not being attracted to the Lutheran Church today, or when we ask members why they leave for other denominations, the answers very frequently include references to worship. Either people who worshipped at the Lutheran Church did not feel at home and moved on to another denomination, or members who visited other congregations found a more exciting worship and left our congregation for them.

Other factors, such as the quality of sermons, congregational programs, and pastoral care, will attract people or drive them away. But the one place where the congregation meets Sunday after Sunday and where potential members make their first tentative contact with the congregation is in the worship service.

The point of this article is not to criticize or to condemn traditional Lutheran worship. It is greatly loved by the majority of our people. It is the highest type of classical worship and has proved itself through centuries of usage. But it is not meeting the needs of two groups of peo-

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Let The People Sing A New Song!

ple: 1) Members of our congregations, often the younger or newer Christians, who want something different; 2) The people in the community whom we hope to win for Christ.

Therefore, any congregation which has a concern for these two groups of people will want to consider offering also a regular, every Sunday Contemporary Worship Service.

Contemporary Service Defined

There are many different types of contemporary services, but there are a few common characteristics:

1. **Easy entry.** A service which is easy for anyone to enter, with the hymns being singable, and the service easy to follow.
2. **Contemporary music.** A type of music which relates meaningfully to people whom a congregation is attempting to involve.
3. **Warm, personal.** Members and visitors feel at home.
4. **Word and Sacraments.** Containing the Word and the Sacraments as we know them from the Bible and Lutheran Confessions.

The big, obvious reason for the need for a more contemporary approach to worship is the many changes in our society, including the following:

1. **The boats did stop coming.** Methods used to gather the scattered Lutherans yesterday will not work to win persons in our communities today.
2. **The movement of the masses.** One in five families moves every year, and when they move they shop for a new church. People today are not necessarily loyal to their own denomination. They often instead pick a warm, comfortable church.
3. **New hymnals.** The publication of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *Lutheran Worship* with their numerous choices in liturgies caused a monumental change in the philosophy of worship in our circles. The attitude reflected in the publication of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, which assumed that worship should be uniform in all Lutheran churches of the same synod, is obsolete. The new hymnals are based on a philosophy that worship can, may, and should differ from congregation to congregation. Furthermore, each congregation should and does design its worship according to what is most appropriate for its particular situation.

This is consistent with the attitude of Luther, who in his preface to the *Deutsche Messe* wrote:

"In the first place I want to make a request, in

all kindness, and in God's name, too, that all who see this order of service or desire to adopt it shall not impose it as a law or cause anyone's conscience to be distressed or bound by it, but shall use it in Christian freedom as they may please, as, where, when and as long as conditions warrant or call for it."¹

4. **Changing musical tastes.** Only about two percent of American people listen to classical music radio stations. Not more than five percent of Americans have a strong Lutheran heritage. Therefore, a classical music style of worship appeals to an extremely narrow band of the American public.

5. **God is old-fashioned.** American movies and television depict no committed Christians except those who lived at least 50 years ago. One of the greatest challenges for the Christian is attempting to convince people that Jesus is real for today.

Unfortunately, hymns written 100 to 500 years ago and a liturgy which is reminiscent of a monastic setting re-enforce the concept that God is a God of yesterday, but not of today or tomorrow.

6. **Changing attitudes toward worship.** Attitudes of people, including Lutherans, toward worship have changed. Some examples:

- **Scripture readings.** After much initial opposition some years ago, most congregations now use a modern translation.
- **Sermons.** Sermons have changed. Years ago, no pastor would have dared to use humor or personal references.
- **Prayers.** The classic, *Pastoral Theology*, by John H.C. Fritz warned: "In the pastor's absence, the teacher of the parish school or a member of the church council may read (*italics in original*) a prayer that has been prepared for such an occasion. Since praying in public is *teaching (italics in original)* in public, only such should publicly offer *ex corde* prayers as have been called publicly to teach."²

Furthermore, Grandma was never without her prayer book, which had a prayer which could be read for every occasion.

Today, laypersons lead in prayer, and they do it personally, from their hearts. The prayer book in general has gone the way of the dinosaur.

- **Warmth and friendliness.** In times past people looked for awe and majesty. Even little country churches imitated Gothic cathedrals. Though we may disagree with John Naisbitt's theology, he is

right in saying that in today's impersonal, technological, computer age, people are looking for warm personal relationships.³ People join the "friendly" church. We built fan-shaped church buildings. The emergence of the nuclear family was a new development. People no longer have a warm relationship with their extended families. The breakdown of many families is a reality. Many people in our society are totally alone.

- **The personal.** Before we began contemporary worship services in our congregation, I saw a number of families leaving our church for the local independent bodies or for charismatic churches. Perhaps most frustrating was the realization that many of these Christians who cared most about their Lord, or who had a new-found faith, were the ones who were most turned off by our liturgy.

Then one of these persons shared an insight. When an individual discovers a meaningful relationship with God, that person frequently craves a more personal, meaningful, intimate type of worship. At that time, that person often finds that the Lutheran liturgy as well as written prayers and litanies are impersonal. People would rather pray for their own specific needs and share their own faith. Music by its nature is personal and touches the emotions, but if the tunes, the words, and rhymes are of a bygone era and in another style, they are no longer personal, but only foreign sounding.

- **Interdenominational fraternization.** This is another development in our circles in which members are attending all sorts of community Bible studies. They hear about the exciting things other churches are doing and are not content with dull, uninspiring worship.

But Does It Work?

It is legitimate to ask the question, "Does a contemporary worship really reach the people it is intended to reach?"

Take a quick look at history. Luther's reformation began in Wittenberg, Germany, and within only a few decades had spread to all of Northern Europe and Scandinavia. One can literally say that it flew to the far reaches of Europe on wings of song. The Reformation was sung into the hearts of the people, using the words and music of the people.

The next great revival was Methodist, led by the Wesley brothers. Charles Wesley alone composed 6,500 hymns. Once again the fires of revival were fanned by spiritual songs and hymns which the people loved.

When the Christian Church moved to North America, German and Scandinavian Lutheran Churches gathered their sheep into ethnic flocks, attracting them with the language and worship of the old country. But the real growth through evangelism occurred in those churches

such as the Baptist, which held revivals and spread their Gospel through the songs and hymns of their time.

Look at the growing churches in our own communities. Almost without exception those experiencing almost miraculous growth are also closely tied to the music of the day.

As I write this article, the religion section of *Time Magazine* is devoted to the Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois. The basic point of the article is that "The prime market for Hybels' (the pastor's) softsell pitch is what he calls 'unchurched Harrys', 25-to-45-year-old professionals who have become disenchanted with the stodgy ritual and sanctimoniousness of many traditional churches. 'This is the generation that grew up on television,' says Hybels."⁴

The experience of our congregation (Grace Lutheran Church, Tacoma, Washington) reinforces the importance of the contemporary service for evangelism. Our own congregation holds three Sunday services. A traditional Lutheran service begins at 10:45 a.m., and contemporary services are scheduled at 8:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. (the 9:30 a.m. being an outgrowth of the 8:00 a.m. contemporary service).

When the last group of new members joined our congregation, we asked each person to fill out a survey form. Forty-six persons returned the forms. Of those, seventeen specifically mentioned that they joined this congregation because of contemporary worship services. Thirty-eight of the forty-six regularly attend the contemporary services.

But Is It Lutheran?

Probably the most often heard objection to a contemporary worship service is, "But, pastor, it's not Lutheran."

If by "not Lutheran" the person means the service according to our experience in the Lutheran Church since the publishing of *The Lutheran Hymnal* in 1945, then he or she is probably right. However, most would define "Lutheran" in broader terms. The genius of the Lutheran Church has been to keep the traditional and to add the contemporary as Luther did in keeping the Latin mass and adding the *Deutsche Messe*.

The Lutheran Confessions direct attention to worship. In the Confessions there are two basic emphases. The first is found in "The Augsburg Confession," Article VII, which states: "It is not necessary that human traditions or rites in ceremonies instituted by men should be alike everywhere."⁵ This theme is repeated in several other places, as in the "Apology of The Augsburg Confession," Articles VII and VIII. The second accent is the teaching that traditional ceremonies do not help to merit justification for the believer. This concept is mentioned in the "Apology," Article XV, and repeated in a number of other places. In fact, the "Epitome" of the "Formula of Concord," Article X, emphasizes that ceremonies and church usages are perfectly free and need not in any sense be uniform. The "Epitome" states:

"We believe, teach and confess that the community of God in every locality and every age has authority to change such ceremonies according to circumstances as it may be most profitable and edifying to the community of God . . . that no church should condemn another because it has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God as long as there is mutual agreement in doctrine and in all its articles, as well as in the right use of the sacraments."⁶

Why Not Simply "Teach 'Em"?

Two questions sometimes asked are: "Why do we need to offer different music and different liturgy to reach the non-member? Why not simply bring people into the church and teach them to appreciate the beautiful Lutheran liturgy and the great Lutheran chorales?"

There are two responses. First, visitors who come to a worship service and are not excited or touched by the service simply will not return a second time, making it impossible for anyone to teach them about the Lutheran liturgy. A second response is that it is extremely difficult to teach a person appreciation for a type of music or a type of liturgy. Each of us likes one's own particular style of music, and it takes a great deal of time and effort to change tastes in music or in art, or, for that matter, in clothing or automobiles. It is certainly possible to win a person to the church by program or friendship or some other means, so that the individual becomes a part of the congregation in spite of a dislike of a particular style of music or liturgy. But in the process we simply lose too many people.

The Decision

Every church body, every congregation, must eventually make the decision as to how important outreach, evangelism and growth are to that particular body. Evangelism as a priority will be reflected in the worship of the congregation and the extent to which a parish is willing to adjust its worship services to the needs of the outsider and visitor, even to the slight discomfort, perhaps, of the long-time parishioner. We have to decide what kind of church body, what kind of congregation we wish to be. Through the years one has heard criticism of other denominations. One denomination is criticized as adopting a philosophy which suggests that it does not wish to grow, and that it is very happy to remain small because doctrinal purity is the first priority. Another denomination appears to believe that growth and winning souls, which might be considered the "numbers game," are much less important than ministering to the social, physical, and emotional needs of the people in the community. We must ask ourselves, "Do we wish to become known as the church body which is quite content to lose members gradually in order that we might preserve a particular form of worship set in a specific time period in our history?" The price, it seems to me, is much too high.

A Sample Contemporary Worship Service

- THE SERVICE PREPARATION AND PRAYER
(Private meditation)
- THE PRE-SERVICE MUSIC (Several songs are sung)
(Songs are from *The Other Song Book*⁷ or various copyright networks.)
- THE ANNOUNCEMENTS
- THE SONG (Procession of pastor and acolyte)
- THE WORDS OF WELCOME (Visitors are welcomed)
- THE ACT OF FELLOWSHIP (Worshippers stand, greet, shake hands, hug their neighbors)
- THE OPENING PRAYER (Read by one of the members)
- THE FIRST SCRIPTURE READING
- THE CHILDREN'S SERMONETTE
- THE GOSPEL LESSON (Read by one of the elders)
- THE SONG
- THE SERMON
- THE OFFERING AND SONG
- THE PRAYERS OF THE CONGREGATION
(Worshippers speak brief prayers from their seats)
- THE LORD'S PRAYER
- THE SILENT MEDITATION AND CONFESSION OF SING
(Can also include a time of sharing)
- THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION
- THE DISTRIBUTION AND SONGS (A number of songs are sung. Communion is received in a circle, passed from one to another.)
- THE PRAYER AND BENEDICTION
- THE SONG

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- ⁵*The Book of Concord*. Theodore G. Tappert, ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959, p. 32.
- ⁶*Ibid.* p. 493.
- ⁷*The Other Song Book*. Dave Anderson, compiler. Edina, Minnesota: The Fellowship Publications, 1987.

Tension and Release

Some Implications of the Church Growth Movement
for Worship Leaders and Other Educators

What an exciting and fascinating time to be a part of the Church's mission! So much interest and emphasis on so many areas of ministry! So much exploration into contemporary media! So much study in the different disciplines of theology and sociology! So much reflection upon effective parish planning and management! Who knows, years from now, what significance this decade will have had for the Church?

Of course, with such a burst of activity in all directions, controversies inevitably arise. Some in the Church fear such tension and ignore it or hide from it. Others *revel* in it! But tension always accompanies times of creativity. It is to be expected. Only a tenacious working through of the dilemma finally brings a release in the form of a new product, a new vision, a new way of doing things. Such is the nature of creativity.

What implications does the Church Growth Movement hold for us as worship leaders (whether we actually "lead," assist, or teach)? Should our churches continue to pull their members into an understanding of our heritage, or should they discard that and break new ground, create brand new, "user-friendly" forms for corporate worship? What can *we* do to assist the Church in its present dilemma? First of all,

ACCEPT

Let's accept the present tension. We may even come to regard it as healthy—a necessary part of an active, living Church. We all know that if the topic is worship and music, whenever two Lutherans gather, there will be three opinions! All of us—pastors, teachers, musicians, lay people, church growth spokesmen, liturgical renewal leaders—feel a deeply personal involvement when it comes to worship. This is an emotional issue because it touches the heart of every Christian. How *shall* we "Call on the name of the Lord"? (Genesis 4:26)

Let's accept the likelihood of pitfalls which can trap us as we embrace programs which promise all the answers or yield to those who would compel us to retain ceremonies as if they are commanded. Let's keep an eye out for the misrepresenting of LCMS tradition or a sloppy analysis of it. There are few truisms in the current debate. Are there

liturgical churches in the LCMS which are growing? Of course! Do some churches that adopt informal worship services continue to decline? You bet! Let's support dialogue with clear definitions. What does liturgical mean? Even our private prayers and praises coalesce into regular acts and forms—liturgies. Is informal worship really informal, that is, without form? Not really. Formal worship follows the prescriptions of the church-at-large, the compilation of the efforts of countless people and generations; most informal worship follows the design of one person, the pastor.

Let's acknowledge the pitfalls of programs generated from a different theological perspective. At Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, the faculty (consistent with their tradition) does not consider Baptism and Holy Communion as means of grace. Rather they are ordinances which the Church performs, obedient to Christ's command. This does not mean that Church Growth principles can't be applied in a Lutheran context. But the concern remains since, as Thomas Windsor pointed out in a recent lecture,¹ there have been times in American history when the means of grace were abandoned in favor of sensational new techniques as the church's emphasis turned away from the nurture of its members to the enthusiastic recruitment of converts.

Yet another pitfall is close at hand. It seems to me that the current distinction between *style* and *substance* has a hollow ring to it. ("Our church is still 'Lutheran' in substance, but our worship style is 'evangelical.'") The worship forms that a group of Christians develops grow out of the faith which it holds. Its teachings may be contained in confessional writings and dogmatic textbooks, but it is experienced in worship. As the people gather for worship, hear the Word of God proclaimed, sing, and pray, doctrine (substance) enters and transforms their lives. Within the form of worship, the church's confessional message is taught and made clear. It follows then that if you worship as a Baptist, you're a Baptist; if as a Roman Catholic, you're a Roman Catholic; if as a Sanctified Brethren (of Garrison Keillor fame), you're a Sanctified Brethren; if as a Lutheran, you're a Lutheran.

We are not talking here about the details and actions of the worship form, but rather the content. Discussions about remaining truly Lutheran should center on the latter and not the former. The phrase, "Well, historically it's been our practice to . . ." is not, in and of itself, enough of a justification for what we do in the different sections of our

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liturgy. The essential *why?* must be addressed and affirmed.

Let's accept the reality of a quickly changing society. Homogeneity is disappearing in virtually every part of American life. An all-pervasive pluralism has led us to expect variety in every part of daily living. Where exact repetition does occur, we are conditioned to tune it out. Small wonder then that we occasionally encounter disdain for ritual (especially given the mechanical detachment with which our liturgy is often presented).

It is also not surprising that members of a high-tech society crave warmth and welcome in their worship experiences. According to Carl Dudley, professor at McCormick Seminary, that warmth is their entry to faith. Only then will they move to believing and finally to belonging.² This is the opposite of what most of us experienced and have come to expect. We grew up in what David Luecke calls "the village church" model.³ We were members long before we had worked out the details of our faith. We belonged and then believed. For most of us, the warm, personal faith experiences were much later! As society changes, so must the way in which the church operates.

Let's accept the changing music needs of a church body set in a diverse culture. No discussion of contemporary worship is possible without bringing up the topic of the church's music. People's opinions are even more passionate, if that's possible (!), in this area. The music of the service simply must seek to touch the hearts of all those gathered. Dr. George Hunter, Church Growth consultant, points out in *The Contagious Congregation*⁴ that music is a **primary** factor in reaching the unchurched visitor. Most of our churches do an excellent job in choosing music for worship that is accessible to the average listener. The popularity of the music of Lutheran composers across ecumenical lines in our country attests to the appeal of the fine work being done in this area. But in a 1986 presentation called "Contemporary Christian Music—Problems and Possibilities,"⁵ Dr. Thomas Gieschen, music professor at Concordia, River Forest, Illinois, provided a new frame for discussion. After delineating eleven discernible styles in current sacred choral music (ranging from "church modern" to "holy pop" and "jazz and rock"), Gieschen offered a new premise: What if style in sacred music is morally neutral. That is to say, there is nothing inherently evil in any of the above styles. This premise also suggests that no style carries with it a kind of negative baggage to the church listener because of its concurrent use in American secular music. (Author's note: I doubt that much of the church is ready to accept this as a premise, but there may be some congregations that would accept it based on their cultural setting.) If this premise is accepted, how would the church's musicians choose from the tremendous amount of material being written? Dr. Gieschen offered some questions as part of a screening process:

1. Text concerns
(Misplaced evangelism—trying to convert people

who already believe; Latent synergism—"I came looking for you, Jesus"; Sub-Christian thought—"Gee, how pretty the snow must have been that morning in Bethlehem!"; Quality of expression—inept wordings, doggerel.)

2. Residual style concerns
(Is the morally neutral premise still valid in my congregation? Am I meeting its diverse needs? Could I be cheating the experienced worshiper? Is the listener being sanctified to a higher purpose? Do I continue to teach, or am I simply taking the easy way out? Is the congregation being edified or entertained?)
3. Propriety concerns
(Is our church music program balanced? Is the choir still functioning within the service, or are they performing? Is the music destroying the flow of the liturgy?)
4. Musical concerns
(Is the music excellent within its style? Is it really a "first fruits" offering?)

In accepting the option of considering the contemporary music of a diverse culture, we need to be aware consciously of television's diluting of the term *ministry*. Every TV evangelist, contemporary Christian singer, or touring Gospel group has tacked the term onto its name. Subconsciously, we've begun to think of their music as somehow *sacred* or *church* no matter how superficial or theologically questionable the texts might be. But it is really the *function* of their music which takes it out of the church music realm. Yes, they meet a need, and they really do speak to the faith of many people; but their concerts are not worship, and their purpose is closer to a kind of religious entertainment, a spiritual diversion. The term *ministry* is misapplied to them. The pastors and teachers I know do real ministry. They serve and meet the needs of their children, their members, and others on an ongoing basis, and they do so in a life of personal sacrifice. To apply the term *ministry* to both servants and entrepreneurs does a disservice to the former, and muddies the waters when important questions on the church's mission are discussed. Not everything that goes by the name *ministry* is ministry. By extension, the music associated with a "pseudo-ministry" is not necessarily church music! Let's stick with the basic definitions. (We'll talk about fundamentals in music and worship later.)

AFFIRM

Let's affirm all those things which we as a church body know to be true. Herb Miller has an important reminder in *How to Build a Magnetic Church*:

"... Christianity is not a method but a message. The Christian faith does not derive its enormous people changing power from sociological principles.

Its primary potency comes from theological truths."⁶

Christian worship is not **primarily** evangelism. We would do well to remain devoted "to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42) Controversies often pull discussion into peripheral areas about details and traditions. These pull our focus away from the true area of concern: Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ being clearly proclaimed? Are the sacraments which He instituted being properly administered? Worship in the Lutheran Church is strongest when it brings to the worshipping congregation that Biblical, Christ-centered message which it is committed to proclaim. More often than not, our so-designed liturgy has successfully achieved that end.

Let's affirm that our liturgy has always adapted to changing cultural context. Times of tension and release, of creativity in worship, are not new to us. It was a radical step in 1912 when the LCMS officially adopted the Common Service of 1888. Some minor changes were made when *The Lutheran Hymnal* was produced in 1941. *Lutheran Worship* (1982) offered extensive alterations. Among them:

1. Wider use of psalmody
2. Emphasis on more Scripture reading (three lessons according to a suggested three-year lectionary)
3. Additional liturgical songs such as "This is the feast of victory," "Thank the Lord and sing His praise," and "What shall I render to the Lord," among others.

Even the Church's Year, with its system of Sundays and major festivals retelling the story of salvation in Jesus Christ and the implications for the faith of the life of the church, has steadily undergone changes. The calendar and the lectionary guarantee that the full range of pastoral care will be covered. Many contemporary services which I have attended fail miserably (besides being downright boring) in trying to equal the comprehensive nature of what our heritage offers.

Beginning with Luther himself, it has been our nature to adapt, to refine, to pare away what no longer works, and to try new things. It is not our nature to simply discard what has been given to us. It is not our nature to break cleanly, completely with our past. The biggest problem in dumping our Lutheran rites and starting out anew is that it will likely take many years of hard work to develop something truly worthwhile. What is the effect of this experimentation on the congregation over the long haul? What if, twenty years from now, someone suddenly realizes this wasn't such a good idea? By that time the worship life of an entire generation will have been impoverished. There's much less risk in simply re-molding and re-working what we have.

Let's affirm that Lutheran theology differs from much of American religious thought today. Most television religion expounds what Luther referred to as a theology of

glory. Today it is more commonly called "triumphalism," and it centers on man's successful efforts to win God's approval. Again we turn to Tom Windsor:

"Are we, in some way, seeking out that perfect methodology in evangelism so that we can prove we possess God's blessing? According to Luther the cross of Christ examines our best efforts and declares them wanting. Through the cross God has put to an end our puny efforts at achieving his approval. Let's be wary of any plan which desires statistical success for its own sake."¹

Let's affirm *why* music always has been such an important part of worship in our church. We eagerly remind others that we are the singing church. (Even Bob Newhart speaks of this!). We've been blessed with an equally strong tradition in organ, choral, and instrumental music. But too often we still think of music as an extra ornament enhancing the service. Music is not so much a wrapping around the Word, but rather it is an **unwrapping** of the Word. Where words fail, music speaks. Robin Leaver, noted Luther scholar, has provided the church with a timely gift in his essay, "The Theological Character of Music in Worship."⁷ In it he pulls together a coherent statement on why music is so essential to us as we worship. Leaver shows how music and Biblical theology are interrelated and interdependent, and how this understanding deeply affects how music is used in worship. Music for its own sake, whether classical or "pop," has no place in worship, since it is alien to Biblical thinking: it points to man instead of God. For Luther music was the inevitable eruption of joyful song in the heart of the redeemed. In emphasizing music as God's—not man's—creation and as God's gift to man to be used in His praise and proclamation, and in stressing particularly the royal priesthood of all believers, Luther laid the foundation for the musical involvement of every Christian—congregation, choir, composer, instrumentalist—in corporate worship. Mark Bangert, speaking recently of his worship experiences in Tanzania,⁸ pointed out that these Africans come to worship expecting to participate fully in the musical expression whether by playing the drums or just swaying. A critique of how well the organist played today is simply not a part of their agenda. How much they can teach us about how to worship!

ADAPT

Let's adapt by re-enforcing the variety already built into the Divine Service and building upon it. Let's risk change! Let's seek out what it takes to proclaim the Gospel genuinely in our own society. Let's find out what it means to be *American Lutherans* (and not be embarrassed to capitalize both words).

Let's adapt by re-directing our investments at all levels toward worship education and worship itself. This is desperately needed.

Parish. Does communicative worship mean printing out a worship folder? Do it! Does it mean investing more budget in the music leadership of the congregation? Do it! Are classes on worship needed for new and even long-time members? Do it! Do our children need more explanation and experiences in what worship is and how it's done? Do it! (*Eternal Word* is woefully deficient on this account.)

District. Are we thinking about a district worship committee? Do it! Do we spend a lot of time worrying about how well worship is done at district gatherings? Start soon!

Synod. Is there a need to strengthen the Commission on Worship staff (one person) so it can fulfill field services functions? Or enable it to learn more from our own history, from other faiths, from other cultures as well as about our own? Do it! (The term "liturgical renewal" could take on an entirely new perspective.)

Seminaries and Colleges. Do we need to mandate more class time in the area of worship for professional church workers? Do it!

A church body which takes care of its priorities in order prospers. Rev. Bruce Biesenthal reminds us:

"Worship is the central activity of a Christian parish. All other activities/thrusts/emphases flow out of the worshiping community. The *time of gathering becomes the time essential to the scattering of the community*. Worship is the heart of the church—the cen-

tral muscle which by its strength or weakness impacts the strength and weakness of the other bodily functions."⁹

We cannot be satisfied with "believing rightly" (orthodoxy) alone; we must also worship rightly. Whenever and wherever congregations are committed to doing that, God grants growth, not only in numbers, but in grace as well.

Notes

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- ³Luecke, David S. *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance: Facing America's Mission Challenges*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988.
- ⁴Hunter, George G. *The Contagious Congregation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979.
- ⁵Gieschen, Thomas. "Contemporary Christian Music: Problems and Possibilities"; presentation at Lectures in Church Music, Concordia College, River Forest, Illinois, November 4, 1986.
- ⁶Miller, Herb. *How to Build a Magnetic Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988, p. 110.
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book reviews

THE CHURCH MUSICIAN by Paul Westermeyer. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988.

This is a long overdue book about the life and practice of the church musician (cantor). This publication should be in every church library and required reading for all pastors, church musicians, individuals currently considering a career in church music, lay worship leaders, and worship committee members.

Almost any seasoned church musician could have assembled much of the tried and true "hands on" parish experience that Westermeyer relates and features in his book, *The Church Musician*. Few writers, however, could have been able to infuse the story with the theological clarity coupled with the charm and wit that Westermeyer liberally applies in this brief account. You will be able to read the book initially from cover-to-cover in one evening. But as Martin Marty states in the foreword, you will probably be drawn to read and reread the book on many occasions through many editions and some revisions. I found the chapters on "Cantor," "Tensions," and "Clergy-Musician Relationships" most rewarding and reassuring.

CREATIVE WORSHIP FOR THE LUTHERAN PARISH, Series C, Parts 1-4, prepared and edited by a committee. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988.

The following quote is from the introductory material provided in this resource. "*Creative Worship* is organized by the three-year lectionary (Series A, B, C) and according to the seasons of the church year (Part 1, The Time of Christmas: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany; Part 2, The Time of Easter: Lent/Easter; Part 3, The Time of the Church I: Holy Trinity-Pentecost 18; and Part 4, The Time of the Church II: Pentecost 19-Sunday of the Fulfillment/Christ the King, Selected Minor Lesser Festivals and Occasions). Each part comes in its own three-ring binder, with or without an IBM compatible diskette in either WordStar or Word Perfect formats (for those churches with computers)." The materials for Series A and B are currently in the developmental stages, but, according to the publisher, they will be issued well in advance of the time they are scheduled for use.

This publication is designed to assist those who work in the areas of service planning. Included in the series are service outlines for each Sunday of the Church Year. Each Sunday is designed in its own unique format. Most Sundays have suggested hymns, versicles and responses, confessions, Psalms with printed music, prayers, lessons, and a wide range of suggestions for choir anthems, vocal solos, and organ music.

Selected Sundays include materials for a reader's theatre, a hymn festival, imposition of ashes, The Great Vigil of Easter, suggested materials for brass choir, plus other options in abundance.

Series C - Part I is priced at \$21.95 (\$29.95 with diskette); Part II is listed at \$24.95 (\$29.95 with diskette). No information is given regarding the cost of future issues of this series. I thoroughly welcome and recommend this publication as an additional creative worship resource.

"THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT: A WORD OF CAUTION" by Glenn Huebel. *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, July-October, 1986, pp. 165-181.

"PIETISM AND THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT IN A CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE" by Carter Lindberg. *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, April-June, 1988, pp. 129-145.

"SIX THESES ON LITURGY AND EVANGELISM" by John Pless. *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, January, 1988, pp. 41-52.

The articles by Huebel, Lindberg, and Pless address primary concerns that should immediately surface when one attempts to evaluate historic Lutheran theology and worship practice measured by standards established by the

Church Growth Movement and the followers of its founder, Donald McGavran.

Glenn Huebel, a pastor from Keller, Texas, states, "I have found much to be commended in the Movement (Church Growth). The principles taught are generally very practical and helpful in guiding and structuring the congregation and its ministry . . . (However), a movement which finds universal appeal across denominations must be based on some other foundation than theology." He proceeds to measure the Church Growth Movement against The Great Commission on three fronts: 1) The goal of the Church Growth Movement is sociological rather than theological; 2) The standards of measurement of the Church Growth Movement are sociological rather than theological; 3) The means employed by the Church Growth Movement are sociological rather than theological.

Carter Lindberg, a professor in the School of Theology of Boston University, observes that while the Church Growth Movement itself makes no self-conscious reference to historical pietism, his biases against historical pietism paled in comparison to his reaction to an encounter with Church Growth materials. To Lindberg, pietism and the Church Growth Movement are similar in suggesting that Word and Sacrament are not sufficient for the church. Lindberg's final point is that the Church Growth Movement is a bed-fellow, if not an advocate, of culture religion.

John Pless, a Lutheran pastor from Minneapolis, Minnesota, states at the opening of his article, "If it is true that 'what happens or does not happen in the pulpit and at the altar determines whether a church is still the church of the pure Gospel', then it is essential to give careful and devout attention to the relationship between the liturgy and evangelism." For Pless, Christians have the freedom to create new liturgical forms; however, this freedom must be exercised with the greatest degree of care.

The concerns raised by these three writers seem to be "on target" and pertinent to anyone attempting to evaluate, identify, and preserve the basics of Lutheran theology while continuing to be receptive to all that is useful and new in worship practice. These articles will also be helpful and provocative to the reader wrestling with concerns of "how to bend and not to break" and who by personal response to The Great Commission needs to address these concerns to a world community driven by quantitative analysis, newly conscious and knee-jerk responses to pluralism, and obsessed with change, decadent style, and shifting social and moral values.

EVANGELICAL STYLE AND LUTHERAN SUBSTANCE by David Luecke, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988.

Many will read this book and conclude that if you want your church to grow, you must drop the historic liturgy, pipe organs, 16th-century hymns and much of what has been traditional in the worship style of mainline Lutheranism. Others may conclude that in mission outreach you must emulate Pentecostals like the Assemblies of God and others associated with Fuller Theological Seminary. Still others will conclude, after reading *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance*, that Luecke advocates "holding fast to substance but hanging loose with style."

This book deserves a very careful reading. The author has a lot to say, and he offers many choice ideas that warrant consideration. In this reviewer's opinion, however, Luecke begins to walk on faulty terrain when he advances the theory that one can separate substance and style. There always has been and always will be a close relationship between substance and style. The two in an honest relationship cannot be separated. Our entire evaluation of civilizations past and present assumes a fundamental relationship between substance and style.

It seems appropriate to consider the classical tag *Ex ungue leonem* ("The claw shows the lion") applied to the study of culture. Or as Adolf Loos, a pioneer of modern architecture, put it: "If nothing were left of an extinct race but a single button, I would be able to infer, from the shape of that button, how these people dressed, built their houses, how they lived, what was their religion, their art, and their mentality."

If the substance is complex and formally organized (God as seen through church doctrine and credal statements), it seems perfectly natural that much of the stylistic response to that substance will be reflected in somewhat of a mirror image, namely, complex and formal (tending toward liturgical organization and carrying with it the essentials of attendant historic baggage).

Although I personally disagree with many of Luecke's simple conclusions related to the fundamentally complex issues of style, I am inclined to feel positive about any author who, while advocating change, makes his concluding point by quoting two verses of Martin Luther's 16th-century hymn, "Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott."

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Continued on page 20

Continued from page 19.

THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT: GROWTH, IMPACT, CONTROVERSY, DIALOG by Mark Ellingsen. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988.

In 1984 the Lutheran World Federation Assembly requested a study of the viability of dialogue between Lutherans and Evangelicals. This request demanded that the author give a panoramic view of the varied landscape of Evangelicalism and the equally uneven landscape of world Lutheranism. To perform such a momentous task by specifying the points of dialogue for the two traditions, Ellingsen solicited contributions from outstanding spokespersons of several facets of both Lutheran and Evangelical traditions and gave them editorial privileges as he moved to characterize the several distinctive elements in each. The result is an excellent and evenhanded treatment of all aspects of both traditions.

The author unravels the strands of historical patterns within both groups, revealing diversity where none was supposed and demonstrating

unity or points of agreement where none was suspected. The author separates his task into four major areas. First, he reviews the birth of the Evangelical Movement in North America and worldwide. Second, he deals with the major institutional side of the movement—denominations within the canopy of Evangelicalism. He discusses Lutheranism and its institutionalism insofar as it shares common interests and deviates from various segments of remaining institutions. He then concludes with a discussion of parachurch, mission agencies, and cooperative agencies serving the cause. Third, the author identifies those elements, segments, and denominations within the movement which make the effort to reflect the best of Church tradition, seeking orthodoxy, as Ellingsen puts it, "in modern dress." In the fourth section he investigates common cause issues for both Lutherans and Evangelicals in the modern world, surfacing devisive approaches each step of the way. Neither Lutheranism nor Evangelicalism can enter dialogue on common issues and common concerns without preparing the agenda. Ellingsen's work is a necessary primer for such an agenda.

Ellingsen candidly gives snapshots of both church groups, exhibiting blemishes on the Church's face in both traditions. The reader may

well take exception to the total picture of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, suspecting it may be a character sketch rather than a snapshot. But Ellingsen notes, sensitively, that The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (often branded as Biblicistic by critics) shows itself Gospel-centered as well as Biblical. As easily as the LCMS is misunderstood by elements in Lutheranism, by the same token, institutions within Evangelicalism are misunderstood by other elements of Evangelism. One can only imagine the misconceptions which must be addressed as both traditions seek mutual understanding. Ellingsen admits diversity can make impossible common confession regarding Scripture, Creeds, the work of Christ, justification, church and ministry, and social ethics, but some elements of each tradition may find common cause on one or more of those topics for discussion. Ellingsen has made a major contribution to a mutual understanding of the two traditions, if not in a larger way, to the future dialogue of the two traditions.

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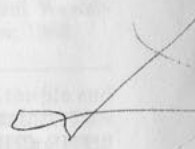


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Continued on page 20