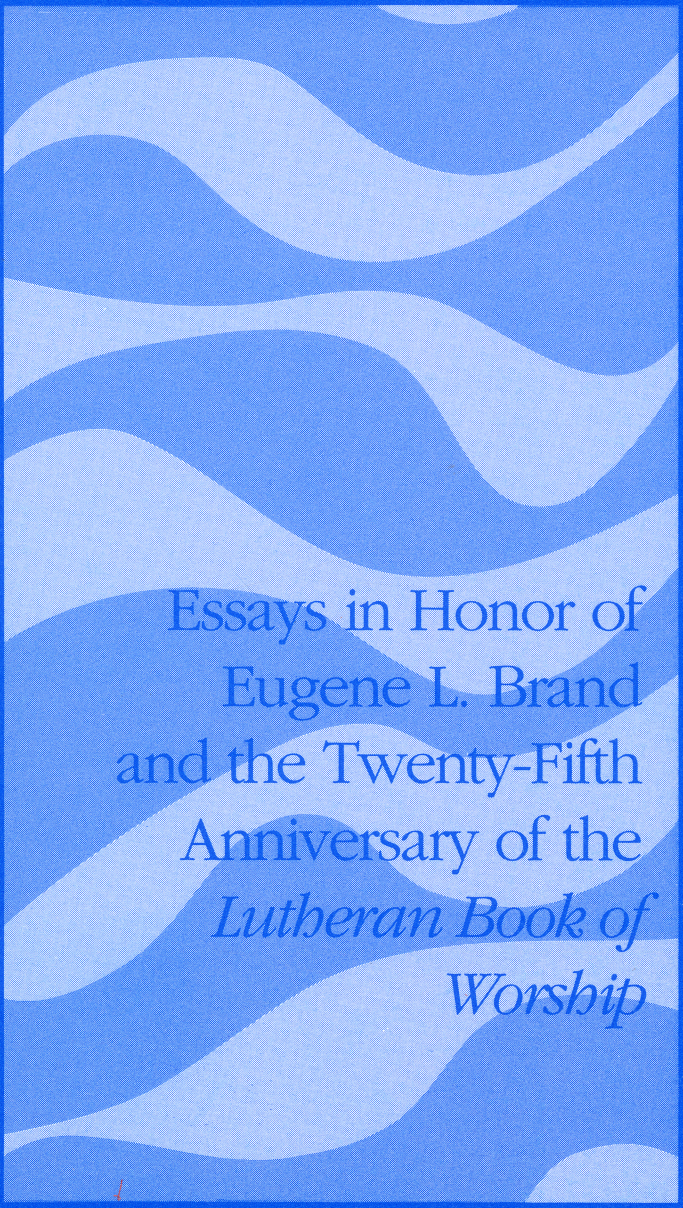
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Essays in Honor of Eugene L. Brand and the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the *Lutheran Book of Worship*

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Essays in Honor of Eugene L. Brand and the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the *Lutheran Book of Worship*

As the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is making preparations for a new service book and hymnal, it seems appropriate to take stock of what was intended and what was actually achieved in the publication of *Lutheran Book of Worship* in 1978. Anita Stauffer and Carlos Messerli proposed this project to me and assisted me in identifying the writers of these articles, all of whom played major roles in producing *LBW*. It was also their idea to take this occasion to honor Eugene Brand for his work as Project Director of *LBW*.

Bishop Robert A. Rimbo, who was executive assistant to Eugene Brand during the final stages of the *LBW* project, has written the opening tribute.

Eugene L. Brand wrote his essay without knowing that this issue would be in his honor. In fact, he suggested to me that other contributors who have entered God's nearer presence be honored. He notes that the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship began its work in 1966 and that *LBW* carries on the tradition of the Common Service (1888), *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941), and the *Service Book and Hymnal* (1958). The *LBW* set out the full mass as the normal Sunday service and attempted to restore Holy Baptism to the liturgical rank and dignity implied by Lutheran theology. The *LBW* included a revised version of the three-year Roman Catholic Lectionary that mandated Old Testament readings and has facilitated ecumenical sermon study groups. For "church-political" reasons the *Triduum* could only be included in the Ministers Edition of *LBW*. Lay involvement in the liturgy was a major innovation. The corporate and sacramental view of the church enshrined in *LBW* has drawn criticism from pietistic and free church circles.

Richard Hillert tells the story of how he composed and revised the music for Setting One in *LBW*. Musical pieces like this go through innumerable reviews, and there were a lot of suggestions, some wise, some otherwise. Half notes eventually became quarter notes, and eighth notes became sixteenths. He shares a lament that *LBW*'s fullest potential has not been explored and notes changes he would make if he were to rewrite Setting One now. There will come a time when Setting One will pass from the scene, and the author remarks: "It is in the order of things that the church, alive and contemporary today, will one day be the church of yesterday. We should rejoice and not be sad about that."

Carlos R. Messerli summarizes fourteen innovative features of *LBW* and assesses the reasons for and the degree of their acceptance. Adoption of an element of worship is most often related to the liturgical inclinations of the pastor and church musician. In addition to weekly Eucharist and an emphasis on baptism, already noted, *LBW* replaced the Introits and Graduals with whole psalms and commissioned original compositions for Settings One and Two. Options for all or parts of the rite are a hallmark of *LBW*, but the plan to vary the rite while preserving its integrity has been only partially successful. Only a few of the twenty-one canticles have been found to be useful by pastors and church musicians. The concept of the Hymn of the Day, advocated by *LBW*, has also not caught on. One of the greatest successes of the book is some form of lay leadership in the worship practices of almost every Lutheran congregation.

Ralph Quere reminds us that the suggestion for a common Lutheran service book came from Oliver Harms, then president of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. Ironically, after the Missouri Synod fight in the 1960s and 70s, the new administration backed out of the project and published their own *Lutheran Worship.* Another irony: 337 of the 569 hymns in *LBW* made it into *LW,* and a good number of the liturgical pieces as well. Almost in spite of themselves, Lutherans have come closer to one another in liturgies and hymns through the work of the Inter-Lutheran Commission. There were plenty of other disputes within those church bodies that eventually became the ELCA as the ten volumes of *Contemporary Worship* rolled off the presses—about confession and absolution, marriage, burial, saints, and the Eucharistic prayer. Fifteen thousand letters came to the ALC about hymn selection alone! Compromise led to the inclusion of more hymns and the consequent deletion of a number of psalms.

Carl Schalk writes about the tensions in hymn selection that brought together high-church Swedes, Norwegians of both high and low inclinations, fans of Luther Reed, anti-clerical Haugeans, and doctrinally concerned Missourians. Committees were established for hymn texts and hymn music. There were a lot of other issues to resolve—to print only tunes or tunes with harmonizations, to print the tunes with classic rhythms or isometrically, to include Bach harmonizations or guitar chords (there are only two of the former and thirty-nine of the latter). Publication of *Contemporary Worship 1* and *4* produced thirty-eight new hymns for *LBW*. Picking the hymns for the new ELCA service book will not be easy, nor in many circles a popular task.

S. Anita Stauffer hails the rite for Holy Baptism in *LBW* and compares it with its predecessors in the earlier hymnals. Hallmarks of the rite include paschal essence, pneumatic nature, corporate understanding, Eucharistic context, and ritual character. Baptism is at the center of *LBW*—in prayers,

confession and forgiveness, and in Affirmation of Baptism replacing confirmation. While great strides have been made to put Baptism at the center of congregational life, much more pastoral and educational emphasis is needed. Restoration of the prayer of thanksgiving over the water is one of the greatest accomplishments of *LBW*.

Mons Teig returns to key terms that were stressed or emphasized in *LBW* and puts the whole enterprise in the context of the 2000-year-old conversation that we call the Christian liturgy. Deep changes in worship patterns often take 70 to 100 years, so the legacy of *LBW* may still be ahead of us. We should not underestimate the unifying effects of a common lectionary with other Christians and common liturgical texts. Lay leadership has been one of the quiet revolutions, often not extended to their leadership in prayers. The dismissal at the end of the service—"Go in peace. Serve the Lord"—underlines the missionary character of the church. A good liturgy is not in any book or bulletin but rather in the gracious promises of the gospel proclaimed and enacted in the Christian assembly.

We should indeed sing doxologies for the quiet revolution accomplished by *LBW* and sing eschatological thanks for the new worship resources that are now being devised. Some old tensions will recur and new ones arise. Discussions about inclusive language have changed dramatically in the last twenty-five years, and the northern European character of the Lutheran church in North America has been enriched by hymns and liturgies of many other cultures. The term "praise band" was unknown, at least by me, until the last decade. But among my objects of praise today are the authors of these essays, gifted lay and pastoral leaders, musicians, liturgiologists, professors, colleagues, friends. What gifts they have been . . . and are.

Ralph W. Klein, Editor

With this issue we warmly welcome Craig A. Satterlee as editor of Preaching Helps. Craig holds the Axel Jacob and Gerda Maria (Swanson) Carlson chair of homiletics at LSTC. He is also dean of the Association of Chicago Theological Schools' Doctor of Ministry in Preaching program. He served two parishes in New York before receiving his doctorate from the University of Notre Dame. He is married to Cathy, and they are the parents of Chelsey. Craig recently received word from the Louisville Institute that his general grant proposal, "Preaching in Times of Congregational Transition," was ranked #1 by their Board and that LSTC will receive a grant of approximately $40,000 for his research. The project will bring together pastors dealing with various congregational transitions and explore how preaching is part of that process. The result will be a book published by the Alban Institute.

Eugene L. Brand: Ecumenist, Liturgist, Servant

Robert A. Rimbo
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To Eugene L. Brand

Offspring of Luther, you know the freedom and grace of font, book, and table. Your writing, teaching, and administrative gifts were as midwife to the Lutheran Book of Worship *and are a bright sign of this Academy's vocation.*

An ecumenist in the service of liturgy, a liturgist in the service of ecumenism, you have set a paradigm before us. For your charisms so unstintingly given in the renewing of the church's prayer and proclamation, our gratitude.

In 1984, the North American Academy of Liturgy presented its Berakah Award to the Rev. Dr. Eugene L. Brand with these elegant words from Dr. Mark Searle. They now form the framework for my thoughts as we commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and Gene's contributions to the church.

Offspring of Luther indeed, Gene is a scholar who holds firmly to Lutheran confessional identity. It is from the strength of that identity that he has been a leading ecumenist on the world scene for much of his ministry.

As one who knows *the freedom and grace of font, book, and table,* he helped shape the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and its balance of historic *ordo* and remarkable freedom. While many North American Lutherans look toward the ongoing renewal of worship, it is clear that the vast resources of *LBW* will remain a treasure. In fact, the "Introduction" to *Lutheran Book of Worship* (pages 6–8), written by Eugene Brand, continues to be a call to freedom and grace within the assembly gathered around Word and Sacrament.

Gene's *writing, teaching, and administrative gifts* have themselves been gifts to the church. As professor at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, and an advocate for worship renewal in Lutheran church bodies, he was influential in the very first days of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship and, of course, as Project Director for *Lutheran Book of Worship.* His work has left an indelible mark on our Lutheran prayer and praise. Likewise, his association with the International Consultation on English Texts, the Consultation on Common Texts, and numerous other ecumenical partnerships has reached beyond the boundaries of Lutheranism and into the entire church catholic.

The sentence from Dr. Searle's tribute that best describes Eugene Brand's remarkable contributions to the church is this: *An*

ecumenist in the service of liturgy, a liturgist in the service of ecumenism, you have set a paradigm before us. In his response to receiving the Berakah Award, Dr. Brand articulated this reality:

> Our American liturgical convergence with the mutual recognition it fosters should teach us that a powerful uniting factor is common worship. When we finally reach the point that our earthly altars are laid for all Christians, as the heavenly altar already is, then eucharistic sharing will create both the atmosphere and the will to deal with remaining issues of doctrine and polity.
>
> As liturgists . . . we are involved with an aspect of the church's life which is fundamental to Christian unity. For it is we who are responsible for the research, the creative efforts, the pastoral aspects, the cultural fine-tuning which is required. That is not an elitist stance, at least not in any negative sense. The impulses must emerge from the actual life of the churches, and the product must be appropriate to an edifying for all the Christian people. But these impulses need to be given form and appropriate expression. The development must be *evolutionary*—out of our heritages—not some artificial construct. . . .
>
> It is true, as several of our churches hold, that the eucharist *celebrates* unity in Christ, and that such unity has unavoidable structural aspects. But I am not sure that such an affirmation precludes seeing in the eucharist and in common worship in general *also* a force *creative* of unity. I am even less sure that the unity we are speaking about has to do *primarily* with dogmatic agreement.
>
> Theologically our age has been marked by a rediscovery of eschatology as more than just "last things." We have learned to see the church as a pilgrim people on the way to God's future—but a future which has already happened in the death and resurrection of Christ. In the eucharist the pain and brokenness of our world and the hope we have in Christ come together. Thus to meditate on the church's worship *is* to reflect on the nature of the church. From the eucharistic perspective there is little doubt about that unity which is the principal mark of the church.

Finally, with all of these reflections on the ministry of Eugene L. Brand, it is that little word *service* in the Berakah citation that stands out for me. The paradigm Gene has set before us is that of servant, to the Holy Trinity and to the one church that he so dearly loves. As we commemorate this anniversary of the publication of the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, we give thanks for the servant leadership of Eugene L. Brand.

—Robert A. Rimbo was Executive Assistant to the Project Director during the final stages of preparation and publication of the *Lutheran Book of Worship.*

Quotations are from *Worship* 58(4), pages 305–15.

The *Lutheran Book of Worship*— Quarter Century Reckoning

Eugene L. Brand
Former Project Director
Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship

The catchphrase of the now iconic Ed Koch, former mayor of New York City, was "How'm I doin'?" After a quarter century it is appropriate to attempt to answer that question about the *Lutheran Book of Worship*. What were its goals, and what has it accomplished? This article is truly an *attempt,* since the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) did not work on liturgy and hymns from a previously articulated set of goals and because the book's accomplishments vary greatly from region to region, congregation to congregation. Whatever is claimed in the following paragraphs will be some place open to refutation.

There are, of course, the oft-quoted goals that are stated on page 8 of the Introduction to the *LBW*. In fact they are reflections on the completed work rather than a recipe for completing it. As they began their task, the four ILCW working committees tried to formulate such a recipe for doing their work on the basis of papers they had commissioned on various subjects. Those papers and the discussion they stimulated were all very good, but it soon became clear that they were leading nowhere. Theories and ideas were really put to the test when the committees set about drafting and selecting materials. After the smoke of battle had cleared, unstated but operative goals could be discerned in what had been produced.

After 25 years, the *LBW* has taken its place as a presence in Lutheran congregations and homes, including some Missouri Synod churches, and the "greening of Lutheran worship" has come full circle. Publishing house figures at the end of 2002 showed approximately 3.2 million copies sold. The *LBW* is also found in English-language congregations in various European cities as well as in other parts of the world where Lutherans desire to worship in English. One example is the Cathedral Church of Our Savior in Bukoba, Tanzania, where a weekly Eucharist in English is celebrated. The fifth edition of *Laudamus*, the multi-language worship book of the Lutheran World Federation, includes the Eucharist and the services of daily prayer from the *LBW*, thus spreading its influence to many parts of the Lutheran Communion.

The ILCW began its work in 1966, just three years after the Second Vatican Council issued its *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. It was a time when the Roman Catholic Church was working on a new Roman Missal and when most mainline churches in the English-speaking world were preparing new liturgical books. It was also a time when Lutherans were in the initial stages of ecumenical contact, setting up bilateral theological dialogues and participating in the work of Faith and Order which would eventuate in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982). Therefore it is not

surprising that early on the ILCW committed itself to close collaboration with other communions in the English-speaking world and the global Lutheran communion. The mutual exchange enriched the work of all with the result that, laid side by side, the new books were remarkable more for their similarities than for their differences. That was especially true of the liturgical texts.

In this commonality rooted in the Western or Latin tradition, however, lies something deeper. When Holy Baptism and the Eucharist are the focal points of liturgical action, those celebrating them are propelled into the context of the Great Church. Lutherans may have their particular way of celebrating these rites, but in so doing they step beyond confessional boundaries into the *communio sanctorum* where no such barriers exist. The ecumenical dimension is therefore built into liturgical worship.

Accomplishments

What has been accomplished over the quarter century past? Lutheran liturgical practice in North America has advanced another step. The *LBW* stands as successor to the *Service Book and Hymnal* (*SBH*, 1958) and *The Lutheran Hymnal* (*TLH*, 1941), its immediate predecessors. More important, it carries forth the tradition of the *Common Service* (1888), the rite that virtually all Lutheran bodies employed as they began to speak English. Recalling this fact is important, for the *Common Service* set Lutherans in North America on the high road liturgically. It reintroduced more of the historic Lutheran tradition than could be found in European books of the same vintage. It connected the American churches directly with the rich Latin tradition that Luther had preserved in the *Formula Missae* (1523).

During the intervening centuries, the celebration of the Eucharist as chief service on Sundays and Holy Days had given way to periodic celebrations. Preaching was exalted to *the* form of the Word, and so a preaching service on Sunday became the norm for Lutherans. In the traditions brought by immigrants to North America, it was the "first half" of the mass that fleshed out the Sunday service. But beginning with the *Common Service*, attempts were made to restore the full mass as norm. Seventy years later, progress having been made in most places from a quarterly to a monthly Eucharist, one still encountered the typical rubric in the *SBH:* (at the offertory) "When there is a Communion, the Minister . . . shall uncover the Vessels and reverently prepare for the Administration of the Holy Sacrament." That clearly implies that sometimes (often?) there isn't. In the *LBW* just prior to The Prayers this note is found: "When there is no Communion, the service concludes . . . ," implying that such a service is the exceptional case. In order to take this step, the ILCW had to include a separate Service of the Word.

The *LBW* sets out the full mass as the normal Sunday service. In many places the weekly communion has resulted in illogical surgery to the traditional rite for, as it is said, reasons of time. But the tide has clearly turned, and the service of Word *and* Sacrament is more and more frequently encountered in Lutheran congregations and in synod and churchwide assemblies.

The *LBW* rescues the *other* sacrament, Holy Baptism, from the Occasional Services and presents it immediately after the Holy Communion. In the words of the Introduction, this was done "to restore to Holy Baptism the liturgical rank and dignity implied by Lutheran theology and to draw out the baptismal motifs in such acts as the confession of sin and the burial of the dead." Baptism is a chief service *of the congregation*, not a private matter where the members are spectators, and it is grati-

fying to see how people have grasped this. (See the separate article about Holy Baptism in this issue.)

Another Lutheran principle was at work in forming the *LBW*. Liturgy must be in the vernacular; it must be "understanded of the people." Almost before the ink was dry on the *SBH*, a shift took place in the general attitude toward the classic sixteenth-century Tudor style of the *Book of Common Prayer*, not least because of the way the Revised Standard Version (1952) of the Bible had taken the field. It was self-evident that the *LBW* must be in a more contemporary style of English. The same daunting task faced the other Anglophone communions, including Roman Catholics. Fortunately the major texts were prepared together and issued as *Prayers We Have In Common* (1975). The new texts expanded the bond that the Tudor texts had created among Anglicans, Lutherans, and others to include Anglophone Roman Catholics. People were being schooled to pray in a new, less-stilted manner, in a style of language connected to their everyday way of speaking to each other. The *LBW* seems to have accomplished this task so well that many people are now at a loss when faced with *SBH*-style texts. Knowledge of Tudor grammar can no longer be assumed, even among the clergy. The Tudor style lingers on, as well it should, in classical hymns and, in some instances, the Our Father, but the bulk of liturgical prayer now addresses God as *you*, not *Thou*.

Using international, ecumenical texts enabled the *LBW* to restore the word *catholic* to the creeds. What began as Luther's natural borrowing of *Christian* from existing German versions ballooned over centuries of anti-Roman feeling into a huge pseudo-confessional issue. German ecumenical texts today still cannot employ *katholisch*. The most important thing is



not, however, the restoration of the word because of faithfulness to the original texts, but the handle that *catholic* provides for teaching about the wholeness of the church and its universal reach, and that Lutherans are in sync with the rest of Anglophone churches when an ecumenical creed is confessed together.

The ILCW responded to a felt need to revise or replace the "old line" pericopes, especially to add readings from the Hebrew Bible. A global Lutheran effort at lectionary revision took place under the auspices of the Lutheran World Federation (1969–74). All were agreed on the desirability of amplifying biblical coverage, but the consultation was stymied by a difference of opinion about the new lectionary system adopted by the Roman Catholic Church, the three-year cycle of three readings per Sunday. The German churches insisted on retaining a modestly revised old-line series amplified by a six-year system of "preaching texts." The ILCW insisted on a revised Roman system both because it would keep preaching connected to the liturgical readings and because other Anglophone churches were going that route. If a choice had to made, it seemed more important to

have readings in common with neighboring congregations than with other Lutherans overseas.

Thus the *LBW* contains a revised version of the Roman Catholic lectionary, one of several included in the liturgical books of the 1970s. It vastly increased the scope of New Testament reading in the liturgy and added an Old Testament reading as one of the three Sunday pericopes, except during Easter. The churches took to the new system readily. Having a system in common stimulated weekly meetings of local pastors across confessional lines to discuss possibilities for preaching, to say nothing of a flood of commentaries and sermon helps. Soon there was pressure to deal with the variants from one system to another. In the case of the liturgical texts, the ecumenical collaboration had come before the texts were adopted. In the case of the lectionary, it came afterward. The result was *The Revised Common Lectionary* (1992) issued by the Consultation on Common Texts. That the *LBW* lectionary was thereby rendered obsolete is a positive sign of its success.

Along with lectionary reform went the revision of the calendar with its addition of such festivals as The Baptism of Our Lord and Christ the King. Changing the names of the Sundays between Easter Day and Pentecost to Sundays *of* Easter appropriately connected the Resurrection to the outpouring of the Spirit, making it clear that Easter is not a day but a week of weeks. The Lesser Festivals were amplified a little, and to them was added a set of commemorations of Christians throughout the ages whose faith and life had been particularly exemplary. This emphasis on Christian vocation beyond the precincts of the church itself and beyond the bounds of the Lutheran Communion has inspired liturgical creativity in many places.

For church-political reasons the full set of services for the Great Three Days that culminate Holy Week, the *Triduum*, could be included in the *LBW Ministers Edition* only, but even so they have made a surprising impact. People have grasped how the baptismal motif and that of the Eucharist/Resurrection come together in the Vigil of Easter, how it is the nexus of the gospel itself.

The hymn committees also were involved ecumenically. Not only did they determine which hymns of the predecessor books had actually been used in the churches, but they gave full weight to a list of hymns compiled by The Consultation on Ecumenical Hymnody (those asterisked in the index of first lines). Where new tunes were needed, special preference was given to the American heritage of hymnody. It should go without saying that great care was taken to pass on the classic heritage of Reformation hymnody.

A format step signaled a revolution in our worship: including the little boxes containing P, A, or C. At first they were the cause of some merriment, but they have meant changing from our highly clericalized past when the whole liturgy was a dialogue between pastor and people to a much more corporate action in which lay persons assume key roles of leadership and the clergy *preside*. P is for *presiding minister*, not *pastor*, though the role is pastoral. Even in places where the *LBW* has made only a minor impact, it is rare not to find lay persons involved in the various leadership roles open to them. It is instructive to recall that not many decades ago the pastor even spoke the Our Father in the Eucharist alone, sometimes with the congregation joining in the doxology but most often strictly solo. It was truly a one-man show.

Flexibility is another potential gift of the *LBW*. Classically formed rubrics gave

way to descriptive notes, thus changing the atmosphere of the service. Congregations are presented with a variety of liturgical possibilities enabling them to fit the materials to their needs and customs. Of course, this is risky, because the integrity of the ritual act must be maintained whether the service is very simple or more elaborate. Increased flexibility should entail more care and time in the preparation of a service. The Eucharist is set out in three complete musical settings, and there is provision for a Chorale Service of Holy Communion (all the necessary hymns are in the collection). The Service of the Word finds its place alongside offices of daily prayer: Matins, Vespers, Compline, Suffrages. One could go on. But how many congregations make intelligent use of this variety? All too often choices made when the *LBW* was introduced still determine the pattern. While it is entirely appropriate for the ELCA to issue supplemental materials and even to work toward a replacement for the *LBW*, most congregations have not yet begun to plumb the depths of the green book itself. Why is that?

Ecclesiology

In many ways the ecumenical movement and the liturgical movement are twins. Vatican II and the work of Faith and Order leading to and beyond *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* are benchmarks of today's ecumenical movement, and, as already noted, this work was paralleled by the revision of most liturgical books. Fortunately, ecumenists are finally beginning to discover the relevance of the worshiping church. But the ecumenical vision of the church—that it is one communion or *koinonia* in Christ—parallels what is embodied in every eucharistic celebration.

Philipp Harnoncourt has written, "A church cannot define its essence by establishing what it is *not*, by setting dividing lines. Essence and identity must be defined from the center—that is, from the faith-center, from the living center. It is precisely the liturgy that is to be recognized as the church's living center and therefore its faith-center." In support he quotes article 10 of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, "The liturgy is the pinnacle to which all the Church's activity strives, and the spring from which all its strength flows" (*Studia Liturgica* 32 [2002]: 171).

As any book of liturgy must, the *LBW* issues from and embodies that view of the church. Its potential contribution is an intensely corporate and thus sacramental view of the church. One should not be surprised therefore when the major criticism of both that sacramental vision and the various ecumenical agreements comes from those parts of the Lutheran Communion with strongly pietistic and free-church backgrounds. Is not the pivotal issue whether Christianity is seen in corporate, sacramental—ecclesiological—terms or as a matter of the salvation of individuals? Where the individualistic understanding of the church prevails—that it exists to save individual souls—there will be no felt need to plumb the depths of the *LBW*. All that is needed is a worship program.

Centered in Baptism and the Holy Communion, the *LBW* both shapes and presupposes an identity that is ecclesial and corporate. Where that is understood, the book has contributed to a vision of the church as both evangelical and catholic. Both the liturgical and the ecumenical movements among Lutherans are pressing the question of catholicity. Are we prepared to be evangelical catholics? Are we prepared to revise our Lutheran story accordingly? Or, better, are we prepared to recapture the vision of the Reformers?

Over the centuries when we lost a

eucharistic piety and placed upon the office of preaching a burden it cannot really bear, Lutherans tended in practice if not in theory to abandon their baptismal tradition—Luther himself was a preeminent baptismal theologian!—for a confirmation tradition. We continued to baptize, of course, but we invested confirmation with vastly greater theological and ritual importance. This confirmation tradition places individual knowledge and commitment above corporate prayer and the sacraments and leads to determining confessional identity, to use Harnoncourt's phrase, "by setting dividing lines." When, following the lead of the *LBW*, Lutherans begin to identify themselves by Baptism and the Eucharist instead of preaching and confirmation, they are on their way to becoming evangelical catholics.

This new (recovered?) emphasis will inevitably be seen by many as diminishing the sermon, the proclamation of the Word, and as selling out the Lutheran heritage itself. But in fact it restores to preaching its supporting and necessary context and revives what the Augsburg Confession and its Apology are at pains to confess.

There is very little if any denominational specificity in the church's liturgy. Even when we celebrate the sacraments in our separate denominational settings, we are doing very ecumenical things. For the Eucharist, celebrated according to the tradition of the church catholic, is neither denomination-specific nor denomination-affirming. Neither is the baptism by which the eucharistic community is established. They are acts of the whole church performed locally. Formed sacramentally, Christian identity cannot but press for greater realization of the unity of the church.

Striving to realize the evangelical catholic vision is, of course, a multifaceted task, something a worship book cannot accomplish alone. But the *LBW* has made its contribution to deepening that vision and reality in many places. In other places it has been used just as one had used its predecessors, with a blind eye to its inner logic and ethos, a fate its successors will also meet.

It cannot be claimed that the vision here projected was clearly in the minds of the ILCW and its working committees and that they prepared a book to further it. Viewing the *LBW* in this light could only be done reflectively and on the basis of experience with it. What guided the ILCW was a spirit of pastoral responsibility for the worship life of Lutherans in North America and a sense of fidelity to the liturgical and hymnological traditions of the Lutheran Communion and thus of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. And that *inevitably* led to embodying the vision.

To return to the title. Where it has been used not just as a program for Sunday worship but according to its own inner logic, the *LBW* has measured up and has put its stamp on the ongoing tradition of North American Lutheranism. There are many bright signs on the Lutheran horizon—congregations where the rediscovery of the catholic heritage is well under way. In that, the *LBW* has made its contribution.

About Setting One

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The music for *LBW* Setting One was written in 1974–75 at the request of the Liturgical Music Committee (LMC) of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW).[1] I accepted this composing assignment in a spirit of duty and obligation as well as enthusiasm, but with only a dim awareness of all that would be involved in its production.

The developments leading to the publication of *LBW* in 1978 have been largely documented in several other places. The composition of Setting One of the Holy Communion has its own microhistory that, for me as the composer, begins with the earliest meetings of the LMC in 1967–68.

A preoccupation with Lutheran unity took priority in the earliest meetings of the ILCW. The proposed all-Lutheran book of worship was to be a major catalyst in achieving that unity. There were several stages of development within the LMC itself as it sought to fix guidelines and formulate its duties. There were to begin with no firmly established liturgical texts to work with. Nor was there a clearly defined understanding of the function, or even agreement about the nature of music for liturgical texts. These were to be formed only over several years' time. Eugene L. Brand, who was later to serve as Project Director for the ILCW, summarized these early meetings most succinctly:

> At first the working committees were issue-oriented. They commissioned papers, and they asked staff for bibliographies and historical comparison charts. While these provoked lively debate, it soon became clear that such debate could continue for a long time without the production of any materials. The committees, therefore, shifted to the project-oriented method.[2]

With no projects for the LMC immediately at hand, we explored and evaluated new liturgical music of other contemporary churches. It is interesting to recall that the late 1960s was a period of rampant unease that was to disturb the status quo in church music, especially among Roman Catholics, who were desperately seeking a "music for the people's song" and were experimenting with folk- and pop-oriented settings of hymns and liturgy, all in response to Vatican II. This search for a new, popular ("contemporary") music was also prevalent in some places within Lutheranism, although it had not yet reached a point of heated concern.

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[1] The Liturgical Music Committee, as one of the four "working" committees, was elected at the first meeting of the ILCW in November 1966. It consisted of nine members, three from each of the participating church bodies (the complete listing of persons involved in preparation of the *LBW* may be found in that book under Acknowledgments, pp. 922–23. Along with Paul Bunjes and Carlos Messerli, I was a member of the LCMS group of three.

[2] Eugene L. Brand, "Liturgical Reconnaissance," *The Future of Worship in the ELCA* (Minneapolis: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1999), 7.

Behind these preparatory discussions there loomed always the theological, liturgical, and aesthetic issues concerning the heritage of Lutheran liturgical music. Whose "Lutheran heritage" would it be? About ten years before, in 1958, the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) had managed some tenuous compromises in *Service Book and Hymnal* (*SBH*). Now, with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) and its uniquely defined canons of worship and music added to the mix, the current ILCW makeup rather nicely represented a mild diversity of views about the nature of liturgical music in our time. Retrospectively it is a tribute to the entire ILCW enterprise that many of these apparent diversities ultimately vanished, at least for the time being, in the melding process of attaining a common worship resource.

There was one undisputed basic assumption: the music for the liturgies would be primarily the people's song, sung by the assembled congregation. But other fundamental questions about musical style and the role of music—unison song, accompanied or unaccompanied chant, homophonic hymn texture, "contemporary" vernacular style, the role of the cantor and the choir—would go unsettled until we were actually confronted with a given liturgy. Of equally practical concern was how to acquire the kind of musics that would be needed. Should we adopt and adapt music already existing in the various service books? Who would write any new, original music that might be required?[3]

In the meantime I took part in another project that was to be important for the future composition of Setting One. That was the preparation and publication (1969) of *Worship Supplement* (*WS*), prepared by LCMS's Commission on Worship, Liturgics and Hymnology. This book was meant to be complementary, a preparatory rather than a counter proposal. The ILCW had given explicit permission to issue this publication. It represented several years of creative and intensive work within the LCMS—begun in 1961, before the ILCW came into being. This editorial work was originally intended as a thorough revision of *The Lutheran Hymnal* (*TLH*), 1941. But that project was abandoned in 1965 when the LCMS invited the other Lutheran churches to join in the preparation of an eventual all-Lutheran service book and hymnal.

WS offered a Hymn Section with a broad, ecumenical range of previously unfamiliar tunes and texts, and a dozen or so completely new, original hymns. And, just as important, half of the 200-page volume was devoted to a Liturgical Section with the classical texts of the Eucharist revised, or adapted from other new text sources, into contemporary English. In the words of the Foreword the *WS* described itself as "experimental and exploratory in nature," seeking to respond to "a need for updating liturgical and hymnodic materials both as to language and form."[4]

The liturgical section of the *WS* included a Holy Eucharist, a Morning Ser-

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[3] In the hope of achieving a superior musical product there was at one time discussion of seeking the services of one or another well-known contemporary "name" composer (such as Benjamin Britten, Halsey Stevens, or Virgil Thomson). Our committee chairperson, Dr. Daniel Moe, was asked to undertake a serious attempt to contact the twentieth-century master Igor Stravinsky (1882–1972), composer of some of the century's most profound concert music using liturgical and scriptural texts. Stravinsky was approaching his 90th year and proved to be unaccessible, although perhaps not for reason of age.

[4] Foreword, *Worship Supplement* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1969), 9.

vice, an Evening Service, and numerous other items, many of which, because of the new text versions, needed new musical settings. It was my special privilege to work with Paul Bunjes on the preparation of the music for these liturgies. In addition to writing music for the office canticles and responses, we prepared completely original settings of all the sung items in Holy Eucharist I.

The decision not to use any kind of formulaic chant for the people's part in the chief songs of the Eucharist made it virtually impossible to use any existent music that would accommodate the new *WS* texts. So the basic style, form, and performance medium was to be through-composed, accompanied, unison congregational song. This was noted in a later review in which Leonard Ellinwood identified the *WS* style as "unison melody—simple, modern tunes in the style of plainsong, but with more rhythmic and chromatic interest."[5] Coming after several generations that had known the Gloria in Excelsis, for example, only as a form of harmonized Anglican chant, this through-composed concept was something not yet common in the Lutheran experience. For a composer espousing artistic integrity and at the same time an integrated style of unison/accompanied songs that would be lyrically attractive and easily accessible to an ordinary assembly of worshipers, the compositional style and creative challenges were very real—and loaded with problems not to be easily solved. Perhaps the most demanding was the writing of viable congregational song for extended prose texts such as the Gloria in Excelsis and the Te Deum—texts that were inherently resistant to melodic formulae. In an incisive review of the liturgical music of *WS*, Ulrich S. Leupold characterized the style as "neo-Gregorian" (I admit I had not thought of it that way). His descriptions and observations go directly to the practical application of theory to the hard realities of congregational song:

> The new *Worship Supplement* provides . . . liturgical chants at the same time creative and new and yet suitable for the average congregation. . . . There is a tendency to base the music on the text as it appears. Bars are not used in this music, and no textual repetitions are permitted except those demanded by the liturgy. . . . There is a minimum of musical material, which contributes to the simplicity of the music. . . . On the whole, one is struck by the observation that the musical effectiveness of the various chants is very much dependent on the text.[6]

While commending the liturgical music as "an instructive example," Dr. Leupold was critical as well of certain melodic lines as in the Te Deum, where "the notes, following each other in conjunct motion, seem to proceed without much rhyme or reason."[7] In moments of self-evaluation I willingly agreed with him and in later writing sought to avoid the kind of characterless banality that comes all too easily in the hasty setting of a long prose text.

How important the *WS* may have been finally in the grand history of service books from the last forty years I will not judge. It is seldom mentioned these days, almost forgotten in fact, and in most places the "updating" claimed for it in 1969 is now quite thoroughly passé. As an interim supplementary book, however, it was used quite widely, although mostly in LCMS parishes and schools. But I learned much from the writing for it. And ultimately the publication made its own modest contribution to *LBW*, for, in addition to many hymns

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[5] Leonard Ellinwood, "Church Music in Review," in one of numerous commentaries on *WS* contained in *Church Music* 70.1, 42.

[6] Ulrich S. Leupold, "Church Music in Review," *Church Music* 70.1, 43–44.

[7] Leupold, "Church Music," 43–44.

and settings, both the Offertory "What shall I render to the Lord" from the Eucharist and the Venite "O come, let us sing to the Lord" from the Morning Service were subsequently taken into *LBW*, with slight modifications because of textual variants.[8]

Following closely upon the appearance of *WS*, the ILCW brought out the first of ten soft-cover *Contemporary Worship (CW)* trial publications (1969–76). Among these were tentative proposals for new musical settings of the *Holy Communion* (no. 2, 1970), and new liturgies that were included in *Services of the Word* (no. 5, 1972) and *Daily Prayer of the Church* (no. 9, 1976). Finding and commissioning music for the sung liturgies in these publications became a central concern of the LMC. Another concern was the conscientious evaluation of comments received from church musicians who had participated in trial-testing the four settings of the Holy Communion published in *CW2*. These returns revealed much about the current diversity of taste and preference in liturgical music. Altogether, after the evaluations were received and carefully considered, some of the music was rejected outright,[9] but the most prevalent criticisms about *CW2* were directed to the structure of the services and the theological issues raised by the texts.

Two of the other *CW* booklet series also contained newly written liturgical music. For *Services of the Word* (*CW5*, 1972), I composed the music for six responses, one for each of six church-year components. These were written for unison congregation (or choir) and keyboard. Observable now within the brevity of these songs is a significant evolution in the liturgical music I was writing. The compositional style employs direct, simple, lyrical melodic lines over a calm and unwavering pulse—frequently half-note value—faintly reflective of certain popular styles that were much in the air in the early 1970s. I am just a little amused to remember that, when these responses appeared in *CW5*, simple guitar chords were printed above the keyboard notation. However, the guitar notation disappeared when the entire set of responses was included six years later—in tune-text notation, as Canticles 7 through 12—in the section just before the hymns in the *LBW*.

Also in *Services of the Word* (1972) was a newly composed Te Deum, later included again in *Daily Prayer of the Church (CW9,* 1976). In this setting I employed musical characteristics quite similar to, but not exactly the same as, the responses described above (more dependent upon the keyboard [organ] accompaniment and without the guitar chords). The melodic line used certain rhythmic figures later to be found in the Gloria in Excelsis of Setting One. Here is also a valiant attempt

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[8] See Randall K. Sensmeier, "The Influence of the *Worship Supplement* on the *Lutheran Book of Worship:* A Legacy of Excellence," *Church Music* 79:77ff. This issue of *Church Music* devotes about fifty pages to major reviews and commentaries on the *LBW*.

[9] Six years after the publication of *CW2*, two of the four settings of *Holy Communion* were ultimately, and happily, included in the *LBW*—not, however, without some important additions and editings, due in part to revisions in the texts. But the setting by Daniel Moe, which used simple diatonic melodies with twentieth-century style pandiatonic harmonies, and which I thought showed a high degree of musical and stylistic integrity, was determined to be unacceptable—too strange, too difficult, too modern (but wasn't this after all proposed as "contemporary worship?"). Nor was there readiness to place John Ylvisaker's setting, for all its attractive but rather "period piece" folkish songs, into a hardcover establishment publication.

to avoid the hazards alluded to in Dr. Leupold's comments noted above. *CW*9 also contained the Venite borrowed from *Worship Supplement* (in an improved notation). The Te Deum was later to be included as part of the Paschal Blessing in *LBW* Morning Prayer. In all, the liturgical pieces in the *CW* trial series, and evaluations of them, constituted a significant preparation phase for practically all of the liturgical music in the *LBW*.

By 1974 the ILCW and its liturgical committees had carefully studied the text-and- music test evaluations of some of the *CW* series. A comprehensive worship book, a "one-volume collection of liturgical rites and hymnic materials," was now officially proposed.[10] And the stage was set for full provision of musical settings for the liturgies, with a completion goal of July 4, 1976. It became apparent that the search for additional new settings of the eucharistic songs of the ILCW liturgy should continue. In the meeting of February 19–21, 1974, the LMC determined to settle on four stylistic settings: (1) unaccompanied melody setting; (2) setting similar to *SBH* Setting II; (3) 20th-century diatonic setting; (4) simple congregational setting. Two methods for achieving new settings were proposed: (a) invite entire settings of the service from the general public, and (b) commission certain composers to write settings according to specified parameters and deadlines. Names of composers to be commissioned for the specific style settings were proposed.[11] Announcements went out concerning the search for new settings for the Holy Communion texts (Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei). In the September 1974 meeting (held at Curtis Hotel and organ lofts of Mount Olive Lutheran Church and Central Lutheran, Minneapolis) the committee members examined viable works from eleven composers who had submitted noncommissioned settings and nine of the ten settings that had been commissioned, with the composers' names remaining anonymous. These were all graded in secret ballot. None received a composite rating above B+. Later, in the same meeting, the commissioned settings were again reviewed in the light of newly suggested criteria about melody, accompaniment, and overall style.



There was conditional acceptance of my music for the communion texts. Committee members also offered detailed suggestions for improvement: the introductory lines (incipits) in the Assisting Minister's part in the Kyrie needed to be reworked; some of the melody/text phrases in the Gloria need to be restudied; some of the accompaniment in the Sanctus seemed to be pianistically conceived; the melodic range in the Sanctus, especially going to the high E-flat, needed to be reconsidered; the use of syncopated rhythmic figures in

[10] From the ILCW Minutes, November 8–9, 1973, 18.

[11] Details of these proposals and procedures may be found in the LMC minutes of February 19–21 and September 23–26, 1974.

The first liturgical use of what was later designated as Setting One occurred at Trinity Lutheran Seminary on June 10, 1975.

the Gloria and Sanctus were questioned. This setting and others would be reconsidered at the next meeting.

At the LMC meeting February 18–20, 1975, in Minneapolis the revised communion music, together with the newly composed alternate Song of Praise, "Worthy is Christ" (with its antiphon, "This is the feast of victory"), were accepted for recommendation to the ILCW. The first liturgical use of what was later designated as Setting One occurred at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio, on June 10, 1975, during a conference of both the text and music committees and subcommittees on the liturgy. A full communion service took place just before noon, with Dr. Walter Bouman as Presiding and Dr. Mark Bangert as Assisting Minister. Later that afternoon the music of Setting One was one of the subjects for critical evaluation from the assembled liturgists and worship and church music authorities. The criticisms of the music were generally friendly. But it was also quite apparent that some of the Liturgical Text Committee members were not firmly convinced this was the liturgical music they had hoped for.

Among the comments: the music for the preface dialog and the proper prefaces did not engage the kind of florid and climactic chant lines that would more properly highlight the introductory section of the Great Thanksgiving. I accepted this as a highly valid observation that caused me later to rewrite and edit all of the preface material. "Worthy is Christ" is too long—why need the refrain be repeated so often? A valid question, but the alternation structure—All, Women, Men—was valiantly supported by LCM members. I was reminded that a few items still needed to be written to make the setting complete.

I respected all the comments and at least temporarily accepted them as helpful. I had become accustomed to enduring critical suggestions from about eight years' experience with the LCMS music committee. In the preparation and production of the *WS*, the music committee had evolved an in-house fine art of locating exactly the right notes and searching out the wrong notes without engaging in personal deprecation. Of course, it is not a composer's favorite thing to have a group of critics picking away at the creative work at hand! However, there were times during the more than ten years in the LMC when I wished for a little more aggressiveness and a little less politeness or reluctance to engage in scholarly music criticism.

In providing for a book that was to serve several million worshipers possessing a multitude of tastes and needs, it was inevitable and even obligatory that the music would need to withstand rigorous evaluation. I developed a theory of three distinct phases of the criticism process: (1) the workaday stage of suggestions and corrections offered internally by members of the LMC, (2) the pre-publication official and voluntary test review and evaluation events carried on by the sponsoring churches, and (3) the ongoing post-publication era when members of the worshiping congregations would be permitted to offer the ultimate,

unpredictable, and perhaps undebatable judgment determined by the use of a musical setting in the context of parish worship.

The primary criticisms at the Columbus conference, however, were aimed at nonmusical matters—details of structure and rubrics pertaining to the communion service itself. So it was at the end of the conference that the "Hillert setting" and the music for the revised *SBH,* Setting II (revised because of textual changes), were voted to be included in the book. There remained much to be accomplished by the LMC: the music for any additional Holy Communion settings that might be needed; the music for the services of Morning and Evening Prayer and the Prayer at the Close of the Day (Compline), and The Litany. And finally, and very importantly, there needed to be developed a useful music for the congregational singing of psalms. These were not easy assignments and were to occupy the liturgical committees and subcommittees for many more months.

During the following months my own composition schedule also had to include the completion of shorter items that would be needed for a final, complete Holy Communion: the Salutation; the Alleluia Verse (to be printed "in place"); the short Gospel Acclamations (one of them in first draft had sounded a little like "O Canada"); the Offertory, "Let the vineyards;" the complete revision of the Prefaces and the setting of the Proper Prefaces; the two Post-Communion Canticles, "Lord, now you let your servant go in peace" and "Thank the Lord and sing his praise;" "Create in me," the optional psalm for the offering of the gifts; and the Benedictions.

Two last items, "Through him, with him, in him," which comes at the close of the Great Thanksgiving, and "Return to the Lord, your God" (the Tract for Lent), were not completed until the late summer of 1976 at the Lutheran Seamen's Center in New York City during a subcommittee meeting with Eugene Brand, Donna Zierdt Elkin, and Gerhard Cartford.[12] All of these musical items, including editing that needed to be done for the completion of the revised Setting II, were subsequently approved by the LMC and ILCW.

Several concurrent events affected the final version of Setting One in an important way. Trial booklets containing text, tune, and setting were distributed in late 1975 to a diversified selection of parishes and schools, together with detailed and well-organized questionnaires about the efficacy of the several settings. The users were asked to use one of the settings in real worship services for a specified, fair, length of time. The evaluations of Setting One came back with some surprises concerning the music, although most comments were still directed to the words and structure of the texts. There was a great mix of favorable and unfavorable replies.

I did not personally receive these returns; they came through to me by way of "unofficial" paths. Some reports about the music were very favorable, in some cases quite enthusiastic. But others were negative—so unfavorable in fact that friends refused to let me read some of them. A few reports were received in the form of letters offering detailed instruction in how to compose for a congregation (music easy to sing, melodic patterns "logical" to the un-

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[12] Dr. Cartford should be credited with Setting III in the *LBW.* His work in providing an original, modern, and pure chant setting using *all* the ILCW Holy Communion texts (in addition to editing the former *SBH* Setting II to accommodate the new texts) was an outstanding contribution to *LBW.* The quality, dedication, and honesty of his work and contributions to the ILCW have not been fully appreciated.

trained ear, projecting "a feeling of timelessness"). At least one missive came from an educated church musician who maintained that the tonality was too ambiguous, the rhythm possessed of meaningless asymmetry, the modal harmonizations insipid, and the excellent liturgy spoiled by such inferior music. I might have been tempted to do battle, but I was cautioned not to enter into unresolvable controversies.

Other returns, however, began to follow a pattern that I took more seriously. One review group, for example, reported that "the music was rather drab for contemporary liturgy [and] that the second setting of *CW*-2 [the setting by Ronald Nelson, later Setting II] had more 'drive' to it. . . . 'Worthy is Christ' is much too long."[13] Other reports confirmed the reaction that the music was too slow, too difficult, too ponderous, lacking in spirit, uninspiring, and neither melodically nor rhythmically attractive. This, of course, was the opposite of what had been my intentions.

Because of the recurrence of this critical theme, I began to realize that there may have been a problem in the notation. The original notation of the Gloria, for example, employed a half-note pulse that was, because of the visual appearance in notation, misunderstood as a quarter-note pulse. I had notated the beginning in the following way:



In misinterpreting the half-note pulse, the performance tempo was bound to be twice as slow as it was meant to be. I revised the notation to make the quarter note the basic beat. Now the visual appearance of the notation at least strongly suggested a more sprightly pace:



As I adopted a new orientation to the notation of the basic pulse values, I became a veritable convert, and in my enthusiasm I revised the notation of several other items in the liturgies, e.g., the Offertory "What shall I render"[14] and the Te Deum in Morning Prayer. Although doing this was accepted in the LMC as an improvement, it created yet another potential problem: the pairs of eighth notes in the original now became pairs of sixteenths, and the sight of these in a pew book tended to be frightening—giving the impression that the music would be *too fast* for congregational singing. Time has revealed that the pairs of sixteenths in the Gloria and the Te Deum are not daunting but comfortable for good rhythmic accentuation. Upon the actual publication of "the book" in 1978, most of the editorial hangups began to recede into the depths of historical esoterica.

Many of us involved in one way or another in the elaborate and carefully planned process of introducing the new worship materials tried to point out, however, that the publication of a worship book is not an end of the creative production of such materials. It is, rather, a good beginning. The need for supportive materials would be endless: composing music for the psalm antiphons, choral settings for verses and offertories, organ pieces based on the new hymnic and liturgical music, and music for the Easter Vigil. Much of this eventually came to pass, although not as completely as we may have envisioned. A fair observation now is that the *LBW* itself has, regrettably, not been explored to its best and fullest potential.

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[13] Minutes of ALC Review Group for ILCW Materials, Minneapolis, August 18–20, 1975, 11–12.

[14] Cf. the same offertory in tune-text edition of *WS*, 25.

The unsolicited post-publication reviews have been many favorable and some extremely critical. There is at least one interesting commentary on Setting One on the Internet. It acknowledges the popularity of "Worthy is Christ," noting that this canticle is included in most of the newly published hymnals in North America. It continues with random comments:

> Hillert's setting was the most difficult for Lutherans to learn in the beginning. [He] composed simple melodies for the Kyrie, then went into a chromatic frenzy with his music for the Gloria. [Some] have said that his Gloria sounds like a record being played backwards. However his "Worthy is Christ" is excellent for congregational singing. [But] congregations fizzle out on [his] "Let the Vineyards" and other pieces [and his] Nunc Dimittis is hardly ever used because it again strains congregations with difficulty.[15]

The simplest commentary to be made is that if Setting One were to be done, or redone, today it would be quite a different musical setting (not for the reasons noted in the preceding commentary). I suspect that through-composed music, always more vulnerable as to variables in style and taste, would be more radically different than in 1975. But, if given the option, I think I would, for example, try to improve all the music for the Prefaces; I would strive for more chant-oriented melodic lines; I would expand the congregational song to include more musical options for the Kyrie and possibly reconsider assembly participation in music during the Eucharistic prayer.

I am too close to the music itself to judge whether Setting One is now a bit old-fashioned, too well-worn, or near to acquiring a kind of tentative classic status, or even whether it is headed toward obscurity. I know that in many places it has already been put aside in favor of a host of other worship music materials. That is every generation's prerogative. While it is gratifying to see liturgical music being kept alive in one way or another for the church of today, it is in the order of things that the church, alive and contemporary today, will tomorrow be the church of yesterday. We should rejoice and not be sad about that.

The inclusion of Setting One of the Holy Communion in *LBW* was a greatly fulfilling experience in my career as a church musician. I continue to be grateful for the common purpose shared among fellow Christians with whom I was stimulated to plan and create and who accepted and supported my dutiful contribution. My wish is that Setting One, and the other musics created for *LBW*, whatever their fate, will somehow endure as a kind of tribute to common efforts dedicated to a proper and worshipful Word and Sacrament in liturgy and song.

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[15] James Gerhardt Sucha, *The Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) 21 Years Later*, October 15, 1999 (*www.suite101.com*).

Editor's note: In honor of his 80th birthday, there will be three celebrative concerts for Professor Hillert in October:

Sunday, October 19, 4 p.m.
Secular and jazz music
Chapel of Concordia University
River Forest, Illinois

Sunday, October 19, 8 p.m.
Sacred and concert music
Grace Lutheran Church, River Forest

Monday, October 20, 8 p.m.
Hymn festival at Grace

Lutheran Book of Worship: Successes and Failures—A Review for Pastors and Musicians

Carlos R. Messerli
Founding Director, Emeritus
Lutheran Music Program

All worship books contain some features considered to be improvements over previous books. While in most cases they preserve many elements of earlier, similar publications, they all contain some new or revised elements of liturgy or hymnody that make them different from their predecessors. The *Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW)*[1] continues this tradition. Philip Pfatteicher discusses its older and its innovative features in detail in his *Commentary on the LBW.*[2] The present article gives a brief summary of fourteen of the revised or innovative features of *LBW* with a few words about their character and the likely reasons (and degree of) their acceptance.

The success or failure of these innovative features can be related to many factors, some of which were beyond the control of congregational leaders. However, experience has shown that adoption of an element of worship is most often related directly to the liturgical or musical inclinations of the parish pastor and church musician responsible for leading congregational worship. Those who spearheaded the elaborate and lengthy introductory process of the church-wide introduction of the book more than twenty-five years ago can bear witness to the fact that if local leaders embraced the liturgical or musical elements of the book in that process and helped their congregations by exercising knowledge, patience, creativity, and vigor, the people responded favorably. If the leaders did not prefer historic liturgical practice (or certain elements of it) or a strong historic and contemporary hymn repertoire (or certain new hymns), or if they did not understand and accept the nature of the features being introduced, the acceptance of *LBW* structure and innovations floundered. Even congregational size and resources of talent were of relatively little importance in comparison to pastoral and musical leadership in predicting the success of the book.

LBW was built upon the foundation of its predecessor books, *The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)*[3] and *Worship Supplement (WS)*[4] of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and *Service Book and Hymnal (SBH)*[5]

[1] *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978).

[2] Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990) contains a valuable examination of all texts in *LBW.*

[3] *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1941).

[4] *Worship Supplement* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1969).

[5] *Service Book and Hymnal* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1958).

chiefly of the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America. In general, these books contained a strong hymnic tradition and the perpetuation of Lutheran liturgical practice, especially as the latter was interpreted by the publishers of the Common Service of 1888. The *LBW* also reflects the efforts of other Protestant bodies and the scholarly and practical work of Roman Catholics to introduce new or reformulated elements of worship.

While formal statistics on current practice or past use of the book by congregations of the largest body authorizing the use of *LBW* (the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) are unavailable from church headquarters, informal observation of worship practice by knowledgeable observers and evaluations by authors of books and articles appearing on the subject over the past twenty-five years have been helpful in forming the following opinions.

1. *Holy Communion and Holy Baptism.* Fundamentally, the *LBW*[6] provides encouragement for the weekly celebration of Holy Communion and a greater parish emphasis on Holy Baptism, both of which profoundly affect the nature and leadership of worship by pastors and musicians. The service of Holy Communion especially provides many additional resources and opportunities for rich Lutheran worship not available regularly before. The emphasis on baptismal practice and theology through regular congregational participation in the rite strengthens the sacramental basis of Lutheran liturgical worship.

It seems clear that, while not all congregations fully availed themselves of the resources, the influence of sacramental worship has pervaded the church, thereby reflecting one of the major successes of *LBW.*

2. *Introduction of an Old Testament reading and the three-year cycle of readings.* The Eucharist of the early church provided for three readings of Holy Scripture. As time passed the Old Testament reading was eliminated and only two biblical readings remained, Epistle and Gospel. Subsequent Lutheran practice followed this later scheme. However, the rubrics of both *SBH* and *TLH* (the latter to be found in the *Agenda*)[7] allowed for the possibility of a third reading, an option that was usually ignored in practice.

In recognition of the earlier work of Roman Catholic scholars, the authors of the *LBW* lectionary adopted a three-year cycle of weekly readings that included one from the Old Testament in addition to the New Testament Epistle and Gospel. The three-year cycle and the addition of the OT reading in *LBW,* now widely accepted, have helped to increase the biblical literacy of the people and provided a far greater wealth of material for preaching. They have also expanded the potential musical resources for the musician. These two new features are generally considered to be a success.

3. *Singing the Psalms.* The Psalms have always been a part of Christian worship, especially in the Daily Office. While present in early eucharistic orders, complete Psalms were gradually reduced in length to the text snippets found in the proper Introit, Gradual, or Offertory of the Mass. The historic Introit and Gradual texts were preserved in *TLH* and *SBH.* Biblical study, devotional concerns, and

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[6] For the purpose of this article, the supporting resources of the commentary and rubrics of the *Lutheran Book of Worship, Ministers Desk Edition* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), and the observations contained in *Manual on the Liturgy, Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979), by Philip H. Pfatteicher and Carlos R. Messerli, are considered to be interpretative of the *LBW.*

[7] *Liturgy and Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1916).

interest in authentic rites suggested a return to ancient practice in *LBW,* and thus a full psalm or a major portion thereof is now assigned to each Sunday and festival of the church year. This inclusion provides an insight into a prophetic text in relation to the liturgy of a given day and also forms a liturgical bridge between the first two lessons.

Historically, Psalms have always been sung by believers, beginning in Jewish worship and continuing through that of monastic orders. Mostly they were sung by choirs of trained singers who chanted the texts to flexible formulas that were repeated for each verse. The framers of the *LBW* for the first time provided Lutheran congregations with complete Psalm texts for singing to simple melodic formulas. For each Psalm an antiphon is given as a recurring theme phrase to be sung by the choir or the people. Methods of singing the Psalms by the people or the choir in more artistic or elaborate forms are encouraged.

The innovation of congregational or choral Psalm singing must be judged a qualified success, for, while many congregations do sing the Psalms, many only speak the texts, and others ignore the Psalms altogether. In addition, few church musicians expose their choirs to the vast choral literature of Psalms settings that is readily available. Pastors and musicians who deprive their people of the opportunity to experience sung or spoken Psalms weekly deprive them of a rich devotional and liturgical treasure.

4. *The new propers: Verse and Offertory.* Traditionally, the Proper texts of the Eucharist reflect the theme of each Sunday or festival. In the historic Mass these consisted musically of the Introit as an entrance song, the Gradual sung between the Epistle and the Gospel, and the Offertory at the presentation of offerings of the bread and wine of the meal.

The *LBW* eliminated the Introit in favor of other "entrance songs," such as a hymn or a complete Psalm. This move has helped sharpen the focus of the beginning of the Mass and reduced the number of preparatory items before the Eucharist actually begins. In place of the Introit, a new proper Verse text for choral performance was introduced after the second reading and before the Gospel. A congregational Alleluia and Verse are now provided for all seasons except Lent, for which a separate verse is given if the choir does not sing the proper text. A new proper choral Offertory text is also suggested. Congregational alternatives for the Offertory are provided in *LBW* for use in the absence of a choir.

These two proper items have achieved a degree of popularity in some parishes with strong choral leadership. The Verse is probably being sung more than the Offertory. The *LBW* innovation is only a qualified success, for parishes often sing the common texts printed for the congregation, whether or not a choir is present. Instead of singing the proper Verse intended for the choir, many musicians prefer to concentrate their preparation on a choral anthem.

5. *Composed musical settings of the rite.* Before the appearance of the *Worship Supplement* nearly all liturgies available for Lutherans were set to adaptations of either Gregorian or Anglican chant music or to chorale settings. *LBW,* for the first time (except for isolated experimental settings and those of the *Worship Supplement),* provides Lutheran congregations with settings written by musicians as original compositions. Only Setting Three of the Holy Communion rite in *LBW* is built upon preexisting chant.

Pastors can take credit for introducing Setting I and the Setting II, which have been well received. Setting Three is sung less often, even though it is based on a

chant found in the earlier *SBH.*

6. *Options within the rite.* Optional settings of all or parts of the rite are a hallmark of *LBW.* The options presented are of two kinds. The first includes the different musical settings printed within the rite as well as the choice to include or exclude certain items according to the church year. The second is the great range of options or substitutions provided for nearly all of the major parts of the rite (both the Proper and the Ordinary of the Mass) that are articulated in the rubrics in *LBW* and the rubrics and comments in the *Ministers Desk Edition* as well as the explanatory material in the *Manual on the Liturgy.*

The first type is exemplified by the three complete settings of the Eucharist. It is suggested that these are to be sung in various seasons of the church year. A fourth setting occurs in the form of the Chorale Service of Holy Communion, in which classic hymns are suggested to replace texts of the Ordinary of the Mass and a few other texts. Additional examples of flexibility are present within each setting of the liturgy. It is suggested that seasonal use be made of the Hymn of Praise, for which there are now two texts: "Glory to God in the highest" and "Worthy is Christ." The former is intended for use in the Christmas season, Epiphany, and the Sundays after Pentecost. It is not sung in Advent or Lent. The latter is intended for the Easter season and saints' days.

The second major type of option includes other congregational or choral settings of individual texts of the Ordinary replacing those provided in the book. This includes the possibility of substituting a concerted or polyphonic choral setting (historic or contemporary) for a designated congregational item in the rite, such as the Gloria in excelsis. Another choice would be the singing of carefully chosen hymns that fill the requirement of the text of the Ordinary. For example, the Reformation chorale "All glory be to God on high" (*LBW* #166) could be sung in place of the specified Hymn of Praise (a substitution common in Luther's day).

Judicious and thoughtful use of the options in the *LBW* or those in the *Ministers Desk Edition* and the *Manual* would lend enormous variety to the rite, would give opportunity for adaptation to local preference, and would give the congregation and the musician-leaders of worship opportunity to experience historic artistic treasures of the church's heritage or important contemporary settings. And all of this could be accomplished without disturbing the integrity of the rite. In fact, such occasional substitution would give well-founded strength to its integrity.

Several of the printed options within each rite, such as the two Offertory canticles, are sung in many parishes. Other available options, for example, for the entrance hymn, Offertory, Verse, or post-Communion canticle, are seldom used except for the substitution of a hymn for the latter two. The option of hymnic, classic, or contemporary choral settings of the Ordinary of the Mass (Kyrie, Gloria in excelsis, Sanctus, Agnus Dei) has largely been ignored. Thus, it appears that the concept of varying the rite while preserving its integrity has been only partially successful with pastors and musicians. The most apparent and convenient possibilities printed in the book have been chosen occasionally, while those requiring more thought and preparation have been little utilized.

7. *Additional canticles.* The poems of the Bible called canticles have inspired many musicians through the ages to provide settings for worship. The host of available settings of the songs of the Daily Office, such as the Magnificat and the

Nunc dimittis, are testimony to the power of these texts. The *LBW* provides settings of these and other standard features of the Daily Office. In addition, the book includes seventeen new settings of both old and new biblical canticle texts and four that are printed without music but pointed for singing with psalm tones. All are intended for use particularly in the Service of the Word. But they may also be used at appropriate places in the Eucharist and Daily Office. Only a few of the canticles printed in *LBW* seem to have found favor with pastors and musicians. This is a loss for the people, for the texts of the canticles are timeless, and the printed melodies are memorable.

8. *Historic hymns and Hymn of the Day.* Although the historic Lutheran chorales were not popular in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in some areas of Lutheranism, they did appear in their original rhythmic form in *TLH* and some other pre-*LBW* books as one of the most treasured parts of Lutheran liturgical and confessional practice. A number are found in *SBH* in the iso-rhythmic (all quarter-note) form. *LBW* has retained many Lutheran chorales in their original rhythmic form.

Lutheran leaders of the sixteenth century developed lists of popular hymns (chorales) that reflected the thought and spirit of certain Sundays, festivals, and seasons of the church year. Such core hymns contributed specifically to the liturgy and "taught the faith." These hymns of a certain day or festival often were sung in alternation between choir and people or performed on the organ alternating with the congregation. The practice took hold, and the "hymn of the day" became the chief hymn of the service. A modern adaptation of a historic list with many newer hymns added is identified by those hymn numbers marked with an asterisk in the *LBW* index (pp. 929–31). While it is admirable that hymns of the historic tradition are present in their original form in *LBW,* it seems that relatively few pastors and musicians have followed the discipline of regular singing of these classic Lutheran treasures. Also, for the most part the concept of the Hymn of the Day as presented in *LBW* has been only partially utilized. Selection of a Hymn of the Day now usually reflects only the theme of the sermon and possibly the day or season of the church year.

9. *Broadened hymn selection.* The *SBH* and *TLH* contained mostly hymns that reflected the largely German or Scandinavian ethnic background of Lutherans, as well as many from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English and American Protestant sources. Some of the latter possessed a scant association with Lutheran doctrine and liturgy and were weak in theological content and musical substance. *LBW,* following the earlier lead of the *Worship Supplement,* attempts to keep the best of the various European Lutheran hymns while also expanding the repertoire to include, among others, hymns from India, Liberia, Japan, Poland, and Wales, as well as some from the Anglican tradition. American contributions are greatly increased, especially those from the black and the white spiritual and folk traditions. Added to this ecumenical influence is the large number of new hymns written by contemporary American authors and musicians.

The success of this broadened selection of hymns is somewhat uneven, but on the whole the hymns new to the *LBW* can be judged a success both on the basis of critical evaluation by pastors and musicians and by popular acceptance.

10. *Lay participation.* A major change in *LBW* is the assignment of worship leadership roles to lay assisting ministers. This practice has restored the more active par-

ticipation of representatives of the congregation in leadership of the service and more clearly identified the essential role of the pastor as presiding minister at key points in the rite. Assisting ministers are encouraged to lead the congregation in the Eucharist and the Daily Office chiefly by reading the lessons and creating and speaking the prayers. The concept of lay leadership also suggests the assignment of musical leadership to a cantor in the Eucharist as assisting minister at the organ or in directing the choir or in singing such chants as the Kyrie or the intonation of the Gloria in excelsis. A lay person can lead any of the Daily Office orders in *LBW.*

As a result of the publication of *LBW,* some form of lay leadership is now found in the worship practice of almost every Lutheran congregation, and musical leadership is recognized as a component of the office of assisting minister.

11. *Prayer at the Close of Day (Compline).* Before *LBW,* the Lutheran Daily Office was usually limited to the traditional Lutheran observance of Matins and Vespers, now called by their English names, Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. Additionally, *LBW* provides for the restoration of the ancient office of Prayer at the Close of Day (Compline) for congregational use in a rite set to mostly Gregorian Chant. Considering that it is a new rite for many Lutherans, it is surprising that the devotional comfort of a late-evening office has found even the limited acceptance that it seems to enjoy. While the service may be easily abbreviated and is sometimes used in informal worship settings with lay leadership, a few parishes regularly employ the complete Office with its chant setting and some additional choral music.

12. *Service of the Word.* The Service of the Word was designed to accommodate those pastors who choose to have a preaching service complete in itself and not a truncated form of the Eucharist. It contains two biblical canticles, two Scripture lessons, sermon, Psalm, hymns, biblical dialog, a creed, and prayers.

While this service has found some acceptance, it seems to be seldom used in its entirety. Usually it serves as an outline for a selection of (often other) components. It thus appears that the attempt to provide a rite that has its own integrity—one that features a particular combination of Word, prayer, and song—has not been entirely successful, even with pastors and musicians who choose not to celebrate weekly Eucharist and need an alternate service.

13. *Enriched Church Year Calendar.* Lutherans have usually kept saints' days on their calendars but limited the list to those persons cited in the Bible. *LBW* greatly expands the recognition by including "commemorations," which give congregations the opportunity to note historic Christians of special distinction whose life work or achievements could serve as models for worshipers today.

Possibly because Lutheran publishing houses have included references to these commemorations in their printed service material, some pastors and musicians have been able to broaden their references and repertoire and, at times, to recognize these special calendar days in worship.

14. *The Triduum.* The observance of the Triduum, which consists of the three services of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil, is constructed in *LBW* as one great service spread over three days to form "the culmination of the entire liturgical year."[8] This change from previous Lutheran practice has profound implications for pastors and musicians leading the worship of the congregation.

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[8] Pfatteicher, *Commentary,* 239.

In *LBW* the structure of the first two services of the Triduum has been reordered and the Vigil has been introduced to Lutherans. Maundy Thursday is not only observed in *LBW* as the commemoration of the institution of the Lord's Supper; it also emphasizes the new commandment of love for one another given us by our Lord in the light of the preparation for Good Friday. Good Friday itself provides opportunity to retell and reflect on the suffering and death of our Lord as well as opportunity for adoration of Christ, the sacrificial Lamb. The elements of the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services offer enriched opportunities for pastoral and musical leadership of the congregation, including singing a complete Passion on Good Friday. The historic Easter Vigil of *LBW* presents new possibilities in extended biblical readings, hymns, canticles, and prayers as it explores salvation history and celebrates the Resurrection with Baptism and the Eucharist.

Some features of the Triduum as ordered in *LBW,* especially those of Thursday and Friday, have found their way into the worship of most Lutheran congregations, but relatively few appear to have embraced the whole of the Triduum, especially the riches of the Vigil. It appears that past local practice and the busyness associated with former Holy Week and Easter Sunday worship customs in many parishes have made pastors and musicians reluctant to capitalize on the significant ritual and spiritual benefits embodied in the Triduum.

In conclusion, evaluation of the "success" of these fourteen new features can be measured only partially by their current use by congregations. Where certain features have not been accepted, the reason for their rejection or "failure" may be due not to the item or innovation itself but to pastoral or musical leadership not having sufficient knowledge or interest to stimulate congregational growth in these areas. In some cases failure may be the result of other, local priorities of pastors or musicians, or a lack of perception of the value of the innovation, or even a judgment that a certain congregation was not ready for something new of that kind.

The reasons for the failure of some to accept worship innovation are many, but it is also necessary to be thankful for those who have benefited from the use of *LBW* and to conclude with an encouraging observation: The most telling proof of the success of *LBW* is the appearance of nearly all of the innovations cited above in one form or another in all of the post-*LBW* Lutheran worship books: *Christian Worship*[9] of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Lutheran Worship*[10] and *Worship Supplement 98*[11] of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and *With One Voice,*[12] a worship supplement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The recognition in these books of the value of elements of worship appearing in *LBW* affirms its pioneering position and gives hope for the development of a common understanding of worship among Lutherans, one that relies on a respect for tradition and the thoughtful introduction of contemporary innovation.

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[9] *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1993).

[10] *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1982).

[11] *Hymnal Supplement 98* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1998).

[12] *With One Voice* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995).

Liturgy, Unity, and Disunity: The Context and Legacy of *LBW*

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The 1960s were the high point of Lutheran unity in America. The American Lutheran Church (ALC) was formed by churches of Danish, German, and Norwegian origin in 1960. In 1962 the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) was formed from Danish, Finnish, German, and Swedish roots. These churches joined together in 1966 with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) to form the Lutheran Council in the USA (LCUSA). Ecumenical dialogues also began with the Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches with all of these Lutheran churches participating. On the basis of decisions made at its 1965 convention, President Oliver Harms of the LCMS invited other Lutheran representatives to a consultation about producing new worship materials together. In February 1966 representatives of these Lutheran churches plus the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada (ELCC) met to draw up a statement of purpose. In February 1967 the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) began its work.

Planting in ground cracked by controversy

Given the past century of controversies, this common undertaking was miraculous. When immigrant Lutherans came from Germany—fleeing the governmentally enforced "union" of Lutherans and Reformed—they found Pennsylvania Lutherans cooperating with German Reformed and even with Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists in revivals. They followed the advice to "go west" and settled in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Missouri. The subsequent split between these confessionalists, all supported by Wilhelm Loehe of Neuendettelsau, came over the doctrine of the ministry. S. S. Schmucker's preparation of the American Recension of the Augsburg Confession, gutting the Lutheran view of the sacraments, only confirmed the Midwestern Lutherans' suspicions of the Easterners, even though the General Synod rejected this revision. In the 1860s a controversy over predestination among Midwestern Lutherans caused further splits that lasted well into the twentieth century. This controversy spread to Norwegian-Americans, who later added a controversy over absolution. The fundamentalist-modernist controversy over the inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture that began in late nineteenth-century Protestantism finally made its way into Lutheranism in the early twentieth century. All of these somewhat unresolved controversies were to dog the

steps of the ILCW in its work, even as other controversies and tensions arose.

The amazing thing is that in the midst of this most divisive period of Lutheran history in America, the Common Service was developed by the Eastern synods that had been split by the Civil War and by theological controversy over the Lutheran confessions. By the early twentieth century, the Common Service was adopted as the liturgical text by virtually all Lutherans in North America. Mergers along ethnic lines had begun, but no significant mergers crossed the borders of national origin.

The stated purpose of the ILCW was to prepare a "new, common liturgy and hymnal." This was to succeed *The Lutheran Hymnal* (*TLH*) of 1941 used by LCMS and the 1958 *Service Book and Hymnal* (*SBH*) used by most other Lutherans. The first step was to prepare provisional and experimental supplements to existing worship materials. The series of ten paperbacks was called "Contemporary Worship" (CW). In 1969 the LCMS *Worship Supplement*—authorized and worked on since the 1950s—and *CW-1: Hymns* were published. Of *CW-1*'s eighteen new hymns, thirteen survived in *The Lutheran Book of Worship* (*LBW*) and four in the LCMS service book *Lutheran Worship* (*LW*) of 1982. In 1970 a new communion liturgy with four musical settings (contemporary, hymnic, chant, and folk) was published as *CW-2*. What was new to Lutherans is that the rite began without an opening order of confession. Rather, an Act of Reconciliation (after the sermon and creed) simply confessed "that we have sinned . . ." (p. 9), not referencing the "corrupted-nature" language of Luther and the Formula of Concord. *TLH* (p. 6) and *SBH* (p. 1) mirror that confessional language in the prayer "we poor sinners confess unto thee that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned. . . ." *TLH* in the Communion liturgy (p. 16) uses "poor, miserable sinner," and *SBH*'s preparatory rite (p. 251) uses "by nature a most unworthy sinner." The omission was undoubtedly influenced by critiques caricaturing this as "worm theology," but the point of the older liturgies was to acknowledge not only that we *have sinned* but that we *are sinners*. The passing of the Peace completed the Act of Reconciliation and, in its early years, probably caused more consternation than any other part of the liturgy for many shy lay people.

The flowering of the sacraments

The eucharistic prayer caused the most consternation to many pastors and theologians, especially because *CW-2* did not allow for just the words of institution; rather these words (*verba*) were encased in a prayer of thanksgiving. Criticism of this was immediate and varied: "too Calvinist—mere symbolic memorialism" or "too Catholic—turning God's gift to us into our sacrifice to God." The battle lasted until just before publication when a compromise was finally reached.

Another change that brought criticism was the revision of the *SBH*'s language ". . . with thy Word and Holy Spirit to bless us thy servants and these thine own gifts of bread and wine. . . ." The proposal was "Send the power of your Holy Spirit upon us [Rubric: *He* (sic) *extends his hands over the bread and wine*] and upon this bread. . . ." (*CW-2*, 17). Critics objected to borrowing the *epiclesis* from the Eastern Orthodox liturgy, some arguing that it changed the consecration from the *verba* to the epiclesis. The rubric probably fueled the critics' charge; thus in *LBW* the focus of the invocation of the Spirit is shifted away from the elements to the people (*LBW: Minister's Desk Edition* [*MDE*], 221–27).

The publication of *CW-4: Hymns for Baptism and Holy Communion* (1972) reflected the ILCW's concern to highlight these two sacraments for the life and worship of the church. (Out of the twenty hymns, fifteen made it into *LBW* and six into *LW*.) The first revision of the baptismal rite came in *CW-7* (1974). Criticism focused on the addition of "nonessential" ritual acts: (1) an epiclesis on the child, "Pour out your Holy Spirit. . . ." with the laying on of hands; (2) anointing with oil as "sealing" and marking the child with the sign of the cross; (3) giving a white garment symbolizing being clothed in Christ's righteousness (this was relegated to a permissive rubric in the *MDE*, 31, #15); and (4) giving a lighted candle with the words, "Let your light so shine . . ." (*CW-7*, 28). These additions, which ILCW regarded as simply ritual enacting of Lutheran baptismal doctrine, made it through the review process into the *LBW*. There had been serious discussion in the Liturgical Text Committee (LTC) concerning the renunciation—whether or not to name "the devil." The compromise, ". . . all the forces of evil, the devil and all his empty promises" (*CW-7*, 25), was incorporated into *LBW*.

Like public confession and absolution, "Confirmation," by that hallowed name, suffered in *CW-8* and became Affirmation of the Baptismal Covenant. Such affirmation was to be done (1) in the baptismal rite, (2) "in the context of the teaching/learning life of the congregation," i.e., catechetical or adult membership classes, or (3) "in the context of the varied personal experiences of the believers," e.g., membership transfer, inactives returning to church, taking a new job or office in the church, at marriage or retirement. The rejection of Confirmation as a separate rite was based on the Report of the Joint Commission on the Theology and Practice of Confirmation, 1970 (*CW-8*, 6–10). The blessing "The Father in heaven, for Jesus' sake, strengthen in you the gift of the Holy Spirit . . ." was to be given to all who would make this affirmation. When, in the next years, the churches decided to retain the practice of confirmation, this blessing with the laying on of hands was retained only for the confirmands (*LBW*, p. 201). Moreover, the language was changed in *LBW* from a benedictory bestowal formula (*SBH*, p. 246) to an epicletic prayer formula as in Baptism where the Spirit's gifts are also named: "the spirit of wisdom and understanding . . ." (*LBW*, p. 124; cf. *SBH*, p. 245; *CW-8*, p. 24). The attempt to improve on the gifts listed in Isaiah 11:2 adds, in *CW-8*, "the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence" and is reduced to sevenfold gifts in *LBW*'s "spirit of joy in your presence."

In contrast to what has been said about the deflowering of the preparatory offices or orders for public confession in *CW-2* and even in *LBW*, their permissive detachability may have undercut an important instrument of pastoral care. In the Apology XIII, Melanchthon designates Absolution as a sacrament and Luther lists it with the means of grace in Smalcald Articles III, 4; both exhort that absolution should not fall into neglect. However, the Reformers were speaking about *private* confession. Not only is *LBW*'s "Corporate Confession and Forgiveness" (*LBW*, pp. 193–95) a fine rite with its provision for individual absolution, but the LTC subcommittee on Penitential Rites has done the churches a great service with the rite for "Individual Confession and Forgiveness" with its clear absolution: "By the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I . . . forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (*LBW*, p. 196).

The mutual confession and absolution in Compline (*CW-9*, 52; *LBW*, p. 155) made

its way to the *LBW* with its powerful expression of the "mutual conversation and consolation" in the royal priesthood of all believers. The proposed assurance is turned into a continued plea: "The almighty and merciful Lord grant *me* pardon . . ." (emphasis mine). This approaches self-absolution and reminds me of my favorite corollary to the proverb, "To err is human," to wit: "to forgive yourself is habit-forming."

Services of the Word (*CW-5*, 1972) totally lack the absolution. Since part of the rationale of "preaching services" was as an alternative to using the communion rite without communion (sometimes called a "half-mass")—a common practice in *SBH* days—an order of confession and forgiveness seems all the more important. A case can be made for omitting confession in a service when forgiveness is also proclaimed in Baptism and Eucharist, but most of the weight of gospel proclamation rests on the sermon in these Services of the Word. On the other hand, if used in evangelistic or "seeker" services, the confession and assurance of forgiveness might well come after the sermon, as in *CW-2*.

Matched . . .

So how does one do weddings—if there are to be weddings—after the sexual revolution of the 1960s? The Marriage Service (*CW-3*) was a creative attempt, and some of it survived in the *LBW*, e.g., the opening prayer and the description of the reality of married life, as well as the declaration of intentions and the new description of what constitutes marriage: ". . . if it is your intention to share with each other your joys and sorrows and all that the years will bring, *with your promises bind yourself to each other as husband and wife*" [emphasis mine] (*CW-3*, pp. 15, 22; *LBW*, pp. 202f.).

The italicized words define marriage differently from the legal declaration common in marriage rites: "I now pronounce you man and wife." Many pastors and others attempted unsuccessfully to defend the latter on theological grounds.

However, the vows were successfully attacked on biblical grounds, concerning the promise to be faithful "as he [God] gives us life together." Interestingly, the subcommittee's first draft had retained "until death parts us" and "I pronounce them man and wife." The former was retained until the eighth and final draft before publication in 1972; the latter was dropped in the second draft in 1970. The issue in lifelong vows was not just traditional language but how seriously the NT's prohibitions of divorce, except for adultery and desertion, were to be taken.

. . . and dispatched

The other much-revised but ultimately less criticized rite was *CW-10*, The Burial of the Dead. The rite went through eight revisions before it was finally published in 1976. Numerous questions were raised about prayers for the dead. Eugene Brand responded: "We say what we would have said at the moment of death, had we been present. Prayer that God will give the deceased eternal life . . . should be understood neither as doubt that God will indeed grant such blessings nor as an attempt to 'change the judgment of God upon the deceased.' Rather such prayers express the faith and hope of the community."[1]

So the prayer reads: "Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your own fold . . . a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive *him/her* into the arms of your mercy . . . and into the glorious company of the saints in light" (*CW-10*, p. 13; *LBW*, p. 213).

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[1] ILCW Worship-brief, No. 6 (March 1977): 1f.

In the committal rite, the brother or sister is commended to God and the body to earth or its resting place, and then the benediction is spoken about the dead: "The Lord bless *him/her* and keep *him/her*. . . ." And before the final benediction on the mourners, this prayer from the Roman Catholic Requiem is prayed: "Rest eternal grant *him/her*, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon *"him/her."*[2]

Scriptures and saints

Another biblical issue involved the lectionary. Lessons from the Old Testament had been added to the traditional Lutheran one-year lectionary by *SBH,* and Nesper's *Biblical Texts* had long provided alternates to the standard pericopes. Roman Catholic, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches had recently published three-year lectionaries. ILCW decided both to revise the one-year lectionary in light of recent German and Scandinavian revisions and to prepare a three-year lectionary using the above ecumenical models. The Gospel was to be the criterion for selection, from the exodus to redemption in Christ. Classic themes of Christian faith and life, as well as Lutheran theology and piety, are treated by the interlocking of lessons to "let Scripture interpret Scripture." In its work revising the one-year lectionary the subcommittee stated that some selections were rejected as "no longer exegetically defensible" or open to misunderstanding as anti-Semitic (*CW-6*, 16f.).[3] The now-familiar pattern of each of the Synoptic Gospels having its year was established, supplementing Mark with John, giving that Fourth Gospel about as much usage as Luke. The semicontinuous reading of epistles in Epiphany and Pentecost seasons meant that there was often interlocking only between the lesson and the Gospel. In one-sixth of the cases, *CW-6* differed from the Roman *ordo*; some of these came where the *ordo* had readings from the Apocrypha. Following the Presbyterians in such cases, ILCW states that the decision was "made on pastoral rather than confessional grounds" (*CW-6*, 23), presumably so that concerns over giving equal status to apocryphal books did not torpedo the project. *LBW* followed the same pattern, although current revisions of the lectionary give apocryphal alternatives to some OT readings. The *CW-6* lectionary received positive reception, with few questions and no significant controversy.

Causing considerable controversy was the greatly expanded *CW-6* list of post-biblical saints from every century, continent, and Christian group. Challenges were raised concerning Fox, Hammerskjöld, Schweitzer, Kagawa, and King.[4] On the other hand, many worthy heroes of the faith are absent. *LW* "solved" the problem by commemorating only St. Lawrence (a third-century martyr), Martin Luther, and C. F. W. Walther!

To pray or not to pray (together)

Now consistency may be, in some circumstances (like perhaps theology), "the hobgoblin of weak minds"; but in corporate

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[2] *LBW*, p. 214; cf. Apology XXIV.94–96.

[3] One principle of selection/exclusion became an issue in the LCMS debate that grew in 1976–1977. It concerned the rejection of some traditional lessons as "no longer exegetically defensible." Paul Foelber wrote to Brand Feb. 7, 1977 asking which selections were meant. John Reumann, chair of the LTC Lectionary Subcommittee, responded to Foelber Feb. 18, 1977, citing the allegory in Gal 4:21–31, the end of Mark (16:14–20), 1 John 5:7f., and for Trinity IV, Num 6:22–27.

[4] Cf. Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Festivals and Commemorations: Handbook to the Calendar in Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 16–18.

prayer consistency helps, if one wants to pray *together*. In the past it has been hard to get Lutherans to say "Amen" at the end of prayers—especially since they could never be quite sure when the prayer had ended. *CW-6* and *LBW* brought great consistency to the collects by utilizing the trinitarian ending, "One God, now and forever"—modified from "world without end." Even when the trinitarian ascription of praise is not used, "forever" ends prayers. The alternative is the christological ending "through Jesus Christ (your Son) our Lord" —or at least "Lord." Even shy Lutherans seem able to voice an Amen with such clear cues! The only exceptions I have found to those endings are the Tuesday of Holy Week (*LBW*, p. 19), the commemoration for pastors and bishops (*LBW*, p. 38) and the prayer for the 23rd Psalm (*LBW*: *MDE*, 353). In the miscellaneous prayers of "Petitions, etc." (*LBW*, pp. 42–53) taken from various sources, about a dozen prayers have alternate endings. (The whole prayer can, of course, be printed for unison recitation or to cue the closing words.)

Minimalists and "maximalists"

As reactions to the music of the *CW-2* communion liturgies poured in, the ground under the text began to harden and crack all the more. Oliver Olson from the ALC saw in the work of Odo Casel and Gregory Dix anti-Lutheran theories used to pervert the sacramental into a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead.[5] Eugene Brand of ILCW and Robert Jenson, both students of Peter Brunner, argued that the eucharistic sacrifice in the Communion was a sacrifice of *thanksgiving*, not atonement. Lowell Green joined Olson, adding the charge of "crypto-Calvinist evasions of the Real Presence" and the Reformed hallmark, "the breaking of bread from a loaf."[6] Frank Senn supported the eucharistic prayer and offered a friendly critique of "liturgical actions and gestures."[7] Arthur Carl Piepkorn from the LCMS was supportive of the eucharistic prayer with the epiclesis but had numerous suggestions about the structure of the rite.[8]

The controversy went public when Olson published an article in the *Lutheran Standard* in June 1972 titled "The Mix Makes a Muddle" accusing ILCW of importing "pagan Greek mystery cults and denying the grace of the gospel." Even offertory processions, bringing forward bread and wine with the offering plates, mix God's gifts and our sacrifices.[9] Gordon Lathrop's lecture at Valparaiso argued, against Olson, that the *Berakah* (the Jewish meal-prayer) constitutes "the New Testament *shape of the liturgy* . . . and the vehicle of religious promise."[10]

Meanwhile, responses from congregations were collected, compared, and analyzed as musicians critiqued the settings of *CW-2*. Taking a different tack, the Minneapolis Worship Conference of June 1973 was keynoted by Joseph Sittler who proposed that praise (*doxa*) illumines and en-

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[5] Oliver K. Olson, "Luther's Catholic Minimum," *Response* XI, 1 & 2 (Pentecost 1970), 17–31.

[6] Lowell C. Green, "The New Holy Communion Rite—II: Historical and Practical Questions," *Lutheran Forum* 5:4 (April 1971), 12f.

[7] Frank Senn, "Open Forum," *Lutheran Forum* 5:8 (October 1971), 20.

[8] Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "The Rite, I," *Church Music* 71:2 (1971), 36f.

[9] Oliver K. Olson, "The Mix Makes a Muddle," *Lutheran Standard* 12 (June 12, 1972): 11.

[10] Gordon W. Lathrop, "On Bringing the Ark from Ashdod to Jerusalem: Reflections on the Use of the Eucharistic Prayer in Lutheran Celebrations," *Response* XIII, 2 (Pentecost 1973), 6.

riches faith (dogma), so "dogma bears forth *doxa*." Yet worship is *public* action for Christians, not the action of a cult.[11] Sittler's creative approach sheds light on the theological controversies that were raging over the dreaded victory of *lex orandi* over *lex credendi*, i.e., liturgy over doctrine. Jaroslav Pelikan addressed that Western theme of *lex orandi* and its Eastern Orthodox counterpart: worship ties "yesterday with tomorrow" by a "unity in the truth of the church's doctrine," or, more poetically, "the rhythm of past and future" is "the melody of theology."[12] Brand had earlier argued that "a liturgical act must be theologically defensible" but not shaped or governed by a particular theology, which, I think he would agree, is different from the doctrine or dogma of the church catholic.[13] In spring 1975, Brand—named Project Director the previous January—was to write: "It is useless to argue, as some do, whether liturgy embodies theological concepts or whether they emerge from liturgy. . . . No true liturgy can be átheological; no true theology can be áliturgical."[14]

In October 1973, a theological symposium was held, called for by Luther Seminary (where Olson was currently teaching) and supported by the Philadelphia and Southern seminaries, to review as a "blue-ribbon commission" the work of ILCW. Olson's lecture stated his charges with even greater intensity: that *SBH* and *CW-2* imply "that worship is primarily man's sacrifice to God and, further, that man *cooperates* in his own salvation by participating in sacrifice of Calvary" (emphasis mine).[15] Olson "upped the ante" by adding synergism to the heresies he addressed. Ronald Hals and Herbert Lindemann added their support for the anamnesis and epiclesis that Olson had again attacked. Three discussion groups reported back that most were not persuaded by Olson's arguments, though some in one group were "in almost total agreement with Olson's theology."[16]

The climax of the theological debate over the eucharistic prayer came in Frank Senn's picking up Olson's challenge to relate contemporary Lutheran liturgiology to classical Lutheran theology.[17] The terse summary by Paul Rorem captured Olson's position well: the words of institution are Christ's testament "to be proclaimed to the people and not to be prayed to God."[18]

Robert Jenson's response was that eucharistic prayer is "neither prayer nor proclamation only, but a third thing, encompassing both," i.e., an "*embodied* prayer word" that thanks—not propitiates—God (emphasis his).[19] Gerhard Forde, newly appointed to the ALC Review Group, entered the debate, raising the question of authority for liturgical changes, seemingly appealing to a consensus of all Christians,

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[11] *Worship: Good News in Action*, ed. Mandus A. Egge (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), 17–22.

[12] *Worship: Good News*, 57–61.

[13] Eugene Brand, "Responses," *Response* X, 3 & 4 (1971), 97f.

[14] Eugene Brand, "The ILCW: Dimensions of its Task," *Dialog* 14 (Spring 1975): 94.

[15] Oliver K. Olson, "Contemporary Trends in Liturgy Viewed from the Perspective of Classical Lutheran Theology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 26:2 (May 1974), 111.

[16] For further detail on this symposium see Ralph W. Quere, *In the Context of Unity: A History of the Development of the* Lutheran Book of Worship (Minneapolis: Kirk House, in press), 48–52.

[17] Frank C. Senn, "Contemporary Liturgical Theology," *Response* XIII, 1 (1974), 10–12.

[18] Paul Rorem, "Luther's Objection to a Eucharistic Prayer," *The Cresset* 38 (March 1975): 5, 12.

[19] Robert W. Jenson, "Eucharist: Its Relative Necessity, Specific Warrant and Traditional Order," *Dialog* 14 (Spring 1975): 124–26.

at all times, in all places: i.e., "sound theological principles espoused by the whole Church."[20] Jenson points to the exegetical work of Joachim Jeremias and the Formula of Concord (SD VIII.83f.). Forde ends by proposing that the eucharistic prayers *end* with an "Amen" so that the *verba* can be clearly proclaimed. This was to become one of the three options in *LBW*.

CW-2 revisited and revised

The Holy Communion for Trial Use was distributed for field-testing in October 1975. The Act of Reconciliation had been restored as an optional *opening* order for the service. It included the following assurance of pardon: "God grants us forgiveness." After the greeting, psalmody took the place of the Introit and the later Gradual. The Kyrie was also restored. Western gospel acclamations replaced *CW-2*'s language borrowed from Eastern liturgies: "We praise you, Christ, our Lord and God." The Hymn of the Day could come before or after the sermon. The Creed was to be after the sermon and Hymn of the Day. The fraction of the bread was optional. The question of the *verba* alone was discussed as an option but unresolved.

The final draft—thus the penultimate version—of the Holy Communion was printed in fall 1976. Musical settings by Richard Hillert and Ronald Nelson and an adaptation and expansion of *SBH* Setting II were sent to congregations for field-testing. The text of Holy Communion along with revisions of the other Contemporary Worship series liturgies were sent to all pastors in a booklet titled "Liturgical Texts." Reactions from earlier field tests and review committees led to the following changes in this 1976 draft:

1. In the optional Brief Order for Confession, the Anglican prayer, "Almighty God to whom all hearts are open . . ." (*SBH*, p. 251) was restored. It was followed by the exhortation to confess from 1 John 1:8f. There were two forms of confession: one borrowed from the Episcopal proposal,[21] which had no mention of us as "sinners" but simply confession of *sins*. The traditional assurance of pardon (*TLH*, p. 6; *SBH*, p. 1) and a first-person absolution (cf. *TLH*, p. 16) were proposed. The alternative was the mutual confession and forgiveness which was eventually dropped and transferred to *LBW* Compline (p. 155).

2. There was no psalmody after the opening greeting: the psalm was placed after the first lesson. After the Creed came the following rubic: "When there is no communion, the service continues on page 00." This proposal, handwritten in Liturgical Texts, was an ILCW concession to those who wanted to be able to use the first portion of Holy Communion rite (the "Ante-Communion" or "half-mass") even when there was no Eucharist.

3. The eucharistic prayer was in two forms: one from *CW-2* (pp. 15–17) and the other modified from *SBH* (p. 11) by taking the *verba* out of the middle and placing it after the Amen—as Olson and Forde had argued and the ALC Review Group requested.

4. The trinitarian and Aaronic benedictions were made options.[22]

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[20] Gerhard Forde and Robert W. Jenson, "A 'Great Thanksgiving' for Lutherans?" (NY: ILCW, n.d.), 1. Cf. *Response* 15 (Fall 1975): 3 & 4, 49–52, and Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 5:80f., 259, 265; and 1:333–39.

[21] The Episcopal Church in the United States of America, *The Draft Proposed Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Hymnal Corp., 1976), 354.

[22] These proposals are contained in the undated booklet by ILCW titled "Liturgical Texts," pp. 1–8.

Debate becomes debacle

Lowell Green picked up the earlier polemic of Olson in 1975 arguing that Brand, and implicitly ILCW, had "Romanized and Calvinized" the Sacrament as something "offered to God, either as a merit or as proof of one's salvation." The central error was "withdrawing [the Sacrament] from the Lutheran categories of Law and Gospel,"[23] thereby losing the Sacrament as a means of grace and endangering the doctrine of justification. This article, like Rorem's in *The Cresset*, appeared in publications largely read by Missouri Synod audiences. In 1975 the Consultation on Lutheran Unity was dissolved, and in 1976 the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches was founded, thus "resolving" the LCMS Seminex controversy. In 1976, articles on ILCW's proposals increased significantly in LCMS publications. One such example: Arnold Krugler picks up theories set forth by Olson and Green: "To embed Christ's Words of Promise into Eucharistic Prayer is to destroy their character as Gospel to the congregation."[24] Bailey and Klein in their *Forum Letter* tried to moderate such criticisms and explain ILCW's work to LCMS and ALC audiences, but they betray a Missourian understanding of the *verba* as consecration.[25]

With the publication of eight sample eucharistic prayers in *CW-01*, LCA theologian Clarence Lee and Missourians David Scaer and Gottfried Krodel joined in the attacks on the Great Thanksgiving. Krodel's focus on the consecration further suggests that this issue divided Missourians from other critics of the Great Thanksgiving.[26] Lee's critique, by contrast, was of ILCW's attempt to make the Great Thanksgiving, rather than the bare *verba,* normative. He also argued that to describe the meal fellowship as "the actualizing of our act of thanksgiving" makes human activity the essence of the Sacrament.[27]

In 1977, "Judicius" [=Douglas Judisch] stated the decision facing LCMS in the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* by applauding the LCMS South Wisconsin District whose resolution "indeed, has said what really must be said; . . . withdraw from plans for an inter-Lutheran hymnal and . . . concentrate on developing a new hymnal for our synod." Judicius concluded that the LCMS constitution mandates the "exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda [and] hymnbooks" and the "products of the ILCW are doctrinally impure in every case." Examples of the "impurity" included: presupposing the validity of higher criticism and "the so-called ecumenical movement"; rejecting "narrowly defined orthodoxy" and exegetically indefensible or "socially hazardous" pericopes; and commemorating enthusiasts and Unitarians. All of these charges were directed at *CW-6*.[28] Theo Delaney, the LCMS worship executive working with ILCW, produced a line-by-line response to Judisch's charges, counter-

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[23] Lowell C. Green, "Between Luther and the 'Now' Generation: Some Thoughts about 'Contemporary Worship' as Advanced by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship," *The Springfielder* 39 (Dec. 1975): 81.

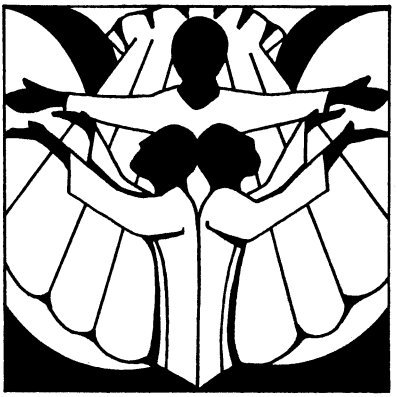
[24] Arnold F. Krugler, "The Words of Institution: Proclamation or Prayer?" *Concordia Journal* II (March 1976): 2, 57.

[25] See *Forum Letters* 2–5 (Feb. 1976–May 1995).

[26] Gottfried G. Krodel, "The Great Thanksgiving of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship: It Is the Christians' Supper and Not the Lord's Supper," *The Cresset,* Occasional Paper I (1976): 19f.

[27] Clarence L. Lee, "The Great Thanksgiving: A Critical Review," *The Mt. Airy Parish Practice Notebook*, No. 10 (June 1976), 5–7.

[28] [D. Judisch], "The Deepening Liturgical Crisis," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* XLI, 1 (Jan. 1977): 50.



charging "libel" against the LCMS Commission on Worship. Regarding the eucharistic prayer, Delaney gave a telling defense, which had not been much emphasized before: "Scripture refers the *proclamation* to the eating and drinking, rather than to the *Verba* [1 Cor 11:26]. . . . Scripture does not prescribe how the word is to be proclaimed (i.e. whether as *nuda verba* or in the 'framework of the eucharistic prayers')."[29] An editorial in the *Bride of Christ* attempts a "confessional high churchman" critique of the work of ILCW, "destined to create havoc wherever it is used." *LBW* is "musically absurd." *TLH*'s Scottish chant in the *Gloria* is "the tune that history has wedded to the text"—dropped "for the sake of Joy, Joy and more Joy," in the sense that "multiplied musical settings equal multiplied joy." And should "Grandma Schmidt" object to tunes or text, "we'll just have to tell her to shut up and mind her own business." Beware, "Grandma will vote with her feet"![30]

Paul Foelber in defending the LCMS work in ILCW asks: "If Eucharistic prayer is unorthodox, one wonders why objection was not raised years ago since the [LCMS] Worship Supplement which includes Eucharistic prayers has been in print over eight years and is being used extensively in our schools and churches."[31]

Wayne Schmidt argued for an advanced distribution of *LBW* like that suggested for the 1941 *TLH*—a suggestion already mentioned by LCMS president J. A. O. Preus. Schmidt argues that the supposed unity of Lutherans in the 1960s is a sham that glossed over "really serious doctrinal disunity." Arguing that the 1977 LCMS convention should reject *LBW*, Schmidt cites the adiaphoristic controversy of the sixteenth-century Formula of Concord X, which forbids concessions on nonessentials (*adiaphora*), like liturgical ritual, when under persecution. Although he admits the current "pressure" is not persecution, he argues that the recommended worship practices will offend "the weak in faith." For the hymnal is "a layman's book of doctrine and guides the thinking of pastors as well," and hence "a shaper of theology."[32] So *lex orandi* had its supporters in LCMS as well. Like the LCMS stand on *closed* communion, "a worship book can be a testimony of unity, it does not create it."[33]

The May 1977 *Lutheran Witness* had articles supporting and opposing approval of *LBW*. The positive argument stressed contemporary hymns for LCMS congrega-

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[29] E. Theo. DeLaney, "The Deepening Liturgical Crisis: A Response," unpublished document, Concordia Historical Institute file ETD 848, 7–9.

[30] Editorial, "Whatever Became of Common ['just plain old-fashioned horse'] Sense?" *The Bride of Christ* I:2 (May 1977).

[31] Paul J. Foelber, "Lutheran Book of Worship," *Concordia Journal* 3 (May 1977): 3, 107–9.

[32] Wayne E. Schmidt, "Lutheran Book of Worship—A Perspective," *Concordia Journal* 3 (May 1977): 3, 102–5.

[33] Schmidt, "Lutheran Book of Worship," 105.

tions and standardizing hymns and liturgies for all Lutherans. The responsiveness of ILCW to LCMS concerns was also documented.[34] The negative argument stressed *TLH* hymns that *LBW* did not include. Furthermore, it was stated, doctrinal differences are deemphasized in order to improve Lutheran unity; thus approval of the *LBW* would serve consciously to sanction its ambiguity without "precise agreement in the Gospel" as demanded by Augsburg Confession VII. One of the evidences of "this tendency of impurity" is the rewriting of sexist language from the Bible, the creeds, and the hymns. Therefore the dearth of hymns on the ministry (*TLH* had a dozen, and *LBW* had only four) was related to the fact that ALC and LCA now ordained women. The article closes with the warning that approval of *LBW* would violate the LCMS constitution.[35] A final mediating article attempts to assure congregations that neither *LBW* nor synodical decisions can be forced on congregations. Moreover, delegates to synodical conventions are not knowledgeable enough to judge doctrinal issues.[36] So the positions of moderate ecumenists, conservative critics, and canon lawyers were all represented in the *Lutheran Witness.*

Brand's bombshell

As project director, Eugene Brand sent out a confidential Position Paper on Liturgical Matters in March 1976 suggesting ". . . the diversity of theological positions and liturgical practices, always just below the surface of apparent confessional unity, has now surfaced, though it remains to be recognized openly. Myths of *the* Lutheran position and *the* Lutheran way of worship remain" (emphasis in original).[37]

However, he continues that a new book could be a catalyst for needed vitality and common endeavor, but "important differences in theology and practice . . . cannot be resolved by publication." Indifference after publication "creates the vacuum into which new books [and in retrospect, I would add, worship wars] are launched." Brand goes on to recommend the following compromises: (1) the "I forgive you" formulation as an alternative absolution in the Brief Order of Confession, because it is "firmly embedded Missouri Synod practice"; (2) "he descended into hell" as a permissive footnote; (3) the use of the term Confirmation for the Affirmation rite; and, most painful of all, (4) three options in Holy Communion: a full Eucharistic prayer, a prayer with an "Amen" followed by the *verba,* and the *verba* alone. He concluded with two questions: (1) Even with these compromises, can other controversies be resolved by the set publication date of Advent 1978? Even more shocking, (2) "Has the *kairos* for a new book passed and should we therefore withdraw the plan for a new hymnal and service book?"[38]

Final changes

In April 1976, LTC approved the LCMS reviewers' request of changing the *descensus* clause back to "hell." ALC and LCA objections to the new translation of the Lord's Prayer led to the compromise of printing both texts. (Roman Catholics had

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[34] David Held, "Issues at Dallas: The Proposed New Hymnal," *The Lutheran Witness* (May 22, 1977), 198f.

[35] Kenneth P. Kothe, "Issues at Dallas: The Proposed New Hymnal," *The Lutheran Witness* (May 22, 1977), 199f.

[36] Richard T. Du Brau, "Issues at Dallas: The Proposed New Hymnal," *The Lutheran Witness* (May 22, 1977), 200f.

[37] Eugene L. Brand, Position Paper on Liturgical Matters, Mar. 4, 1976 (Confidential), 1.

[38] Brand, Position Paper, 2f.

decided not to use the new translation at all.) The Nelson setting from *CW-2* was chosen for *LBW*. In November, ILCW approved the addition of the *verba* alone as a third option, which the ALC Review Group had virtually demanded. LTC suggested that the second (prayer plus *verba*) and third (*verba* alone) options be combined by rubrics or design. Like the ALC, the ELCC Review Group protested the absence of reference to "original sin" in the opening confession. LTC's compromise proposal was: "Most merciful God, we confess that we cannot free ourselves from bondage to sin." Ultimately, it was the ALC proposal that emerged in *LBW*. The LCA proposed a revision of the traditional declaration of pardon ("Almighty God . . . hath had mercy upon us and hath given his only Son") to "In the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given. . . ." LCA and ALC review groups both opposed the LCMS "I forgive you" and preferred "I declare . . . forgiveness." ALC also preferred "I declare" in the service of "Individual Confession," but this was declined (*LBW*, p. 197).

The Episcopal Psalter was chosen over other translations with permission for limited editing, e.g., Psalm 8: "O Lord, our Governor." Why 28 of the psalms are not included has been the subject of many creative theories that have little to do with what actually happened. When the number of hymns escalated from a "core hymnal" of 200 to 510 in 1976 and then, by popular outcry (15,000 letters to ALC), to 569, there was not enough room for all 150 psalms. The publishers had warned that the back would soon break with a book that large. Those psalms assigned for liturgical use were retained.

"Final" changes were approved or made at the last meeting of the full ILCW commission in May 1977. However, some fourteen pages of changes were made afterward by the Editorial Group. Many of them had to do with sexist language—e.g., in nine prayers "Father" was changed to "Lord." In the *LBW* "Affirmation" prayer (p. 201), the liberation of "sons and daughters" of the "Father" (*CW-8*, 35) and the reference to regeneration (*SBH*, p. 246) into the Father's family are lost by such cleaning-up of language. Similarly in the Burial rite (*LBW*, p. 206), the opening blessing (2 Cor 1:3) is altered: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *source* of all mercy and God of all consolation" (emphasis mine). Not only is the poetic structure ruined by substituting "source" for "Father," but the personal and parental relationship is omitted at a time when it is most needed. Current emphasis on expansive rather than merely inclusive language seems much more helpful.

Blue-ing away *LBW*

The Executive Committee met in September 1977 to act on final details of publication. Responses from the churches on changes made were positive except for the LCMS, whose May convention had set up a "blue ribbon committee" (=Special Hymn Review Committee [SHRC]) to do a further, final review of *LBW*. President Preus's report to the Synod had recommended a delay of publication, as well as declaring a state of "fellowship in protest" with ALC for "doctrinal aberrations."[39] A bylaw disallowing any group, except the Synod in convention, from authorizing a hymnal was also proposed, and the Commission on Worship was directed to "gather materials for a new hymnal." All of these actions were passed. Theo Delaney submitted his resignation after the convention, predicting that the rest of LCMS's Commission on Worship would also do so by the end of the summer.[40]

The SHRC failed to meet ILCW's January 1978 deadline for final changes, insisting that their review was not yet complete. Paul Foelber, an LCMS representative to ILCW, thereupon resigned from the SHRC. The moderate journal *Missouri in Perspective* reported that the "Missouri Synod's 'blue-ribbon' panel . . . has declined to give assurances that it will give final approval to the new book—even if every change requested by the panel is made."[41] The chair of the SHRC, LCMS vice-president Robert Sauer, stated that it was quite unlikely that *LBW* would be recommended. *Missouri in Perspective* opined that "some conservatives will reject the joint hymnal on the grounds that it may give the impression that Synod is in formal fellowship with other participating Lutherans."[42] President Preus attended the November meeting of the SHRC, calling for a new Commission on Worship and a plan for publishing "at the earliest possible time . . . a new book of worship—including reasons why some of the contents of the proposed Book of Worship are unacceptable."[43] Such a charge from the president of LCMS would serve to undercut any objectivity in the committee's recommendation. The resignation statement of the LCMS Commission on Worship members, many of whom served on ILCW, stated their well-founded fear that the SHRC "process has served to delay a decision on the *LBW* until after the other church bodies have proceeded with publication. . . ."[44]

The committee's dutiful attempt to fulfill President Preus's charge to find "reasons" why *LBW* is "unacceptable" produced some interesting results. Examples of their critique: the collects were also mined for heresies and even the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET) translation of the creeds.[45] One pastor objected to the SHRC's challenge to "catholic" simply because it was different from Luther's Small Catechism. He said the SHRC's preference of *Christian* "seemed to be based on the German versions of those creeds while giving no hint of the original Greek [or Latin] texts."[46] LCMS professor David Scaer defended the ICET translation of the Nicene Creed, "eternally begotten." He writes: "The new translation is much stronger in its confession of the Son's deity, because his begottenness or birth from the Father is, in fact, 'an ongoing process,' something which the committee finds objectionable." On the other hand, "'begotten of his Father before all worlds' would lend itself more easily to the Arian understanding"[47]—or that of Unitarians or Jehovah's Witnesses!

Of the 569 hymns in *LBW*, the blue-ribbon committee recommended 504, although only 337 finally made it into *LW*. "Breathe on me, Breath of God" was criticized for its mysticism and perfectionism: it "could well be accepted and used by enthusiasts and Unitarians."[48] The "modernizations" in *LBW* #498 are critiqued for

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[39] Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod Convention Proceedings, 52nd Regular Convention, Dallas, Texas, July 15–22, 1977, 67, 125f.

[40] Ibid., 128.

[41] *Missouri in Perspective* (Oct. 24, 1977), 2.

[42] Ibid.

[43] SHRC Min. of Nov. 18–19, 1977, 17. This document is in the LCMS Archives at Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis.

[44] *Missouri in Perspective* (Dec. 5, 1977), 10.

[45] International Consultation on English Texts, *Prayers We Have in Common* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 4–9.

[46] Letter from Rev. Philip Bohlken to SHRC, May 16, 1978.

[47] Letter from David Scaer to *Lutheran Witness*, May 10, 1978.

[48] LCMS, Report and Recommendations of the SHRC, n.d., 31–37.

changing the language of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, yet this modernization made it into *LW* #384 unaltered. Similarly, the criticisms of the *LBW* translation of "A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth" (#105) for changing "My Son" to "my child" in stanza 2 are met with the response: "Who wants a synod so orthodox that they will not allow Paul Gerhardt to say . . .'mein Kind'. . . but insists that Gerhardt be corrected to say 'mein Sohn'."[49] Others charged "nit-picking" by a committee with a "foreordained goal." Ultimately the failure of LCMS to give any assurances of future approval of *LBW* and the refusal of ILCW to extend the deadline of publication constituted the de facto withdrawal of the Missourians from the project their synod had initiated.

The controversies over eucharistic prayer, etc., that emerged during the development of the *LBW* were tempests in teapots as compared with the tempests that began brewing in the 1970s with the ordination of women and the heresy investigations within LCMS leading to the formation in 1974 of Christ Seminary–Seminex by the majority of the Concordia Seminary–St. Louis students and faculty. Support for Seminex by ALC and LCA seminaries heightened tensions with LCMS, especially for ALC. Its president, David Preus (the cousin of J. A. O. Preus of LCMS), tried to mollify LCMS by stating that such seminary support was "not official ALC policy." Nonetheless, "fellowship" was strained, and LCMS designated the situation "fellowship in protest." LCMS leadership sensed that the dialogues with the Episcopal and Reformed churches were heading toward intercommunion. LCMS was participating in all the ecumenical dialogues, but intercommunion without full doctrinal agreement was regarded as "unionism"—not legitimate ecumenism.

Communion praxis

New approaches to the understanding of Communion and its practices had been building in other Lutheran churches since 1960 with the United Lutheran Church's statement: The Sacrament of the Altar and Its Implications. The Sacrament is set in the context of the doctrines of the Church and the Word and focuses on mystery, memorial, eschatological expectation, and evangelical proclamation. The categories of eucharistic sacrifice used by Brilioth and Aulen are not developed, although Aulen's influence is otherwise evident.[50] The 1964 LCA statement (after the 1962 merger with Swedish-American Augustana Synod) is an adaptation of the 1960 United Lutheran Church in America document, with emphasis on self-examination, confession and absolution.[51]

Regarding intercommunion, the LCA Statement's warning against implying "a unity which is not a reality in other realms of faith and order" comes as a bit of a surprise from non-Missourians![52] But the following statement raised an issue that would become a part of the LCMS objection to eucharistic prayers: "The 'words of institution' are not in themselves a formula of consecration, for there is no precise moment of consecration."[53]

The ALC Statement on Communion Practices of 1968 was a giant step in the

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[49] Letter from Winfred Schaller to SHRC, June 11, 1978.

[50] *Liturgical Reconnaissance:* Papers presented at the Inter-Lutheran Consultation on Worship, Feb. 10–11, 1966, ed. Edgar S. Brown (Chicago and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 34, para. 2.

[51] The Second Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America, Pittsburgh, July 2–9, 1964, Minutes, 300.

[52] Ibid., 298.

[53] Ibid., 301.

direction that ILCW would be moving in the next decade. The influence of Brand on the document was palpable and emphasized (1) anamnesis, (2) community with Christ and his body, the church, (3) eucharistic sacrifice, and (4) the foretaste of the Messianic banquet. Dix's four-action shape of the meal was also evident. In its liturgical experimentations this "basic shape . . . must be maintained."[54] In contrast to the LCMS position and the 1964 LCA Statement, the sole criterion for intercommunion in the 1968 ALC Statement was "whether the proclamation of the gospel is compromised or enhanced." This is expanded and expounded on in the 1978 joint statement by ALC and LCA.

In the 1976 draft of this document, the LCA convention objected to the statement: "Corporate confession . . . is not required as a part of every service of Holy Communion." The 1978 joint statement as adopted reads: "Corporate confession . . . is the normal preparation for the celebration of Holy Communion."[55] This stands in tension with the *LBW,* which was to appear in Advent 1978, where the use of the Brief Order of Confession was made permissive (*LBW,* p. 57). The other controversial statement grew out of the decision that pastor, child, and parents shared the decision about when to admit to communion. The implication drawn was: "Thus infant communion is precluded" (the "precluding" was reversed by the 1997 ELCA document, "The Use of the Means of Grace"). On many levels the 1978 statement can be seen as moderating the ILCW's original vision—and, at points, in tension with the *LBW.* This is even more true of the negative reactions of many ALC leaders to the Pfatteicher and Messerli *Manual on The Liturgy* (1979), which some saw as a "high church" attempt at taking over the interpretation and practice of *LBW.*

On the issue of intercommunion, the 1978 ALC/LCA Statement seems to "open" Lutheran altars even more than previous statements. But there are still some cautions: "For Lutheran clergy to be involved as presiding or assisting ministers in the celebrations of Holy Communion in other churches, a reciprocal relationship between the congregations and clergy should prevail."[56] This may be more like what has been called "close communion," but in a way it set the guidelines for what in 1982 became "interim eucharistic sharing" with the Episcopal Church and in ALC's 1986 limited intercommunion with the Presbyterian and Reformed churches.[57] The difference from "close communion" is that reciprocal intercommunion was with other denominations and not just local congregations and clergy. If fellowship with the ALC had not already been broken by the Missouri Synod in 1981, these ecumenical moves would surely have brought that break. From the point of view of the leadership of LCMS, the worst fears of most nineteenth-century confessionalists and some German-American Lutherans into the twenty-first century were realized: the "unionism" they left Germany to escape and the "American Lutheranism" they

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[54] The American Lutheran Church, "Statement on Communion Practice," statement adopted by the Fourth General Convention of the ALC on Oct. 19, 1968, 2–4.

[55] The American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America, "Statement on Communion Practices," Advent 1978, adopted by the 1978 conventions, I:3.

[56] Ibid., 7.

[57] The American Lutheran Church, "Lutheran and Presbyterian-Reformed Agreement 1986: A Study Guide" (Minneapolis: Office of the Presiding Bishop, n.d.), 21: para. 3, "providing for occasional joint services of the Lord's Supper where appropriate and desirable, and in accord with the disciplines of our several churches." See also para. 6.

encountered in the east had finally triumphed in contemporary Lutheranism. It was the General Council, at the urging of the Iowa Synod (currently at war with Missouri Synod over predestination), that passed the infamous Galesburg Rule: (1875), "Lu-theran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only; Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only."[58] Ironically, only Missouri and Wisconsin Synod Lutherans follow this procedure: the former would allow some exceptions, and the latter would add Wisconsin Synod to "pastors" and "communicants." The "full communion" with Reformed and Episcopal churches in the 1990s made the intra-Lutheran situation worse.

Missouri blues

The *LBW* project began "in the context of unity" with high hopes that a unity, greater and more ecumenical than what the 1888 Common Service brought, could finally be achieved. Deeper divisions than were imagined or hoped surfaced within LCMS and were dealt with by President Jacob Preus. Part of his strategy seems to have been to distance and ultimately separate LCMS from the *LBW*. When *LW* appeared, it was no surprise that the cover was not green. Even the blue book in the pew racks would reassure the faithful that they were within the fellowship of the book. There was to be no confusing of LCMS hymnals with those of other Lutherans—even though early on significant numbers of LCMS congregations purchased *LBW*.

In spite of the protests and safeguards that Augsburg and Fortress executives tried to build in, because the LCMS also owned the copyright they were able to use—and change—any materials ILCW prepared. And change they did. For example, in *LW* Divine Service II (pp. 158ff.) they use a mix of *TLH* and *LBW* language in their confession and retain their absolution, "I . . . forgive you"; in the Nicene Creed they also retained "begotten of his Father before all worlds," "for us *men*," and "Christian" for *catholic* (also in the Apostles' Creed). They altered the ICET translation of the Lord's Prayer by retaining "Lead us not into temptation" and placed the Lord's Prayer between the eucharistic prayer and the *verba*. *LW*'s Divine Service I combines some of the texts of *TLH* services with or without communion. It also has a brief eucharistic prayer.

On the other hand, two of the ILCW musical settings are used in *LW* (pp. 158ff. and 178ff.) retaining the Kyrie litany and "This is the Feast"—perhaps the most creative and important addition ILCW made to the sung parts of the liturgy. "Let the Vineyards" and "What Shall I Render"—real offertories, as opposed to "Create in Me"—are retained, as is "Thank the Lord" as a post-communion canticle. Like *LBW*, it also allows the rite to be used without Communion but makes that a secondary use. Moreover, *LW* uses a three year lectionary.

My point is that, almost in spite of themselves, through the joint work on ILCW, Lutherans in America have come closer to one another in liturgies and their music, as well as hymns. In spite of ongoing grumblings from some ELCA folk about having been "stuck" with all those LCMS hymns, I am convinced that *LBW* is a better book for the LCMS contributions, including hymns. One of the premier hymnologists in America, the witty Welshman Erik Routley, was commissioned in 1967 to evaluate *TLH* and *SBH*.[59] After *LBW* was published he did a review of its hymns,

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[58] R. C. Wolf, *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 171; cf. 167–78.

calling them "an enormous advance" over *TLH* and *SBH*, noting the problems of blending German and Scandinavian traditions into a new hymnal.[60] He also commended ILCW "for declining to abridge texts ruthlessly"—contrary to the protests of "too many stanzas!"[61] He concludes: "Considered as a Lutheran manifesto . . . it is an impressive piece of work."[62]

Conclusion

In relation to the high hopes not only for church unity but also for renewal that most of us on ILCW's committees shared, Pfatteicher sounded a realistic note already in 1971. He acknowledged the "nagging suspicion, unacknowledged and usually unspoken. . . . Surely liturgical revision—no matter how skillful or exciting—is not alone going to revitalize the Church in the 20th century."[63] In the decade from 1978 to 1988, when ELCA was budding or aborning, multiple disappointments over *LBW*—from the absence of Ylvisaker's folk setting to this or that hymn—gave rise to rumors and realities of "worship wars." Indeed, the desire for and shift to "contemporary" or "alternative" liturgies and hymns was well underway in congregations across the land. GIA with its 1991 *Hymnal Supplement* was supplying the liturgies of Marty Haugen for Catholic and Lutheran congregations. Many congregations were turning elsewhere for liturgies bearing little resemblance to the Western rite, the Common Service, or the *LBW*. Until *With One Voice* (1995), *This Far by Faith* (1999), and *Worship and Praise* (1999) appeared, Augsburg Fortress had provided few significant supplements to *LBW*. Eugene Brand had expressed the hope that the next worship book after *LBW* would be ecumenical. The near-bloody history of worship wars, the struggle for a Lutheran Christian identity, the decline of mainline churches due to their failures in evangelism—all these seem to have postponed Brand's dream, and "renewing worship" is underway again. Whether we have learned from the development and use of *LBW* is yet to be seen.

> Almost in spite of themselves, through the joint work on ILCW, Lutherans in America have come closer to one another in liturgies and their music, as well as hymns.

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[59] Quere, *In the Context*, 17–18.

[60] Erik Routley, "The New Lutheran Book of Worship: A Preview of Hymns," *Worship* 52 (Sept. 1978), 5, 403f.

[61] Ibid., 407.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Philip H. Pfatteicher, "The New Holy Communion Rite—III: Seven clear achievements," *Lutheran Forum* 5, No. 4 (April 1971): 15.

Some Thoughts on The Hymnody of *Lutheran Book of Worship:* Context, Issues, and Legacy

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It is a common observation that of the three books that historically have been most influential in developing and nourishing Lutheran piety—Bible, catechism, and hymnal—it is the hymnal that, for many, has been of most lasting influence. Bibles may go unread and catechisms set aside as a regular part of Christian education, but it is the hymnal, it can be argued with some justification, that, encountered on a regular basis Sunday after Sunday, has had the most significant effect on the piety of American Lutherans.

It is appropriate, therefore, to describe the context in which the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (*LBW*) took shape and the procedures that shaped the content of the hymn portion of the book, and to assess the impact and legacy of its hymnody on the piety of American Lutherans.

The *LBW* was the end product of the invitation of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), extended in 1965, to all Lutherans in America to join together in the production of common worship resources. The 1965 resolution of the LCMS convention clearly envisioned liturgical and hymnic materials "under a single cover."[1] As far as hymnody was concerned, the wording of the resolution of 1965 envisioned "a common core of hymn texts and musical settings" and "a variant selection of hymns, if necessary. . . ."[2] The following year the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) was formed, consisting of eight members from the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), seven members each from the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and the LCMS, and one each from the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (SELC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada (ELCC). Its Statement of Purpose described the ultimate goal of the ILCW: "the production of a new, common liturgy and hymnal for the participating churches." The work of the Commission was delegated to four standing committees—on Liturgical Texts, Liturgical Music, Hymn Texts, and Hymn Music. Membership of these four committees was apportioned among the participating church bodies.[3]

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[1] LCMS Convention Proceedings, 1965, p. 186.

[2] Ibid.

[3] The membership of the Hymn Texts Committee and the Hymn Music Committee, as well as the membership of the ILCW and its other committees, is given in Philip H.

Uniting a variety of pieties

The major challenge of the hymn committees was to fashion a collection of hymns that would be acceptable to the wide variety of Lutheran pieties represented in the groups involved in its preparation. The partners in this new venture brought to the table the books they were presently using. The LCA and the ALC brought the *Service Book and Hymnal* (*SBH*, 1958), at the time of the formation of the ILCW in use for only a few years; the LCMS brought *The Lutheran Hymnal* (*TLH*, 1941) and, a few years later, *Worship Supplement* (*WS*, 1969), the fruit of the work it had already done on its unilateral revision of *TLH*.

Neither *SBH* or *TLH* was without its critics. By the early 1960s there had already developed "serious internal criticism of the *SBH*," then only a few years old, much of it apparently directed toward its hymnody.[4] *TLH*, in use for almost a quarter of a century, had its own faultfinders whose disapproval was especially directed to the musical settings of the hymns and liturgy.

Both the *SBH* and *TLH*, at the time they appeared, were the latest in a number of hymnals produced as a result of the consolidation of various smaller Lutheran bodies, a consolidation that had begun already in the latter part of the nineteenth century.[5] But, for the most part, the previous Lutheran hymn collections in the first part of the twentieth century—such as *The Lutheran Hymnary* (1913), the *Common Service Book and Hymnal* (*CSB*, 1917), the *American Lutheran Hymnal* (1930), *TLH* (1941), and even the *SBH* (1958)—brought together groups of Lutherans of largely similar ethnic backgrounds, pieties, or ideologies. While there were, of course, disagreements among those who participated in shaping these earlier hymnals, those who came together to produce them came with largely similar backgrounds and assumptions as to the general contents of the books they were preparing.

Nevertheless, even some who participated in the preparing of these earlier hymnals were dissatisfied with the final results. As early as the *CSB*—the joint work of the General Synod, the General Council, and the United Synod of the South—the lack of sufficient Scandinavian hymnody was noted. Typical of such comments was one which complained that

> the committee rigorously guarded the hymnal against the introduction of renditions of Norwegian, Swedish or Danish hymns as found in *The Lutheran Hymnary*, persistently ignoring these translations. . . . The commission, *whether by design or inadvertence*, is a disappointment to the Scandinavian-American Lutherans.[6]

While such comments can be expected from any group that does not receive the due it believed to be its own, they reflect the difficulties encountered in any attempt to unite a wide spectrum of pieties.

If the subsequent work on the *SBH* (1958)—which comprised an even broader

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Pfatteicher, *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship: Lutheran Liturgy in Its Ecumenical Context* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 515–16. The chart accompanying this article details the membership and length of service of each member of the hymn committees. I served as a member of the Hymn Music Committee throughout the process except for the first year. While the ILCW included a representative from the ELCC, that body was not represented on any of the hymn committees.

[4] Eugene Brand, "Liturgical Reconnaissance," in *The Future of Worship in the ELCA: Exploring the Critical Issues*, prepared by Paul R. Nelson and Frank W. Stoldt (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 4.

[5] See Carl Schalk, *God's Song in a New Land: Lutheran Hymnals in America* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1995).

[6] Schalk, *God's Song in a New Land*, 162–63; emphasis added.

spectrum of pieties—attempted to address such objections, it was still not sufficient for the Danes, who were among the participating groups. J. C. Aaberg, a member of the committee who had produced the Danes' *Hymnal for Church and Home* (1927), complained that the book "contained more hymns from Catholic sources than from the land of Luther."[7] Two years later, in 1960, the Danish Lutherans published a supplement of 28 Danish hymns that had not been included in the new book. That one of the chief architects of both the *CSB* and the *SBH* was prominent Lutheran liturgical scholar Luther D. Reed concerned some who wished to see a greater emphasis on Reformation hymnody.

To a lesser extent such criticisms also were made of hymnals that joined together groups of greater similarity and background. But with the goal of the ILCW to prepare "a common core of hymn texts and musical settings" the task was even greater. For the hymn committees of the ILCW, attempting to satisfy the often conflicting views of "high church" Swedes, Norwegians of both high and low inclinations, those who followed the lead of Reed, anti-clerical Haugeans, and doctrinally concerned Missourians, in the process of producing a selection of hymns that would be useful yet would reflect a Lutheran concern for the role of hymnody in worship, the task was a daunting one.

Apart from the matter of a wide dissimilitude of pieties, the task was complicated by somewhat different understandings of the role of hymns in worship. LCMS participants brought as a primary concern that hymns, as the Handbook to *TLH* stated, "be pure in doctrine."[8] The principles of the selection in the *SBH,* which clearly stated that they should be in agreement with the teachings of the Word of God, nevertheless placed great importance on the criteria that "the hymns should be devotional rather than didactic or homiletical" and that the "hymnal must have the highest standards of literary excellence."[9] If the Reformation chorales were anything, they were didactic and homiletical. Moreover, it was precisely the emphasis on literary excellence that had been used by earlier committees to disqualify many of the translations from German, Norwegian, Danish, and Finnish heritages in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century American Lutheran hymnals.[10]

One additional factor contributed to the conversation. The earlier hymnals of the participating churches were generally of two kinds: those intended specifically for use in corporate worship, and those designed for use in church, school, and home. Such titles as the General Council's *Church Book* (1868) and *Kirchenbuch* (1877), Grabau's *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Kirchen-Gesang-Buch* (1842), C. F. W. Walther's *Kirchengesang-buch* (1847), the *CSB* (1917), and the *SBH* (1958) all suggested that their primary, if not sole, purpose was for corporate worship. Other books such as hymnals "for church and home," the German *Liederperlen*, and various Scandinavian collections that featured more personal hymns from the nineteenth-century

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[7] Enok Mortensen, *The Danish Lutheran Church in America* (Philadelphia: Board of Publication, LCA, 1967), 265.

[8] *The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal*, comp. W. G. Polack (St. Louis: Concordia, 1942), xi.

[9] "Introduction to the Common Hymnal," *Service Book and Hymnal*, p. 286.

[10] By one count, the *Common Service Book and Hymnal* contained only seven such hymns, the *Service Book and Hymnal* only nine, while the *Lutheran Hymnary* had contained 21, the *American Lutheran Hymnal* 17, and *The Lutheran Hymnal* 30. See Schalk, *God's Song in a New Land*, Appendix E.

revivals—such as the "*Andeliga Sanger*" ("spiritual songs")—were intended for a broader use. These latter materials, while particularly useful in family and private devotions, were often viewed by many as inappropriate for use in corporate, liturgical worship. These approaches often vied with each other in meetings of the hymn committees.

In many instances, treasures of one group were unknown to the others. I recall one meeting where heated conversation occurred regarding a particular hymn ("On Our Way Rejoicing"), a hymn unknown to me at that time, though one obviously highly treasured by many others. I am certain that the situation was the same in the case of many of the sixteenth-century chorales. This, then, was part of the context in which the hymn committees were to do their work.

The makeup of the hymn committees

The two hymn committees—the Hymn Texts Committee and the Hymn Music Committee—consisted of nine members each, three members each from the LCA, the ALC, and the LCMS. (The members and their length of service is noted in the accompanying charts.) In addition to their expertise in language, several of the members of the Hymn Texts Committee were also familiar enough in the area of music to be alert to musical concerns that might be raised in connection with the choice of particular texts. Even more important, and certainly new in American Lutheran hymnal-making experience, was that a significant number of the members of the Hymn Music Committee were theologically trained. This rather new situation made for a lively give-and-take between the members of the two committees that continued through the decade of its existence.

What was not anticipated was the genuine collegiality that quickly developed within and between the two groups. Decisions regarding various issues before the committee and regarding specific hymns were almost never taken along what might be assumed to be the "party lines" of the church bodies. Members could and did, often vehemently, disagree. The strengths and weaknesses of conflicting views were frankly and honestly debated, the final result the better for it. It was an example of collegiality at its best.

The general procedure was that texts submitted for consideration were reviewed by the Hymn Texts Committee and, upon their approval, were sent to the Hymn Music Committee for the selection of a tune and ultimately a musical harmonization or setting. It was not unusual for the Hymn Music Committee to return a provisionally approved text to the Hymn Texts Committee for reconsideration in the light of what the Hymn Music Committee judged to be a theologically deficient text. The Hymn Texts Committee sometimes returned the favor.

Preliminary forays

One of the important discussions in the early years of the committees was whether a regular hardcover hymnal was a realistic goal for the future. The late 1960s and early 70s were times of great experimentation and upheaval in hymnody (and liturgy). It was a time when so-called "disposable hymnody" was the rage, that is, hymns written not for lasting use but for a particular situation or occasion, to be disposed of when the occasion passed. Whether the ILCW should even envision a traditional hardcover book was an issue raised by some. The clear indication of the LCMS in its resolution of 1965 favored cooperative work toward liturgical and hymnic material that would appear "under a single

cover." It was not until several years had passed that a consensus had been reached that this was indeed what was needed and called for. In the meantime, the committees prepared two provisional fascicles. The first to be published was a general collection of new hymns: *Contemporary Worship 1: Hymns* (1969), containing 21 hymns (four with two tunes or settings). The second, *Contemporary Worship 4: Hymns for Baptism and Holy Communion* (1972), was a group of baptismal and eucharistic hymns, two areas where the consensus was that more, newer, and better hymns were desirable. Both collections were intended as provisional collections "intended to supplement those already in use in the participating churches."[11] Ultimately, 13 of the 21 hymns (62 percent) in *Contemporary Worship 1* found their way into *LBW*. The contents of *Contemporary Worship 4* fared better, 25 of its 30 hymns (83 percent) winding up in *LBW*.

Specific questions before the Hymn Music Committee

A basic question before the ILCW, and particularly the Hymn Committees, was that of the format of the hymns in the new book. Both *SBH* and *TLH* had appeared in a full-music edition, that is, four-part keyboard settings with some of the stanzas interlined between the music and additional stanzas in stanza form below, usually referred to as the "traditional American hymnal" format.[12] The *SBH* was also available in a text-only format. *Worship Supplement*, following the example of the German and Scandinavian hymnals of the time, appeared in a tune-text format in which only the melody appeared with one stanza of the text under the melody, the remaining stanzas in stanza form below, the accompaniments to be found in a separate volume. *Contemporary Worship 4* also appeared in tune-text format. There was considerable discussion about the best format. At one point, the ILCW apparently determined to follow the tune-text format for the pew edition, but ultimately reversed course after pressure from the publishers in favor of the typical American hymnal format prevailed.[13] The pew edition of *LBW* appeared only in the full-music edition.

Another matter was the organization of the hymnal. *SBH* followed the long tradition of Lutheran hymnals, beginning with the church year. *TLH* began with sections on "Opening of Service," "Lord's Day," "Close of Service," then moving to the church year. The matter was ultimately decided by adopting the traditional Lutheran model as in *SBH*, although not without opposition even by some who were already using *SBH*.

An equally important decision, which significantly affected the selection of hymns to be included in the new book, was the adoption of the Hymn of the Day in the liturgy of Holy Communion.[14] The use of

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[11] From the Preface to *Contemporary Worship 1: Hymns.*

[12] This format was, in fact, a recent development on the American Lutheran scene as the primary format for the congregational editions of their hymnals. American Lutherans, as well as the Scandinavian countries and Germany, had followed the tune-text or text-only model until the late nineteenth century, with accompaniments in a separate volume for the organist.

[13] The role of the publishers as they influenced a variety of factors related to *LBW* has yet to be told. Their influence, then as now, was often prompted by fiscal concerns since hymnals and supplements accounted for, and continue to account for, a significant part of the income of all Lutheran publishers.

[14] For information on the origin and use of the Hymn of the Day, see Carl Schalk, *The Hymn of the Day and Its Use in Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1983).

the Hymn of the Day (*de tempore* hymn) had been promoted since the late 1950s as a replacement for the more protestant tradition of the Sermon Hymn. Its adoption for use in *LBW* was the first time in American Lutheranism that the Hymn of the Day was officially an integral part of the liturgy. Two listings of hymns were prepared, the first a contemporary adaptation of the traditional Lutheran *de tempore* series, the second, a series designed for the three-year lectionary.[15] This action meant that at least 52 hymns had to be included that reflected the intimate connection between the Scripture readings, the sermon, and the Hymn of the Day.

A matter of greater importance to many on the hymn committees had to do with the melodic form of the Reformation chorale. The constituents of the LCA and ALC came from traditions that—to the extent the sixteenth-century chorales were sung at all—used the isometric, or even-note, form of the sixteenth-century chorales that developed during the period of Pietism. The entire history of the LCMS, however, was intimately tied to the use of the original, rhythmic forms developed at the time of the Reformation. *LBW* ultimately included 26 such chorales, most in their historic rhythmic form. This infusion of historic Lutheran texts and melodies was erroneously interpreted by some as a concession to pressure from the LCMS.[16] The support for use of the original rhythmic forms of the chorale melodies actually cut across synodical lines and was the overwhelming, although not always the unanimous, choice of the music committee. In some cases (for example, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" or "Wake, Awake, For Night Is Flying"), the melodies appear in both rhythmic and isometric forms. The recovery in *LBW* of a significant number of early Reformation chorales together with their original rhythmic melodies, and the official use of the Hymn of the Day, constituted probably the most significant hymnic contributions of *LBW*.[17]

Types of settings

The kinds of settings to be fashioned for the hymns of *LBW* had to take into account whether they would be sung in unison or in parts—or at least have the capability of being sung in parts. While some looked for a one-kind-fits-all solution, the actual hymnody reflected a more complicated situation. In certain periods of Lutheran history (sixteenth century), hymns were sung in unison and unaccompanied; in later periods (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), keyboard accompaniments gradually became the norm; some hymns of the English tradition, for example, required unison singing, while others suggested singing in harmony. In certain cases, specific harmonizations had become associated with particular hymns.

The hymns of *TLH* contained simple four-part chordal settings that were largely indistinguishable from one another; their

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[15] The initial compilation of both series was the work of Edward Klammer, member of the Hymn Music Committee. Unfortunately, while the terminology of "Hymn of the Day" has been quite generally accepted in parish practice, the title in Sunday bulletins often serves simply to mask what is essentially the old "Sermon Hymn" under a new guise.

[16] Eugene Brand notes, "I think of no concessions made on the basis of Missouri pressure alone. That is especially true in regard to the number of 'chorales' in the hymn collection." "Liturgical Reconnaissance," 13, note 29.

[17] This inclusion and availability of a large number of early Reformation chorales in *LBW* can hardly be overstated. The otherwise highly regarded *Church Book* (1868) included only six, the *CSB* (1917) seven, the *SBH* nine, and now *LBW* contained 26. See Schalk, *God's Song in a New Land*, Appendix E.

note-against-note character meant that they could easily be sung in parts by the congregation, but they almost never were. The *SBH* reflected a greater diversity of musical settings. Since the initial thrust of the hymn committee's work in its early years centered on more experimental material, the Hymn Music Committee encouraged a broader range of musical accompaniments than previously found in either of the predecessor hymnals. As a result, a number of the musical settings in *LBW* reflect less-usual harmonies, some settings are in three parts instead of four, thinner-textured accompaniments are used for chant melodies, and so on. The general conclusion of many who have used these less-usual accompaniments over the years in parish worship is that, in spite of the initial enthusiasm for the variety that they represented, they have largely proved to be ineffective in leading congregational singing.

The question of whether to include harmonizations by J. S. Bach was another issue. The *SBH* included a significant number of them. Bach harmonizations were, after all, it was argued, part of the Lutheran heritage of song. (They were certainly part of historic Lutheranism's choral tradition, but not its congregational song tradition.) The view that Bach's chorale harmonizations were essentially choral settings not intended for congregational singing prevailed, and one finds only two included in *LBW*.

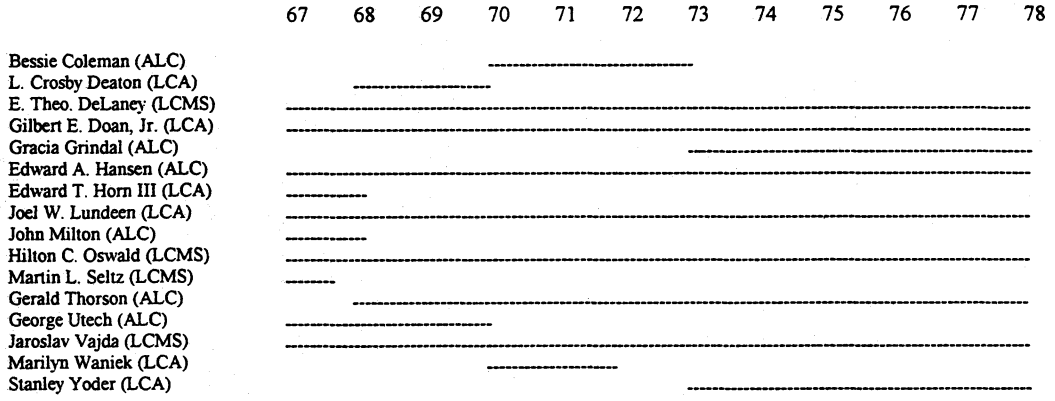
An issue that came up late in the project was the possible inclusion of guitar chords for certain hymns—a response to the times in which the guitar had become the ubiquitous instrument of choice for many young people. Despite the obvious fact that the guitar is an ineffective instrument for accompanying congregational singing, some 39 tunes included guitar chords. I have yet to hear any of these hymns sung by congregations accompanied with guitar. In retrospect, the decision seems to have been a gratuitous gesture in the direction of relevance and contemporaneity. The one hymn that was an obvious choice to be sung with guitar—"Silent night, holy night"—was left chordless!

Every hymnal, including *LBW*, reflects the understandings of those who shaped it—their understandings of what the relative balance should be between the church's heritage of congregational song, both texts and tunes, and the impetus to move that heritage along through new expressions from its own time. While, for the most part, of the "new" songs from each generation relatively few find their way into the more permanent treasury of the church's song, and far fewer into the immediately subsequent hymnals, that in no way abdicates each generation's obligation to sing its own song. What hymnals can do is chart the progress (or regress) of that responsibility. In so doing they give us a more realistic view of the situation. Songs heralded by a new generation may or may not ultimately prove to be musically or theologically appropriate. Hymnals help to sort out the enthusiasms of a given time from more substantive contributions.

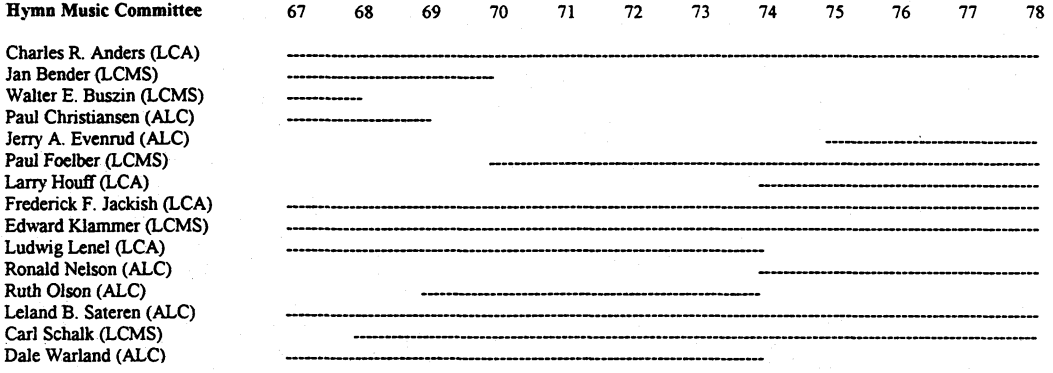
What the future holds for the successors of *LBW*—in all the church bodies who contributed toward its shaping—is difficult to say. The reciprocal enthusiasms and cautions that shaped *LBW* will no longer be in place in quite the same way. What every new Lutheran hymnal or revision must surely reflect is a continued grounding in the hymnic heritage of the Reformation and a balanced view of the contributions of each new time. That is a necessary mission for every hymnal committee. But it will be neither an easy task nor, in many circles, a popular one.

CHART OF YEARS OF SERVICE OF HYMN COMMITTEES MEMBERS

Hymn Texts Committee



Hymn Music Committee



Baptism: Back to the Future

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The principal purpose of this article is to honor the rite for Holy Baptism in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (*LBW*, 1978) and those on the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) and its Liturgical Texts Committee (LTC)[1] who prepared it, and to consider whether the baptismal rite met the goals set for it. A secondary and minor purpose is to compare the *LBW* rite with the baptismal rites in the two predecessor books of the *LBW*—the *Service Book and Hymnal* (*SBH*, 1958), which relegated the baptismal rite to its *Occasional Services Book* (*OSB*, 1962), and *The Lutheran Hymnal* (*TLH*, 1941) as found in its companion volume *The Lutheran Agenda* (*TLA*, n.d.); and, also to a minor degree, with the new provisional materials in *Renewing Worship 3: Holy Baptism and Related Rites* (*RW3*, 2002), which is being reviewed and revised even as this is being written.

Toward all these ends, an attempt will be made to evaluate the first principal goal of *LBW* itself—"To restore to Holy Baptism the liturgical rank and dignity implied by Lutheran theology, and to draw out the baptismal motifs in such acts as the confession of sin and the burial of the dead,"[2]—by examining five hallmarks of the *LBW* rite, which I enumerated in a previous article in *Currents*:[3] paschal essence, pneumatic nature, corporate understanding, eucharistic context, and ritual character.

From even a cursory examination, it is clear that the *LBW* took bold new steps in the creation of the rite for Holy Baptism and that *RW3* seems thus far to be building partially on *LBW* baptismal foundations. The two previous rites in *OSB* and *TLA* did not provide much foundation for the *LBW*.

Did the *LBW* succeed in its goal "To restore to Holy Baptism the liturgical rank and dignity implied by Lutheran theology . . ."? And what are the rite's strengths and its weaknesses?

Overall comments

In many ways, the evaluation of *LBW* can only be done by the pastors who lead its rites and the congregations who participate in them. Hence, I have done a brief random survey of some parish pastors who have used the *LBW* baptismal rite since it was first published in 1978.

One major difference between the *LBW* and the two predecessor rites (*OSB* and

[1] The late Rev. Hans Boehringer was the main drafter. Other members of the LTC included John Arthur, Eugene Brand, Charles Ferguson, Edward Horn III, A. R. Kretzmann, L. R. Likness, Herbert Lindemann, Paul Peterson, Philip Pfatteicher, Fred Precht, Ralph Quere, Krister Stendahl, Clifford Swanson, Johan Thorson, and Ralph Van Loon.

[2] The goals are on page 8 of *LBW*.

[3] S. Anita Stauffer, "Holy Baptism in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 13:6 (December 1986), 339–45. These hallmarks are my own construct.

TLA) is that they provided separate baptismal rites for infants and adults, while *LBW* provided just one rite for all ages. *RW3* follows in the *LBW* tradition. The differences in these approaches are highly significant, though they will not be discussed further here. Clergy seem to be in general agreed that the unified rite is preferred.

In previous rites, infant Baptism seemed to be the norm, while in *LBW,* with its multivalent meanings and richer ceremonial, adult Baptism seems more the norm, even if the respective numbers of candidates do not make that apparent. The *LBW* rite could well be the culmination of the process of the adult catechumenate.

A second general impression is that in *LBW,* Holy Baptism is central to the book. There are collects that remind us of our Baptism (e.g., p. 47, # 199, 200); and many Psalm prayers, unfortunately found only in the *Ministers Edition* (*LBW-ME,* 1978), have images related to water, the fountain of life, the flow of living water, etc. In a sense the Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness is a form implicitly for the renewal of baptismal vows, as is the recitation of the two commonly used ecumenical creeds. Receiving the body and blood of Christ is a form of renewing our Baptism, and the Paschal Blessing at the conclusion of *LBW* Morning Prayer (pp. 138–41) is an explicit remembrance of Baptism, as is the address from Romans 6 as the pall is placed on the coffin in the burial rite. Also, confirmation is now properly called "Affirmation of Baptism." In the Vigil of Easter in the *LBW-ME*, Holy Baptism is central to its understanding and enactment. Thus, it is clear that the second part of *LBW*'s goal has been met—that the baptismal motifs be emphasized in such rites as confession and burial.

Music must not be forgotten.[4] *TLH* had six baptismal hymns, so identified. With *SBH*, the number was four. *LBW* contains nine baptismal hymns, with several references to others. The character of the music and texts is different, with *LBW* hymns being more joyful and less penitential overall than predecessors *TLH* and *SBH*. Consider, for example, the triumphant baptismal hymn "We Know that Christ is Raised" (*LBW* #189), with its rousing Hallelujahs at the conclusion. Also, note that "Even As We Live Each Day" (*LBW* #350), a clearly baptismal text, is appointed for use in the burial liturgy.

It is interesting that the *LBW*'s baptismal roots are deeper than those in the *OSB* and *TLA*—the ILCW dug to roots of the ancient church, not just to those of the sixteenth century. As well, the *LBW* was prepared in the context of then- contemporary ecumenical bodies, particularly the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET) and the Consultation on Ecumenical Hymnody (CEH).[5]

These are some of the positive comments about the *LBW* rite for Holy Baptism. On the other hand, the rite has far more potential than has been realized in its twenty-five years of use. One frequently hears, "If only pastors would read the Notes on the Liturgy [in the *LBW-ME*] and the *Manual on the Liturgy*. . . ."[6] While great strides have been made to put Baptism at the center of congregational life, much more pastoral and educational emphasis is

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[4] Regarding *LBW* hymns, see Marilyn Kay Stulken, *Hymnal Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991).

[5] For more on this, see Philip H. Pfatteicher's *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 809.

[6] Philip H. Pfatteicher and Carlos R. Messerli, *Manual on the Liturgy, Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979).

needed. Pastors and chairpersons of parish worship committees should be expected to read and follow the guidance of these and other valuable resources.[7]

A slight internal contradiction within *LBW* is that the laying on of hands and anointing with the prayer for the Spirit (in the baptismal rite) *is* confirmation; why, then, do we continue to have a later so-called confirmation rite for use with adolescents? Do they really need a repetition of the handlaying and prayer for the Spirit? As an eminent liturgical scholar once put it, "Confirmation is a rite in search of a theology."

Evaluation of the hallmarks

1. Paschal essence. As St. Paul wrote to the Romans (6:3–5), Baptism is our participation in the Paschal mystery—we are baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ. Luther echoed this when he wrote, "The sinner does not so much need to be washed as he [*sic*] needs to die, in order to be renewed and made another creature, and to be conformed to the death and resurrection of Christ, with whom he [*sic*] dies and rises again through Baptism."[8] Paschal references pervade the baptismal rite, but it is notable also in the suggestion that the Vigil of Easter is the context par excellence for the baptismal celebration. *LBW* also suggests other days for Baptism, but the Easter Vigil provides an unequaled baptismal context. Focus on the paschal essence is especially meaningful when baptizing adults and particularly poignant with infants.

The paschal essence is especially evident in the prayer of thanksgiving over the water (largely the emended text of Luther's Flood Prayer).[9] Restoration of this prayer to our baptismal rite is one of the greatest accomplishments of the *LBW*, for which the ILCW and especially the LTC should be proud. *RW3* is proposing to include several alternate prayers over the water, but Luther's Flood Prayer (albeit emended for *LBW*) cannot be equaled. The challenge with all prayers over the water is that some pastors omit them in order to save time. The Flood Prayer and the Eucharistic Prayer are two texts which ought *never* to be omitted!

It is not clear to what extent the paschal essence has become clear to members—even in large parishes, who hear the words over and over again. More adult baptisms will help change that. With infants, it difficult for some people to understand Baptism as anything but cute and sentimental. As well, when pastors omit the prayer of thanksgiving over the water, the paschal dimension is greatly diminished.

2. Corporate understanding. Holy Baptism is always simultaneously personal and corporate. The *LBW* made major steps toward strengthening the corporate understanding by its appointing the Sunday assembly as its setting, the use of baptismal festivals, the use of plural language in referring to the neophytes, the welcome by the congregation, and the use of the Apostles' Creed. The culture's privatized understanding of Baptism is hard to maintain with all of the corporate facets and emphases. However, baptismal festivals are sometimes a little too corporate. Efforts should be made to avoid an assembly-line atmosphere. On the other hand, such festivals do enhance the corporate under-

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[7] For example, Ralph R. Van Loon and S. Anita Stauffer, *Worship Wordbook* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995).

[8] *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), in *Luther's Works*, ed. Abdel Ross Wentz, vol. 36 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959): 68.

[9] The English translation of Luther's *Sintflutgebet* is provided in Pfatteicher and Messerli, *ML*, 370n6.

standing of the sacrament. Baptism is always personal, but never private; always corporate, but never anonymous.

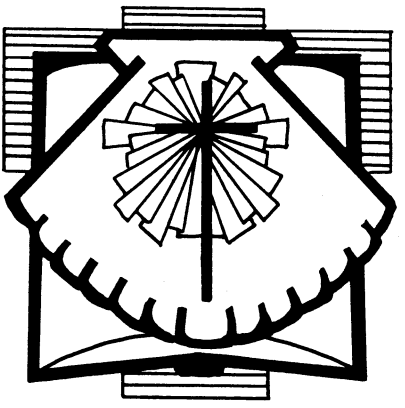
Regarding the welcome by the congregation, the text in *RW3* is called not a welcome but an acclamation, making the texts difficult to compare. However, *LBW* is to be credited for introducing the congregational welcome; predecessor books did not include any such text, and the *RW3* acclamation serves as a sort of welcoming.

3. Pneumatic nature. The Holy Spirit's role is apparent in the *LBW* rite, at least to those who pay close attention to the texts and actions of it. There are two epicletic prayers invoking the Spirit. The first is in the prayer of thanksgiving over the water (section 9), in which the Father, whose Spirit moved over the waters of creation and anointed Jesus in his own Baptism, is asked to send the Spirit now, that new life may be given to the baptized. These are major improvements over *OSB* and *TLA*.

A second epiclesis for the Spirit (section 13) is prayed during the laying on of hands. The neophyte is given not only new life in Christ but also the seven gifts of the Spirit.

Immediately after the handlaying, the sign of the cross is made, which may be applied by anointing with oil. Here again is reference to the Spirit, this time in the past tense: "you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit" (section 14). There are multivalent meanings to this anointing and signation (including christological), and its history is quite complex, but it is at least a mark of the gift of the Holy Spirit received in Baptism, making us God's own people (see 2 Cor 1:21–22). We are "branded" as forever belonging to the God who made us. This seems to have been well received by congregations.

These actions related to the Holy Spirit



—in the water, imposition of hands, signation, and anointing—are not simply liturgical "extras." The Holy Spirit comes not only in the water bath but also in these actions of the Spirit. Water Baptism and Spirit Baptism are a single indivisible action of the single indivisible Triune God. The Spirit elements are really confirmation elements, a significant return to the early Christian unified sense of Baptism, before confirmation degenerated in the medieval period into a delayed, separate rite for the gift of the Spirit. The ILCW showed great wisdom in looking back into early Christian history for what would shape the future church.

4. Eucharistic context. Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist are closely connected. "The gift of Communion is the birthright of the baptized."[10] Even when a young child is baptized but not yet admitted to the Lord's Table, the Eucharist remains the culmination of Holy Baptism. The connections are several. There is an ecclesial connection: Baptism creates the church, and Eucharist nourishes and sustains it. There is also a soteriological connection:

[10] *LBW-ME*, p. 31.

Baptism brings, and Holy Communion renews, the gift of forgiveness. Because of such connections, the *LBW* expects that Holy Baptism will be celebrated within the context of the Eucharistic liturgy (which is, of course, the case in the Easter Vigil, the primary time for Baptism).

Water Baptism and Spirit Baptism are a single indivisible action of the single indivisible Triune God.

This hallmark is met when Baptism is in fact celebrated within the Eucharistic context. All too often it is not, but that is the fault of the pastor and other worship planners, not of the book.

5. Ritual character. The *LBW* baptismal liturgy is more than words. Its rich use of actions and signs distinguishes it sharply from the *OSB* and *TLA* rites. In *OSB* and *TLA*, there is a handlaying in both the adult and infant rites. In both books, there is a permissive ("may" rubric) sign of the cross on the forehead (and breast, in *TLA*). But these actions seem more central to the rite in *LBW*; for one thing, they are not "may" rubrics in *LBW*.

In *LBW* there are other ritual actions. The water is to be used abundantly. Hence, the Flood Prayer, with the possibility of the presider making the sign of the cross with his/her hand in the water of the font—and the amount of water is expected to be abundant.[11] As Luther wrote, "It would be more fitting to immerse in the water than to pour with it, for the sake of the completeness and perfection of the sign."[12] Elsewhere, Luther calls for *sub*mersion—completely covering the body with water; *im*mersion is dipping part of the body in the water but not completely covering it.[13] *LBW* suggests pouring, but the Notes on the Liturgy in *LBW-ME* make immersion permissive. Both *OSB* and *TLA* speak of "applying water." *RW3* suggests immersion as the preferred mode while also making pouring permissive. If a parish does not have a font large enough for submersion or immersion, a larger temporary font can be constructed easily.[14] Such abundant use of water clearly speaks the "drowning" and incorporation into the death and resurrection of Christ that are essential aspects of the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

LBW reintroduced the ritual use of oil for the anointing. Oil has many biblical references and meanings. The sign of the cross with anointing with oil unites us with the crucified Christ, seals us with the Spirit, and starts us on life's faith journey in the way of the cross. As the *LBW-ME* points out, other uses of the sign of the cross (at the invocation, at absolution, at the benediction, etc.) "become acknowledgments and affirmations of Baptism."[15] Such an action may also be used at home (during meal and bedtime prayers, for example), thus lead-

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[11] See S. Anita Stauffer, *Re-examining Baptismal Fonts* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991) (video), and *On Baptismal Fonts: Ancient and Modern* (Cambridge, England: Grove Books, Joint Liturgical Studies), 1994.

[12] *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods* (1519), *Luther's Works* 35:50.

[13] *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* (1519), *Luther's Works* 35:29.

[14] See Stauffer, *On Baptismal Fonts*, 57.

[15] *LBW-ME*, p. 31, section 14.

ing people slowly into a more Christ-centered life.

Two other ritual actions are also provided in *LBW:* presentation of a white baptismal garment and presentation of the baptismal candle. The garment is a christological symbol: "Baptized into union with him, you have put on Christ as a garment" (Gal 3:27). Some sort of garment was used in the ancient church because adults were baptized, and they were naked, so some simple clothing was needed to dry them off and cover them for entrance into the main worship space (the baptistery was normally a separate building, albeit sometimes attached to the church.) In present times more infants than adults are baptized (although the latter is increasing), and the infants are usually already clothed in an elaborate white dress from home, so one wonders whether the white baptismal garment is now unnecessary and superfluous. Indeed, some on the ILCW Liturgical Texts Committee must have shared this thought, for the garment is provided for only with a "may" rubric, and that only in the *LBW-ME* Notes on the Liturgy, not in the rite itself.

The other action, which seems to be more cogent, is the presentation of the baptismal candle, lighted from the Paschal candle and thus a sign of the inherent connection between Baptism and Easter. As well, there are ethical dimensions of the candle: the neophyte is called to live and serve in such way that the light of Christ will be beamed into the world.

One danger in these ritual elements is that they will be more obvious and dramatic than the water bath itself. This can be avoided with the use of the thanksgiving over the water (a parallel to the Eucharistic Prayer) and the abundant use of water generously applied through immersion or submersion. All too often it is not, but that again is the fault of the pastor, not of the book. The renewed understanding of Holy Baptism may *require* the installation of larger and deeper fonts.

Conclusion

It seems clear that the *LBW* did succeed well in restoring "to Holy Baptism the liturgical rank and dignity implied by Lutheran theology, and to draw out the baptismal motifs in such acts as the confession of sins and the burial of the dead." This rite is a gem of the *Lutheran Book of Worship*. The Liturgical Texts Committee and indeed the ILCW itself and its project director, Eugene L. Brand, deserve thanksgiving and honor. And may eternal rest be granted to the main drafter of the rite for Holy Baptism, Hans Boehringer, and other members of the ILCW and the LTC who have gone to their rest, and may light perpetual shine upon them. Alleluia.

Lutheran Book of Worship: A Gift of the Church

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A Gift of the Church. That positive phrase was the title of the first section of the *Guide to introducing Lutheran Book of Worship* that congregations used back in 1978. I want to suggest some ways in which the *LBW* indeed has been a gift to Lutheran congregations across North America.

As we consider the short life span of *LBW,* I always try to put it in the context of the 2000-year-old conversation that we call the Christian liturgy. Assemblies of Christians around word and sacrament were encountering God in the event of communal worship long before this worship resource appeared, but *LBW* has served congregations in significant ways in this generation.

In his study of Christian worship, Dom Gregory Dix suggests that deep changes in worship patterns generally take from 70 to 100 years.[1] In a time that invites constant change, it may serve us well, before we dismiss the *LBW,* to befriend the treasures of the tradition that it has bequeathed to us and cultivate the seeds that still have potential to bear fruit.

Key things that were emphasized in *LBW* include the following: baptismal accents in various liturgies; centrality of both word and sacrament each Lord's day; a clear Paschal focus; use of lay assisting ministers; fuller congregational participation; variations that provide a spectrum from a simple rite to a festive and full rite; ecumenical convergence; fuller use of psalms; appeal to all the senses; expanded use of the Bible in liturgy and lectionary; new liturgical music and hymns; a strong use of trinitarian language; more inclusive language; a stress on thanksgiving; a fuller resource for daily prayer; rich rites for Holy Week and the Triduum.[2] These and other aspects of the *LBW* are gifts for the worship life of the church. Gordon Lathrop writes that "the real intention of the gifts of the *LBW* is the surprising encounter with God . . . in the gospel of the crucified and the life of the Trinity."[3]

Baptismal focus

A stated goal of *LBW* was "to restore to Holy Baptism the liturgical rank and dignity implied by Lutheran theology, and to draw out the baptismal motifs in such acts as the confession of sin and the burial of the dead."[4] Various rites in the *Occasional Services* book such as "Recognition of

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[1] Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre, 1945), xv.

[2] *Encountering God: The Legacy of Lutheran Book of Worship for the 21st Century,* ed. Ralph Van Loon (Minneapolis: Kirk House, 1998), 6, 43, 49.

[3] *Encountering God,* 49.

[4] Lutheran Church in America, American Lutheran Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing; Philadelphia: Board of Publication/LCA, 1978), 8.

Ministries in the Congregation" or "Affirmation of Vocation in the World" put in ritual form the Lutheran theological stress on Christian vocation that is given in baptism. This has undergirded the use of lay assisting ministers in shared leadership roles with ordained presiding ministers.

Confession and forgiveness have been more closely tied ritually to baptism. While we have stressed theologically that daily confession and forgiveness reflect the baptismal structure or pattern of our lives in Christ, formerly worshipers did not see the connection in worship. As pastors have done the Brief Order of Confession and Forgiveness from the font and invited people to retrace the sign of the cross over their bodies at the baptismal naming of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the connection is being made. (The connection is even clearer when the lids on fonts are removed and water fills the font or pool. After all, we are not into dry cleaning!)

The recovery of the communal dimension of baptism has moved pastors and congregations to include baptisms within Sunday public worship. Private baptisms tended to make baptisms a biological family affair rather than a congregational act. In addition to family sponsors, some congregations are adding congregational sponsors to stress that this newly baptized person is now part of our community and our responsibility.

As I reflect on some nuances and contributions of the baptism liturgy in LBW, I see several things that have enriched worship life of congregations. More biblical images are put before us in Luther's Flood Prayer and remind the baptized that they are now inserted into that story as they pass through this saving flood. As adults come to faith and seek baptism, the missionary or evangelical character of baptism comes to the fore in making disciples. Congregations are rediscovering their "disciple-making mission" and their call to be catechumenal communities. Lay representatives who give the candle, pour the water, and welcome the baptized, and the whole congregation that witnesses the rite, underline that "in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor 12:13). The gift of grace in baptism draws us into the self-giving of God as we are swept up into Christ's mission for the world; the welcome at the end of the baptismal liturgy led by a representative of the congregation stresses the vocation of all Christians implicit in baptism. The laying on of hands with the "confirmation prayer" for God to pour out the Spirit on the baptized as a new Pentecost takes seriously the biblical call that we "live by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16) as we "have been born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). The possibilities for Christian identity are strong as people recall that prophets, royalty, and priests were anointed and that Christ was "the anointed one." As the newly baptized are anointed, they are reminded that they part of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" that they "may proclaim the mighty acts" of God (1 Pet 2:9).

All of this prompts a lively awareness of baptism's continuing relevance for Christian life and mission. If I were to say, "I was married," you might assume that I am now divorced or widowed. But while "I was married" on a certain date, I am still married. People are gaining new awareness that not only *were* they baptized, they *are* baptized. The various dimensions of the *LBW* baptismal rite have helped individuals and congregations grasp the rich gifts that God gives the church in Holy Baptism.

Word *and* Sacrament

Word and Sacrament go together. *LBW* by its layout suggests that the main Sunday

service be a service of both proclamation of the Word and celebration of Holy Communion. I had a professor who said that this was not merely a conjunction but a theological "and." We have seen congregations move from Word and "occasional Sacrament" toward every-Sunday celebration of the Word and Meal. Along with this more frequent celebration of both Word and Sacrament, we are discovering that younger children sense this gift in Communion and are being shaped by this gift of Christ's grace and presence. They get it. They know it is "for you". . . . and for them!

As this pattern of Word *and* Sacrament becomes the central focus of our Sunday assemblies, we also find that people of faith seek to have their weddings and funerals of loved ones in the context of a full liturgy of Word and Lord's Supper. The profound pairing of these means of grace is deepening worshipers' encounter with God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit.

Generations were deprived of the life-giving gifts of the mutuality of Word and Communion by the private mass or infrequent communion practice. Now, as in baptismal practice, we are discovering that congregations not only receive the Body of Christ but sense in profound new ways that they are being formed into the Body of Christ for God's mission in the world. That is a gift for the world.

The ELCA's *The Use of the Means of Grace* continues the trajectory set by the liturgies of *LBW* and suggests that new worship resources will build on the rich traditions that *LBW* has passed on from past generations.

Signs of unity

One of the gifts of *LBW* is its ecumenical vision shared with other Christian churches. Because all churches read the Scriptures and proclaim the Word, they thought that it would be beneficial to work toward a common lectionary. Now the gift to neighbors or co-workers from different denominations is that on Sunday they have likely read the same biblical texts, so conversations during the week can reflect on what God is saying to the churches.

Basic texts for the liturgy were translated by ecumenical committees for use in the various churches. Now when people visit other churches, many of them have similar liturgical texts, patterns for reading the Bible, and patterns for Sunday worship. In a world torn apart by tensions and divided over many issues, worship that provides a sign of unity is certainly a gift. Pastors and lay persons from different denominations can join together in Sunday text studies because they hold those texts in common.

Lay worship leadership

Lutherans along with other Protestants and Roman Catholics have been stressing that worship is the action of the entire Christian community. This was emphasized in a 1979 LWF statement: "We need to regain the concept of an acting assembly presided over by the pastor. For that concept to receive adequate ritual expression, unordained ministers must function in capacities of leadership as a matter of principle, not just to compensate for having only one pastor."[5]

LBW clearly calls for laity to fill assisting minister roles in most of its liturgies. In most congregations lay persons present the first and second lessons. That is a return to the ancient communal leadership model of the early church. However, there are some things we still can do more effectively.

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[5] *A Lutheran Agenda for Worship* (Geneva: Department of Studies, Lutheran World Federation, 1979), 29.

Often a lector is simply given a text without any shared study or guidance for how the lector can most effectively proclaim it. I have found that where the pastor or another leader in the congregation meets with the lectors for a liturgical season, new insights are gained, and practicing various ways of presenting the texts makes for more dynamic communication of the Word.

In one of my classes we work on oral interpretations of the Word with seminarians. One student related an experience in his contextual education parish. He worked on an effective interpretation of the biblical lesson. After the service, a worshiper asked him what version of the Bible he had used. Caught off guard, he said he thought it was the NRSV. She asked if he was certain. He said he was confident that it was. Then she said, "I guess it was the way you read it that made it seem new." That could happen more often with preparation and practice.

The Prayers or the Prayer of the Faithful suggest that a lay assisting minister lead the petitions of the congregation. I find in my travels around the church that fewer pastors invite lay assisting ministers to lead prayers, although some will have them pray prayers preprinted in publishing-house inserts or other sources. There is opportunity here to deepen the congregation's understanding of and practice of prayer. A group of members could be recruited, for example, to serve as the congregation's intercessors for a year and then meet during that year to deepen their understanding and experience of prayer. They could help each other discern what the needs of the congregation are and ways to lift up the world to God in the congregation's communal prayer. This pattern is new for us, and we are still searching for ways to make it more effective. We might find that people ask, echoing Jesus' disciples, "Pastor, teach us to pray."

In the liturgies of Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Prayer at the Close of the Day, lay people can fill all the leadership roles. If preaching is part of those liturgies, that would be the one thing the pastor would do!

In the Baptism liturgy, there is clear involvement of the whole congregation as a baptizing community. It is no longer a private pastoral act done away from the congregation into whose life and mission this person is received. The lay representative who lights the baptismal candle from the Paschal candle is ideally a symbol of the congregation's continuing care for the newly baptized. For an infant, this may be a person teaching Sunday School. The lay representative who welcomes the newly baptized ideally will be an elected officer or council member who represents all the baptized. These are all ways in which the acting assembly at worship shares leadership with the clergy.

God's mission in worship

In *The Use of the Means of Grace*, the ELCA's 1997 statement on the practice of Word and Sacrament, the last section is titled "The Means of Grace and Christian Mission."[6] The gift that *LBW* offers includes the dismissal at the end of the Sunday liturgy, which stresses this mission and vocation of the baptized as a lay assisting minister sends the congregation into the new week: "Go in peace. Serve the Lord."

The mission of God in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit sweeps the worshiping congregation up into that mission as it hears and celebrates the proclaimed Word and Holy Communion. The prayers pay attention to the congregation's

[6] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament* (Chicago: ELCA, 1997), 55.

call to ministry in the world as they lift up the laments, intercessions, praise and thanksgiving of this mission people.

The baptismal liturgy certainly has added a strong Lutheran baptismal motif in ritually stressing our vocation and mission that arises out God's grace for us. The lay representative says, "Through Baptism God has made these brothers and sisters members of the priesthood we all share in Christ Jesus, that we may proclaim the praise of God and bear his creative and redeeming Word to all the world." Then all the baptized respond: "We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as fellow members of the body of Christ, children of the same heavenly Father, and workers with us in the kingdom of God."

These dimensions of *LBW* are still shaping us into a more missional people. The liturgy for us is not simply a sixty-minute program to entertain or enlighten us; rather, it draws us more deeply and passionately into the mission of God for us and through us in the world.

LBW's gift of past and future

LBW has served countless assemblies of worshipers throughout North America as they have encountered God through the means of grace. Faith has been given, lives have been strengthened, hope has been renewed, communities have been formed, and mission has been engaged.

More of the gifts of *LBW* are enumerated in more expansive descriptions of its past gifts and future promise. Several authors collaborated on a book titled *Encountering God: The Legacy of Lutheran Book of Worship for the 21st Century*,[7] which will reward readers who want to explore more fully the contributions of *LBW* to the worship life of congregations. Another book that picks up the trajectories of *LBW*'s contributions to congregational worship and mission is one authored by professors of worship from the eight ELCA seminaries and one Canadian seminary. *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission*[8] reflects how the gifts of *LBW* have brought us this far by faith and open up a vision of worship appropriate to the twenty-first century.

I have talked positively about gifts of *LBW*. Some have spoken of its failure for our present time. But I keep wondering whether there is any "perfect" worship resource. I wonder whether such failures are of the *LBW* (or other resources) or of practice? Can any book renew a congregation or give faith? Or is a worship resource a faithful servant open to serving a congregation that seeks to center its life on the encounter with God through the Spirit-empowered means of grace? In this sense a good liturgy is not in any book or bulletin but rather in the gracious promises of the gospel proclaimed and enacted in the Christian assembly.

Any worship resource is like notes on a music score. It is not music until it is sung and danced. It is not liturgy until the Word is proclaimed and Sacraments rightly administered and the Spirit breathes life into the valley of dry bones. Only then are we graced with the power to raise the dead and give new life. And that is exactly the way that *LBW* has sought to serve congregations for these twenty-five years. Because lives are deeply shaped by worship, the continuing effects of *LBW* in the lives of people and congregations will bear fruit for many years to come, even after new worship resources continue the faithful service of *LBW*. Indeed, this book has been a good and faithful servant! Thanks be to God!

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[7] See note 2.

[8] *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission*, ed. Thomas Schattauer (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

Preaching Helps

First Sunday in Advent—The Epiphany of Our Lord, Series C

"900 Words": Initial Reflections of an Emerging Editor

I'm spending my Sundays preaching in a congregation that is earnestly hoping that their bishop will give them a pastor for Christmas. Their eyes are peeled for any sign of activity; their ears are attuned for any whisper of news. They hang on for any hint of their future. As I ponder preaching in the Advent and Christmas seasons, I wonder: What could possibly make us that anxious and expectant for the coming of the Christ? A healthy dose of uncertainty, perhaps? How about some honest-to-goodness fretting over the future? Or maybe what we need is some overwhelming good news!

Here it is! To a world in which peace seems to be slipping, to a nation in which unemployment is on the rise, to congregations who know in their hearts that, if they keep on being who they are, they will someday cease to be, to pastors who are just plain tired, to people sick and shunned, oppressed and afraid, Christ comes! Christ comes as a babe so that God knows what it is to be human. Christ comes in Word and Sacrament so that we know how much we are loved. Christ comes in glory to make all creation whole and safe. All around us we find uncertainty and fretting. When we spend prayerful time with the readings, the good news of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany leaves us overwhelmed. Perhaps that's how we might spend some time this fall as we prepare ourselves to prepare God's people. Two fine contributors bring purpose to our prayers and offer counsel as we contemplate.

Glenn Monson is Pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Austin, Minnesota. A second-career pastor, Glenn played trombone professionally for more than fifteen years before beginning his studies at Luther Seminary. I came to know Glenn through his work in the ACTS Doctor of Ministry in Preaching Program, of which he is a recent graduate. In the course of his doctoral work, Glenn explored new forms of preaching, on one occasion effectively bringing his horn into the pulpit, and revealed new insights into the essential role that our listeners play in creating meaning in the preaching event. Glenn is married to Ruth and the father of Abby and Catherine. Glenn will be guiding us through Advent.

For Christmas and Epiphany, we accompany **Aaron Couch**, co-pastor at First Immanuel Lutheran Church in Portland, Oregon. Aaron describes himself as a father, a husband, and a pastor. I knew Aaron in seminary and am delighted to

come to know him again through one of my teaching partners, Melinda Wagner, who is Aaron's spouse and co-pastor at First Immanuel. Before attending Trinity Seminary, Aaron studied ancient Semitic language and literature, gifts he ably shares with us.

As I complete my first attempt at editing *Preaching Helps*, I find myself joyously fretting over my own uncertainties. For thirteen years as a parish pastor, I cherished this pre-chat room for preachers both for exegetical insights that are concise and relevant and for pastoral perspectives that both affirm and stretch me. I remember fondly the days of "prophetic reflections," which always turned the texts—and me—upside down! It is a bit humbling to assume the stewardship of a resource that many like myself find essential to a task and calling so important. I am grateful to Robert Smith for his own care of this coming together of preachers around God's Word and for being my wise and gentle guide as we make this transition. In one e-mail conversation, Bob mused that it might be time to consider giving *Preaching Helps* a new name. While that may have been good for Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Simon Peter, I have come to trust the name *Preaching Helps* as a faithful witness both to the gospel and to the power, promise, and privilege of preaching. I want to express my gratitude to my colleagues, Ralph Klein and Kadi Billman, for entrusting me with this task.

For years I wanted to write for *Preaching Helps*. I sort of felt I owed it to everyone from whom I was borrowing. I wondered how one gets the chance, whom one needs to know, what's the secret handshake. So, please, let me be clear. If you are interested in writing and have been waiting for an invitation, if you can name a voice that we need to hear, if you've written before and want to indicate how much you enjoyed it, please drop me a note at LSTC. I'd appreciate your partnership as we cultivate a company of contributors. How wonderful it would be to be overwhelmed by a long waiting list!

My biggest learning as an emerging editor is not to count the minutes, as I do as part of my preparation to climb into the pulpit, but instead to count the words. We're allotted an average of 1,200 per Sunday. That's 400 words for each pericope, 200 for exegesis and 200 for pastoral reflection. That's short. It requires clarity in thought, precision of language, deciding what's important and committing to that decision. I guess writing for *Preaching Helps* isn't that different from preaching, after all. As for this introductory essay, Peggy Eldredge, my other wise and gentle guide in this transition, indicates that I'm allotted 900 words. Clicking File > Properties > Information, I find that I'm eighteen words over! Do you think I need to go back and edit?

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First Sunday in Advent
November 30, 2003

Jeremiah 33:14–16
Psalm 25:1–9
1 Thessalonians 3:9–13
Luke 21:25–36

First Reading

All three readings underscore the importance of context. By itself, the brief reading from Jeremiah may seem uninspiring. When we understand that this word came to Jeremiah while he was under arrest in the court of the guard of King Zedekiah, during the siege of Jerusalem, because he kept saying there was no use resisting the army of Nebuchadnezzar, the passage changes remarkably. Apparently, King Zedekiah tried desperately to build morale during the siege by forbidding discouraging words. Looking honestly at the situation and then beyond it, Jeremiah declared that, though God would give the city and the land to the Babylonians, this was not the last word. In his *Handbook of the Old Testament*, Claus Westermann said of this passage, "The tired and bewildered people in the last stage of the siege were told, 'All is not lost!'" (p. 164) Zedekiah and Jeremiah illustrate the difference between false optimism and real hope. A most interesting play on words in the last phrase underscores this. The new name of the city will be "The Lord is our righteousness." The Hebrew word for righteousness is *zedech*. The phrase in Hebrew is "*Adonai* is our *zedech*," meaning perhaps that the Lord is our hope; Zedekiah is not.

The context of the second reading also is very important. 1 Thessalonians 1–3 reveals that opposition, persecution, and attacks by Satan are all very real experiences of these believers and their pastor and teacher, Paul. Paul longed to come and see his beloved children in the faith but was prevented, and so he sent Timothy to find out if they survived. Timothy returned with the miraculous report that the Thessalonians held fast to the faith. Verse 8 says, in a nutshell, what this means to Paul: "For we now live, if you continue to stand firm in the Lord." Our text continues this theme. The Greek reveals that the question mark belongs at the end of verse 10, not verse 9. Placing the question at the end of verse 10 focuses on the primary verb so that the verse reads, "How can we thank God enough?" The primary verb in verse 10, "pray," is a participle, indicating that this praying to God is done in the context of thanksgiving. Supported by the Greek word order, these verses read that Paul is rejoicing exceedingly, night and day, for the faith of the Thessalonians and, in that state, prays to see them in order to continue to build them up. As the rest of the passage makes clear, Paul's concern is that they not falter in their faith. Paul does not pray night and day to see them but rejoices night and day that God has sustained them in the faith.

The Gospel parallels Jeremiah in that Jesus distinguishes between false optimism and real hope. Luke 21:5–6 provides the context as Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple, saying: "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down." King Zedekiah forbade discouraging talk about the city of Jerusalem under siege by the Babylonians, and we can be sure that Jesus' talk of destruction was forbidden by the chief priests and scribes. Again, there was a denial of imminent destruction. The stark contrast between those who welcome the coming of the Son of Man and those who do not makes a case for the difference between false optimism and real hope. While some "faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the

world," believers are encouraged to "stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Pastoral Reflection

What is the difference between false optimism and real hope? What is the difference between being merely optimistic in a shallow wishful way and the hope that comes from knowing the Triune God? Imagine a retired couple; the wife is dying of a chronic illness and the husband simply can't bear the thought of life without her. He is angry that at the last doctor's appointment the physician said, "She's dying, and there's nothing we can do." He wants somehow to forbid this kind of talk. Or, imagine a severely dysfunctional family situation such as alcoholism. Family members pledge to one another not to tell "the secret about Mom," which, of course, everyone knows. But real hope comes from speaking the truth and getting Mom to treatment.

The ability to call a thing what it actually is, is a necessity of real hope. False optimism is perpetuated when we insist on calling evil good and good evil. Our tendency as fallen beings, as those whose bondage to sin is real, is to insist that real hope comes by refusing to look at evil and call it what it is. This is not so. The Cross invites us to call a thing what it is and then believe that God is at work even there, in the darkest, most difficult times. Our North American culture is particularly adept at refusing to call evil what it is and refusing to take it seriously, lest we somehow became "less optimistic"! Christians can offer a hopeful alternative by being willing to live a life that believes that God is at work, yet without denying that pain and grief, hardship and turmoil, tragedy and death are part of life.

In reflecting on the difference between false optimism and real hope revealed in these texts, I am struck by the image of a jigsaw puzzle. Wintertime in our house is a time for working puzzles. Starting a puzzle is always a bedlam of cardboard confusion. In difficult puzzles, pieces are even cut to keep one from seeing the true shapes of the pieces at first. But as one fits them together, the whole picture begins to emerge.

Perhaps a way of describing a "puzzling" state of affairs, a place of confusion and difficulty, whether it be Jerusalem under siege, Thessalonica under persecution, or the coming of the Son of Man, is to use the image of a puzzle. Real hope, perhaps, can be described as taking a look at all "the pieces" without flinching, realizing that God's design will in time emerge. Imitating Paul, who offers extravagant praise to God even in the face of opposition and persecution, we, too, can keep our eyes on what God is doing in the world. Through puzzling days, days under siege, and times of "distress among the nations," we need to proclaim that God is at work now and will be to the coming of the Son. This is finally the basis for real hope. GM

Second Sunday in Advent
December 7, 2003

Malachi 3:1–4
Luke 1:68–79
Philippians 1:3–11
Luke 3:1–6

First Reading

Malachi is primarily written to the corrupt priests of Israel. The prophet calls the priests those "who despise [the Lord's] name" (1:6). The priests are accused of causing "many to stumble" and of corrupting the covenant of the Lord (2:8). Malachi says that these prophets have "wearied the Lord with [their] words" (2:17) "by saying,

'All who do evil are good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them.' Or by asking, 'Where is the God of justice?'"

Our text is an announcement that the messenger of the Lord, and subsequently the Lord himself, will suddenly come to his temple. Ironically, this messenger is one in whom the priests claim to be delighting, and the Lord is one they claim to seek. The prophet, however, is skeptical of their welcome for the Lord and his anointed and reminds them that the new arrivals will purify these descendants of Levi as gold and silver are purified. In other words, they will be put through fire. The soap (in Hebrew, "lye") of the fuller will cleanse them of all impurities. The message is undoubtedly that this cleansing process will not be pain-free. But the result will be that the offerings given in Judah and Jerusalem will again be pleasing to the Lord, for they will be made by righteous hands.

The Epistle reading is primarily a testimony to Paul's affection for the Philippians. This congregation seems to have been the first established by Paul in Europe, and his relationship with them was a very happy and close one (Acts 16:11–13, 4:15–16). The work of the gospel in Philippi, however, was very difficult, as there was intense opposition to Paul's evangelistic efforts from the beginning (Acts 16:19–40). This persecution apparently only cemented Paul and the Philippians together even more closely. Thus, in today's text Paul praises them for their "sharing in the gospel from the first day until now." The word translated "sharing" is *koinonia*, a word that has found its way into popular Christian usage. Often translated "fellowship," "participant with," "partner," or "sharer," when a person is in *koinonia* with another, the sharing is much deeper than any of these translations suggest. Those who are in *koinonia* are in fellowship with Christ, the Spirit, one another, and with the work and suffering of the gospel. Paul's multiple thanksgivings for the faith of the Philippians are all the more profound as he gives thanks to God for the myriad ways in which they share with him in the gospel.

The central figure of the Gospel text is, of course, John the Baptist. Well before this time, at both the announcement of his birth to Zechariah (1:17) and on the occasion of his circumcision (1:76), we are told that John will be the one who "will go before the Lord to prepare his ways." This parallels the Malachi text and undoubtedly brings to mind, for its hearers, the promises and warnings of Malachi. As in Malachi, the people that first heard the announcement of this messenger and the Lord's imminent return were ill-equipped to welcome it. The list of names, from Tiberius to Annas and Caiaphas, was certainly no list of saints, and thus this messenger came to a people claiming to "delight" in the Lord but by no means living that way. But that is exactly why John came "proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."

The exilic prophet Isaiah is quoted here. Is the inference that the hearers are also "exiled in sin"? Claus Westermann says that these verses are a "message of God's new act . . . the new event, the exile's release and the new exodus, is already under way." God has forgiven the people and resolved upon their deliverance. "That God turns once again to his chosen people in forgiveness puts everything right" (*Handbook of the Old Testament*, pp. 34–36). All this can be seen from the simple purpose clause that is translated "repentance for the forgiveness of sins." The phrase might well be translated "repentance so that sins might be forgiven."

In other words, the purpose of repentance is that sins might be forgiven. God has decided to forgive. That is the Good News. GM

Pastoral Reflection

Paul's declaration, "that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless," being ready for the coming of the Lord, or being prepared for the announcement of God's arrival, are certainly themes that arise from these readings. Because Advent is a time of preparation, it is appropriate that at least one Sunday before Christmas be devoted to repentance.

We might ask our hearers whether they are ready for Christmas. What does that mean? Of course it means getting presents purchased and cookies baked and decorations up, but the challenge could be to stop and prepare one's heart. For a preacher this is no small task, for one could simply shame everyone from the pulpit for "being so secular," but where is the good news in that? Perhaps we could invite our hearers into the place where one can hear the weeping of Jesus over Jerusalem, or the lamenting of the Lord in the book of Hosea. Certainly a preacher would want to announce the fact that God has decided to forgive sin!

A preacher could talk about preparing for death by lifting up the lives of saints who have passed away in faith and hope. We could talk about preparation for receiving Holy Communion by lifting up our parents' and grandparents' memories of going to the church or the parsonage and meeting with the pastor the night before receiving Holy Communion. Aside from the impossibility of such a system in our day, and the fact that many of our churches practice weekly communion, this could be an excellent way to reflect on what preparation means for receiving the sacrament. We might also consider preparation for Holy Baptism. Many pastors provide pre-baptismal counseling with parents and/or candidates. This practice could be described and used to remind people of the promises of baptism and the promises of raising a child in the Christian faith. "Preparing the way of the Lord" could find its way into sermons on a wide variety of subjects.

A related but more difficult tack is to look at the costs of being unprepared. The Malachi passage particularly lends itself to this. The priests for whom this text was written did not consider themselves unprepared to meet the messenger of the Lord, and yet they clearly were. What is the warning here for us? Hubris? This kind of preaching is difficult not because people might not want to hear this word but because it is difficult to get back to the gospel of forgiveness if the sermon theme is unpreparedness. One might get to the gospel by showing how God prepares us through "fire" and "fuller's soap." The preacher might suggest that God's cleansing action, though painful, is really a gracious act. Like a surgeon who cuts out cancer, or a parent who disciplines a child, or a counselor who leads an intervention, painful means sometimes lead to life-giving ends. This could be a way of getting to the gospel word of God's love without giving up on the theme of unpreparedness.

Philippians gives the preacher fodder for celebrating our fellowship (*koinonia*) with other believers, with Christ, and within the work of the ministry. We are not alone. Faith is not merely "Jesus and me." Christian belonging means that I am attached to everything of the Spirit, and in this I rejoice. Tying in somewhat with the major theme of preparation, one could say that our partnership with other believers, with Christ, and with the Spirit is one way of ensuring that we are "prepared" for the coming of the Lord. GM

Third Sunday in Advent December 14, 2003

Zephaniah 3:14–20
Isaiah 12:2–6
Philippians 4:4–7
Luke 3:7–18

First Reading

The good news permeates the first reading, with perhaps the best news being the repeated phrase "The Lord is in your midst." To a people who have known the chastisement of the Almighty this is no small thing. The promise here is that not only has the Lord not abandoned the people, but God is in their very presence. This is significant, for the earlier chapters of this book make it clear that Israel has not been faithful in their worship of the one true God. Indeed, religious syncretism has been all the rage, and the Lord has not been pleased. However, "the Lord has taken away the judgments against" the people and has returned to Zion as a king and a warrior (v. 15). The promises of verse 19 are particularly noteworthy. The word translated as "the lame" is a substantive participle meaning the "limping ones." Recalling that Jacob limped after his encounter with the Lord (Gen 32:31), suddenly we understand the richness of this expression. Also, "the outcast" is another participle which can be translated the "banished ones," and this again widens and deepens the meaning. The promise to "make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth" (v. 20) is better translated "to give you a name and fame among all the peoples of the earth." Again, the connection with Genesis can be seen; Abram was told that his name would be made great (12:2), and that promise is reiterated here.

Philippians 4:4–7 is sometimes read at weddings, perhaps because of all the anxiety that often accompanies them. In writing this letter Paul had much more to be anxious about than whether the tuxedos fit! Opposition and persecution were commonplace in Philippi, and Paul was probably in prison as he wrote this. Paul's opening imperative, "Rejoice!" is in present tense, implying continual and habitual actions. From prison Paul exhorts these Christians to continual and habitual rejoicing, even though they are under duress. This is no small task. Yet, Paul urges them to "let [their] gentleness be known to everyone." The Greek word for gentleness is a rich word, shown by the many ways it has been translated: moderation, forbearance, magnanimity, reasonableness. The word is rare, used only five times in the New Testament. It is the ability to be steadfast in suffering, trusting in God despite it all. "Gentleness" does not do justice to the richness of this term. The second half of the text is well known, but again it is worth remembering that the verbs are present-tense imperatives, urging all to a continual practice of not worrying but letting requests be made known to God, while expecting the peace of God to continually guard our hearts and minds.

The Gospel is a continuation of last week's reading. Today we get to hear John the Baptist preach, and preach the Baptizer does! John launches into a tirade against the crowds who seek to be baptized, going right to the heart of their self-righteousness when he calls them "offspring/brood of vipers." John continues attacking their heritage as he mocks their proud phrase, "We have Abraham as our father/ancestor," and points out that "even now the ax is lying at the root of [their family] tree." What the Lord seeks is "good fruit," not simply pious prayers and hand wringing. The turning point in the text comes with the crowd's response: "What then should we do?" This is appropriate, for, as Luther said, "to do it no more is the

truest repentance." Their question was really, "What then are fruits which are worthy of repentance?" John tells them. Luke says that "even tax collectors came to be baptized." The word "even" indicates that these folks were unexpected, as certainly was their question of what fruits they could bear. Soldiers were also unexpected; like tax collectors, soldiers were known for their abuse of the public.

The last verse is a puzzle. After all John's exhortations, warnings, and admonishments, Luke summarizes it by saying that "with many exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people." Do John's words sound like gospel to you?

Pastoral Reflection

John is certainly a colorful character, and his words are powerful and intriguing. One way we preachers might get the creative juices flowing is to imagine ourselves as members of the crowd. How does it feel to be preached at like this? One can do this simply by changing a few words. For example, in the opening verse: "John said to [us who] came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" In this way an exegete can begin to feel the accusation of hypocrisy that came at these listeners. Since Pharisaism is a continual problem for Christians, the preacher would do well to identify with the crowd, not with John.

The question of the Gospel text, "What then should we do?" is a pregnant question for any preacher. How does one "bear fruits worthy of repentance"? How does one "live a life consistent with one's baptism"? This could send us back to our baptismal promises, where we "grow in faith, love and obedience to the will of God." It could also send us back to Romans 6, where Paul reminds us that we are "buried with Christ by baptism," and thus the Christian life involves a daily dying. One possible play on words could be, "Is the Christian life a 'Hoop' [to jump through] or a 'Hope' to live in?" Our natural Pharisaism makes it into a hoop more often than not.

The preacher might consider the identity Jesus is given here. When John talks about Jesus as one who will "clear his threshing floor" and "gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire," it sounds like the stuff of fire-and-brimstone preachers, something few Lutherans are known for. Does this picture of Jesus offer a corrective to our often completely inoffensive portrait of the Lord? Where is the place of wrath and judgment in contemporary preaching? Does the Holy Spirit and fire ever need to come down in our houses of worship?

Zephaniah is pure gospel. It is the announcement of God's decision to forgive and to live among God's people once again. This text might well serve as a fine example of our motivation for Christian living. God has decided to forgive. God has decided to live among us. God has become ruler and warrior for us. God has saved the lame, gathered the outcasts, changed our shame to renown, and restored our fortunes, thus we can do nothing but praise God's glorious name. There is much piety not born of gratitude, and perhaps that is the most likely to lead to Pharisaism. So an antidote to a hoop-jumping sort of expression of faith might well be thankfulness. Zephaniah gives us all the reasons we need to base our faithfulness on thanksgiving. GM

Fourth Sunday in Advent December 21, 2003

Micah 5:2–5a
Luke 1:47–55
Hebrews 10:5–10
Luke 1:39–45 [46–55]

First Reading

Micah 1–3 announces God's judgment upon Jerusalem for the sins of evil rulers, false prophets, and immoral priests. These people, who have been given the responsibility to shepherd Israel faithfully, have not done so, but instead have led Israel down the path of impure worship and social injustice. In chapter 4, judgment changes to God's promised restoration. Thus we are led to the text for this Sunday, where we are told of a new ruler who will come to shepherd Israel. He will not be like the wicked rulers of the past but "shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord." This ruler will come not from Jerusalem or from one of the large tribes of Israel but from Bethlehem, one of the little clans of Judah. Bethlehem reminds us of the Israelite monarchy's humble beginnings. The Hebrew word translated "little" in verse 2 can also be translated "insignificant," and thus it reminds us that the insignificant ones in the eyes of the world may indeed be God's messengers or servants. They minister in the strength of the Lord, therefore their own strength is not a prerequisite.

The Epistle reading begins "Consequently," begging us to look at the context of this passage. Earlier in Hebrews 10 we read that sacrifices according to the law and the first covenant cannot take away sin. After speaking again and again about sacrifices and offerings in this passage, finally at the end of the periscope we find out what offering is efficacious: "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ." This point is most effectively reiterated in the verses that follow (11–14) as the writer says that "by a single offering [Christ] has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."

The Gospel is the story of two miracles meeting for the first time. Both John and Jesus have now been conceived. John is more than six months along, we are told, and thus very capable of giving a swift kick or two to his mother, and Jesus has just been conceived. In fact, just prior to this text is the story in which Mary finds out about Elizabeth's pregnancy, and it is to rejoice with her kinswoman that she goes on this journey. But the miracles don't stop with the conception of these boys. A miracle of prophetic utterance and discernment is given to Elizabeth as soon as she is greeted by Mary. For her babe leaps in her womb, and at that she pours forth the ecstatic speech of one who has been gifted by the Holy Spirit. She is given knowledge of the amazing news of Mary, and the identity of Mary as "the mother of my Lord," as well as the fact that there would be "a fulfillment of what was spoken by the Lord." All this is certainly miraculous, for even Luke's "orderly account" offers no explanation for their knowledge other than being filled by the Holy Spirit.

The Magnificat is certainly one of the great pieces of poetry in Scripture, and it brings to mind the first text from Micah. As in Micah when the "insignificant" town of Bethlehem produced the righteous ruler, here we are told that God has "looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant." Like the Hebrew word for the "little ones," the Greek word for "lowly ones" refers to one "who is of no account in the eyes of the world." Also, just as the righteous ruler in Micah stood in the strength of the Lord, so it is "the Mighty One [who] has done great things for [Mary]." This whole passage is a

great testimony to the fact that God chooses "what is low and despised in this world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are" (1 Cor 1:26–31). In other words, God's favor is not dependent on our exalted status in the world's eyes. God's favor is not dependent on us being unexalted in the world's eyes. Luther makes this point beautifully in his commentary: "They, therefore, do [Mary] an injustice who hold that she gloried in her humility. She gloried neither in the one or the other, but only in the gracious regard of God. Hence the stress lies not on the word 'low estate,' but on the word 'regarded.' For not her humility but God's regard is to be praised" (*Luther's Works* 21:314). In the NRSV, the word Luther translated as "regarded" is "looked with favor" (v. 48).

Pastoral Reflection

Consider the many folks among us who think of themselves as lowly or insignificant. There don't seem to be any real boundaries to this feeling. The young can feel like they don't matter. The elderly often don't feel like they count. A man who is losing his capacity for work told me recently that he's beginning to feel "discarded." Often people who are unemployed feel this way, as do those who are chronically ill, or those who suffer with mental illnesses, or those who have been abused. There doesn't seem to be any limit to the number of ways a person can reach the point of feeling insignificant. These texts preach to this state of mind by saying, Look! God chose the insignificant ones. God chose the ones who the world thought were nothing. In fact, God even became one of the despised ones!

But there is another message here. Jürgen Moltmann says that the non-poor, non-oppressed, non-sick, non-disenfranchised of this world must be moved toward "an attitude of solidarity with their victims" (*The Crucified God*, p. 49). So these texts reach out not only to the marginalized of the world but also to those of us who sit in seats of power, exhorting us to remember that we are all brothers and sisters. Status can no longer be a dividing line for the believer, for it is not for God. Thus we can be free of the need to either hold on to our power or seek it. This can be very good news to the powerful, for even the powerful know that their status in the world is fragile. Think of the professional athlete who signs a multimillion-dollar contract one season and is forgotten the next when he gets hurt and can't play. Think of Hollywood's beautiful stars who are quickly forgotten when they start to lose their luster. Think of Washington, where the name of the winners of elections are on everyone's lips, but we can't remember them as soon as they leave office.

Hebrews is a wonderful passage for simply preaching the good news that in Christ sins are truly forgiven. How often we fail to take this deeply to heart. Instead "we try to absolve our guilt by bringing sacrifices with us [to worship]" and asking, "Doesn't it count, Lord? Doesn't it count?" This passage is an excellent opportunity to announce to our listeners that we do not need to bring our guilty consciences and good intentions to worship each week, hoping they are enough. Rather, we can simply trust that Christ's death is enough, and that the gospel is true—we are indeed forgiven! Perhaps the most important phrase in this pericope is the parenthetical phrase in verse 8, which notes that these offerings were "offered according to the law." The preacher may well point out that when one is in a loving relationship with another, one does not bring gifts to the beloved because of "the law." One brings gifts because one cannot help but express love for the beloved. Thus the point of this passage is not that offerings are not important, but that they do not recon-

cile us with the Beloved and do not forgive sins. We do not buy the affection or the forgiveness of the Beloved. We receive it by grace. Any offerings that follow such a gift function simply as an outpouring of thankfulness and praise. Perhaps the preacher could go after the persistent human predilection to bribe or coerce or otherwise control God. God's will remains God's. Thankfully, God's will is to forgive. GM

The Nativity of Our Lord Christmas Eve December 24, 2003

Isaiah 9:2–7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11–14
Luke 2:1–14 [15–20]

First Reading

Isaiah announces a word of hope, employing imagery that resonates deeply in the human psyche. Light speaks promise both for the darkness of shortened days and for the darkness of troubled times. In the eighth century B.C.E., the source of the darkness was the Assyrian invasion under Tiglath-Pilesar III. But following the death of the Assyrian monarch, the prophet declares that in the darkness, light has shined! The text then completes the metaphor by naming the light and identifying the specific content of the hope—defeat of the enemy, deliverance from oppression, and gift of peace. Although the language might suggest the birth of a royal heir, it more likely refers to a new king ascending to the throne (note the similarity to Psalm 2), probably Hezekiah. Hope for endless peace, justice, and righteousness is kindled and burns brightly.

This hope is assured not because of human power or wisdom but because "the zeal of the Lord of hosts" will accomplish it. Zeal is perhaps a weak translation for *qin'ah*, which can refer to jealousy, envy, even fury. Isaiah pictures God not as remote and unmoved but as passionately involved on behalf of Israel. It calls to mind how God speaks in Exodus 20—"I the Lord your God am a jealous God." It is not human agency but God's passion that will bring fulfillment to the people's hope.

The Gospel text narrates the surprising turn to God's passionate involvement with humanity. God's powerful work of salvation comes under the appearance of weakness. The royal child—heir to King David's throne and bearer of wonderful titles—is born in poverty. He is laid in a manger because there is no room in the inn. From the very beginning, Luke challenges all human expectations about how God will fulfill our hopes for endless peace, justice, and righteousness.

Within the larger context of chapters 1 and 2, Luke employs the story of Jesus' birth to proclaim who Jesus is, thus helping the reader to better appreciate the significance of the story to follow. As the story of the annunciation has already told us, Jesus' life and ministry are the embodiment of the work of God's Spirit. Locating the birth in Bethlehem permits Luke to return King David into the picture, reminding us of the promise that Jesus, descended from David, will "reign over the house of Jacob." He is Messiah—the one anointed to fulfill God's promises to deliver God's people. Referring to the Roman census that brings Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem represents Luke's attempt to locate Jesus' birth in time. It also identifies God's intention for salvation as global. Through Jesus, God will bring salvation to the whole world.

Pastoral Reflection
The letter to Titus invites us to consider how we are to live now that God has come to us in the life of Jesus. We are to renounce impiety and worldly passions. We are to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly. Once in worship I misread Titus, declaring that we are to be "uptight" instead of "upright" (a Freudian slip?). It occurs to me that this is how I have usually thought of the Pastoral Epistles, regarding them as representing an accommodation to the paternalistic values of Mediterranean family structures. I have never chosen to preach on the Pastorals, feeling that they feed a legalizing, overly controlled, uptight way of faith. This year, though, I'm rethinking that judgment.

If the language of "renouncing impiety and worldly passions" and being "self-controlled, upright, and godly" seems oppressive, perhaps it says more about us and our culture than it does about the intentions of the writer of the Pastoral Epistles. We live in a tremendously impious culture. (We are a people of unclean lips!) We have been led to believe that life should always be fun and entertaining and that we should never be denied anything we desire. Advertising tries to manipulate those desires, to control us for the financial gain of others, and never more than in the Christmas season. As a culture, we are out of control to such an extent that we endanger not only our own health—physical, emotional, and spiritual—but even the health of the earth. Titus carries a wonderful message for us. Our lives can never be the same, now that God has come to us in Christ. Because of God's passionate involvement with humanity, we have been delivered from futility and endless self-seeking, so that our lives might count for something.

Perhaps Titus also permits the preacher to say a surprising word on Christmas Eve. While the story of Jesus' birth from Luke's Gospel tells us what happened, more or less, Titus leads us into "and then what." Because God loves humanity with a love that is stronger and purer than any of our loves, God has acted with "zeal." In Jesus, God has come to give us new life. This life is a gift of God's mercy. It is not a matter of rules to obey to earn God's favor. God offers us a new life in which we are free from impiety and its cousins, cynicism and despair. God invites us into a life that is self-controlled, not ruled by ever-shifting inner desires—directionless, senseless, and finally meaningless (a tale told by an idiot . . .). As we enter deeply into the love of God through the practices of faith, such as prayer, Bible reading, and worship, God gives us back our truest self. When we receive Jesus, the most priceless gift of God, we also receive our own genuine life. AC

The Nativity of Our Lord Christmas Day December 25, 2003

Isaiah 52:7–10
Psalm 98
Hebrews 1:1–4 [5–12]
John 1:1–14

First Reading
There is a quality of majesty about the readings for Christmas Day, communicating a sense of calm and confidence, grounded in the conviction that in the gift of Jesus God has acted decisively to bring salvation to God's people. Second Isaiah sets the tone for the day, picturing the messenger who at last arrives, declaring peace, good news, and salvation. The root of this happy proclamation is simple: "God reigns." This is the source of great joy that calls forth singing. The Lord returns to Zion! The lan-

guage calls to mind the enthronement psalms, which celebrate the majesty of God's reign, received with joyful singing by the people of God and by the whole of creation (Psalms 93, 95–99).

Even as the fulfillment of the promise remains in the future, the prophet creates a surprising sense of immediacy by focusing on the arrival of the messenger. The proclamation is made with perfect verbs, in Hebrew expressing completed action. "The Lord *has comforted* his people, he *has redeemed* Jerusalem." The prophecy pictures the return of the exiles from Babylon as being like the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. However, instead of leaving in haste, the people will depart in dignified procession. God will go before them and be their rear guard (52:12). The return of the exilic community to the ruined city of Jerusalem is also the return of God to rule.

In a similar way, the reading from Hebrews declares what God has accomplished. While in the past the word of God was mediated through the prophets, now God has given direct and unmediated communication by the Son. There is a beautiful expression of reverence and awe in the exalted language, describing the Son as "the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being."

The high Christology of Hebrews is a wonderful match for the high Christology of the Gospel reading. In the first verses of John's Gospel, we are given the perspective from which we are to understand what is to follow. John wants us to know who Jesus is and who he is not. He is not simply a teacher of righteousness, a miracle worker, or a martyr. He is the Word made flesh—the creative and redeeming power of God present in a human life. Jesus as the Word does not provide information about God but is the very presence of God. In Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection, God makes God's self known to us. Jesus is the self-expression of God.

It is not enough, however, to read the Johannine prologue for its beautiful language and high Christology. In the prologue we encounter a theme that will be repeated at the end of the Gospel. This Gospel was written so that we may believe and have life through Jesus. The prologue is more than a word about Jesus. It affirms who Jesus is *for us*. Through believing in Jesus' name, we receive the power to become children of God. We become born of God, born from above, and born to new life.

Pastoral Reflection

The Scripture texts for Christmas Day celebrate the faithfulness of God, who has acted decisively on our behalf. In a way, though, our situation is still like that of Second Isaiah. We speak of God's intervention in human affairs as completed action, yet we also still wait for the fullness of the reign of God to be revealed, for all tears to be wiped away and all creation to be made new. In the meantime, we may look to the Incarnation to give shape to our spiritual journey. When the Word became flesh, God revealed a desire to be in relationship with us. As God seeks us, so we—if we are wise—will seek God. In a life shaped by prayer and worship, by Bible reading and Christian fellowship, we seek communion with the One who seeks us. We seek to belong, ever more deeply, in love to the One who has loved us with a love that is stronger than death.

In addition, the message of the Word made flesh reminds us that faith also requires flesh. In Christ, God has taken on our flesh, taken on our sin, taken away our condemnation. Such amazing goodness calls for a similarly embodied response from us, that praise and thanksgiving might become visible in every aspect of our lives. Faith can

never remain only a matter of head or heart, limited to thinking or feeling. Faith needs flesh. Faith comes to life in our pursuit of justice, mercy, and compassion.

Christmas Day also offers the preacher the opportunity to simply celebrate the goodness of God. Following the lead of the Epistle and Gospel readings, we might look beyond the manger in Bethlehem to contemplate what it means that God has come to us in Christ. In Christ, God has come to dwell among us and take on our flesh. Christ has proclaimed to us the reign of God, healed our diseases, and delivered us from the power of Satan. Christ suffered and died for our sin, bearing the condemnation that was ours. On the third day, Christ was raised from the dead, and has promised to come again. This is the whole mystery we receive. The exalted and majestic language of our Christmas Day readings help to remind us that the traditional Christmas narrative is only the beginning of the story. AC

Second Sunday after Christmas
January 4, 2004

Jeremiah 31:7–14
Psalm 147:13–21
Ephesians 1:3–14
John 1:[1–9] 10–18

First Reading

With subtle differences in emphasis from one reading to another, God as parent serves as a unifying image for this day. The first reading comes from Jeremiah's "Book of Consolation." The joyful character of the reading is expressed in the series of imperatives at the beginning of the reading: sing, shout, proclaim, praise! Such happiness springs from the promise of God to gather and restore the people of Israel. God will show intimate care and concern by leading the people with consolations, by brooks of water, and in a straight path where they shall not stumble. The reason for such wonderful care is to be found in God's declaration: "I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn."

The NRSV enhances the surprising character of God's declaration by translating the Hebrew *Qal* perfect verb as a present perfect (note the simple present tense in the NIV). While one might argue the translation, it is worth noting that the present perfect, "I have become," fits well with the emphasis in chapter 31 on a "New Covenant." Jeremiah declares that God will now forgive the sins of the people and establish a new covenant with Israel. In a new way, now God has become a parent to Israel. God will be their source of protection and the one who provides for their needs. The nation that came to an end under the power of foreign empire will know a new beginning and a new future. This new future is the reason for the exuberant language that celebrates the goodness of God. Israel's joyful response to such a message of hope is expressed well in *LBW* Canticle 14, "Listen! You Nations," which is based on verses 10–13.

Following the theme of parenthood, the second reading employs the image of adoption to suggest the surpassing and surprising goodness of the gift we receive from God. We can never construe relationship with our Creator as our right. Rather, it is a gift of God's good pleasure, given through Jesus. Similar in tone to the exuberant joy of the first reading, Ephesians pours out praise for the goodness of God. Purely by grace we have been blessed, chosen, destined for adoption as children, redeemed, and forgiven. According to God's good will, we have received gift upon gift, an inheritance of mercy, finally being marked with the seal of

the Holy Spirit as the pledge that we will receive all good things from God.

Since John 1:1–14 was only recently assigned (for Christmas Day), one may wish to focus on the new themes at the end of the reading. "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known." While the Father remains hidden, Jesus has shown us the Father (14:9–10). In the life and ministry of Jesus, the heart of God is revealed. Because of Jesus, we know God as our heavenly parent whose heart is full of love for the whole creation.

Pastoral Reflection

The image of adoption speaks with special warmth and power for me. We have been blessed to grow our family through adoption. But were it not for the birthmothers who chose us to care for their children, and for the social workers and adoption agencies who facilitated the adoption process, I would never have known the joy of becoming a father.

When we adopted our first son, we breezed through the process. It was easy. The match with his birthmother was perfect. It all happened so fast! But when we wanted to adopt again, the process was not so easy. It tested our patience and endurance. It took much longer than we ever dreamed. There were some serious bumps along the way. Twice we thought we would be receiving a child, only to have prospective adoption fall apart. Once this happened in the week before Christmas. It brought a new level of difficulty to preaching about the joy we share at the birth of the Christ child. And yet, when the phone call finally came that told us we were to become parents again, and when we actually held our second son, the joy we felt swept away the waiting, the worry, and the sadness that had colored the previous three and a half years.

As I reflect on the image—on the reality!—of being a child of God by adoption, I smile with joy, both for God and for myself. What a source of joy for God it must be to adopt the whole human family, to claim us in love as precious children. What a test and trial it must have been for God, enduring through waiting and rejection. What a joy it must be—*must be!*—for us, who through no merit of our own have been received in love and made children of God. And from our loving heavenly parent we receive gift upon gift. Our sins are forgiven, our guilt and shame are wiped away, and we have been drawn into an eternal relationship of love and blessing.

Those who are unfamiliar with today's open adoption process might want to take time to learn more. One of the most helpful resources we found was *The Open Adoption Experience* by Lois Melina. There are both gifts and losses for all members of the adoption triad—the birthparents, the child, and the adoptive parents. The preacher should consider it likely that there are members of his or her congregation for whom adoption is part of their life's story, and who will need and appreciate nuanced language. AC

The Epiphany of Our Lord January 6, 2004

Isaiah 60:1–6
Psalm 72:1–7, 10–14
Ephesians 3:1–12
Matthew 2:1–12

First Reading

The guiding image running through the readings for Epiphany is of the wise men, as representatives of the entire Gentile world, coming to honor the God of Israel, whose presence is manifest in the Christ child. Third Isaiah calls the city of Jerusalem to rise from the ruins and shine, so that the glory of God might radiate out to be seen by all the nations. In its wider context, there is both a wonderful universalism and a disturbing parochialism about this vision. The message is beautiful for daring to imagine the glory of God shining out to the world, and the world responding by streaming to Jerusalem to proclaim the praise of the Lord. The message is unsettling for the threat of destruction for all who will not serve the people of the holy city. These more parochial themes are not found in the verses assigned for reading in worship.

After calling on Jerusalem to stand up and let the light of God shine forth, Isaiah speaks a pair of promises for God's people. First, the city's sons and daughters will return. The exiles will come home again. Second, the wealth of the nations will flow to Jerusalem, arriving by land and sea. The picture of caravans of camels bringing the wealth of the east, including gold and frankincense, may well have provided some of the inspiration for Matthew's account of visit of the magi.

In the verses immediately preceding our second reading, the writer of Ephesians reminds the Gentiles of the time before their inclusion into the people of God, but then celebrates the gift of grace. God has broken down the dividing wall of hostility in order to create one new human family, composed of both Jews and Gentiles in Christ, to be a dwelling place for God. Our reading then identifies this as the cause Paul serves and for which he is a prisoner—the desire of God that Gentiles become fellow heirs and members of the same body, together with Jewish Christians. The language celebrates the wisdom and wide mercy of God, who now receives Gentiles and permits them to share in the promise of the gospel. Our passage concludes by contemplating how, through the church, this wisdom of God is made known even to the heavenly powers.

Matthew tells the familiar story of the wise men traveling to Bethlehem to honor the Christ child. It is worth noting that as Matthew tells the story, it is Gentiles who are the first to honor Jesus as king. Herodotus identifies the magi as Medes. After a detour to Jerusalem and a visit with King Herod, the wise men find their way to Bethlehem and the house where the holy family is living. When they arrive, they are "overwhelmed with joy." They present precious gifts to the Christ child, kneel before him and pay homage (NRSV). One might also translate *prosekunesan* as "they worshipped" or "they prostrated themselves." These Gentiles appear to appreciate who Jesus is!

Pastoral Reflection

What are we to make of these incongruous facts? On the one hand, Israel looked for the whole world to come to worship the Lord, having received from Third Isaiah (and elsewhere in their scriptures) a compelling universal vision of the nations streaming to Jerusalem to give praise to the God of Israel. On the other hand, the cultural walls separating Jews and Gentiles proved more sub-

stantial than any desire to make this vision become reality. It wasn't until the early church began its Gentile mission that a large-scale entrance of Gentiles into a primarily Jewish community actually began to happen. Sadly, it also contributed to the fracturing of first-century Judaism, with Jewish Christians finally being expelled from their synagogues.

Perhaps more pointedly we might ask about the incongruity in our day between the Church's explicit missionary identity and the relative lack of passion for outreach that is evident in the life of many congregations. At our best, we do seek to be welcoming to those who come to us, warmly receiving those who find their way to the church door, especially if they are "like us." Yet even at our best, we seem to generally lack not only the resources but also the awareness of the need to reach out to those who have not come looking for us but nonetheless need the Christ and are included in Isaiah's vision of God's wide embrace.

A year ago I attended a "Transformational Ministry Event" sponsored by the ELCA Division for Outreach. What I appreciated most was that outreach was not presented as a program to implement. Instead, the focus was placed on transforming congregational life, growing deeply in the love of God so that our hearts are changed. When the love of God upends our self-oriented lives so that we become not only aware of but also passionately concerned about the needs of others, then our light will truly shine in such a way that people will be drawn to experience the grace of God in our congregations. Our neighbors and coworkers do not need to become our evangelism prospects or projects, nor do they need to join a religious club. They need to experience the love of Christ flowing through us. This can happen when we are willing to risk becoming transparent about our needs and hurts, and how we have found strength and hope in Christ and among Christ's people.

I pray for us to be filled with the kind of joyful and thankful spirit evident in the reading from Ephesians, that we may be passionate about sharing the boundless riches of Christ. Martin Luther is said to have described the church's mission very simply: it's a matter of one beggar telling another where to find bread. Gone is any trace of triumphalism. Present is only a sense of gratitude and joy for the exceeding goodness of God. AC

Responses *are welcome!*

Readers who would like to respond to any article published in *Currents* are invited to contact the editor by mail at the address below or by e-mail, rklein@lstc.edu.

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