

The Hymnal: Past, Present, and Future

Kevin Bode, February and March 2021

Week 1: History of Christian Orders of Worship

Week 2: the hymns we sing

→ **Week 3: the Monday meetings (inside look at the hymns committee meetings)**

Week 4: *Christian Worship 2021* and the accompanying products

Our objectives for four weeks:

- ✓ Recognize the importance of public Christian worship
- ✓ Gain an understanding and appreciation of worship forms Christians have used over 2,000+ years, especially Lutherans, especially WELS
- ✓ Recognize that worship forms and hymns are both changeless and changing
- ✓ Recognize that Emmanuel is part of a massive body of Christians
- ✓ Recognize the need for a new hymnal
- ✓ Identify features of the new hymnal that emphasize the purpose of public Christian worship

Review

Week 1: orders of service. There's no higher activity we do together than public worship.

- Germans for the win: Gottesdienst
Meaning/evidence:

"The manner in which we worship God is a message about how God is perceived."

"To appreciate genuine worship takes care, education, and patience because you're dealing with the Deity. That which is fast and easy cheats our God. It deprives us of a grandeur God. Our incredibly narcissistic culture doesn't want to get over the fact that there's something beyond our understanding." However, Gottesdienst is beyond our sinful understanding!

Week 2: the hymns we sing

- Nike gift card vs. an Amazon gift card analogy (Amazon for the win!)

- Who will be singing the hymns and songs in this hymnal?
Teachers, insurance workers, plumbers, farmers, surgeons, professional musicians, the supporters of the arts, the supporters of the sports, the supporters of songs from the distant past, the supporters of songs from the radio, and finally, **CHILDREN!**

Special Guest and then Introduction

Million dollar question: so what makes a hymn worthy of a hymnal? And to put it in a way perhaps you haven't thought of before: what does God want to hear when we're together?

Form and Content/Medium and the Message

This is a deep discussion. We will just skim the surface.

- Can it bear the weight of the Gospel?
- Musical styles are not a matter of taste.
The danger?

- “Does our singing material increase or decrease our capacity to listen and to think theologically? Does bad music “dumb down” the faith?” Augustine: “My soul is restless until it finds thee.”

Characteristics of music

- true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, worthy, full of integrity, creative, timeless, digestable, nourishing, long-lasting
- Trite, trivial, shallow, gimmicky, stereotyped, cliché, trendy, temporary, candy, immediate gratification

Whether you've thought about this or not, worship (what we say, what we sing) forms a certain kind of character. So, what kind of character do we want to shape and mold? Culture has a lot to say about this! The church has a lot to say about it, too!

Lesson 3: the Monday Meeting

Criteria for good hymns

1. Text: Christ-centered: a confession of the Trinity and a response to their works
2. Tune: great melody (serving lobster, caviar, or a great cut of filet mignon on a flimsy paper plate; a \$200 bottle of bourbon served in a Dixie cup)
3. Good hymns are liturgical
4. Good hymns are doxological
5. Good hymns incorporates Scripture and applies this message
6. Good hymns are poetic
7. Good hymns contain emotional content

Criteria for hymns in the new hymnal

1. Be Christocentric
2. Be in harmony with the scriptural faith as confessed in the Lutheran Book of Concord
3. Be rooted in the Church year with its emphases on the life of Christ and the Christian's life in Christ
4. Be drawn from classic Lutheran sources and deliberately inclusive of the Church's broader song (including so-called international or global music)
5. Be superlative examples of their genre in regard to both textual content and musical craft
6. Be accessible and meaningful for God's people at worship in both public and private settings
7. Be useful for those who preach and teach the faith
8. Be part of a corpus that will find wide acceptance by the vast majority of our fellowship

The Hymn Selection Process

Preliminary data

- Star Rating
- Usage Rating
- National Surveys
- Every CW and CWS hymn reviewed (A to F rating)
- Keep/Kill day

Our Work (text team vs. music team)

- Critical eye, musical theorist eye, a shepherd's eye, melodious eye, practical eye, etc.
- Things that were always considered:
 - The setting
 - The key
 - Singer friendly
 - Player friendly
 - Organ vs. piano vs. guitar
 - Descant
- The motion
- Points of numerous discussion and changes
 - Singer's book vs. musical variety
 - New tune for an old text
 - Changing half notes to quarter notes
 - Many comments like, "in my experience" and "I've heard it this way..."

List of 180 and Hymns for Life curriculum

Remaining high-rated hymns

New Hymns

The results

- 2/3 "old hymns
- 1/3 new; this is comparable to CW93
- 15,000 hymns were examined
- More sacramental hymns
- New categories

KB's experience...