

## LITURGICAL WORSHIP

*Articles by Prof. James P. Tiefel of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*

### **ARTICLE 1 - What Do You Mean by *Liturgical*?**

Most of us WELS pastors have never felt constrained by precise liturgical rubrics or definitions. But as we find ourselves in an era of changing worship styles, we might be able to communicate with one another more effectively if we can agree on a working definition of the word *liturgical*. From what I hear from returning vicars, the word is being used in our circles in a variety of ways, and occasionally brother pastors end up talking past one another.

We didn't always have trouble with the word *liturgical*. Over the years WELS pastors could refer to "our liturgical service" or "our liturgical heritage" and the meaning seemed clear enough. We all had a course at the Seminary called Liturgics, and we knew what the class was about before we picked up the course notes.

The last half-century hasn't been kind to that sturdy old word. In the 1940s the Lutheran liturgical movement attached a high church odor to it, and liturgical worship came to be identified with vestments, chanting, and processions. Vatican II inundated the Christian world with liturgical studies, and brother pastors thought to be perhaps too interested in such studies were often said to be "liturgical."

Then came the dawn of the Church Growth movement and the awakening of modern Evangelicalism. The *de facto* marriage of the two movements gave birth to a worship style that was very different from traditional Lutheran worship. When conservative Lutherans (especially those in the LCMS) began to sense that proponents of Evangelical worship styles also seemed to be espousing elements of Evangelical or CGM theology, the worship wars began. In our day, the strength or weakness of a congregation's (or a pastor's) commitment to Lutheran doctrine has come to be gauged in some circles by the congregation's worship style, whether liturgical or non-liturgical. In much of the literature that comes out of the confessional Lutheran Church these days, liturgical almost comes to mean confessional.

So what is it? If a brother pastor defends liturgical worship, is he inclined to be high church? If a he offers a non-liturgical alternative service, ought we to wonder about his theology? Is liturgical worship the same as traditional worship? Is non-liturgical worship the same as contemporary worship? Is contemporary worship usually more upbeat and liturgical worship usually more formal? Without a decent definition of *liturgical*, those questions are impossible to answer with anything approaching precision.

*Liturgy* isn't a word the Scriptures use to denote the event that takes place on the Lord's Day. In fact, the Scriptures aren't nearly as interested in what Christians call this event as in what they do at this event. The pattern and purpose of the early Christian assemblies is pretty clear: "They

devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). Luther took from this description the perspective that "among Christians, the whole service should center in the Word and Sacrament"(LW, Vol. 53, p. 90).

In the decades that followed the apostolic age, the church in the east gradually descended into mysticism and emotionalism. The church in the west, however, was determined to give the teachings of the apostles a high and visible priority at its gatherings. As we watch the formation of the so-called western rite, we see the Word of God--and especially the gospel--remaining in central focus. By the third century we notice that worship on the Lord's Day invariably included four song texts (*Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei*) that repeated essential truths of the Christian faith. A fifth text was added later, *Credo* (Nicene Creed). These five texts came to be known as up the *Ordinary* of the liturgy.

Already in the synagogue believers had the custom of reading specific Scripture lessons on specific days, and this practice continued as the Epistles and Gospels began to circulate. The formation of the church calendar added to the pericopal concept an emphasis on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Prayers, psalms, hymns, and sermons that accented the lessons were natural inclusions and became known as the *Proper* of the liturgy. The *Proper* offered an every-year review of the Savior's work and ministry. With this proclamation of the gospel in the Word, the western church included the proclamation of the gospel in the Sacrament.

This pattern of public worship--Ordinary, Proper, and Meal--is known among pastoral professionals as the *liturgy*. Essentially, the liturgy combines the texts of five great songs that review the plan of salvation and a set of lessons, prayers, psalms, and hymns that review the life of Christ with the meal instituted by Christ in a pattern that has been consistently the same over 17 centuries of the Church's history.

It may be arbitrary, but in this day and age it may be easiest to define liturgy in this way: **The liturgy is an order of service formed in the Christian church of the West that consists of the Ordinary, the Proper, and the Meal.** Liturgical worship, therefore, is worship that employs the liturgy. Non-liturgical worship is worship that doesn't employ the liturgy. It can be as simple as that.

This definition of liturgical implies nothing as far as musical style is concerned. The song texts of the Ordinary and Proper can be sung to traditional or contemporary tunes and be supported by a praise band as easily as by an organ and brass ensemble. The elements of ambiance and ceremony aren't included in this definition, either. Liturgical worship can be formal or casual and richly high church or flat-footed low church. And, at least among us in WELS, liturgical worship ought not be a test of orthodoxy. Plenty of heresy has crept into liturgical churches through the pulpit, and many pulpits proclaim the truths of the gospel even when the order of service is decidedly non-liturgical.

So we have a definition. We'll look at several more facets of this liturgical thing in coming issues.

## **ARTICLE 2 - If The Liturgy Is Proclamation...**

The liturgy is an order of service with roots in the history of the western Christian Church. The liturgy includes five song texts (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei) that retell the plan of salvation Sunday by Sunday. The liturgy includes lessons, psalms, prayers, and hymns that retell the story of the life and ministry of Jesus in coordination with the Church Year. The liturgy includes the meal that Jesus instituted the night before he was betrayed. When Christians use the liturgy for public worship, their worship is said to be liturgical.

This definition of **liturgical** was proposed in the initial issue of *Worship the Lord*. We proposed it in an attempt to bring clarity to pastoral discussions concerning new worship forms and styles. From this perspective, the liturgy has little to do with contemporary or traditional, high church or low church, formal or informal. This definition views the texts of the liturgy as gospel proclamation by universal priests and called ministers to edify the saints and evangelize the lost.

Every WELS pastor worth his rugged individualism knows, of course, that use of the liturgy is adiaphora. But when we see the liturgy primarily as gospel proclamation, the question is not as simple as, "Shall we use the liturgy in this parish or not?" If we lift liturgical proclamation out of a specific historical setting (e.g., the *TLH* Common Service), all kinds of questions present themselves:

### **Can we place liturgical proclamation into a style of language that communicates clearly in 21st century America?**

The language of *The Lutheran Hymnal* was KJV and the *Book of Common Prayer*. The language of *Christian Worship* is NIV and ELLC (English Language Liturgical Consultation). *CW* anticipated inclusive language issues that *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978) and *Lutheran Worship* (1982) did not.

The search for appropriate worship language--language that communicates to people and enables people to communicate with one another--is an ongoing challenge. Scripture lessons, psalms, and hymns are filled with theological terms, word pictures, and Bible references that are foreign to many, especially new Christians. We often find ourselves standing between two poles; one sees the necessity of leading people into the "culture of Christianity" (understanding the Bible's *shepherd* language, for instance), and another recognizes people will usually not understand or repeat what is not part of their experience. The language question is a challenge wherever there is gospel proclamation, in evangelism and education as well as in worship.

There are other issues related to language. Some question the contemporary relevance of liturgical worship's dialogue. Some are convinced that propositional preaching is passé in a post-modern age. And these issues may be minor compared to the reality of a visual society where people assimilate information through their eyes as often as through their ears.

### **Can we find a musical style for liturgical proclamation that is relevant for today's worshippers?**

Which worshipers? That's the bigger question. The liturgy isn't nearly as concerned with musical style as it is with getting its message to the heart. The problem is that worshipers have different kinds of hearts. A musical style that touches one may turn off another. WELS baby boomers may groove to the Peter, Paul, and Mary style of the *Chicago Folk Service*, but generations on either side of the boomers tend to consider that style silly, especially for worship. Add to this the reality that many worshipers refuse to be categorized. Many teens are appalled by gospel rock, and some middle class African Americans are put off by high-energy gospel music.

Hymnals have tended to accompany the liturgy's sung texts with a fairly neutral musical style some call *ritual music*. Ritual music isn't meant to be anyone's personal favorite (you wouldn't dance to it), but it is able to make gospel proclamation practical: with such music a wide variety of worshipers can hear and proclaim the gospel.

The ritual music of *Christian Worship* may not be the right ritual music for every WELS congregation, however. There are many other possibilities. (See sidebar.)

### **Can a more casual worship ambiance enable liturgical proclamation to reflect the joy of the gospel?**

Informal or formal? Alb and stole or slacks and sport jacket? In the pulpit or out? Worshipers cheered (and sometimes jeered) during Augustine's very liturgical sermons, but one can't imagine that kind of free-for-all when Luther preached at the *Hauptgottesdienst* in Wittenberg. In his keynote address at the 1996 National Worship Conference, Prof. David Valleskey noted that the mood of a liturgical service he attended in India was strikingly different from the mood of the conference's opening service. But the gospel proclamation was exactly the same, even word for word.

There has never been a setting of the liturgy with a rubric to be somber. But there is in the liturgy--as there is whenever people gather around Word and Sacrament--an implicit sense that something very important is happening. There is joy wherever the gospel is, but generally, churched and non-churched worshipers sense that this joy isn't quite the same as the joy that explodes after the home team scores the winning touchdown. Liturgical worship doesn't require gloom and doom, but the presence of Jesus in Word and Meal does call for an ambiance more serious than a county fair.

### **If not liturgical proclamation, then what?**

Gospel proclamation certainly takes place even when the liturgy isn't used in public worship. Consider the special services many of us compose for Christmas or Easter. If we don't use the standard liturgical rites on these festivals, the psalms, lessons, festival dialogues, and hymns (and, of course, sermon) certainly proclaim the gospel.

A non-liturgical service exciting a significant number of Lutheran congregations these days is what we'll call, for lack of a better term, a *worship and praise* service. Some might call such a service "contemporary," but that title is going to be confusing since contemporary music and

ambiance can also accompany the liturgy. Some call this kind of service “entertainment,” although that term is pejorative and probably best avoided.

The next issue of *Worship the Lord* will take a look at the worship and praise phenomenon. We’ll trace its roots, analyze its presuppositions and concepts, and see how its non-liturgical form compares with liturgical worship.

### **ARTICLE 3 - If the Liturgy Isn’t Proclamation...**

But the liturgy is proclamation. Two previous articles in *Worship the Lord* have noted that the liturgy brings together the texts of the Ordinary, Proper, and Meal to proclaim the gospel of Jesus. So what’s the point?

Here’s the point. The liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, used in almost all Eastern Orthodox churches for centuries, shares some of its history and several of its Bible-based texts with our so-called western rite. But the objective of public worship in Orthodox churches is clearly more about *sensation* than *proclamation*. Aiming its otherworldly music and mysterious ambiance directly at human emotions, the eastern rite means to transport worshipers to an ethereal realm of the divine. This worship objective matches Orthodox teaching perfectly, since the essence of salvation in the Orthodox system is the ultimate deification of the human creature.

Although their theological systems are very different, most American Evangelicals share with Eastern Orthodoxy the viewpoint that the purpose of public worship is not primarily proclamation. In Evangelical models, the preacher may proclaim, but the people praise. While liturgical worship purposefully turns every part of itself into proclamation, worship in contemporary Protestant churches sees praise as pure praise.

Rick Warren is one of dozens of authors who contend for the praise objective in public worship. In his book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, Warren is sure that the purpose of public worship is to love the Lord. “How do we love God with all our heart?” he asks. “When we express our love to God, we’re worshipping” (p. 103). Warren applies this principle to the songs he selects for public worship: “Today’s most effective worship songs are love songs sung directly to God” (p. 289). He speaks disparagingly of songs that sing about God or about the Christian experience.

#### **Praise and Worship Alternatives**

Warren’s perspective is part of the Evangelical phenomenon that has its roots in German Pietism, English Methodism, and American Fundamentalism, all of which have a different understanding of public worship than Lutherans do. Evangelical preachers proclaim a message similar to what Lutherans proclaim and agree that the gospel informs about the realities of salvation. Evangelicals do not agree, however, that the gospel empowers faith and the Christian life. Evangelicals look for the power for faith and living in the personal decision of each individual. What Evangelicals need to support their theological presuppositions, therefore, is not more of the gospel, and this is one of the reasons why liturgical worship (Ordinary, Proper, and Meal)

doesn't appeal to them. What they need is more of what can lead individuals to an experience that moves them to accept Christ and live the Christian life. Most Evangelicals are convinced that exuberant, emotional, and personal praise is the catalyst that is critical for enabling this experience. George Barna reports that twenty minutes of praise and worship songs are essential for leading worshipers into the presence of God (*cf. Mark Bitter's note*), and Rick Warren insists, "More people are won to Christ by feeling God's presence than by all our apologetic arguments combined. It is the sense of God's presence that melts hearts and explodes mental barriers" (p. 242)

## **Well, what if worship isn't proclamation?**

### **If Worship Is Praise...**

***Are we really reflecting biblical priorities?*** Rick Warren is very convinced that he is, as are most Evangelicals and Lutherans who encourage the praise and worship format. Warren writes, "Throughout Scripture we're commanded to celebrate God's presence by magnifying the Lord and exalting his name" (p. 103) and adds, "This is biblical worship." He invokes Psalm 34:3 as his proof text: "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together" (NASB). What Warren seems to have missed is that the remaining 19 verses of Psalm 34 proclaim the great things God has done. David concludes: "The Lord redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him." Warren insists that the Bible wants us to sing *to* the Lord, not *about* him, but then ignores the proclamatory content of the *Cantate Domino* psalms!

To defend their emphasis on praise, Evangelicals often resort to poor exegesis and tend to overlook how the Scripture joins the concepts of praise and proclamation. Luther saw the relationship clearly. He wrote, "We praise God best when we proclaim his Word, not when we say 'he is an awesome God.' When the redemptive note is at the core, we praise him best; when we praise him for his redeeming acts by telling others and ourselves about his redeeming acts (WA 12, 306).

***Will proclamation continue to be critical and clear?*** Praise and worship advocates insist that it must be, although proclamation by an Arminian Evangelical is very different from Lutheran proclamation. Note Rick Warren's confusion of justification and sanctification: "Jesus said, 'I have come that you might have life.' He didn't say, 'I've come that you might have *religion*.' Christianity is a life, not a religion, and Jesus was a life-application preacher. When he finished his teaching to the crowd, he always wanted them to 'go and do likewise.' Christ-like preaching is life-related and produces a changed lifestyle. Sermons that teach people how to live will never lack an audience" (page 230). One might expect more from Walter Kallestad, a Lutheran pastor who presides at several praise and worship services at his Community Church of Joy in Glendale, AZ. Here is a critique of a Kallestad sermon from a retired ELCA seminary professor: "Although you were leading us in worship on the theme 'Battling the Enemies of Joy,' I think you succumbed to the enemies. Your words did not bring joy to Christ. If he were listening in--as he claims to be present where two or three are gathered in his name--he may have wept as he did over Jerusalem...Christ's cross and resurrection were never mentioned in your sermon...and then at the end you urged us to take Christ into our hearts."

Is there an essential link between unclear preaching and the praise and worship format? Probably not. But a quick perusal of church websites reveals that the burden to retain proclamation that is distinctively Lutheran lays heavy on those who imitate Evangelical worship styles. The noted LCMS author David Luecke wrote a book insisting that Lutherans could copy Evangelical style and still retain Lutheran substance (*Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance*, CPH, 1988), and then only succeeded in proving that at least he could not.

***Will preaching be able to carry the weight of proclamation?*** In the praise and worship format, preaching is literally the only proclamation, and most advocates suggest a 30 to 45 minute sermon. Of course, no one suggests that every preacher can hold an audience's attention for that long, and everyone suggests that most preachers require a wide variety of communication tools to make a message memorable. In a praise and worship format, the preacher carries the weight; he must succeed. He can't have a bad day and he can't he leave the pulpit saying to himself, "Thank God for good hymns."

***Will other areas of ministry be able to take up the slack when worship is not primarily proclamation?*** This is a critical question for Lutherans who substitute the praise and worship format for the proclamation inherent in the liturgy. If the Spirit works only through the means of grace, where does the believer go when he needs more than what the sermon gives? Rick Warren's solution is to move committed worshipers to small groups and to a midweek "believers" service. I suppose Lutherans would encourage attendance at Bible classes. One wonders if Lutherans would be as willing as Warren is to see to it that members participate gain the proclamation: "If you do not fulfill the membership covenant, you are dropped from our membership. We remove hundreds of names from our roll every year (p. 54).

### **All Things Are Permissible...**

For some Lutherans, the praise and worship phenomenon seems to be an attractive alternative to liturgical worship, and without doubt the concept stands with other worship forms and styles that the Scripture considers free. But the "all things are permissible" part of Christian freedom carries with it the caution that "not all things are beneficial." One can't help but worry that praise and worship services can't really do what Lutherans really want to do for both the lost and the found, to proclaim to sinners again and again the good news that Jesus saves.

Can the Christian liturgy do what Lutherans want to do for the lost and the found? We believe it can--but that's the subject in the next issue of *Worship the Lord*.

*Quoted in the article*

Warren, Rick, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995). Correspondence between Prof. em. Edward Schroeder and Pastor Walter Kallestad, March 16 - 27, 2003.

## **ARTICLE 4 - Can The Liturgy Serve The Lost And The Found?**

With the goal of bringing some clarity to discussions about worship in WELS, *Worship the Lord* has been offering a practical definition of the liturgy: **The liturgy is an order of service formed in the Christian church of the West that consists of the Ordinary, the Proper, and the Meal.** The articles have proposed that the liturgy's primary objective is to proclaim the story of salvation. To do that, the liturgy not only brings the Word and the Sacraments into specific use, but also turns prayer, praise, and confession into gospel proclamation. We've made the point that various artistic styles can carry the liturgy and that style isn't as important as the liturgy's gospel content. Finally, we've suggested that liturgical worship may be a wiser choice for Lutherans than the popular praise and worship formats common in Assembly of God and Evangelical circles.

### **Can the liturgy do what Lutherans want to do for the lost and the found?**

That was the question posed in the last issue of *Worship the Lord*. It's no secret that the liturgy is under close scrutiny these days. Some suggest that a liturgical service be only one of several options congregations consider in their planning. Probably more than ever before, those who contend for the liturgy are asked to demonstrate that liturgical worship is able to offer what both seekers and members are looking for when they come to worship.

The simple answer to the question is yes. The liturgy does what we want to do for the lost and the found because it proclaims the gospel. There isn't a man among us who doesn't believe that the Holy Spirit works exclusively through the gospel and creates, strengthens, and preserves faith. The liturgy becomes the Spirit's tool as it puts the means of grace in action in its Ordinary, Proper, and Meal.

The simple answer can also be simplistic, however. The truth is that not all seekers or members walk through our church doors looking for the gospel. They may be looking for some spirituality they sense is missing in their lives, but aren't at all convinced that everything they need is richly offered in Word and Sacrament. Not finding what they're looking for, they may be out the door as quickly as they entered. Add to this that most of us are willing to admit that worship in our own congregations doesn't always offer the gospel with consistent clarity. It's no great secret that the liturgy's gospel content can be obscured by the sins and weaknesses of those who lead and participate in it.

We believe that the liturgy does what Lutherans want to do for the lost and the found because it highlights the Word and the Sacraments. But if liturgical worship is going to do what it intends to do, it has to deal with both flawed expectations and flawed participation. "Business as usual" has never been a good idea in worship planning, and it is an especially bad idea today.

### **CATECHESIS FOR THE LITURGY**

It's no secret that WELS growth is flat, and some studies that indicate many of our losses are teens and young adults. Is liturgical worship the problem here--or have our young people come away from their religious education experience without a clear understanding of what to expect at public worship?

It's likely that our entire catechetical apparatus needs an infusion of worship education. Children and adults need to know biblical facts and figures--these are what prompt Christian faith and guide the Christian life--but believers also need to know what they're doing at the Christian assembly and why they're doing it. We can hardly blame them for approaching public worship with flawed expectations if we've failed to mold their expectations in the first place. A means of grace mentality, i.e., a clear and deep understanding of how the gospel and faith interact, deserves at least equal status with moral clarity on our list of desired educational outcomes. It is surely as important to know how faith lives as it is to know how faith acts.

We can't mold the expectations of those to come to worship from outside our congregations, and most pastors have seen visitors walk away from worship put off by the liturgy. Exactly for that reason pastors and evangelism committees need to think about how liturgical worship fits into their congregation's overall evangelism strategy. For all of its gospel benefits, the liturgy won't be seen as having much value if people aren't looking for the gospel. Welcoming brochures, follow-up calls, Bible information classes, and everything else the congregation uses to attract the lost require an up-front confession not only of the gospel itself, but also of the gospel's place in Christian witness. "We are a liturgical church" (defined and explained, of course) may be as important a statement as "We are a Bible-based church."

### **THE SERMON IN THE LITURGY**

It cannot be repeated too often that the Sunday sermon is the most important thing a pastor does and that proclaiming specific law and specific gospel are the most important things a sermon does. It is simply incongruous that a sermon would stand between the Word and the Meal and lack the very thing the Word and the Meal offer. If the liturgy is to do what Lutherans want it to do, the sermon in the liturgy has to be consistent with the liturgy's objective. As the sermon picks up the color and context of the changing lectionary themes, preachers will avoid the trap of preaching the same old story in the same old way--often the source of deep dissatisfaction among young worshippers.

### **THE ARTS IN THE LITURGY**

Studying worship patterns over the span of centuries leaves the impression that Christians have had a consistent sense that gathering on the Lord's Day is for proclaiming the gospel through the medium of the fine arts. Luther, course, championed the use of the arts, especially music. Every WELS pastor who thinks about music in worship--and that includes most of us these days--will gain a good review of biblical principles as he reads the little pamphlet *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise* (Carl Schalk, editor; CPH, 1988).

Where did believers gain this sense? Did they notice how effectively God used symbolic communication to underscore the most important themes of the Old Testament? Was there, even in the early church, an understanding of how the arts impact the human emotions? Luther certainly had a clear picture of the power of music. It seems completely plausible that the church formed its worship patterns to summarize and clarify the most important teachings of the Christian faith and to solidify and embed them in the human heart through music and the arts.

If such a perspective is valid, then this series of articles on liturgical worship requires one last installment: “The Liturgy and Its Music: Delight and Dilemma.”

## **ARTICLE 5 - The Liturgy and Its Music: Delight and Dilemma**

Before it is anything else, the liturgy is the Word of God: five song texts, based on the Word, that summarize each week the plan of salvation (the Ordinary); texts taken directly from the Word that review each year the life of Jesus; and texts that add God’s own Word of power and promise to the bread and the wine in Holy Communion. With these texts—this Word—believers proclaim the gospel. Through the gospel the Spirit creates, strengthens, preserves, and enlivens faith.

Why are so many liturgical texts set to music? It might seem better (and it would save pastors a lot of work!) to allow the Spirit to work without the distraction of music. Luther joined his insights into the Word to his knowledge of music and explained why music so often accompanies the Word:

Except for theology, there is no art that could be put on the same level with music since, except for theology, music alone produces what otherwise only theology can do, namely, a calm and joyful disposition. This is the reason why the prophets did not make use of any art except music; when setting forth their theology they did it not as geometry, not as arithmetic, not as astronomy, but as music, so that they held theology and music most tightly connected and proclaimed the truth through Psalms and songs (LW 49:427).

Luther recognized that music does for human psychology what the gospel does for Christian faith. The gospel proclaimed through the vehicle of music touches the entire human creature. The gospel and music, both gifts of God, become a divine dynamic duo that the Spirit uses to affect the whole man, his psychological and spiritual self. Luther wrote:

After all, the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both words and music; namely, by proclaiming the Word of God through music and by providing sweet melodies with words (LW 53:319).

In his Christmas hymn, “From Heaven Above” Luther has the angelic messenger proclaim:

From heaven above to earth I come  
To bear good news to every home;  
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,  
Whereof I now will *say and sing*.

The Church’s delight, therefore, is to sing the good news about Christ. The pastor’s delight is to select and supervise the music.

This is also his dilemma! The pastor knows that God deserves his best efforts. He also knows that people *expect* his best efforts. With their musical tastes molded by high technology, most North Americans come to worship with high musical expectations. Fast growing churches—even in WELS—usually offer notable music ministries. Several dozen articles far longer than this article would not cover the issues related to music in worship.

The liturgy presents special musical challenges. The great spiritual value that comes with the recurring texts of the Ordinary can be compromised when those texts are always sung with the same tune. The Ordinary begs for alternate musical settings and benefits from musical variety. The Church Year prioritizes music that complements specific themes. With the Word as its priority, Lutheran worship looks for music that allows the Word to be predominant; in other words, music in the liturgy doesn't "take over."

Planning and preparing the music is time-consuming in any worship situation, but liturgical worship has its own set of music planning priorities.

**Training Musicians** – Worship benefits from pastors and musicians working together, giving quality and priority time to worship planning. For many pastors, finding a musician is a challenge all by itself. But even pastors blessed with several musicians often need to help some understand the unique implications and expectations of Lutheran worship. Both *Christian Worship Manual* and *Come Worship Christ* include resources for the on-site training of church musicians and teachers who are involved with music in the Lutheran Elementary School and the Sunday School. Regular sessions devoted to study (even with lifelong Lutheran musicians) will help musicians to make good choices that complement worship.

**Selecting Instruments** – Liturgical worship invites the people to participate; it also encourages a rehearsing ensemble (choir, cantor, soloist) to enrich worship's shared proclamation. Worship instruments, therefore, must be able to accompany both the full assembly and smaller groups. The organ has a long history of supporting worship. The piano works well, too, although in larger buildings the piano has to generate enough volume to support a larger congregation. Many other instruments add their voices to Lutheran worship. Care must be taken with amplified instruments that their sound encourages the people's song without overwhelming it.

**Designing Acoustics** – Dry acoustics or lively? Minimal sound reverberation or maximum? Dry/minimal may work for worship music performed by an amplified ensemble, but lively/maximum is best when people participate in worship. When it comes to promoting lively acoustics, the pastor is often a "voice in the wilderness." The maintenance people insist on carpeting. The budgeters are aghast at the thought of hardwood floors or a new church with a high ceiling. The sound system consultant wants no reverb time at all. The electronics salesman suggests that he can solve dry acoustics by adding more speakers. While this might help amplified singers and instruments, it won't work to "mike" the entire assembly. The pastor needs to be the champion of a worship space that enables and encourages people to sing the gospel with exuberance and joy.

**Selecting Music** – The task of choosing music for worship is always challenging, although it becomes easier with tuned-in musicians, good instruments, and lively acoustics. The critical

issue is knowing where to look. Save time by narrowing the field. Worship planners—both pastors and musicians—are wise to be in touch with three or four music publishers that produce music for liturgical worship. Unless they have a lot of time on their hands, they can ignore most of what comes in the mail. The Commission on Worship website offers many suggestions and samples for adding variety to the liturgy.

For pastors, selecting and supervising worship music is usually more difficult—and certainly more frustrating—than writing a sermon. But dilemma can turn into delight with the right musicians, the right instruments, the right acoustics, and the right music. The effort it takes to achieve what is “right” is worth it...for the sake of the liturgy, for the sake of the gospel, for the sake of the people.