



## PROGRESS REPORT ON THE NEW HYMNAL

Viewed historically, the word "progress" in connection with the hymnal project is a misnomer. The revision of The Lutheran Hymnal is now in its 32nd year — a bit long even for hymnal projects! The revision of TLH was begun by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1953. Later on they issued an invitation to the other three synods of The Synodical Conference to become full partners in the work. What happened after that resembles nothing so much as "The Perils of Pauline" or the experience of an out-of-state driver on a Chicago expressway on a foggy morning during rush hour. Our WELS car with Prof. Martin Albrecht driving and myself as navigator entered the hymnalway in 1959. From then on it was stop and go, hurry up and wait, roadblocks, detours and unplanned exits. As I recall, the Norwegians dropped out of the race early on and the Slovaks eventually ran out of gas and piled in with the Missourians. When the Missouri car took a sudden turn onto another expressway going in the wrong direction, we decided to get off the expressway and find an alternate route. Well, to make a long trip short, we tried a number of roads that didn't lead us anywhere but we must have finally made a full circle because here we are back at Toll Gate #1 and, I might add, without money to pay the toll! At any rate, after feeling for so long like the man who never returned, it's good to know where we are.

Where we are is at the beginning, again, of a project to produce a revision, or something more than a revision, of The Lutheran Hymnal. That may not seem like progress, but perhaps the hand of the Lord is discernible in the whole timetable. The events of the last twenty-five years, national, synodical and intersynodical, as well as the developments on the American worship scene and in our own congregations, have put us in a much safer and stronger position to undertake the production of a new hymnal. In a sense, therefore, a progress report should rightfully include a brief survey of the past and its impact for our present project

First of all, the TLH revision which Missouri initiated in 1953 and which took such unpredictable twists and turns, did ultimately result in the publication of three books which are of considerable importance for our present project. Much of the TLH revision material was published by the LC-MS in 1959 as the Worship Supplement. The formation of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship focused the considerable talents of the three largest Lutheran church bodies on the production of a Lutheran hymnal almost completely new in worship language, style of liturgical music, calendar, lectionary, and hymn harmonization — the Lutheran Book of Worship. And the Missouri Synod has furnished us with a number of theological corrections, the inclusion of a larger number of TLH hymns, and a revision of our p.5/15 liturgy in its recently published Lutheran Worship. In spite of present criticism of both books (some of which will likely disappear with familiarity and some of which will likely remain), there are many overall excellencies in both hymnals. The tremendous amount of research and sifting of liturgical and hymnic materials should enable us to shorten our project by at least three or four years. Even the difficulties being experienced by those using the new hymnals should be a plus for us. Perhaps we will be able to avoid some of the pitfalls which we might not otherwise have recognized.

A second set of factors that points to the present as the propitious time for our hymnal project relates to our synodical and inter-synodical history. The early sixties were a time of great tension and preoccupation with doctrinal differences within the Synodical Conference. Even after the fellowship break with Missouri and the dissolution of the Synodical Conference, our Synod was busy with adjusting to a new independence and response to challenges in various areas. Even though we continued in the hymnal project as observers, it was pro-

ably <sup>forlorn</sup> fortuitous that the Missouri Synod scrapped the revision in 1965 in favor of pursuing a pan-Lutheran hymnal. We were in a poor position to contribute significantly to the project and our Synod had other priorities.

A backward look at the events on the national scene over the past 25 years also reinforces strongly the conviction that our "enforced waiting" for the hymnal project will work strongly to our advantage in preparing a new worship book. The sixties and early seventies brought social revolution to our land, led by the youth but influencing our entire society, and fueled by our national involvement in a war that was increasingly perceived as unjust. The revolt against virtually all forms of authority and establishment, including religion and the churches, affected virtually the whole of our society. Long-held assumptions about what constituted right and wrong, good and bad, normal and abnormal were turned upside down. Protest and confrontation were the order of the day and violence and rioting, burning and looting occurred in city after city, even in bastions of conservatism such as Milwaukee, Wis. "Dope fiend" became an obsolete phrase as the use of mind-altering drugs became a way of life for millions of youth, and sexual license in the name of personal freedom struck hard at the American ideals of marriage and family. The years saw the rise of the cults and charismatic religion, feminism, the increasing acceptance of abortion, and homosexuality as an alternate "lifestyle." The American psyche was rocked as the long-held belief in American invincibility shattered in a war that could not be won, and Watergate engulfed the nation in a mood of frustration and cynicism as it questioned the viability of government itself.

The Christian churches did not escape unscathed in the general upheaval. As youth left the mainline churches in droves, many of these churches responded in somewhat frantic and hastily contrived worship change and experimentation. The Catholic Church opened the doors with an amazing array of reforms that affected worship and Catholic life. The Latin mass was replaced by the vernacular and the centuries-old Gregorian music was relegated to a back seat as all kinds of other music <sup>was</sup> permitted. Perhaps the Lutheran churches were less affected than a number of other denominations because of their firmer biblical convictions and strong worship traditions. It is remarkable that the Lutheran Book of Worship which was produced in these tumultuous decades turned out to be the kind of book that it is, but perhaps the decision for a "totally new book" was influenced, if only unconsciously, by the times. The schools and churches of our own Synod seemed to ride out the period in characteristically conservative fashion and maintained for the most part a "worship as usual" posture.

As we look at the national scene today, we can only marvel at the Lord's goodness and patience. We are again in a seeming period of peace and national calm. Confidence in government has been restored and our nation has regained some of the belief in itself. Our society is functioning in a somewhat normal fashion. But the Vietnam war and decades of social turmoil have left some deep and possibly lasting scars. The national idealism, so long characteristic of American life, has given way to a new realism. The veneer of Christian ethic and morality, which blistered and broke up in the sixties and seventies, is being rapidly replaced by a frank and open humanism that leaves no room for divine word and will. We have descended, it seems, to a new, and lower, plateau in the area of ethics and morality, and the resulting problems are enlarging. The Christian church, it appears, will experience a growing sense of aloneness as it makes its

way in an increasingly hostile and conscience-less society. The search for God continues, however. The "Jesus people" and other quick-fix religions have largely vanished along with the naive of yesterday's flower children, but the rise of the cults continues, and the new churches which offer security, identity, and strong personal involvement in a society still apprehensive and troubled, is appealing to growing numbers of people. There is need as never before for the Christian churches to rise up and reach out in loving concern and to bring to our society the forgiveness and peace which is found alone in Jesus Christ. Whether America's Christians will be equal to that challenge only the Lord knows. There does seem to be in some areas a new sense of seriousness about faith and personal commitment. Most of the mainline churches have experienced the futility of reclaiming their youth or of any sound worship renewal by liturgical novelty or faddish experimentation. The worship excesses of "St. Martin's by the Gas Station" have largely disappeared from the scene, and most of the major Christian denominations have <sup>been</sup> searching out their roots and reassessing their traditions in an effort to rebuild on firmer foundations.

As far as worship in our own Synod and the present hymnal project are concerned, the above observations on our nation and society over the last decades reinforce the conviction that we have arrived at a propitious time to engage in production of a new guide for congregational worship. We should have a sharper perspective on the needs of our members who must live in today's society and be less likely to be swayed by worship trends which have already proved themselves to be superficial, ephemeral, or simply futile.

A final reinforcement of the conviction that our Synod has been making progress even while standing relatively still in our worship practice grows out of our own synodical life and <sup>our</sup> use of The Lutheran Hymnal over the past forty-plus years.

These years have marked the growth of our Synod in a number of ways. Not only in numbers, geographical expansion, and organization, but in a growing sense of synodical purpose and mission. We have emerged as a national church instead of a midwestern German-Lutheran community, serving multi-racial and cultural segments of our society. The years of intersynodical tension and doctrinal struggle, which climaxed in the separation from our former sister synod, forced us to stand on our own feet and the Lord has richly blessed our efforts to face up to the challenges. With continued doctrinal unity and an emerging evangelism concern, we seem to be in a strong position to fashion a worship book that will serve the changing complexion of our membership and be a useful tool to integrate growing numbers of non-German people into the truths of biblical Lutheran teaching and worship tradition.

A brief look at our Synod's use of TLH brings us to two conclusions: First, it has probably been worthwhile to have to wait over forty years for a new hymnal. It has enabled us to come to a settled and familiar liturgical and hymnic tradition.

Our synodical hymnal in the 25 years prior to the publication of TLH was the Book of Hymns which included only 320 hymns and two basic liturgies, the Sunday service and the Vespers. The Sunday liturgy was published in a longer and shorter version. The longer liturgy did substantially include what we have today, although the introits and graduals were missing and the service provided for only one Scripture reading. However, most congregations opted for the shorter version which also omitted the Offertory and General Prayer and reduced the Gloria in Excelsis to a single line. The Vespers also omitted the characteristic parts of that historical service, the Psalmody and

Canticle, and also the Prayers except for a closing collect. So the Sunday service as we know it in TLH (which represents a consensus of the Lutheran liturgies of the 16th century) and the Matins and Vespers have really been in use in our Synod only since 1941. The Missouri Synod, by contrast, had these liturgies in use almost thirty years earlier. We were the last of the major Lutheran church bodies to include these liturgies in our worship book. The number of hymns provided by TLH also more than doubled our hymnic resources, and it took time to establish familiarity and appreciation for new hymns. So, in retrospect, the scrapping of the original hymnal revision and enforced waiting period has been a plus for our Synod.

The second conclusion which emerges from our more recent worship history is that we need to proceed now without further delay in the hymnal project. In the interest of general uniformity in our worship, among other factors, we need to move strongly now. Our hymnal has revealed a number of weaknesses and inadequacies. A substantial number of new hymns, including some very fine ones written in the last two decades, are not available for us in TLH. Other hymns have proved to be unpopular or not particularly useful. There are also liturgical problems, among which we could list a general dissatisfaction with the present form of Propers, the wordiness and undue length of the General Prayer, the placement and function of the Kyrie, and more. In addition, recent developments in Lutheran worship, already widely in use in our Synod, are not reflected in TLH. The change in church year calendar, worship language, use of the NIV, the new three-year lectionary with the addition of an Old Testament reading, and the desire to incorporate the use of larger portions of the Psalms in the Sunday service add up to more than can be gracefully accommodated by the use of supplementary booklets or a worship supplement of even major size. There is a growing use of non-TLH materials in congregational worship and parochial changes which in some cases replace the normal use of TLH liturgies make for growing concern about desirable general uniformity in our worship. So it is high time to print a new book. This we have, of course, already decided to do. From now on, we hope to present progress reports that indicate substantial and lasting progress, but there is some satisfaction in reviewing the past and realizing that the delays of the past have also resulted in a kind of real and important progress.

As far as progress in our present project is concerned, there is not much to add to the report in the recent issue of The Northwestern Lutheran, which, it is piously hoped, has been read by most of you. The organization and planning anticipated for the first year of the project is reasonably on schedule. The list of "questions in search of guidelines," which is appended to this brief report, will give you an indication of the many areas of concern and problems which confront the hymnal committees.

There is one over-riding concern, however, which is of highest importance if we are to make real worship progress as a Synod. We need to realize that the mere publication of a new hymnal cannot by itself assure a revitalization of worship in our Synod. What is vitally needed is an overall renewed concern and effort in the area of worship throughout our whole Synod. This can only take place through the determined interest and work of our pastors and worship leaders. It is vital that preparation be made in these years before publication as well as after. We should learn this from experience. After the initial efforts with TLH, a slackening of concern for teaching and learning have left large areas of TLH untouched in many congregations. May the Lord lead us to a renewal of concern and dedicated effort in bringing our people to a more joyful worship involvement with our God and each other. There is much to lose or to gain...

QUESTIONS AND AREAS OF CONCERN

2/21/85

RELATING TO WORSHIP

1. Do we need a theme?
2. What is our psychology of worship? What do we hope to send out of the church?
3. How could our hymnal continue to teach about our worship heritage?
4. What is changeless and what is changeable about our worship heritage?
5. What a revised hymnal cannot improve and can something be done about it?
6. How do our people want to worship?
7. Is there a problem with words or with music?

GENERAL QUESTIONS ON THE NEW HYMNAL

8. For whom are we preparing the new hymnal?
9. In which ways should the new hymnal be similar to TLH?
10. In which ways new or different?
11. How large should or dare the new hymnal be?
12. What contemporary needs should be reflected in the new book?
13. What kind of balance is desirable between the liturgical and hymn sections?
14. Will the new hymnal strive for a synodical uniformity or invite diversity?

QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE HYMN SECTION

15. Should the hymn section of the new hymnal be basically very similar to TLH or should there be a change? If so, describe.
16. What type(s) of new hymns should we be looking to add to the hymnal?
17. What guidelines should govern language revision or update on hymns?
18. Which factors should determine the length of hymns?
19. How do we feel about the use of a given melody for a number of texts?
20. What is our reaction to the growing number of requests for omitting melodies which seem to be difficult for the congregation?
21. Which factors need to be considered in deciding on the basic type of hymn harmonization? Different types of harmonization for different type hymns?
22. How much importance should be attached to keeping hymn texts or tunes from LW or LBW unchanged?

QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE LITURGICAL SECTION

23. What are the specific values of "set liturgies" for our worship?
24. Are alternate liturgies preferable to alternate musical settings for the same liturgy? E.g., two different services of Holy Communion vs. one service with two musical settings?
25. What factors should guide us in determining the nature and number of liturgies?
26. Which new liturgies, if any, should be prepared for the new book?
27. How much revision can or should be undertaken in the "p.5/15" liturgy?
28. Which specific changes should be considered in the present Sunday liturgy? Cf. Q.3
29. Which lectionary should be used for the Sunday service?
30. Is it desirable to have the congregation participate in the Propers if they are designed for singing?
31. Should the revision of p.5/15 or other liturgies for the Sunday service make use of larger sections of the Psalms as is done in the LW introits?
32. Which of the following orders or rites should be included in the hymnal: Baptism? Confirmation? Marriage? Burial?

Liturgical Section, Cont.

33. If new music is provided for a liturgy, of what sort should it be?
34. Should chants be provided for the pastor's part in any of the liturgies or portions of them?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

35. RE p.5/15 Liturgy:
  - Will we retain the Introit? If so, what form should it take?
  - What is to be the function of the Kyrie?
  - Should there be an alternate(perhaps seasonal) for the Gloria in Excelsis?
  - Assuming a necessary change in the General Prayer, what sort will it be?
  - What is to be the function of the Offertory?
  - Will the present music for the liturgy be acceptable for another 30-40 years?
  - What preliminary opinions do we have regarding the responses to the first two readings?
36. Do we intend to develop a church year calendar unique to our circles or a more commonly used calendar?
37. If we use the 3-year cycle of readings, will we have collects appropriate to each cycle(A,B,C,) of readings?
38. Do we intend to include a "chorale service"(Luther's German Mass)?
39. Do we intend to continue to use Latin titles?
40. Will a section on Liturgical Colors be included?
41. Are we minded to print only the melody line for the liturgical chants?
42. Should the Catechism be included?
43. Should the meter be indicated in the hymns?
44. Should Amens be included?
45. What additional books should be considered for publishing along with the hymnal?
46. What is the best way to report hymnal project progress to the membership of the Synod?
47. What is your suggestion for a name for the new hymnal?