



Worship

As church, we center ourselves and our mission as God's people in worship around word, bath, and meal and amidst the assembly gathered to sing, pray and praise God. We bring who we are into worship. We bring the culture of our upbringing, the cultures of our neighborhoods, and the cultures where we are called into ministry, mission and service. Then we join with the cultures that everyone else brings with them into worship.

We are a church that daily includes a wide variety and array of music, cultural practices, and understandings of what "traditional" and "contemporary" might look like. Every time we are in worship, we are church gathered by God. In worship we are Lutheran, hearing and proclaiming the story of salvation, law and gospel, and the cross that raises us to life. We are together for all of it, so that, as we move toward and around the table, this togetherness becomes even more deep and wide, seen and unseen.

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the
wounded whole;
there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-
sick soul.*
—ELW 614

Worship becomes "balm" in whatever way we define the "Gileads" of our lives. We have been given a holy and awesome responsibility in leading God's people in worship. Every week, in countless assemblies, the body of Christ—the church—gathers. We assemble all our wounds, brokenness, inequalities, complacency, lethargy and greatest moments of joy. Gathered together, we wash in a bath of forgiveness, dine at a table of mercy and are fed with words of grace. When we leave worship, we are not the same. We have been changed to offer "balm" for a world in need.

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton says, "Most of all, we should come to worship expecting to be changed. We are touching, tasting, feeling, hearing and seeing the one who knows us and loves us completely. Our lives are restored. We are set free. Fed for the journey, we are set loose to go in peace and serve the Lord. Thanks be to God."

Our pattern for worship ends with the "Sending." Or does it? In the *Sunday Assembly*, published by Augsburg Fortress, a simple diagram shows the fourfold pattern as a never-ending cycle. The Rev. Gordon W. Lathrop writes, "Sending is ... *movement*: from the communion table to the cross in the world ... the life cycle continues. The ending inevitably leads again to the gathering."

When we say, "Go in peace, serve the Lord," does our worship end? Worship is work that is never completely done. After we are fed and nourished by God's word and by bread and wine, we don't settle in for a long nap. We are not the same people who gathered. We have been formed again—re-membered—as Christ's body and are ready to be sent into the world that God loves. May that continue to be so across this church and throughout all our worshipping assemblies.

Report of work for 2016–2019

- The Church Council, through recommendations from the working group on Ministering to and with Same-Gender Couples and their Families working group, tasked the worship staff with creating supplemental resources for the service of marriage. This resource was completed in 2016 and is published at ELCA.org/worship. In 2019, Augsburg Fortress combined this resource with the existing service of marriage in Evangelical Lutheran Worship and other resource materials to publish a new print resource, *Love and Faithfulness: A Marriage Planning Handbook*.
- In fall 2016, the worship staff hosted "Strong Center—Open Door," three events highlighting the 10th anniversary of Evangelical Lutheran Worship. This provided an opportunity for laypeople and rostered ministers to learn more about ELW and the many supplemental resources that had been published to date.
- In October 2016, worship staff bade farewell to Deacon Scott C. Weidler, program director for worship and music. Deacon Weidler served faithfully in this role for more than 20 years. The worship staff welcomed Deacon John E. Weit to serve as the new program director for music. In fall 2017, the ELCA, in partnership with Augsburg Fortress, created a shared staff position and called Deacon Jennifer L. Baker-Trinity to serve as program director for resource development.

- In early 2017, the worship staff hosted an ELCA composers' retreat that led to the publication of *Music Sourcebook for Life Passages: Healing, Funeral, and Marriage*.
- Throughout 2017 and 2018, the worship staff hosted "Worship at Center" events across the ELCA for laypeople and rostered ministers. While these events varied in theme and content, all centered on the why, what, and how of worship.
- In March 2017, a joint worship service coordinated by the ELCA was held in Cleveland to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the "Formula of Agreement" between the United Church of Christ, the Reformed Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the ELCA.
- Throughout 2017, joint ELCA and Roman Catholic services across the United States celebrated the ongoing work of the Declaration on the Way. In March 2017, the national service for this observance was held in the Lutheran Center Chapel in Chicago.
- In 2017, the ELCA observed the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation with publications, concerts and other events, including an all-day event in Washington, D.C., on Reformation Day that concluded with a livestreamed worship service.
- In July 2018, Valparaiso University hosted an event jointly sponsored by the ELCA, the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians, and Lutheran Summer Music. Approximately 75 attendees participated in a variety of worship services and workshops on topics related to music leadership and worship planning in a variety of contexts. This is one example of the ELCA's ongoing partnership with the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians in offering resources and educational opportunities for church musicians.
- In July 2018, as part of the triennial ELCA Youth Gathering held in Houston, Texas, worship staff gathered with 31,000 youth and their adult leaders. For the first time, the worship team had a presence in interactive learning with youth engaged in many aspects of worship planning, leadership, and music. This included the "Acolyte Olympics," in which youth wrote prayers, played a variety of instruments and experimented with the tools and vestments of worship.
- In January 2019, the first liturgical writers' retreat brought together 13 participants from around the United States. For four days, attendees learned form, history and poetic prose while experimenting with writing liturgical texts. The hope is that these people will become contributors, if they are not already, to *Sundays and Seasons* publications through Augsburg Fortress and ELCA churchwide worship resources.
- In February 2019, a pilot retreat for preachers was held with participants from Region 9 (Virginia to the Virgin Islands). Each synod bishop invited five to six pastors to attend the retreat, called "Lenten Toolbox for Preaching." More than 48 participants attended workshops on worship planning for Lent, preaching techniques and text study on the Lenten lectionary for Year C. The worship team hopes to offer this retreat to other regions in the future.
- *Hear My Voice: A Prison Prayer Book* is a beautiful print resource, intended primarily for those in correctional facilities but also for chaplains and others related to people who are incarcerated. Developed through a collaborative process with the ELCA and Augsburg Fortress, *Hear My Voice* draws on writers with diverse connections to the criminal justice system. Congregations will be encouraged to purchase and share this resource with those in their communities who are in the criminal justice system. This durable and conveniently-sized prayer book, enhanced with color artwork by Ms. Robyn Sand Anderson, provides prayers for many times and circumstances, inviting those who are incarcerated to trust in God's never-failing love for them and the whole world.
- Over the past five years, the executive for worship has been involved in the Word and Service Task Force, and later the Entrance Rite Discernment Group, working with the recommendations for the unification of the roster that took effect in January 2017. Based on the actions of this assembly, the worship team will look at how to shape the entrance rite.
- Throughout each year, worship staff plans and leads worship for weekly chapel at the Lutheran Center. ELCA Worship also coordinates worship at many churchwide events, including Churchwide Assembly, and assists in planning and leading worship for various units of the churchwide organization, the Conference of Bishops, the Church Council, ecumenical gatherings and other worship services that may arise.
- The ELCA Worship page (ELCA.org/worship) includes a variety of print and digital worship resources for congregational use. These include resources for worship planning, evaluation, the lectionary, frequently asked questions and worship during times of national crisis, disasters or world events. From the ELCA Worship page, you may subscribe to the monthly Worship News. Additionally, ELCA Worship hosts a blog (blogs.ELCA.org/worship) and a Facebook page (facebook.com/elcaworship).

Major directions for 2019–2022

- Next steps for Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Beginning with the Worship Jubilee event in 2015, staff have been surveying, engaging with and collaborating with various constituent groups across the church to determine what is next for worship resources in the ELCA. Staff are now in the initial stages of developing a concept for a possible liturgy and hymn supplement to the 2006 edition of Evangelical Lutheran Worship. A publication date is forthcoming.
- The worship team anticipate that the next three years will include teaching and formation events related to the host of supplemental resources published since ELW was released, including a possible new hymn and liturgy supplement.
- As part of the Rostered Ministers Gathering, scheduled for July 2020 in Phoenix, Arizona the worship team will plan and lead worship and will offer workshops on various aspects of worship.
- The worship team will continue to partner with synods, seminaries, and other organizations to provide forums and opportunities for conversation, listening, and sharing about worship.

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