



With the Whole Church

A Study Guide
for Renewing Worship

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



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for Renewing Worship

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Contributors: Barbara Berry-Bailey, Lorraine Brugh, Michael Burk, Craig Mueller, Melinda Quivik, Robert Rimbo, Craig Satterlee, Mark Strobel, Scott Weidler

Illustrations: Daniel Erlander

Design: Diana Running

Editors: Andrea Lee, Suzanne Burke, and Jessica Hillstrom

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With the Whole Church

Introduction

For Lutherans, worship matters. In fact, worship lies at the heart of how we understand ourselves together. Today, worship practices among Lutherans reflect different patterns, different pieties, different ethnic backgrounds and experiences, and some influences that are not Lutheran at all. For the sake of the mission we share and with the hope of coming to understand more deeply who we are as Lutheran Christians together, *With the Whole Church* invites people from every corner of the church into conversation and study about worship.

This study guide is part of the Renewing Worship project, which was initiated by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in the fall of 2000. Over the next five years, Renewing Worship involved thousands



of people in the process of identifying things we hold in common and developing materials that will shape the next generation of worship resources. Timing for this shared work was determined by need. Recognizing growing diversity within this church regarding worship practices and the challenges of being responsive to changing mission needs, Renewing Worship literally renewed an ongoing conversation.

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After the first two years of consultation and work together, it was determined that Renewing Worship should move forward toward the development of a diverse and more lasting family of worship resources that would have at its center a new primary book of worship. This new book, available in both print and electronic forms, will be an important resource for worship and worship renewal among Lutheran congregations for a generation to come.

As important as worship resources can be to shaping the gatherings of faith communities, even more important is the participation of people in worship and in the conversations that surround and support worship. *With the Whole Church* reflects the conviction that **WE all have a stake in what happens when we worship** and a stake in understanding why.



This seven-session study is intended for the whole church:

- individuals and congregations,
- pastors and lay people,
- worship leaders and other members of Christian faith communities.

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It is designed to be used in a variety of settings—in small groups and classes, at committee meetings, or in homes. An entire congregation can read the session essays, then think and talk about them together. Any one person can use the sessions within this booklet as a guide for reflecting on their part in the church's worship life. **The point and the hope is for people—lots and lots of people—to think and to share with one another,** growing together in our understanding of *why* worship matters and *how* worship draws us into God's own mission.

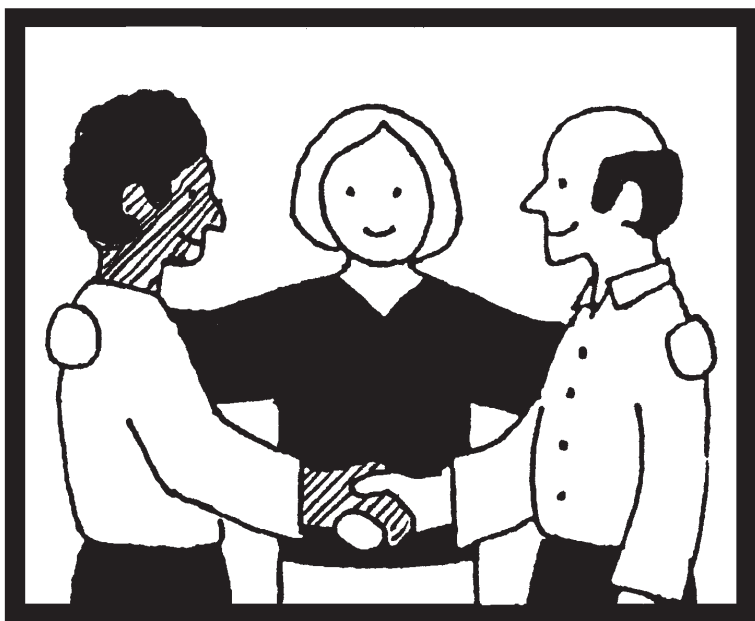
Each session includes an essay to be read by all participants, with suggested discussion questions and activities that will help shape the conversation. In addition to the participant pages, leader helps are provided, which include summary descriptions of each session, pointers for facilitating conversation, and suggestions for additional reading.

With the Whole Church is not intended to cover everything about worship that matters. But because everything about worship does matter, churchwide conversation about worship has the potential of being a great gift to the church—the whole church.



To the Leader

Whether you are the one who leads your congregation's weekly adult forum, the chair of the worship committee, or the congregation's music minister, as facilitator of this seven-session study your primary task is to create a setting in which people feel they can contribute to the conversation in ways that are comfortable to them.



To this end, keep in mind that:

1. You may need to fill some gaps.
Be prepared with back-up resources, quotations, Bible texts, and your own ideas if conversation gets bogged down.
2. You are the timekeeper. You may need to help the group, whether large or small, keep their conversation moving forward.
3. When talkers dominate the discussion, you may need to break in—sometimes gently, other times more directly—so that other people can offer their ideas.

A simple “Thank you, Clarice/Clarence,

for your insights. What do the rest of you think about that?” often is enough.

4. You may need to establish ground rules for your conversation at your first session, such as:
giving everyone a chance to speak;
not insisting that everyone speak;
being active listeners (as opposed to grabbing the next opening in the conversation);

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honoring, rather than judging or condemning, differing ideas;

“telling what’s yours to tell” within the discussion group and beyond.

If your study group numbers ten to twelve people or fewer, try having your discussion as one group. If you discover you have a group with many verbal people, then break the group into smaller groups of three to five people. The essential thing to consider, more than exact number, is the mix of people and their personalities. Aim for a mix and a number that will allow everyone to contribute.

If your group is large, create smaller conversation groups of about five people. In each of these groups, ask someone to facilitate the conversation. Their job is to keep the group “on task” with discussion questions and any other activities you have decided to include with the session.

General preparation

Before Session 1, read *With the Whole Church*: the introduction and all seven sessions. Review the session opening and closing suggestions and make adaptations as needed to suit your study group and your setting.

- Identify and gather the resources you will need for the sessions, such as hymnals, Bibles, worship books, and items related to baptism and communion.
- Visit the Renewing Worship Web site at www.renewingworship.org to learn about available resources.
- Review the list of further resources included with each session and select those you will want to consult or to have at hand for the session.
- Publicize the study and make copies of the guide available in advance to interested participants.

To the Leader

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General resources

The following resources provide additional background on worship matters. See the leader helps with each session for resources related to that particular session. The books in the following list are available from Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 1-800-328-4648 or www.augsburgfortress.org. *Principles for Worship* and *The Use of the Means of Grace* can be reviewed and downloaded at www.renewingworship.org.

Principles for Worship. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002.

The Use of the Means of Grace. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997. (Also reprinted in *Principles for Worship*.)

Worship Matters Series. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004–. The series explores worship-related topics growing out of the Renewing Worship initiative.

Christopherson, D. Foy. *A Place of Encounter: Renewing Worship Spaces* (2004).

Dahill, Lisa E. *Truly Present: Practicing Prayer in the Liturgy* (2005).

Lathrop, Gordon W. *Central Things: Worship in Word and Sacrament* (2005).

Quivik, Melinda A. *A Christian Funeral: Witness to the Resurrection* (2005).

Ramshaw, Gail. *A Three-Year Banquet: The Lectionary for the Assembly* (2004).

_____. *The Three-Day Feast: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter* (2004).

Rimbo, Robert A. *Why Worship Matters* (2004). Foreword by Mark S. Hanson.

Torvend, Samuel. *Daily Bread, Holy Meal: Opening the Gifts of Holy Communion* (2004).

Ylvisaker, John. *What Song Shall We Sing?* (2005).

Mission

Worship and the Unfolding Purpose of God

Summary

The first session explores the direct connection between worship and mission. Its goal is to help participants see worship as integral to God's own mission.

Prior to the session

- Locate your congregation's mission statement and make copies for session participants.
- Make copies of the Introduction and Session 1 to distribute to participants.
- Make copies of Session 2 to distribute to everyone at the end of the session.
- Choose a hymn or song that you know will be familiar to most of the participants and gather copies to use during the session.
- Print the list of "Proposed Hymns and Tunes" from the Renewing Worship Web site. Review the list and note hymns that are likely to be unfamiliar to your congregation and session participants. Make copies of either (1) the entire list or (2) an abbreviated list of those you have noted to distribute to participants.
- Set a small table in the center of the room. Place the following items on it: a Bible, a bowl of water, a chalice (communion cup), and a paten (plate).

Opening

1. To begin the session, invite participants to gather around the table.
2. Lead the group in this greeting:

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Participants: And also with you.

Mission

Worship and the Unfolding Purpose of God

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3. Tell the group that the circle you form around the table is like a wheel with the table and the things it holds (Bible, bowl of water, chalice, paten) the hub.
4. Sing one stanza of the hymn or song you have selected.
5. After the singing, invite participants to identify their favorite hymn. If the group is small, share the hymn names with one another and record their titles. If your group is large, to save time, have each person write the title of his or her favorite hymn on a piece of paper, then collect the slips. Tell participants that for each of the following six sessions, you will choose one of these hymns to sing.

Adapt the session opening, as needed, to suit your setting.

Reading and conversation

In this first session,

- Present ground rules for your conversation. Invite responses and discussion. Adjust the guidelines as needed.
- Briefly summarize the main points from the introduction to *With the Whole Church* (five minutes).
- Review the topics for each of the seven sessions.
- Distribute copies of the introduction and Session 1 to those who need them.
- If your group is large, break into small groups for the discussion. (See “To the Leader,” pp. 6–8.)
- Invite participants to read the Session 1 essay to themselves, or have someone with a strong voice read it aloud, and slowly, to the group.
- Then direct attention to the discussion questions, which follow the essay, and the sidebar material. To begin conversation, invite participants to respond to any one of these.

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Worship and the Unfolding Purpose of God

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- Fifteen minutes before the appointed ending time, wrap up conversation and distribute copies of Session 2.

Closing

1. Distribute the full or abbreviated “Proposed Hymns and Tunes” list to participants. If you are using the abbreviated list, tell participants that you created this short list from the complete one.
2. Ask participants to review the list and identify the unfamiliar hymn names. As a group, decide on one you will agree to learn and, eventually, sing during the next six sessions as part of the Closing.
3. Gather in a circle around the center table.
4. Pray the Lord’s Prayer together.
5. Invite people, one at a time, to go to the center table, dip their fingers in the bowl of water, make the sign of the cross on their forehead, then return to their place in the circle. You, as leader, may go last. The group is then dismissed.

This closing pattern can be repeated each week. Be sensitive to participants’ comfort level. For some, this will be a new experience that may take time and conversation to be well received. Adapt it, as needed, to suit your setting.

Further resources

Braaten, Carl E. and Robert W. Jenson, eds. *The Strange New Word of the Gospel:*

Re-Evangelizing in the Postmodern World. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2003.

Rimbo, Robert. *Why Worship Matters.* Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004, pp. 23–32.

Schattauer, Thomas H., ed. “Liturgical Assembly as Locus of Mission,” *Inside*

Out: Worship in an Age of Mission. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999, pp. 1–21.

“The Means of Grace and Christian Mission,” *The Use of the Means of Grace,* pp. 55–59.

Mission

Worship and the Unfolding Purpose of God



What does worship have to do with mission—with the unfolding purpose of God for the whole creation?

Sometimes people have thought about these two dimensions of the church's life in linear terms: worship is something that happens *inside* the church to equip us for something that happens *outside* the church's walls—namely, mission.

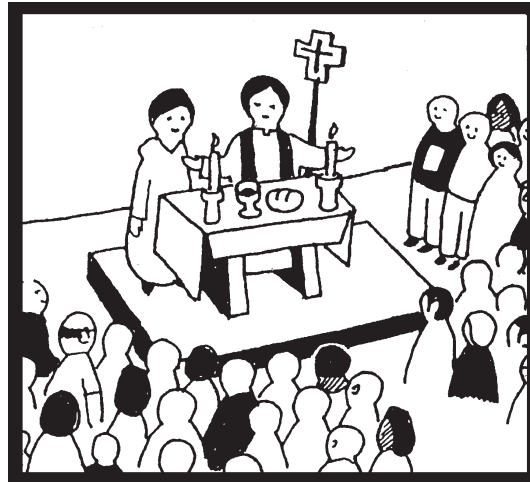
Mission

Worship and the Unfolding Purpose of God

But what if we used the image of a wheel to think about the dimensions of worship and mission? **Around God's grace as the hub, worship and mission rotate in a continuous circle,** intertwined with one another, each leading into the other and out again, constantly in motion.

That grace-centered wheel, worship and mission circling harmoniously together, may be seen in this description from *The Use of the Means of Grace* (background 51A, adapted):

- Baptism and baptismal catechesis join the baptized to the mission of Christ. Confession and absolution continually reconcile the baptized to the mission of Christ.
- Assembly itself, when that assembly is an open invitation to all peoples to gather around the truth and presence of Jesus Christ, is a witness to the world.
- The regular proclamation of both law and gospel, in scripture reading and in preaching, tells the truth about life and death in all the world, calls us to faith in the life-giving God, and equips the believers for witness and service.
- Intercessory prayer makes mention of the needs of all the world and of all the church in mission.
- When a collection is received, it is intended for the support of mission and for the concrete needs of our neighbors who are sick, hurt, and hungry.
- The holy supper both feeds us with the body and blood of Christ and awakens our care for the hungry ones of the earth.



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Worship and the Unfolding Purpose of God

Language used in worship has power to form and shape believers, sending us from the assembly to live as merciful and just people who serve the mission of God in this world.

—*Principles for Worship*,
application L-4C

- The dismissal from the service sends us in thanksgiving from what we have seen in God's holy gifts to service in God's beloved world.
- By God's gift, the Word and the sacraments are set in the midst of the world, for the life of the world.

Worship and mission are inextricably linked, not only to one another but also to God. God is the center, the hub that holds these dimensions of the church's life together and empowers them. Our worship draws upon and focuses attention on the one who is the source of grace for our lives and our world. **God is the one whom we meet in worship and who meets us:** in the scriptures proclaimed, in the washing of holy baptism, in the triune name, in the meal of Christ's gracious, self-giving presence, in the community called the body of Christ, in the poor.



God is the center. God is the focus. Our invitation welcomes people to God, not to our membership rosters, our classes, our choirs, our words, our table.

To the center of God's grace we are joined. From that center God strengthens our faith, gathers us in community, and links us to the rest of the world. Yes, worship equips us for mission, but this mission is to one another as well as to creation. Surely, worship helps us to share the good news, remember the poor, and serve



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the Lord, because Christ is with us. But the direction is always two-way: we nurture one another, as well as the world, with God's gifts of grace.

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Gathering in and being sent out is far more complicated than those simple directions suggest. The image of a circle helps us here, too. For the Christ around whom we gather is always on the outside. He is the one who hangs out with tax collectors and sinners, the one who hangs out with losers, the one who hangs on the cross outside the boundaries of decency, the law, and respectable society. This Jesus gathers us with the hungry, the naked, the imprisoned, and we don't even know who all of them are. This Jesus stands with, embraces, and becomes one of the poor. This Jesus takes on the mortal, frail flesh of the sick, homeless, dispossessed, and hungry people we are.

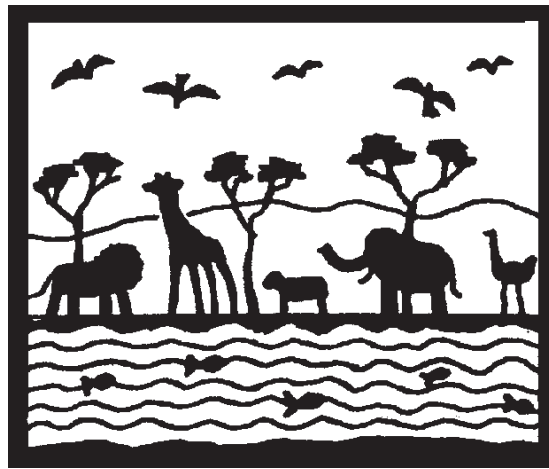


Mission

Worship and the Unfolding Purpose of God

God is the one whom we meet in worship and who meets us. . . . Our invitation welcomes people to God.

The wheel keeps moving back and forth, around and around. As we gather around the table of the Lord, we also bring with us all the world, the whole creation that God loves. **This gathering is open, the walls are porous, the doors welcome. Renewing worship is about renewing mission.** Our gathering as the church is a sending, and our sending as the church is a gathering.



Mission

Worship and the Unfolding Purpose of God

What does this mean?

For your congregation

What does your congregation's mission statement say about worship? about mission? How does it reflect being centered on God?

For public life

When your congregation gathers for worship, what reminds you of the world beyond your doors?

For you

Review the list of bulleted statements on pp. 13–14. What aspects of weekly worship most clearly connect with the living of your life during the week? How is living your life worship?

Notes



Worship Is Central

Summary

This session explores the centrality of worship to Lutheran identity and helps participants think of themselves, when gathered for worship, as “assembly.”

Prior to the session

- Choose one of the favorite hymns from the list that was generated in Session 1. Gather copies to use during the session.
- Make copies of Session 2 to give to new participants and those who forget to bring theirs.
- Make copies of Session 3 to distribute at the end of the session.
- Provide copies of the words to the unfamiliar hymn the group selected last time for reading during the Closing.
- Set a small table in the center of the room. Place the following items on it: a Bible, a bowl of water, a chalice (communion cup), and a paten (plate).

Opening

1. To begin the session, invite participants to gather around the table.
2. Lead the group in this greeting:
Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
Participants: And also with you.
3. Sing one stanza of this week’s favorite hymn or song.

Worship Is Central

Reading and conversation

In this second session,

- Remind participants of the ground rules for your conversation.
- Distribute copies of Session 2 as needed.
- If your group is large, break into small groups for the discussion.
(See “To the Leader,” pp. 6–8.)
- Invite participants to read the Session 2 essay to themselves, or have someone with a strong voice read it aloud, and slowly, to the group.
- Then direct attention to the discussion questions, which follow the essay, and the sidebar material. To begin conversation, invite participants to respond to any one of these.
- Ten minutes before the appointed ending time, wrap up conversation and distribute copies of Session 3.

Closing

1. Gather in a circle around the center table.
2. Distribute copies of the words to the new hymn and read it together aloud, in unison.
3. Ask for a volunteer who will learn the tune well enough to lead the group in singing the new hymn next time.
3. Pray the Lord’s Prayer together.
4. Invite people, one at a time, to go to the center table, dip their fingers in the bowl of water, make the sign of the cross on their forehead, then return to their place in the circle. You, as leader, may go last. The group is then dismissed.

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Worship Is Central

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Further resources

Bockelman, Karen G. and Roger Prehn. *Gathered and Sent: An Introduction to Worship*. Participant book and leader guide. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999.

Dahill, Lisa E. *Truly Present: Practicing Prayer in the Liturgy*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005.

Lathrop, Gordon W. *Central Things: Worship in Word and Sacrament*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005.

Lathrop, Gordon W. and Timothy Wengert. *Christian Assembly: Marks of the Church in a Pluralist Age*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.

Worship Is Central



Why do people show up week after week to participate in the Sunday liturgy? Choosing to worship could be habit. Or perhaps for some, being with friends and other people with whom they feel connected draws them. Others may like to hear the music. Still others go to be spiritually nourished and refueled for the week ahead. Many people wake up Sunday mornings and decide to stay in bed or stay at home and read the Sunday newspaper,

Worship Is Central

or they choose instead to relax in nature or socialize with friends. They may find deep communion with God through nature or meditating alone in their room.

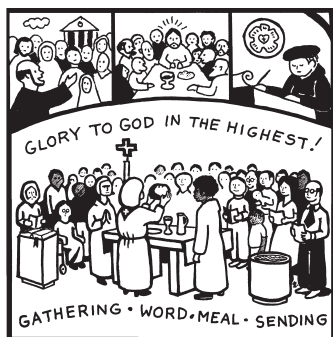


But, for authentic Christian worship that is true to the scriptures and the church's history and tradition, an assembly is required.

For Lutherans the church is defined by its worship. The church is “the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel” (Augsburg Confession, Article VII). More than offering praise to God, Lutherans say specifically that

the heart of our weekly liturgy is gathering around the word of God proclaimed and the sacraments of holy baptism and holy communion.

What would you say is the most important symbol in the worship space? The cross? the altar? the Bible? the baptismal font? Even more important than all of those good answers is this one: the assembly, the people of God. **You can't have worship without the congregation.** The community's presence reminds us that we are more than our individual selves. We are united with the saints of God around the world and throughout the ages. That is what it means to be part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. The things we do and say in the liturgy have marked Christians for centuries. We gather to remember our baptism, to confess our sins, and to receive God's forgiveness. We hear the ancient scriptures read in our midst, but proclaimed anew



Worship Is Central

with power and relevance for our day. We gather around the table to be fed with the bread of life and then we are scattered to live our baptismal faith in our daily lives.

Worship moves us outside of ourselves. Much of spirituality is a good thing because it connects our faith to our experience of God amid our everyday lives. But spirituality can also lead to an unbalanced focus on ourselves and our needs alone. The liturgy calls us to take seriously the suffering in the world: we seek justice for the oppressed and we lift before God in prayer all whose lives are torn by war, violence, addiction, anxiety, abuse, or illness.

Worship is both counter-cultural and a little like play. The radical message of Jesus' love, forgiveness, and acceptance of all people counters so much of the messages we experience in daily living: that life is all about money, success, power, and being busy. In worship we can delight in the presence of God for the pure joy of it, not because we seek some measurable result. What we enact (or "play") in worship is a world the way we believe God intends, where all people are loved, welcomed, and cherished. At the baptismal font and at the Lord's table there are no barriers due to status, race, gender, or wealth. The grace, reconciliation, and justice that we enact through the liturgy form us to live these values in the world.



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Worship Is Central

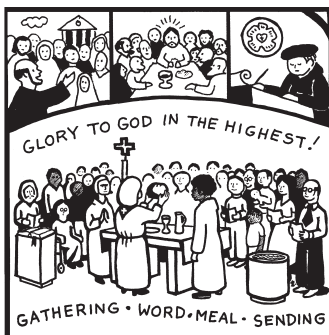
You can't have
worship without the
congregation. . . .
Assembly is required.

Over the centuries, Christians have pondered, disagreed, and sometimes argued over the way in which Christ is present in holy communion. Do the bread and wine literally turn into the body and blood of Christ? Is Christ's presence only a spiritual presence? Is it somewhere in-between? Today more consensus exists among faith traditions that Christ is truly present in a mysterious way that cannot be easily explained. However, if the main question we ask is how the bread and wine are "changed" in holy communion, then we are missing a profound aspect of the liturgy.

The assembly is changed in the communion! We become what we eat and drink. Through hearing the word and sharing the meal, our lives are transformed so that we *become* the body of Christ. As the body of Christ and baptized children of God, we are the sign of God's presence in the world.



Assembly is required for this kind of worship. With its diverse backgrounds, personalities, and gifts, the assembly is fed and nourished by word and sacrament that it may be sent in mission for the sake of a hungry world. In a society marked by increasing individuality and polarization, the Sunday gathering reminds us of the importance of community.



Worship Is Central

We gather on Sunday because that is the day of Christ's resurrection and his appearance to the disciples. As the risen Christ appears to us, the power of Easter is unleashed. **As the scriptures are opened for us, our eyes are opened to see Jesus present in one another,** in friends and strangers, and in the poor and the least of our sisters and brothers.

With such grace as this, we do not need to go to church on Sundays out of guilt or obligation; we go out of joy and gratitude. We gather with the assembly to give thanks for the gifts of life and for the gospel of Jesus Christ that brings new life, healing, and wholeness. Then we are sent to share this good news with the world.

The Augsburg Confession, written by Lutheran reformers in 1530, is a statement of beliefs that is still important to today's Lutherans. As part of its confession of faith, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America accepts the Augsburg Confession "as a true witness to the Gospel."



Worship Is Central

Notes

What does this mean?

For your congregation

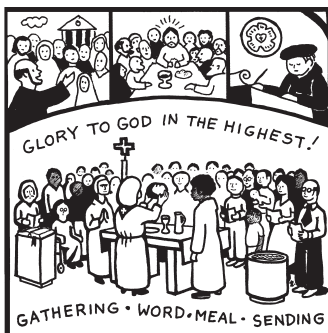
Imagine a picture of your congregation like a family snapshot. In what setting do you picture the people—is it the worship space or another place? Why that setting?

For public life

In what specific ways do you represent the worshipping assembly wherever you are during the week?

For you

Why do you regularly attend and participate in worship?



Means of Grace

The Word Preached, Proclaimed

Summary

This session explores biblical preaching and proclamation as means of grace—where and how Christ encounters us.

Prior to the session

- Gather copies (one per participant) of the worship folder from a previous Sunday.
- Choose another favorite hymn from the list that was generated in Session 1. Gather copies to use during the session.
- Make copies of Session 3 to give to new participants and those who forget to bring theirs.
- Make copies of Session 4 to distribute at the close of the session.
- For singing during the Closing, gather copies of the unfamiliar hymn the group has agreed to learn. Make arrangements to have piano, guitar, or other musical accompaniment.
- Set a small table in the center of the room. Place the following items on it: a Bible, a bowl of water, a chalice (communion cup), and a paten (plate).

Opening

1. To begin the session, invite participants to gather around the table.
2. Lead the group in this greeting:

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Participants: And also with you.
3. Sing one stanza of this week's favorite hymn or song.

Means of Grace

The Word Preached, Proclaimed

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Reading and conversation

In this third session,

- Remind participants of the ground rules for your conversation.
- Distribute copies of Session 3 as needed.
- If your group is large, break into small groups for the discussion. (See “To the Leader,” pp. 6–8.)
- Invite participants to read the Session 3 essay to themselves, or have someone with a strong voice read it aloud, and slowly, to the group.
- Then direct attention to the discussion questions, which follow the essay, and the sidebar material. To begin conversation, invite participants to respond to any one of these.
- Ten minutes before the appointed ending time, wrap up conversation and distribute copies of Session 4.

Closing

1. Gather in a circle around the center table.
2. Distribute copies of the new hymn. Listen to the tune as the volunteer sings or plays it. Then have everyone sing stanza one twice.
3. Pray the Lord’s Prayer together.
4. Invite people, one at a time, to go to the center table, dip their fingers in the bowl of water, make the sign of the cross on their forehead, then return to their place in the circle. You, as leader, may go last. The group is then dismissed.

Means of Grace

The Word Preached, Proclaimed

Further resources

“Proclamation of the Word and the Christian Assembly,” *The Use of the Means of Grace*, pp. 11–18.

“Preaching and the Christian Assembly,” *Principles for Worship*, pp. 47–66.

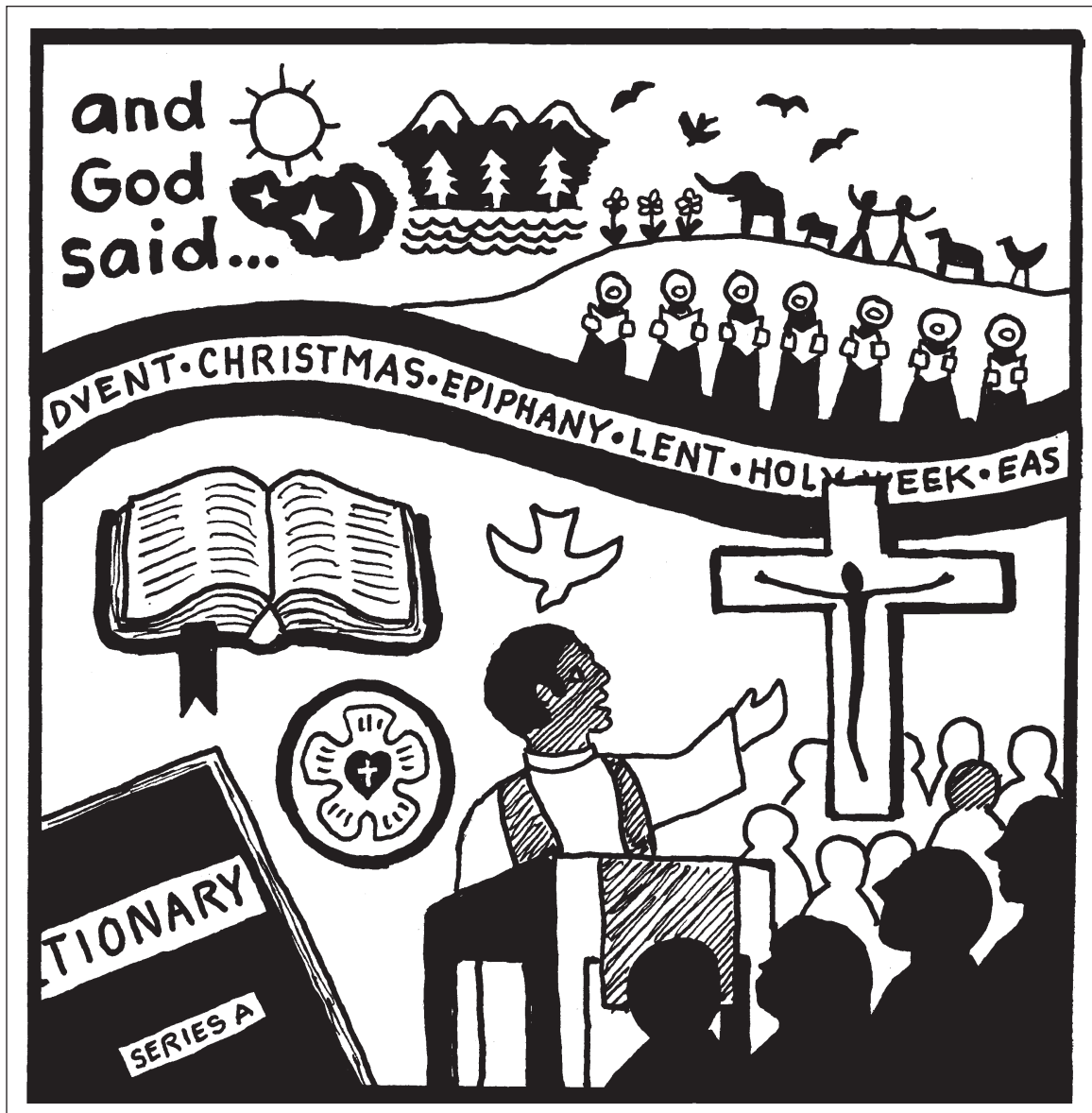
Ramshaw, Gail. *A Three-Year Banquet: The Lectionary for the Assembly*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004.

The Revised Common Lectionary. Consultation on Common Texts. Nashville: Abingdon, 1992.

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Means of Grace

The Word Preached, Proclaimed



In the story of Jesus' encounter with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the gift of Jesus' presence begins with the promises of the word of God: "He interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures." Afterwards, at the table, they recognize him "in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24:27, 35). This story contains the essential elements of what establishes and feeds the body of Christ.

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When Lutherans come together for worship, we, too, encounter the living Christ. In worship the word of God is read, sung, prayed, and preached. That word is the good news of the crucified and risen Christ revealed in the scriptures. That word is heard and digested! In both word and sacrament, we encounter the living Christ.

Scripture shows us that Jesus' own preaching interpreted what had already been written and taught, defining old words in a new way. His words explained and exhorted, commanded, freed, and blessed. He spoke with authority.

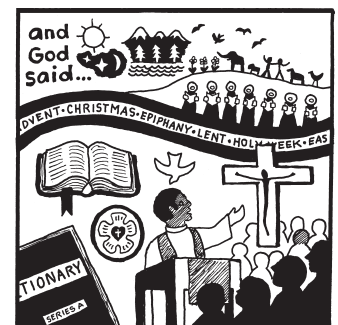
No preacher today can claim to preach as Jesus did. But preachers in every age are called to interpret God's word for their own time and context. The same Holy Spirit invites the preacher into the word of God and uses the preached word to draw the assembly into faith.



Because Jesus Christ encounters us—is truly present—in the proclamation of the word, preaching is central as a means of **grace**: a medium through which Christ is made known. For that reason, Lutherans consider the sermon essential to every Sunday and festival gathering.

The word is the good news of the crucified and risen Christ. . . .

The word is heard and digested!



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The phrase “means of grace” refers to a medium through which Christ is made known, such as the word of God preached, baptism, communion, and the church itself.

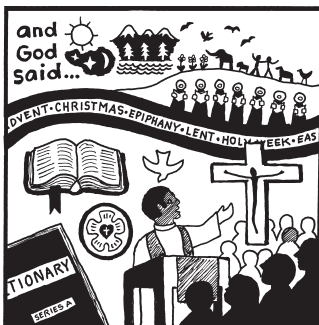
Also for Lutherans, preaching is biblical. Many Christian denominations acknowledge the Bible as the root for preaching but differ on how that word is manifested. This may also be true among Lutheran congregations.

Biblical preaching has been a part of our tradition since the church’s earliest days. Justin Martyr, a second century theologian, wrote that at worship in his time, after the readings from scripture, the presider exhorted the assembly to imitate “these good things” (*1 Apology* 67, in Gordon W. Lathrop, *Central Things*, p. 79). We do not know the sermon’s exact form or subject matter—such as lessons to be learned, symbolic images, or historical perspectives. Nevertheless, Justin’s point is ours, too: the sermon derives from and unfolds the biblical witness.

For some Christians, biblical preaching means that the sermon will be a time primarily to teach about the Bible, focusing on one or two verses of a book each week. For others, biblical preaching entails drawing conclusions from Jesus’ oral teachings or by the example he set to find evidence for how to live.

For many Lutherans, being centered in God’s word means making use of the wealth of readings offered each Sunday in the form of an organized “lectionary” that follows the seasons of the church year. A common lectionary provides another unifying connection with congregations across the church who read the same biblical texts each Sunday and each festival.

The Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) draws on and opens up the vastness of the scriptures, including each week a reading from the Old Testament, New



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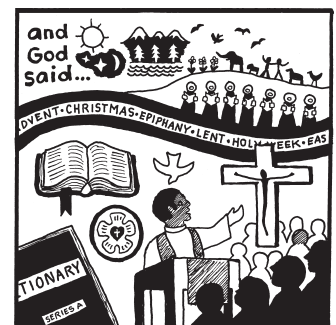
Testament letters (Epistles), and Gospels. A psalm is included as a response to the first reading.

The biblical readings that make up the RCL are arranged in a three-year cycle. Each of the three years (referred to as A, B, and C) draws from the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, respectively, with readings from John's gospel each year, especially for festival days. The Old Testament readings illuminate the gospel reading for that day or serve as sequential readings from one book of the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) or the prophets. The epistle reading can be understood as a window into the early church's living out the good news. The gospel readings tell Jesus' story.

Although the RCL's three-year cycle of readings does not include every biblical text, using this lectionary makes available many of the Bible's riches. Because of its size and variety, this complex of readings fully tells the story of God's salvation and encourages God's invitation into both the hidden and the revealed Christ. While on the surface the readings' intersections may not seem obvious, the Holy Spirit works to bring them together through the preacher who searches out the crucial germ for any given time.

Likewise, the church year reinforces the patterns of the readings appointed within a given period. Beginning with the Advent season's announcement of God's reign, the church year moves to the nativity at Christmas, to the baptism of Jesus in Epiphany, to the Lenten preparation for the Three Days of crucifixion, burial, and vigil, and to the Day of Resurrection, the center of Christian life. After the Easter season, the church celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit in Pentecost, and then,

“Epistle” is another term for “letter.” Many New Testament books, such as Romans, Ephesians, and 1 and 2 Timothy, are letters written by Paul and other apostles to the earliest Christian communities.



Means of Grace

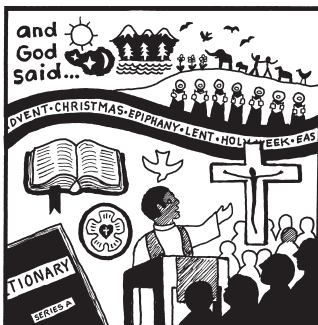
The Word Preached, Proclaimed

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through the time after Pentecost, explores how the Spirit guides the church's life and mission. Preaching that attends to the church year is enriched by the images of time itself brought to birth through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.



Not only the preacher proclaims the word of God, however. By participating in the liturgy, the baptized—that is, congregational members or members of other churches—and visitors, who may or may not be baptized, also proclaim the word of God. The whole assembly first proclaims the word by gathering for worship. Our gathering witnesses to neighbors, friends, and family that we live by radical (meaning “root”) allegiance to the one who created, redeemed, and sustains us.



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Second, the assembly proclaims the word by listening—by attending to the word proclaimed in the Bible readings and the preaching. This takes seriously the apostle Paul’s assertion that “faith comes from what is heard” (Rom. 10:17). **To hear the word is to abide in the presence of the triune God and to be blessed.**

Congregation members may have already “heard” the Sunday readings in their personal preparations—by praying with the texts for the day, attending a preacher’s Bible study during the week, offering insights about



the texts for the preacher’s consideration in sermon preparation, and responding after the worship by discussing what was preached. Because the lectionary makes the readings known in advance, the congregation can read and explore them in anticipation of Sunday worship.

Finally, congregation members also participate in proclamation by reading God’s word, leading the prayers, singing hymns filled with scriptural images and insights, and interpreting the word through the visual arts, gesture, and movement. **Jesus is present in the many ways the congregation members listen, apprehend, and express God’s word.**

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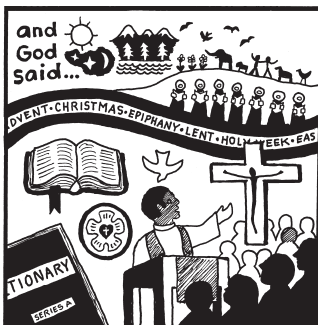


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Notes

Interpreting scripture—preaching and proclamation—results from considerations brought from church and culture, from ancient traditions and contemporary adaptations and insights, and from the gifts of scholarship. Lutherans understand that the preached word is the presence of Christ, because through the word—professing it and hearing it—faith is formed by the Holy Spirit at work among the people.



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The Word Preached, Proclaimed

What does this mean?

For your congregation

Think and talk about leaders and participants in your congregation's Sunday worship. Are many voices heard and faces seen? Discuss ways to involve more people in worship.

Review a copy of your congregation's worship folder from a previous Sunday. Take time to read the hymn texts and Bible passages for the day, noting central themes for the day and their connection to the church year.

Notes



Means of Grace

The Word Preached, Proclaimed

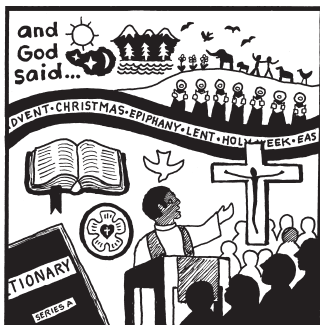
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For public life

What word does your particular community (your neighborhood or town) need to hear from God's church? (For example, a word of forgiveness and reconciliation after a divisive public issue, a word of hope after an episode of violence or disaster.)

For you

"Faith comes from what is heard." How has the apostle Paul's statement proven true for you?



Means of Grace

The Word in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion

Summary

This session explores the Word beyond words—that is, Christ as the Word present in the sacraments of holy baptism and holy communion.

Prior to the session

- Choose another favorite hymn from the list that was generated in Session 1. Gather copies to use during the session.
- Make copies of Session 4 to give to new participants and those who forget to bring theirs.
- Make copies of Session 5 to distribute at the end of the session.
- For singing during the Closing, gather copies of the hymn the group is learning. Make arrangements for piano, guitar, or other musical accompaniment.
- Set a small table in the center of the room. Place the following items on it: a Bible, a bowl of water, a chalice (communion cup), and a paten (plate).

Opening

1. To begin the session, invite participants to gather around the table.
2. Lead the group in this greeting:

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Participants: And also with you.
3. Sing one stanza of this week's favorite hymn or song.

Means of Grace

The Word in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion

Notes

Reading and conversation

In this session,

- Distribute copies of Session 4 as needed.
- If your group is large, break into small groups for the discussion. (See “To the Leader,” pp. 6–8.)
- Invite participants to read the Session 4 essay to themselves, or have someone with a strong voice read it aloud, and slowly, to the group.
- Then direct attention to the discussion questions, which follow the essay, and the sidebar material. To begin conversation, invite participants to respond to any one of these.
- Ten minutes before the appointed ending time, wrap up conversation and distribute copies of Session 5.

Closing

1. Gather in a circle around the center table.
2. Distribute copies of the new hymn. Sing two stanzas.
3. Pray the Lord’s Prayer together.
4. Invite people, one at a time, to go to the center table, dip their fingers in the bowl of water, make the sign of the cross on their forehead, then return to their place in the circle. You, as leader, may go last. The group is then dismissed.

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The Word in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion

Further resources

Erlander, Daniel. *Baptized, We Live*. Chelan, WA: Holden Village, 1981.

“Holy Baptism and the Christian Assembly,” “Holy Communion and the Christian Assembly,” *The Use of the Means of Grace*, pp. 19–54.

Kolb, Robert and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. *The Large Catechism, The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000, pp. 377–480.

Torvend, Samuel. *Daily Bread, Holy Meal: Opening the Gifts of Holy Communion*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004.

Notes

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The Word in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion



Just as God's Word, Jesus Christ, is spoken and heard in the reading of scripture, preaching the gospel, and announcing the forgiveness of sins, so God's word comes to expression in holy baptism and holy communion in ways that we see, smell, touch, and taste. In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther teaches that baptism "is not simply plain water. Instead it is water used according to God's command and connected with God's Word." Luther describes

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The Word in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion

communion as Jesus' words "given for you, and shed for you . . . for the forgiveness of sins," along with eating bread and drinking wine.

In both word and sacrament, Jesus Christ is present among us. "Word and sacrament" are two sides of the same coin, not distinct entities. Both the word that is spoken and heard and the sacraments that we see, smell, touch, and taste are the means by which God's Word, Jesus Christ, is present in the Christian community.

When God's powerful Word is present in water, bread, and wine and when in faith Christians baptize, eat, and drink, God overwhelms us with grace. **By water and the Word in baptism, God frees us from sin and death by joining us to Jesus' death and resurrection.**

God seals us with the Holy Spirit and marks us with the cross of Christ forever, making us members of the church. God gives us power to live as Christ's disciples by repenting and receiving forgiveness, loving our neighbors, suffering for the sake of the gospel, and witnessing to Christ in the world.

God's gifts and promise are so dear that we celebrate them in worship. When we confess our sins and receive forgiveness and as we begin and end our worship in



God wants to nourish us even when we cannot name or feel our hunger.



Means of Grace

The Word in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion

A sacrament:
is a sacred act
established by God;
uses visible, tangible
means like water,
bread, and wine;
is connected with
God's promise, the
Word of God,
which gives faith.

the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we make the sign of the cross. This same name with this same sign of promise was traced on our brow at baptism.



Martin Luther taught that this simple act of tracing Christ's cross over ourselves, as we begin and end each day in God's name, can be a powerful celebration of the hope and comfort of our baptism.

By the Word in bread and wine, which are the body and blood of Christ, God nourishes our faith, forgives our sin, fills us with new life, and gives us power to witness to the gospel. As we receive Christ's body and blood in the holy meal, Christ conforms our lives to his own. We participate in God's new creation and are united with God's people of every time and every place. The Lutheran confessions invite the church to celebrate communion every Sunday, because of Christ's command "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19), in anticipation of meeting Christ, and because **God wants to nourish us even when we cannot name or feel our hunger.**

How Jesus Christ, God's powerful Word, is present in and acts through water, bread, and wine is an inexplicable mystery. It is clear, however, that God alone is the actor in baptism and communion. We do nothing to conjure Christ's presence or to coax God to act. God's powerful presence in water, bread, and wine within the worshiping community is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise, the activity of the Holy Spirit, and the gift of God's grace.



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The Word in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion

When the church gathers at the baptismal font, we acknowledge and proclaim that baptism is Christ's gift, promise, and saving activity. Reading Jesus' Great Commission to baptize and teach (Matt. 28:18-20) as well as the account of Jesus' own baptism by John (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-10; Luke 3:21-22) recalls the biblical witness. Giving thanks and praise to God, our prayers may be offered at the font or over the water. The church's thanksgiving prayer often recalls biblical



images involving water: God's spirit moving over the waters at creation, the waters of the flood, crossing the Red Sea, and Jesus' baptism in the Jordan. The assembly may then invite and implore God to use this water in the font as God used water in scripture—to create and nourish, condemn and save, crucify and resurrect, heal and anoint. The assembly does not ask God to do something God would not do without our asking. Rather, we celebrate God's promise and connect our gathering at the water to the river of life that is God's saving activity.

Christians use a variety of terms for Holy Communion: Meal, Supper, the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table, Eucharist, Mass, the Sacrament of the Altar, the Divine Liturgy, the Divine Service.



Means of Grace

The Word in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion

The living heart of
[the means of grace]
is the presence of
Jesus Christ
through the power
of the Spirit as the
gift of the Father.

—*The Use of the Means
of Grace*, principle 1

When the church gathers at the Lord's table, we declare God's action in and invitation to the Lord's supper. We do not reenact the last supper of Jesus with his disciples. Rather, on the lips of the presiding minister, the words of institution, which are the biblical account of that meal, proclaim God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. These words are surrounded in word and song by our praise and thanks for God's gracious work. We conclude with the Lord's Prayer, the part of our table grace that Christ's entire family says together.

We celebrate our eating and drinking as a continuation not only of Jesus' last supper with his disciples, but also of Jesus feeding the hungry, eating with outcasts and sinners, and breaking bread with disciples after his resurrection. We praise God for providing heavenly food for us in the same way that God provided Israel with manna in the wilderness (Exod. 16:13-21) and Elijah with bread for the journey to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:4-9). We also anticipate the promised feast when death will be swallowed up forever.

Lutherans pray at the font and table in a variety of ways, so our worship books provide a variety of options. As in baptism, Christ's presence, grace, and forgiveness in communion do not depend upon the form of our prayer of thanksgiving. More important is reflecting on what we do at font and table and **how our celebrations of baptism and communion proclaim God's powerful Word of promise, our Savior Jesus Christ.**



Means of Grace

The Word in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion

What does this mean?

For your congregation

When is baptism part of the assembly's worship? When and how often is communion celebrated? Consider how you might enhance their centrality to your congregation's identity (for example, holding baptismal festivals, such as at the Vigil of Easter, Pentecost, or All Saints Sunday).

For public life

Life on Earth depends on water. What difference might it make if, on a daily basis, you prayed over water? What connections to baptism come to mind?

For you

How is participation in holy communion a statement of faith for you?

God alone is the actor in baptism and communion. We do nothing to conjure Christ's presence or to coax God to act.



Hospitality

The Promise to All

Summary

This session examines hospitality in worship and our motivation for this ministry, which is the awareness that God's forgiveness, mercy, and grace are intended for everyone.

Prior to the session

- Choose another favorite hymn from the list that was generated in Session 1. Gather copies to use during the session.
- Make copies of Session 5 to give to new participants and those who forget to bring theirs.
- Make copies of Session 6 to distribute at the end of the session.
- Anticipate discussion in this session of whether unbaptized worshipers should be invited to holy communion. If you don't know what your congregation does and why, find out by talking to your pastor and other worship leaders. Lutheran tradition teaches that to participate in holy communion is a faith statement; coming to the table demonstrates a person's implicit assent. Other traditions view holy communion as a reenactment of Jesus' last Passover meal with his disciples and welcome people who aren't baptized.
- For singing during the Closing, gather copies of the hymn the group is learning. Make arrangements for piano, guitar, or other musical accompaniment.
- Set a small table in the center of the room. Place the following items on it: a Bible, a bowl of water, a chalice (communion cup), and a paten (plate).

Hospitality

The Promise to All

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Opening

1. To begin the session, invite participants to gather around the table.
2. Lead the group in this greeting:
Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
 and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
Participants: And also with you.
3. Sing one stanza of this week's favorite hymn or song.

Reading and conversation

In this session,

- Distribute copies of Session 5 as needed.
- If your group is large, break into small groups for the discussion.
 (See "To the Leader," pp. 6–8).
- Invite participants to read the Session 5 essay to themselves, or have someone with a strong voice read it aloud, and slowly, to the group.
- Then direct attention to the discussion questions, which follow the essay, and the sidebar material. To begin conversation, invite participants to respond to any one of these.
- Ten minutes before the appointed ending time, wrap up conversation and distribute copies of Session 6.

Closing

1. Gather in a circle around the center table.
2. Distribute copies of the new hymn. Sing two stanzas.
3. Pray the Lord's Prayer together.
4. Invite people, one at a time, to go to the center table, dip their fingers in the bowl of water, make the sign of the cross on their forehead, then

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return to their place in the circle. You, as leader, may go last. The group is then dismissed.

Further resources

Bliese, Richard H. and Craig Van Gelder, eds. *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005.

Keifert, Patrick. *Welcoming the Stranger: A Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.

Senn, Frank. "Liturgical Hospitality" and "Liturgy and Life," *New Creation: Elements of a Liturgical Worldview*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.

Stauffer, S. Anita, ed. *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity*. Geneva, Switzerland: Lutheran World Federation, 1996.

Hospitality

The Promise to All



Essential to worship that embodies God's promise of forgiveness, mercy, and grace for all people is the ministry of hospitality. Long before the hospitality industry was created for the sake of profit, the church carried out a ministry of invitation and welcome for the sake of the gospel.

Hospitality

The Promise to All

Care is taken in adapting, altering, or replacing texts, so as to respect the memory of the community and the witness of previous generations.

—*Principles for Worship,*
application L-14E

Christian hospitality is founded in Jesus’ own life and ministry. When Jesus speaks of his cross and resurrection he says, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). At the foot of the cross, the world is gathered up in Jesus Christ. Through worship centered in word and sacrament, Jesus continues to draw all people to new life in him, to reconcile a broken world, and to gather all people into God’s own future.

The church’s ministry of welcome is rooted in Jesus’ invitation to people in need. “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). In Jesus’ own life and ministry, he welcomed people from all



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circumstances, including sinners, outcasts, and all who were seeking God's mercy and grace. In worship, the church extends this same invitation to everyone.

Hospitality in worship grows out of the stories of Jesus' meal fellowship in the gospels. In the ancient Middle East, to welcome someone to your table was to offer that person your friendship and trust. To share your table was to share



your life. Jesus shows how broad the welcome into God's kingdom is through eating with tax collectors and sinners. He offers a feast for all who are hungry for God's grace.

Christ's own welcome and invitation to find God's forgiveness, mercy, and grace in him reach out from the pages of the scriptures and extend to and through the church in the ministry of word and sacrament. In worship we, too, can know and trust that we are welcomed into life with God. Just as Christ gathered a needy world at his table, he invites us to the table of grace. Recalling Jesus' own table fellowship and offer of life, our church teaches that "admission to the Sacrament is by invitation of the Lord, presented through the Church to those who are baptized" (*The Use of the Means of Grace*, principle 37). The table around which we gather is the Lord's table. The hospitality we offer is the Lord's own invitation and welcome.



Hospitality

The Promise to All

The community hospitably assists those new or returning to the assembly . . . and nurtures their understanding and sense of belonging.

—*Principles for Worship*,
application L-14G



The church's life of hospitality grows out of trusting that we have been welcomed by God, that to share in Jesus' table is to share in Jesus' life, and that we are called to share that life with others. **Our worship makes clear Jesus' own welcome and invitation.** As followers of Christ, we are called to welcome others as Christ has welcomed us (Rom. 15:7). Christ's own self-giving summons us to a life of invitation and welcome to all people who long for God's forgiveness, mercy, and grace.

Hospitality, especially hospitality to strangers, is a theme that runs deep in the biblical tradition. In welcoming strangers, people in the scriptures encountered God among them. In Genesis, Abraham and Sarah welcome three visitors into their house who turn out to be none other than the presence of God. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matt. 25:35). And in Luke, on the evening of the resur-

rection, a stranger walks with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The disciples invite their guest to stay with them. At the end of the story, this fellow traveler turns the tables; the guest becomes the host



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(Luke 24:13-35). This pattern is repeated in worship as word proclaimed and bread broken embody the presence of the risen Christ.

Will the people who gather see Christ among us? Will we see Christ in others, especially among guests?

Because worship is a public gathering, strangers, visitors, and guests are expected and will always be present. For worship to be welcoming and inviting—for worship to reveal biblical hospitality and proclaim the promise of God's forgiveness, mercy, and peace for all—it is important to remember that in the people we invite and welcome, the presence of Christ is among us. Two simple questions can shape the beginning of the church's ministry of welcome and invitation: Will the people who gather see Christ among us? Will we see Christ in others, especially among guests?

Such a welcome for strangers and guests is one aspect of hospitality. And yet, because Jesus gathered all sorts of people and welcomed them, hospitality in worship also needs to be broad. **A life of hospitality reaches out to include many cultures and generations.** For example, while we often think of hospitality as a welcome for seekers or the unchurched, longtime members of a worshiping assembly also need to know that they are welcome, that they have a place in the church's gathering.

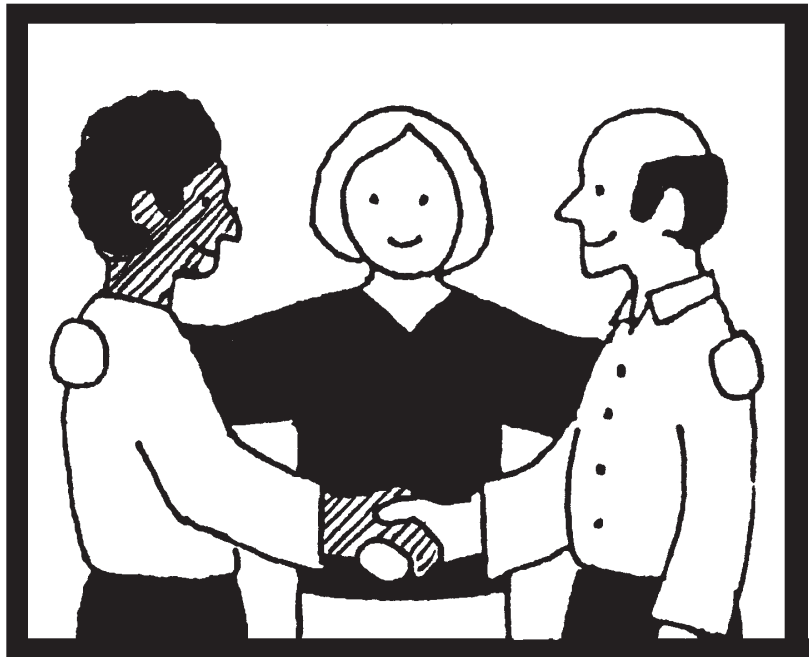


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Worship embodies a way of being in the world. Rather than defined by gender, income, ability, age, or family circumstance, our identity becomes defined, in worship, as a gift of God's grace beyond male and female, Jew and Greek, slave and free (Gal. 3:28). Hospitality in worship embraces a diversity of cultures, perspectives, talents, and generations.



Among Lutherans, one example for the ministry of hospitality can be found in Martin Luther's own work. Luther translated worship texts and prayers and wrote hymns in the language of and musical style of the people he served. Worship renewal addressed the need for people to hear and experience the word of God's grace and promise for them and in ways that they could understand. On the one hand, Luther conserved old forms and styles of worship. On the other hand, he gave these forms new life so that people could understand the message of God's forgiveness, mercy, and grace.



Hospitality

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Luther's work can be a model for worship that welcomes all people. So, for example, the church considers music and language: "Both repeating familiar texts and taking to heart memorable new texts sustain faith across generations" (*Principles for Worship*, principle L-14). As with Luther's reform and renewal of worship, a balance of new and old shows how the whole world—across generations and cultures—stands in need of God's grace and mercy.

Essential to worship that embodies God's promise of forgiveness, mercy, and grace is ministry that invites and welcomes everyone. More than *doing* one thing or another, hospitality is a way of *being* the church, a way of being welcoming and inviting. **Shaped by word and sacrament, we welcome all people who are hungry for God's grace.** Beyond style and taste, beyond generations and cultures, beyond any distinctions the world might draw to separate people one from the other, we are called to welcome others as Christ has welcomed us.

Jesus offers a feast for all who are hungry for God's grace in their lives.



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What does this mean?

For your congregation

How does hospitality work itself out in practical ways in your worship (for example, physical accessibility of the space, attending to the special needs of members of the community, such as providing an American Sign Language interpreter for worshipers who are deaf, and the welcome extended to elderly members that preserves and honors a place for memory)?

For public life

What does your congregation do publicly to tell people they are welcome with you at worship and also to extend the message of God's grace in Christ? What do you do corporately—that is, as a community? What actions do individual members take in daily life to extend Christ's welcome?

For you

What parts of worship communicate welcome to you because of the strong associations of memory? What new, unfamiliar elements of worship have added a dimension that “connects”?



Beyond Speech

Summary

This session considers how art, music, and movement and an array of media choices give full expression to our worship, beyond the spoken or printed word.

Prior to the session

- Choose another favorite hymn from the list that was generated in Session 1. Gather copies to use during the session. If the group hasn't already done this spontaneously, decide on some movement or gestures to accompany the singing.
- Make copies of Session 6 to give to new participants and those who forget to bring theirs.
- Make copies of Session 7 to distribute to everyone at the end of the session.
- For singing during the Closing, gather copies of the hymn the group is learning. Make arrangements for piano, guitar, or other musical accompaniment.
- Set a small table in the center of the room. Place the following items on it: a Bible, a bowl of water, a chalice (communion cup), and a paten (plate).

Opening

1. To begin the session, invite participants to gather around the table.
2. Lead the group in this greeting:

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Participants: And also with you.

Beyond Speech

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3. Sing one stanza of this week's favorite hymn or song. Suggest that participants move with the music spontaneously or offer some ideas for movement or gesture.

Reading and conversation

In this session,

- Distribute copies of Session 6 as needed.
- If your group is large, break into small groups for the discussion. (See "To the Leader," pp. 6–8.)
- Invite participants to read the Session 6 essay to themselves, or have someone with a strong voice read it aloud, and slowly, to the group.
- Then direct attention to the discussion questions, which follow the essay, and the sidebar material. To begin conversation, invite participants to respond to any one of these.
- Ten minutes before the appointed ending time, wrap up conversation and distribute copies of Session 7.

Closing

1. Gather in a circle around the center table.
2. Distribute copies of the new hymn. Sing three stanzas.
3. Pray the Lord's Prayer together.
4. Invite people, one at a time, to go to the center table, dip their fingers in the bowl of water, make the sign of the cross on their forehead, then return to their place in the circle. You, as leader, may go last. The group is then dismissed.

Beyond Speech

Further resources

Christopherson, D. Foy. *A Place of Encounter: Renewing Worship Spaces*.

Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004.

Collins, Dori Erwin and Scott Weidler. *Sound Decisions: Evaluating*

Contemporary Music for Lutheran Worship. Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1997.

Satterlee, Craig A. “The Liturgy—Ordered and Embodied,” *Presiding in the Assembly*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, pp. 23–29.

Westermeyer, Paul. *The Church Musician*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997.

Notes

Beyond Speech



Take a moment and imagine the arts and media you might find in worship on Sunday morning. Your list may include architecture, music in its many forms, textiles in paraments and banners, paintings, mosaics, sculpture, worship books, the worship folder, and the art on its cover.

Beyond Speech

Twenty-first-century Lutherans stand in a long tradition that values the arts in worship. Because of music's prevalence, we may overlook other art forms that can enhance worship. Gesture and posture, action and silence are already part of our liturgy. Simply being aware of their current place in worship can help us explore and further shape their use.

Likewise, other art forms and media can find a place. **Visual images, whether on a service folder, a canvas, or a projected image can give focus to our worship.** The worship space itself also speaks. Does our space say that we value the word read and proclaimed among us? Is it clear that we share communion here? Does our space show that baptism and its regular reaffirmation are central to our worship together as well as our daily living?

Before a word is ever spoken on a Sunday morning, communication abounds.

Many of us identify music as worship's primary art form. As worshipers sing the canticles and hymns of the church, they proclaim the word of God, enlivening it for the entire gathering. Even without words, music communicates, giving expression to our joy as well as lament. Martin Luther believed that next to the word of God, music deserves the highest praise. One important outgrowth of the Reformation was the development of congregational participation in singing a newly developed song form. That form, called the chorale, revolutionized the



Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

—Rom. 12:1

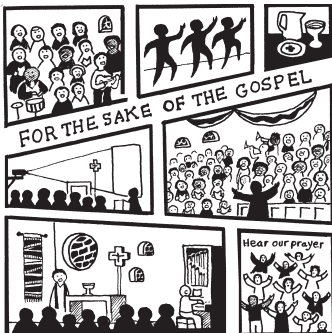


Beyond Speech

church's song because everyone could participate. Prior to that, in the Roman church of the Middle Ages, the choir provided the church's song. And they sang in Latin, which was only understood by the few who were educated. So Luther chose the familiar things of his day, folk songs and the German language, as the vehicles for the new chorale. Here was a tune the congregation and the worship leaders could easily learn, with a text in their own language. Everyone could join in the song. Some of those Reformation chorales, such as "A Mighty Fortress" and "Now Thank We All Our God," are still sung today. Just as our Reformation forebears sang them in German, today we sing those chorales in our languages. Still the people's song, they include all, exclude none.



It is natural for us to ask in our own time and places which art forms we will use and how we will use them. Music, visual art, drama, dance, and other media are gifts. As part of God's creation, they are available to be explored and developed for praising God. Our exploration includes discerning what artistic forms best express our worship. Here again we can be guided by Luther, who recognized the responsibility of art forms to carry God's word in the gathered assembly. This gives us a strong principle to guide our choices in worship. As we decide on this song or that gesture, we keep focused on expressing and illuminating God's word—at times choosing forms without words.



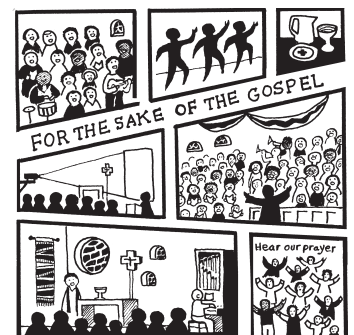
Beyond Speech

Today's technological world gives us access to an even wider range of possibilities for art's presence in worship. Luther certainly couldn't have imagined the visual projection and sound amplification available today. Yet it seems wise, perhaps, to apply the same principles to newly developed media that Luther would have applied to the art forms emerging in his day: Are they able to bear the gospel, carry it into the assembly, and give voice to the full participation of the worshipers? If they can, then we welcome them into our spaces and places. *Principles for Worship* offers guidance regarding our choices today: "Technological equipment is most effective when it does not impair liturgical movement, obscure primary symbols, or adversely affect the design of the space and its worship" (application S-15A). However, we are not compelled to use the latest technology simply because we can. Rather, we are free to use whatever enhances our ability to bring God's word into our midst and gives voice to our laments and praises.



Actions in worship, such as gesture, ritual movement, and dance, as well as the visual and architectural environment, . . . communicate powerfully on their own, and sometimes they support and enhance the words that they accompany.

—*Principles for Worship*,
application L-6C



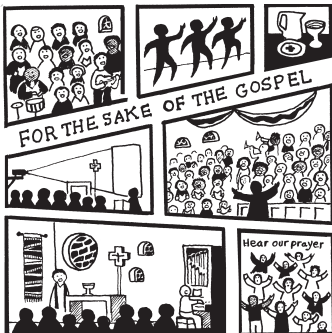
Beyond Speech

Before a word
is ever spoken
on a Sunday
morning,
communication
abounds.

Similarly, the various gestures and postures we practice in our local congregations deserve careful consideration, as these too can bring attention to the centrality of word and sacraments in our gathering. When we all stand to hear the gospel reading, we assent to its importance and honor the Word proclaimed among us. When the presiding minister proclaims the peace to the assembly with a wide, embracing gesture, he or she embodies the love of Christ that extends to all. Kneeling reminds us of our humility before God; lifting our arms in prayer reinforces our communication with God; singing joins our voices in one communal song. All of these are powerful ways we participate beyond speech.

Whether your congregation worships in a simple or elaborate space, a variety of art forms and media are already part of your worship. Each congregation, with its own particular combination of elements, suggests a different approach. Why? Because we are people of the Word. Jesus, the Word, frees us to bring all of ourselves—heart, mind, and body—into our worship. To engage all these aspects of a person and recognizing that **God can never be contained by the words we speak**, we use multiple expressions in our worship. As we gather each Sunday, we proclaim that Word through the many forms God's creation provides.

We have much to explore beyond speech.



Beyond Speech

What does this mean?

For your congregation

What criteria does your congregation use to discern and decide about appropriate art and media for worship? Are your guidelines sufficient; are adjustments needed?

For public life

What role does your congregation play in supporting the arts in your community?
What expanded role might it play?

For you

What talents, skills, or interest can you offer your congregation as it explores the use of the arts and media in worship?

Notes



Renewing the Treasury

Summary

This session examines the value of a core set of worship resources for church-wide use for the sake of unity, not uniformity.

Prior to the session

- Choose another favorite hymn from the list that was generated in Session 1. Gather copies to use during the session. If the group hasn't already done this spontaneously, decide on some movement or gestures to accompany the singing.
- Make copies of Session 7 to give to new participants and those who forget to bring theirs.
- For singing during the Closing, gather copies of the hymn the group is learning. Make arrangements for piano, guitar, or other musical accompaniment.
- Set a small table in the center of the room. Place the following items on it: a Bible, a bowl of water, a chalice (communion cup), and a paten (plate).

Opening

1. To begin the session, invite participants to gather around the table.
2. Lead the group in this greeting:

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Participants: And also with you.

Renewing the Treasury

3. Sing one stanza of this week's favorite hymn or song. Encourage participants to move with the music, as they are comfortable.

Notes

Reading and conversation

In this session,

- Distribute copies of Session 7 as needed.
- If your group is large, break into small groups for the discussion. (See "To the Leader," pp. 6–8.)
- Invite participants to read the Session 7 essay to themselves, or have someone with a strong voice read it aloud, and slowly, to the group.
- Then direct attention to the discussion questions, which follow the essay, and the sidebar material. To begin conversation, invite participants to respond to any one of these.
- Ten minutes before the appointed ending time, wrap up conversation about this session. Invite participants to reflect on the seven-session study and share their observations, insights, summaries, or evaluations.

Closing

1. Gather in a circle around the center table.
2. Distribute copies of the new hymn. Sing all of the stanzas.
3. Pray the Lord's Prayer together.
4. Invite people, one at a time, to go to the center table, dip their fingers in the bowl of water, make the sign of the cross on their forehead, then return to their place in the circle. You, as leader, may go last. The group is then dismissed.

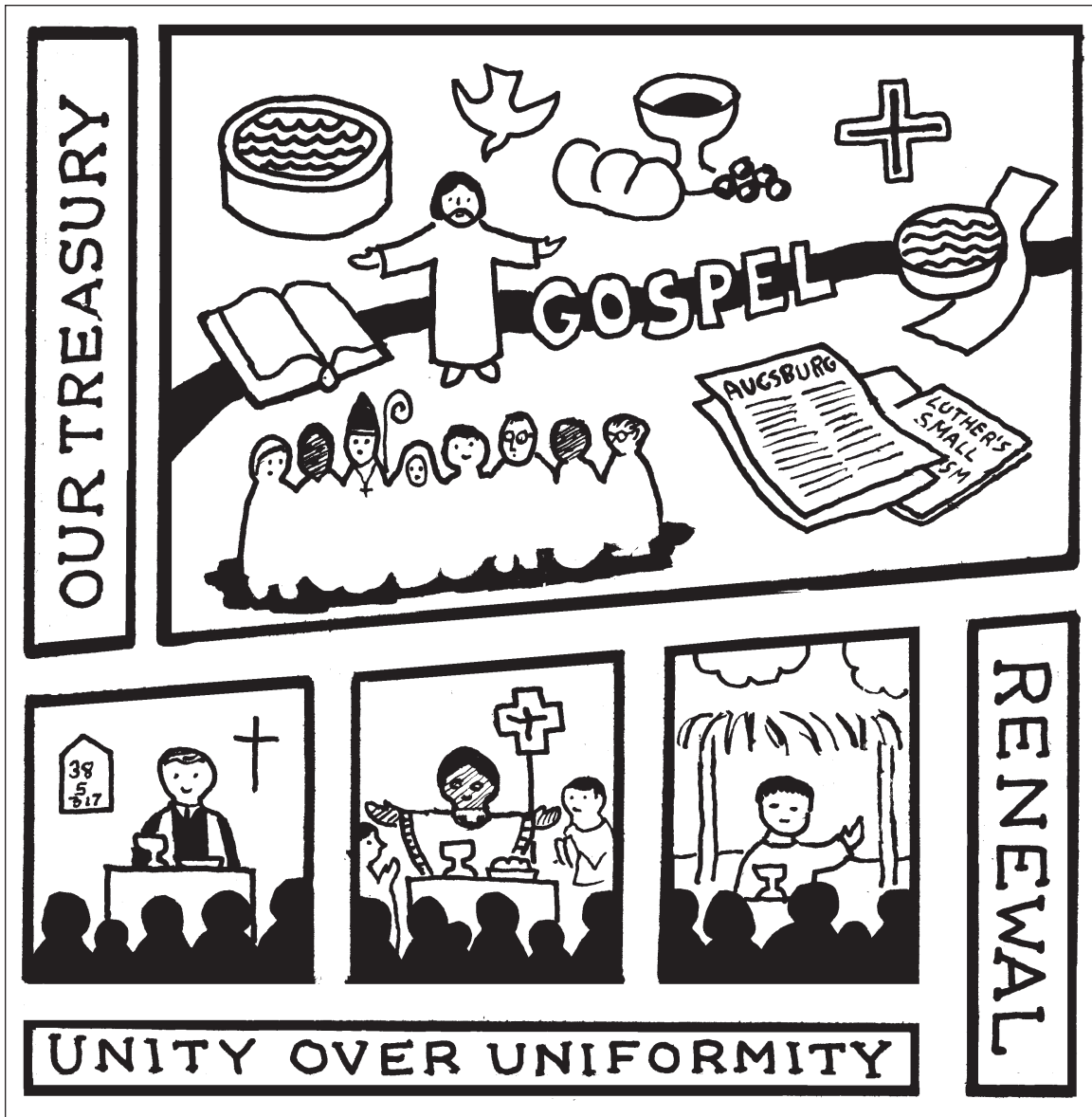
Renewing the Treasury

Notes

Further resources

Gather copies of the primary source materials that your congregation uses for worship each week: Bibles, lectionary resources, various hymnals and songbooks, worship books.

Renewing the Treasury



We have these treasures. When it comes to the songs we sing or the prayers we pray in worship, the real treasures are not so much what any one of us considers our favorites. While an old hymn, a new rhythm, or a particular phrase may capture exactly what I want to say about God or to God, the words, the music, and the movements that shape our worship are

Renewing the Treasury

By God's gift,
the Word and
sacraments are set
in the midst of the
world, for the life
of the world.

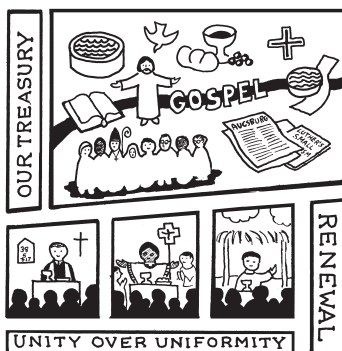
—*The Use of the Means of Grace,*
application 51B

treasures when they help us all. In just the right combination, treasured texts and songs help a whole assembly of people see and experience the promise being kept: God in Christ is with us. Forgiveness is real. Hope abounds. God's own mission is our mission.

Of course, God's promise does not depend on our doing things in just the right combination. **But worship that brings to rich expression the joys and the challenges of God's good news in Jesus Christ depends on words, art forms, and other media that are both inherited and shared.**

Consider the scriptures and how reading and proclamation, singing and action draw the assembly into God's saving story. And more—consider how using Bible texts from a common lectionary draws us together, connecting people in one location to people in another and connecting people in any location to the faithful in every place and every time.

So we have treasures that seek to proclaim the faith while demonstrating that connection. The church's treasury is *inherited* in that certain prayers and confessions, songs and movements have endured the test of time because of the ways they help people praise and give thanks. For example, each Sunday we pray the Lord's Prayer, the prayer Jesus taught us, and we stand when the gospel is read. The treasury is *shared* in that it is not exclusive to any worshiping assembly or even to any church body. Whether it is a hymn by Martin Luther, an ecumenical creed, or the song of the angels announcing Christ's birth, these treasures shape our worship of the God who so loves the world as they remind us who we are called to be.



Renewing the Treasury

As much as this treasury is inherited and shared, it also continues to unfold.

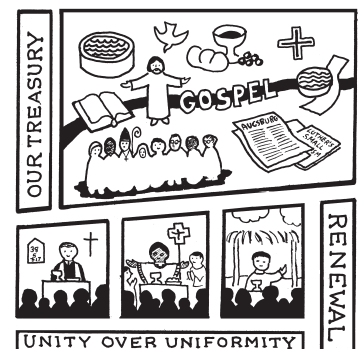
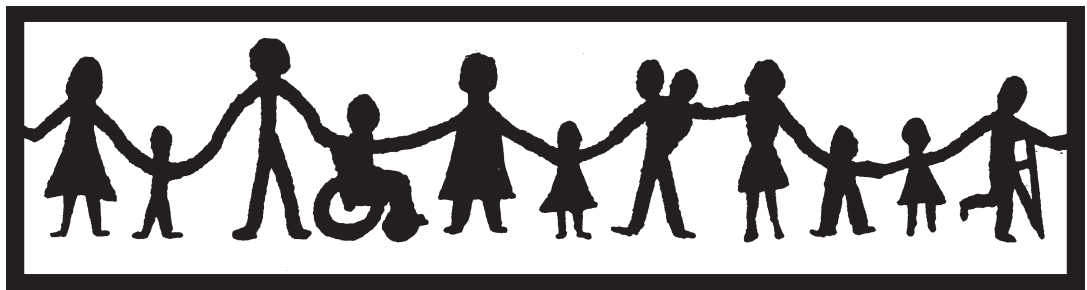
A changing mission landscape that presents new opportunities requires ongoing renewal.

The challenge is to discover and renew ways of praying and singing that witness to our connection through Christ, while honoring valued things that might be unique to a particular culture or community of faith.

At its best, renewal unfolds in multiple ways: It takes place

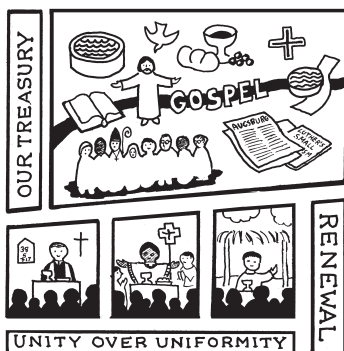
in conversations within local worshiping communities and throughout the church. It takes advantage of present and emerging technologies. And it always remembers that **our shared motivation is a commitment to God's own mission.** These features characterize the process undertaken by our church in its Renewing Worship effort.

As churchwide conversations and explorations have revealed, many congregations are looking for ways to enrich or renew their worship. A further result of this process is the conclusion that a new primary book of worship can be particularly helpful locally and to the whole church. Whether a congregation takes advantage of multiple resources from a variety of sources, develops worship materials locally, or depends almost exclusively on one resource such as *Lutheran Book of Worship*, consider what a new book of worship can offer.



Renewing the Treasury

The challenge is to discover and renew ways of praying and singing that witness to our connection through Christ, while honoring valued things that might be unique to a particular culture or community of faith.



A primary book serves as a tangible sign of what we hold in common. More than a collection of someone's favorites, a primary book can provide a shared and renewing foundation for local worship by including texts and songs that are too important to neglect or risk forgetting. Reflecting a Lutheran perspective on the central things of worship, while drawing on the broader Christian tradition, a primary book of worship can be one more reminder that **local congregations are connected to each other** while providing a sign of our wider communion within the church of Jesus Christ. A new book of worship can help congregations better serve their changing mission context and support their ministry of welcome.

Renewal of the treasury suggests that local worshiping assemblies will have a greater number of resources from which to choose. The days of any one resource containing a complete or comprehensive collection of materials are behind us. But identifying a core of shared materials has value. Rather than being all things to all people, a new book of worship can provide a **grounded center that presents the breadth of the living tradition** in a way that benefits the vast majority of congregations.

Producing a new book of worship in both print and electronic formats increases accessibility to the treasury, beyond the people responsible for worship planning. A shared book makes these treasures regularly available to the assembly. Access to a rich array of shared texts and music—orally, in print, and via other media—will continue to nourish individuals and communities of faith.

To be sure, uniformity is not the goal. Having a primary book is not a way to insist that God's gathered people worship in the same way in every place. Neither

Renewing the Treasury

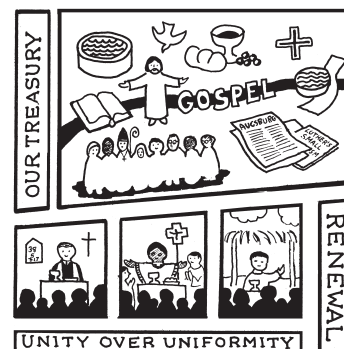
does it imply that a book or any one resource is sufficient for meeting the needs of all congregations. As our treasury is renewed and continues to unfold, the ways in which new resources are developed and made available to worshiping assemblies also evolves.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church will continue to develop and share new and renewed ideas and materials for worship. The hope is for an expanding family of resources that surround and support the core of the treasury, resources that are responsive to diverse worship practices, resources that reflect flexibility in design and variety in the means of delivery (print, electronic—CD, DVD, Web-based), and resources that always demonstrate that we hold certain things in common. This vision depends on widespread participation in thinking and sharing, in developing and testing, and, most of all, in worship.

We have these treasures: Hymns and songs, prayers and statements of faith. Treasures both inherited and new. Treasures that reflect a Lutheran perspective while being more widely shared. Like worship itself, **renewal of the treasury is work that belongs to all of us** as we discover ways to be drawn more deeply into God's own mission. The treasury itself does not hold us together, but the treasury shapes our remembering that in Jesus Christ we are both connected and held.



Notes



Renewing the Treasury

A new book of worship can provide a grounded center that presents the breadth of the living tradition in a way that benefits the vast majority of congregations.

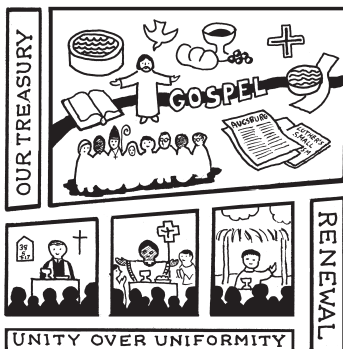
What does this mean?

For your congregation

What worship sources does your congregation now use to draw from the church's treasury? Review the worship books and materials that were gathered for the session. How are these used in your congregation? By whom? When?

Do you have more than one hymnal or songbook? Why or why not?

What do you know about the "story" of these worship books and materials in your congregation? When and why did they become part of your worship?



Renewing the Treasury

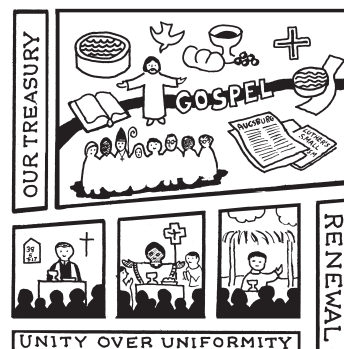
For public life

How might a renewed worship treasury renew your congregation's mission?

For you

Identify two worship-related "treasures," one inherited, one new. Describe what they mean to you, why they are treasured.

Notes



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