



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

## Worship Formation & Liturgical Resources: Frequently Asked Questions

### How are worship resources prepared and approved by the ELCA?

*The worship staff receives a number of similar inquiries on worship-related topics from across the church.*

*These responses should not be considered the final word on the topic, but useful guides that are to be considered in respect to local context with pastoral sensitivity.*

*The response herein may be reproduced for congregational use as long as the web address is cited on each copy.*

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has established a procedure for the preparation, review and endorsement of worship resources that come from its staff and Augsburg Fortress, the ELCA publishing house. The ELCA Church Council adopted this procedure in April 1991. A copy of the procedure is available from the [Director for Worship](#).

This church does not have a standing commission on worship. Its work in developing liturgical resources rests with the worship staff in the unit of Congregational and Synodical Mission, the ELCA publishing house and elsewhere in the churchwide organization.

The current review and endorsement policy of this church offers several levels of endorsement that can be sought for various liturgical resources. These levels fall into the following categories:

- interim materials: provisional, proposed, or other
- market-specific materials: available or recommended
- encouraged materials: commended
- ecumenical materials: authorized
- other endorsements: by action of the ELCA Church Council.

#### **Interim Materials**

"Provisional" designates "resources prepared for provisional use that have undergone liturgical review and are distributed for testing and responses from congregations and other entities employing them." "Proposed" designates "resources that have emerged from provisional use and are now proposed for more formal, ongoing purposes in the life of this church." "Other possibilities" include a resource that "may be prepared and restricted for 'limited use,' with specific limits placed on time or location of its interim use."

### **Market-specific Materials**

"Available" includes "both retail and traded materials that have undergone liturgical review but carry no official endorsement of this church or entities related to it."

"Recommended" includes "all retail material that has undergone liturgical review and is recommended by a specific unit, with the concurrence of the presiding bishop of this church, for use by congregations and synods." The *Music Sourcebook for Lent and the Three Days* and *Music Sourcebook: All Saints through Transfiguration* are such recommended resources for congregations of this church.

### **Encouraged Materials**

Encouraged materials are "commended" by this church for use. These are "resources that have extensive liturgical review and are now commended, normally by the Churchwide Assembly, for general use in this church, such as *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Ordinarily such resources have been prepared as the appropriate form to use, such as the Rite of Ordination, and have been deemed to be in accordance with the governing documents of this church, upon recommendation by the appropriate unit, review by the Conference of Bishops, and approval by the Church Council."

### **Ecumenical Materials**

Ecumenical materials require "authorization." These are "resources that have emerged from ecumenical consultations and the processes of this church and liturgical review, and which are also authorized by the Church Council or the Churchwide Assembly." In 1994, this "authorized" status was given to the *Revised Common Lectionary*, which was prepared by the ecumenical Consultation on Common Texts, of which the ELCA is an active member.

To achieve any of these levels of endorsement in this church, materials must be submitted for liturgical and theological review. This process is directed and managed by the worship staff in the unit of Congregational and Synodical Mission. The current review policy sets forth the following "Standards and Criteria" for the development of material for public worship:

- A. The three general criteria for judging material for public worship and liturgical use shall be fidelity to the Word of God, consistency with the Lutheran Confessions, and respect for the nature of the liturgical assembly as the gathering of God's people in a public exercise of the faith.
- B. All worship material shall express faithfully the biblical witness and the confessional commitment of this church.
- C. Worship material shall reflect the awareness that what is spoken, sung, prayed and enacted by persons in corporate worship is a means by which the faith of the church is nourished and expressed.
- D. Corporate worship is never a private act but rather gives expression to the unity of God's people. "Worship takes place in particular assemblies within particular contexts. Yet every assembly gathered by the Holy Spirit for worship is connected to the whole church." (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*)
- E. The liturgical texts and patterns of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* are viewed as the norm for common use in public worship.
- F. Common ecumenical texts of historic portions of the liturgy from the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, when authorized by ELCA

- process, normally shall be used in new orders of public worship and other corporate liturgical gatherings.
- G. The possibility of and need for development of language-specific and culture-specific public worship resources in expression of the faith as confessed by the Lutheran church is acknowledged.
- ELCA Church Council, April 1991, adapted.





All materials intended by the churchwide organization for use in ELCA congregations, synods, and churchwide events are subject to liturgical review. Materials are subject to internal reviews by staff members of the ELCA, Augsburg Fortress, and other ELCA-related organizations. Depending on the level of endorsement sought, a resource may also be subject to external review for theological and liturgical content, method used to communicate the content, and selected user reaction. This external review involves seminary and college professors, pastors of this church, church musicians and educators, bishops and synod staff as appropriate, and other experts as may be deemed necessary by the worship staff. Resources that require ELCA church council review and approval need to be prepared in a timely fashion so that the council can consider them at one of its two meetings each year.

The present review and endorsement policy is designed to protect the integrity of materials recommended to congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to ensure high-quality materials.

If you have questions about his procedure or about specific resources, you are invited to contact the [Director for Worship](#), in the unit of Congregational and Synodical mission at the Lutheran Center in Chicago.

## RESOURCES

### [Resources Available from Augsburg Fortress:](#)

-  *Music Sourcebook for Lent and the Three Days*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2010.
-  *Music Sourcebook for All Saints through Transfiguration*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2013.
-  *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006
-  *The Revised Common Lectionary: 20th Anniversary Annotated Edition*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2012.

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