



Introduction to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*

Jesus Christ is the living and abiding Word of God. By the power of the Spirit, this very Word of God, which is Jesus Christ, is read in the scriptures, proclaimed in preaching, announced in the forgiveness of sins, eaten and drunk in the Holy Communion, and encountered in the bodily presence of the Christian community. . . . God gives the Word and the sacraments to the church and by the power of the Spirit thereby creates and sustains the church among us. . . . God calls the church to exercise care and fidelity in its use of the means of grace, so that all people may hear and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and be gathered into God's own mission for the life of the world.

—The Use of the Means of Grace, principles 1 and 2

The Lutheran confessions describe the church in terms of the worshipping assembly. “It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It 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*, 7). *Assembly* expresses well the nature of the church as *ekklesia*, a biblical term for the church that has at its root the meaning “called out.” The common pattern for worship underscores this understanding of the church: The Holy Spirit gathers the people of God around Jesus Christ present in the word of God and the sacraments, so that the Spirit may in turn send them into the world to continue the ingathering mission of God’s reign.

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. Worship unites the people of God in one time and place with the people of God in every time and place. We use patterns, words, actions, and songs handed down through the ages to express this unity and continuity. The Lutheran confessions affirm this commitment to the treasury of Christian worship: “We do not abolish the mass but religiously keep and defend it . . . We keep traditional liturgical forms” (*Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, 24).

The Christian assembly also worships in the midst of an ever-changing world. And because the worship that constitutes the church is also the fundamental expression of the mission of God in the world, worship is regularly renewed in order to be both responsible and responsive to the world that the church is called to serve.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* continues the renewal of worship that has taken place over the three centuries Lutherans have been on the North American continent and in the Caribbean region. During this time, renewal efforts have been marked by a movement from a variety of Lutheran immigrant traditions toward a greater similarity of liturgical forms and a more common repertoire of song. The liturgy set out in 1748 by Henry Melchior Muhlenberg and the Common Service of 1888 are two earlier milestones along this path. In the twentieth century, the consolidation of various immigrant Lutheran church bodies and those more established on this continent was reflected in the primary worship books used by mid-century, namely *Service Book and Hymnal* and *The Lutheran Hymnal*. In 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship* was published, the fruit of an ambitious inter-Lutheran project that sought to unite most North American Lutherans in the use of a single worship book with shared liturgical forms and a common repertoire of



hymnody.

The years since the publication of *Lutheran Book of Worship* have seen many changes within the church and the world. Advances in communication and technology have led to the increasing use of electronic and digital resources within the church and its worship. A growing awareness of the interrelatedness of the world, coupled with new understandings of the world's diverse cultures, has had implications also for the church as the one body of Christ throughout the world. The use of language continues to develop in response to context and societal change, as does the use of more than one language in worship. Forms of musical expression have blossomed, and churches have embraced many of these forms for use in worship.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship bears the rich tradition of Christian worship practiced among Lutherans and, at the same time, seeks to renew that tradition in response to a generation of change in the church and in the world. Its identity and its content reveal several goals.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship is a core rather than a comprehensive resource. The collection of materials is more expansive than its predecessor; it reflects a body of prayer and song that our churches consider worthy to hold in common; and, in many contexts, it will provide most or all of what is needed for the assembly's worship. Still, it is not possible or necessary for a single worship book to contain all the expressions of worship desired in every context by an increasingly diverse church. The book contains notable representatives of a wide variety of liturgical texts and musical forms that point to larger repertoires outside this volume.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship is grounded in Lutheran convictions about the centrality of the means of grace. The word of God, read, preached, and sung by the assembly, is essential to the orders of service. Baptism is set within the principal gathering for worship, and its themes are reflected in other services. Materials are newly included to help congregations welcome adults and children to formation in faith, to baptism, and to the baptismal life. Ten musical settings of Holy Communion highlight both the increased diversity of expression in the church as well as the commitment to gathering regularly around both God's word and the holy supper.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship promotes the principle that worship leadership is a shared task among those who carry out various roles in the assembly. At the same time, it affirms that the ministry of the people of God is carried out in their various vocations in the world, not merely in the church.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship continues to emphasize that "freedom and flexibility in worship is a Lutheran inheritance, and there is room for ample variety in ceremony, music, and liturgical form" (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, Introduction). And, through its design and through a variety of interpretive materials herein, it seeks to make more transparent the principle of fostering unity without imposing uniformity.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship represents the gifts of the breadth of the church of Christ, and prizes the words and songs we hold in common with other Christians. At the same time, it treasures and extends the particular



accents of our Lutheran inheritance as gifts to the whole church.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship is the title of this book, but *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* is much more than this book. The pew edition stands alongside a leaders edition and musical accompaniment editions in print, all of which are needed in order for this worship book to be used to its fullest. Beyond these related volumes, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* is also the beginning of an unfolding family of resources in forms reflecting an evolving variety of media, intended to respond to the developing needs of the church in mission.

Supporting this mission of the church, which is the mission of God in Christ for the world, is an ultimate goal of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Through liturgy and song the people of God participate in that mission, for here God comes with good news to save. And through liturgy and song, God nourishes us for that mission and goes with us to bear the creative and redeeming Word of God, Jesus Christ, to the whole world.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship is the outcome of efforts toward the renewal of worship that have taken place over a decade and more. Extensive study and conversation led to statements on the practice of word and sacrament in both the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (*Statement on Sacramental Practices*, 1991) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (*The Use of the Means of Grace*, 1997). The preparation of supplemental and provisional resources has been accompanied by wide participation from across the churches in setting the direction and shaping the contents of a primary resource for renewing worship. In 2005 both church bodies affirmed the completion of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and commended its use.

May this book of the church, and the materials that support and extend it, be servants through which the Holy Spirit will call out the church, gather us around Jesus Christ in word and sacrament, and send us, enlivened, to share the good news of life in God.

General Notes

The arrangement of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* reflects a pattern familiar to many worshipers. First are materials related to the church year. The orders of service follow, including integrated liturgical music. The numbering in this half of the book is at the bottom of each page, and red tabs at the outside edge of the pages divide the major sections.

The second half of the book consists of resources for assembly song. Psalms for singing are followed by other service music choices for the various services. The hymns are then arranged by categories beginning with the church year and continuing with thematic categories. Hymns intended for part-singing are presented with a singable harmony. Several national songs are appended at the end. The numbering in this half of the book uses large numerals at the top of each item: red numbers for the psalms, black numbers for the service music, hymns, and songs.



Additional resources include a daily lectionary, a description of the use of scripture in worship, and the Small Catechism of Martin Luther. Various indexes will be helpful especially to worship planners.

The orders of service in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* identify the person leading worship as the *presiding minister*, when that person is normally an ordained pastor, and as the *leader*, when that person may be either lay or ordained. *Assisting ministers* are usually lay people who are selected to carry out other roles in worship, such as the readings and the prayers of intercession. The people gathered for worship are referred to as the *assembly*.

Throughout the services, notes in red italics are intended as helpful guides for worshipers and leaders. Some of these notes are instructions for worshipers' actions or postures. Recognizing that some individuals may not participate in these actions or postures, these notes describe the action of the assembly as a whole. So, for example, "the assembly sings" or "the assembly stands" are notes affirming what the whole body is doing on behalf of all who are gathered—even though the action may not be possible for some of us.

In the orders of service, the words that are spoken by a leader are in regular type. Words spoken by the assembly are in boldface type. When a particular service music item includes both a leader and an assembly part, the words are similarly distinguished. Otherwise, the words in regular type are sung by all.