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## INTRODUCTION

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Corporate worship expresses the unity of the people of God and their continuity with Christians across the ages. In the liturgical tradition are the gestures, songs, and words by which Christians have identified themselves and each other. The Lutheran Confessions set our liturgical life within that mainstream 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).

All that is edifying and authentic in the life of the Church of every time and every place is affirmed. Only that which is contrary to the Gospel is rejected. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the reformers led the people of God across the barrier between Latin and the vernaculars of the West, just as the barrier between Greek and Latin had been crossed centuries earlier. The transition in language contributed to a new outpouring in the arts of worship, notably in hymns and other music.

The flowering of popular hymnody is the greatest of the artistic contributions of the Lutheran churches. Not since the early years of the Latin Church had there been such an outpouring by hymnists and composers. The Reformation hymn provided, once again, an open channel through which the people’s thanks and praise for the Gospel could flow. And, all the while, it sang that Gospel into their hearts. The elemental merging of tune and text resulted in a rugged, vital song which, still today, inspires an ever-growing choral and instrumental literature. The key to the particularity of Lutheran worship is the Lutheran love of hymns.

Europeans carried out the task of reforming the liturgy and returning it to the language of the people by territories. A large number of Lutheran church liturgies in the languages of Germany, Scandinavia, central Europe, and the Baltic countries was the result. Lutherans who emigrated to North America took with them their hymnals and service books; the traditions were transplanted, but almost immediately the emigrants began to respond to the new situation and the new land.

The worship life of Lutherans in North America has been enriched by this variegated heritage and by the transition to the English language. Worshiping in English led to the use of English hymns and the majestic language of the Authorized Version of the Bible and the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Common use of English also stimulated the quest for liturgical uniformity. The foundation was laid in 1748 by the German liturgy of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg. It exhibited clearly the fundamental elements of the classic church orders. After a period of decline from that standard, the next milestone was reached with the publication of the *Church Book* (1868) by the General Council. Building on that English-language work, the General Synod and the United Synod in the South joined with the General Council to produce the Common Service (1888), forming it on the principle of “the common consent of the pure Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century.” Further joint efforts resulted in the *Common Service Book* (1917), the appearance of which coin-

cided with the formation of The United Lutheran Church in America, the merger of the three church bodies.

Meanwhile Lutheran immigrants continued to arrive. They formed new groupings of congregations. Swedes formed The Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church. German groups centered in Buffalo, Iowa, Ohio, and Texas combined to form the American Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and other churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America represented other segments of the northern European heritage. The Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Free Church exemplified the Norwegian tradition. The American Evangelical Lutheran Church and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church were groupings of Danish congregations. The Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church of America (Suomi Synod), one of the several Finnish Lutheran synods, and the Icelandic Evangelical Lutheran Synod of America completed the Scandinavian circle. As these churches began to worship in English, most of them eventually included the Common Service in their hymnals. The liturgical tradition was becoming uniform, but the hymn traditions remained diverse.

Eight churches began work in 1945 on a service book and hymnal through the Joint Commission on the Liturgy and Hymnal. The endeavor grew out of their desire for a common worship in a common tongue as a sign of a common Lutheran heritage. The desire to express more clearly the breadth of the ecumenical heritage in worship, part of the Lutheran birthright, also motivated their work. The step could be contemplated because of increased knowledge of liturgical origins and development, and also because of the dawning of a keener ecumenical awareness.

The *Service Book and Hymnal* (1958) was published jointly by the churches soon to form The American Lutheran Church (1960) and the Lutheran Church in America (1962). Liturgically, it marked both the culmination of the Common Service tradition and the first step into the larger ecumenical heritage. Musically, the liturgies continued the style of the *Common Service Book*, but added the northern European type of unison chant derived from plainsong and the chorale. The hymnal was conceived as a collection for Lutherans who had become Americans in speech and culture. It combined translations of Lutheran hymns from Germany and Scandinavia with English versions of Greek and Latin hymns, while giving preeminence to the Anglo-American tradition.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod together with other churches of the Synodical Conference had published *The Lutheran Hymnal* in 1941 and was understandably reluctant to join a new project in 1945. The liturgy of *The Lutheran Hymnal* is similar to that in the *Common Service Book*, though with different musical settings in the style of Anglican chant. The hymns are predominantly Germanic in origin, preserving in translation not only the classic body of chorales but also many pietistic hymns of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

At the beginning of the 1960s, most Lutherans in North America used either the *Service Book and Hymnal* or *The Lutheran Hymnal*. The liturgical traditions were similar in form and musical style; the hymnals were markedly different.

In 1965, after abandoning work on a project of its own begun in 1953, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod issued an invitation to other Lutheran churches in North America to join it in work toward a common hymnal and service book. Groundwork for such a venture had been laid in joint work on *Culto Cristiano* (1964), a book for Spanish-speaking Lutherans. The invitation was accepted by the Lutheran Church in America, the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (Slovak), and The American Lutheran Church, and in 1966 the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship was formed. Soon thereafter the Slovak church merged with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and was replaced as a partner in the ILCW by The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, formerly the Canadian district of The American Lutheran Church.

The Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship entered into dialog with congregations, pastors, musicians, and theologians on the basis of a series of trial-use booklets, *Contemporary Worship*. These were supplemented with testing programs, conferences, and questionnaires. Congregations for whom the revised services and hymns are intended have been able to participate in shaping the project. The result is this *Lutheran Book of Worship*.

An examination of the contents will reveal the several goals toward which the Commission worked in liturgy: to restore to Holy Baptism the liturgical rank and dignity implied by Lutheran theology, and to draw out the baptismal motifs in such acts as the confession of sin and the burial of the dead; to continue to move into the larger ecumenical heritage of liturgy while, at the same time, enhancing Lutheran convictions about the Gospel; to involve lay persons as assisting ministers who share the leadership of corporate worship; to bring the language of prayer and praise into conformity with the best current usage; to offer a variety of musical styles.

Compilers of the hymnal have worked for an equitable balance among hymns of the various Lutheran language traditions, while acting on the premise that most North American Lutherans no longer regard themselves as transplanted Europeans. The Anglo-American hymn tradition is given, therefore, a rightful and large place. More early American tunes are included than in previous hymnals; fewer late nineteenth-century English tunes are included.

Through participation in groups such as the Consultation on Common Texts, the Consultation on Ecumenical Hymnody, and the International Consultation on English Texts, the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship has done its work in concert with other English-speaking churches. Through the Lutheran World Federation, contact has been maintained with other Lutheran churches of the world.

The services of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* embody the tradition of worship which received its characteristic shape during the early centuries of the Church's existence and was reaffirmed during the Reformation era. As such, they are an emblem of continuity with the whole Church and of particular unity with Lutherans throughout the world. At the same time, the services are adaptable to various circumstances and situations. Freedom and flexibility in worship is a Lutheran inheritance, and there is room for ample variety in ceremony, music, and liturgical form.

Having considered their resources and their customs, congregations will find their own balance between fully using the ritual and musical possibilities of the liturgy, and a more modest practice. A full service should not allow secondary ceremonies to eclipse central elements of the liturgy, nor should a simple service omit essential or important parts. Every service, whether elaborate or spare, sung or said, should be within the framework of the common rite of the Church, so that the integrity of the rite is always respected and maintained.

With informed and imaginative use, this book can open to congregations the riches of the Church's heritage of liturgy and song, and thus become a worthy instrument in the praise and thanksgiving of the people of God.

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This edition is intended for use by the congregation. The Accompaniment Edition—Liturgy includes keyboard settings for the music of the liturgy which are needed to support congregational singing. The Ministers Edition is designed to assist the leaders of worship and to provide supplementary resources. All three editions are needed if use of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* is to achieve its full potential.