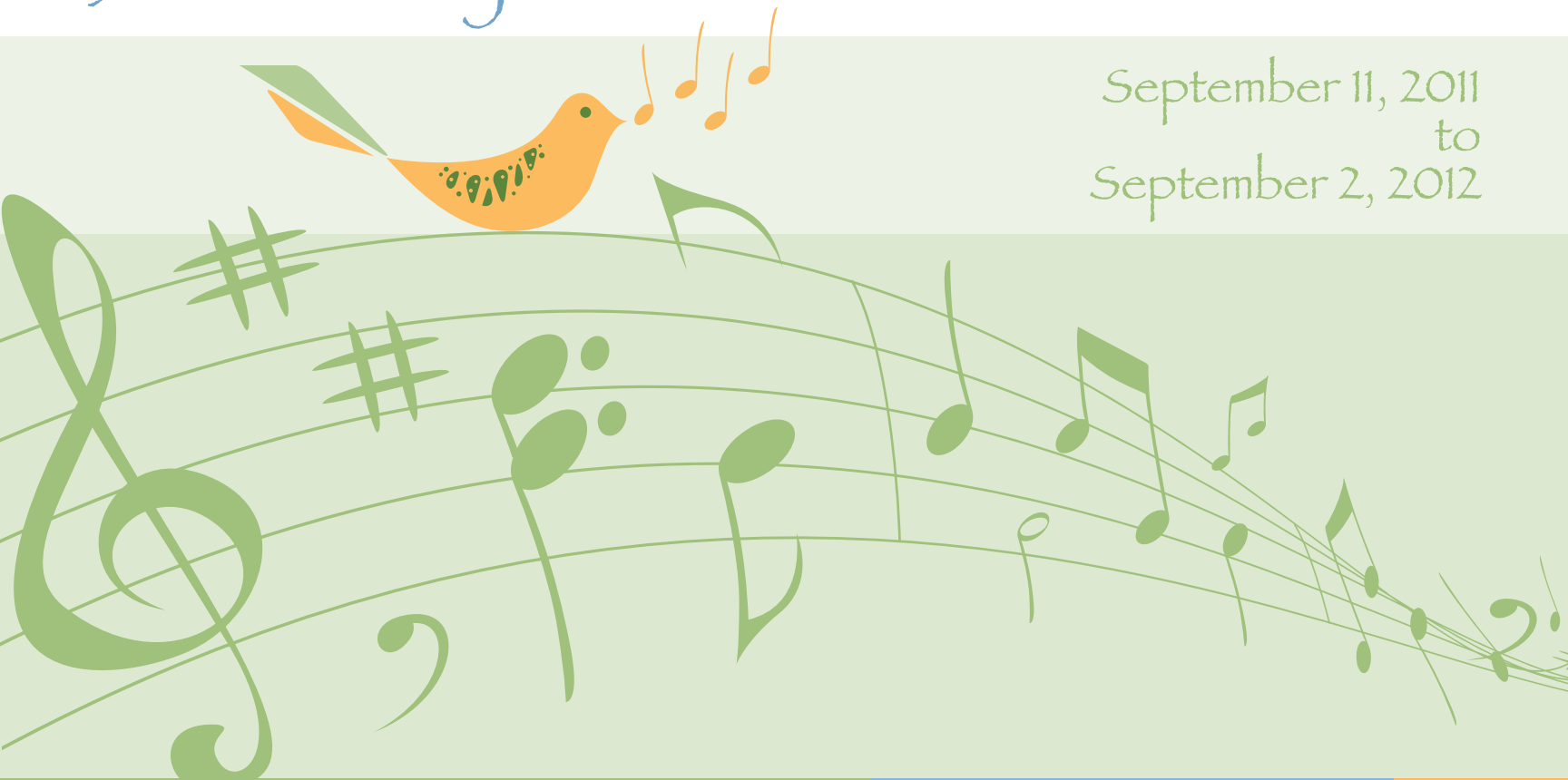


Singing the Songs of Faith: 52 Great Hymn Stanzas

September 11, 2011
to
September 2, 2012



“I am not ashamed to confess publicly that next to theology there is no art which is the equal of music, for she alone, after theology, can do what otherwise only theology can accomplish, namely, quiet and cheer up the soul of man, which is clear evidence that the devil, the originator of depressing worries and troubled thoughts, flees from the voice of music just as he flees from the words of theology. For this very reason the prophets cultivated no art so much as music in that they attached their theology not to geometry, nor to arithmetic, nor to astronomy, but to music, speaking the truth through psalms and hymns.”

— Martin Luther, in a letter (1530) to Catholic composer, Ludwig Senfl

INTRODUCTION

Lutherans sing. Hymns, music, singing have long been central to our lives as Christians. Music is a foundation of worship life in Lutheran congregations. It is the ground of faith in Sunday Schools and Vacation Bible Schools. It extends to life in Lutheran homes, not just at Christmas. Lutherans adorn even their potluck dinners with song.

Singing the Songs of Faith: 52 Great Hymn Stanzas is an undertaking intended to teach, lift up and deepen the faith of God's people. It follows 52 Great Bible Verses – a yearlong effort encouraging weekly memorization of significant Bible verses. For many the exercise was more than mere rote learning. The verses also served as the basis for reflection and meditation throughout the week. They were frequently the focus of discussion and devotion for gatherings of the congregation and committee meetings.

Singing the Songs of Faith: 52 Great Hymn Stanzas is a logical continuation of this effort. Many Christian hymns are based in scripture passages. They teach about God. They tell the stories of faith.

Why are we looking at hymn **stanzas** and not hymn **verses**? A verse is generally considered to be a single line of text in metrical composition. A stanza is a larger unit within a poem, song or hymn. For example, in the hymn *Joy to the World* the first stanza is:

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king; let ev'ry heart prepare him room and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and heav'n and nature sing.

This first **stanza** contains seven **verses** of poetry. While in many circles it is becoming commonplace to refer to stanzas as verses we will be looking at the 52 great stanzas in this collection.

For the ardent accountants among us, we readily admit that there are more than 52 hymn stanzas. In fact, there are 60 hymn stanzas. We included selections for various festivals and holidays, as well the weekly selection.

Our prayer and hope is that these hymn stanzas will lift and deepen your faith and encourage your living of that faith in daily works of love and acts of mercy.

DATE	Sunday, September 11, 2011
DAY	Lectionary 24 / Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	Children of the Heavenly Father <i>ELW</i> 781, Stanza 3
TUNE	TRYGGARE KAN INGEN VARA

Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord his children sever;
Unto them his grace he showeth,
And their sorrows all he knoweth.

The reassurance of God's loving care is overwhelming in this hymn. Swedish Lutheran Lina Sandell wrote the text of the hymn when she was a teenager. The words grew out of the struggles and trials Lina experienced as a child, especially a paralysis that left her confined to her bed until her teenage years. Romans 8:38-39 resounds – *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Origins of the tune are not certain. Some believe the tune stems from England, and others see its origin in a Swedish folksong.



DATE	Sunday, September 18, 2011
DAY	Lectionary 25 / Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	Beloved, God's Chosen <i>ELW</i> 648, Stanza 1
TUNE	ANDREW'S SONG

Beloved, God's chosen, put on as a garment

Compassion, forgiveness, and goodness of heart

Above all, before all, let love be your raiment

That binds into one ev'ry dissonant part.

This text by Susan Cherwien is based on Colossians 3:12-17, a portion of which reads *As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body.* It speaks of the new life in Christ and the values and actions that should clothe Christians. The hymn is suitable for a wedding service.



DATE	Sunday, September 25, 2011
DAY	Lectionary 26 / Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	When Peace Like a River <i>ELW</i> 785, Stanza 3
TUNE	VILLE DU HAVRE

He lives oh, the bliss of this glorious thought;
 my sin, not in part, but the whole,
 is nailed to his cross and I bear it no more.

It is well (it is well)
 with my soul (with my soul),
 it is well, it is well with my soul.

Praise the Lord; praise the Lord, O my soul

The author of the hymn, Horatio Spafford, was heavily invested in real estate in Chicago. During the fires of 1871 he lost his entire fortune. At the same time he lost his four-year-old son. Horatio decided to pour himself into his work and began assisting the nearly 100,000 people who had been left homeless by the fires

A few years later Horatio decided to take his family to England on a vacation. However, he was held up in New York and decided to send his family on ahead. Horatio's wife and four daughters settled into a cabin aboard the French liner *Ville du Havre*. On its voyage to Europe, it crashed into another ship and sank within two hours. The only survivor from Horatio's family was his wife. During his voyage to comfort her, Horatio sat in meditation and thought about his life. He was so deep in his faith in the Lord that that he said to himself, "It is well; the will of God be done." He later went on to write the rest of the hymn, *When Peace Like a River*.



DATE	Sunday, October 2, 2011
DAY	Lectionary 27 / Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	Take, Oh, Take Me As I Am <i>ELW</i> 814
TUNE	TAKE ME AS I AM

Take, oh, take me as I am;
summon out what I shall be;
set your seal upon my heart
and live in me.

The text of the hymn, which can be used as a repeated chant, was written by John L. Bell for a weekly service of commitment in Iona Abbey, Scotland. The island, in the Inner Hebrides, is home to the Iona Community, an ecumenical Christian group committed to seeking new ways to live the Gospel of Jesus in today's world.



DATE	Sunday, October 9, 2011
DAY	Lectionary 28 / Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	The Church of Christ, in Every Age <i>ELW</i> 729, Stanza 5
TUNE	WAREHAM

We have no mission but to serve
in full obedience to our Lord;
to care for all, without reserve,
and spread his liberating word.

Fred Pratt Green is perhaps best described as the twentieth-century hymn-writing incarnation of Charles Wesley. When he retired from the ministry, he was asked by the Working Party of the Methodist Conference of Great Britain to write hymns for topics that seemed to be lacking. This hymn, on the relationship between Sabbath and Sunday filled one such gap. The text of stanza four references the parable of the five loaves and two fish feeding the five thousand, and the fifth stanza sums up the people's mission of service and discipleship. The tune WAREHAM is named for the birthplace of its composer, William Knapp. Its enduring simplicity and grandeur arise from the fact that the melody contains only one leap. The rest of the motion is step-wise, which also makes it very singable.



DATE	Sunday, October 16, 2011
DAY	Lectionary 29 / Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	We Give Thee but Thine Own ELW 686, Stanza 1
TUNE	HEATH

We give thee but thine own,
whate're the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone.
a trust, O Lord, from thee.

William W. How (1823-1897) was an English bishop known for his work with the poor and with children. He was dedicated to bringing a new spiritual life to the worship services of the people. The stanza above reflects the words of King David upon the ascension to the throne of his son Solomon – *For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you* (1 Chronicles 29:14b). Reliance upon God is a given.

The entire hymn reflects How's commitment to serving God through serving God's people. It is reflective of

1 John 3:17-18 – *How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.*



DATE | Sunday, October 23, 2011
DAY | Lectionary 30 / Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN | **This Is My Father's World** *ELW* 824, Stanza 1
TUNE | TERRA PATRIS

This is my Father's world,
and to my list'ning ears
all nature sings and round me rings
the music of the spheres.

This is my Father's world;
I rest me in the thought
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;
his hand the wonders wrought.

Often sung on Father's Day, for reasons beyond comprehension, as there is no commentary on fathers, this work is intended as a hymn of praise or an accompaniment to scripture readings on creation. It was written by a Presbyterian minister, who often walked to his backyard to view Lake Ontario, remarking to his wife, "I am going out to see my Father's world." Maltie Babcock's text is greatly enhanced by Franklin Sheppard's setting of the traditional English folk tune, TERRA PATRIS.

DATE | Sunday, October 30, 2011
DAY | Reformation Sunday
HYMN | A Mighty Fortress *ELW* 504, Stanza 1
TUNE | EIN FESTE BURG (rhythmic)

A mighty Fortress is our God,
A sword and shield victorious;
He breaks the cruel oppressor's rod
And wins salvation glorious.

The old evil foe,
sworn to work us woe,
With dread craft and might
He arms himself to fight.
On earth he has no equal.

What else? It's Reformation!

This hymn is based on Psalm 46 – *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea.* It was written by Martin Luther (1483-1546) during the struggles and trials of the Protestant Reformation in Germany. It is indeed one of the great hymns of the Church. The Church today continues to be called to reformation and resistance to whatever might divert her from her mission reliance upon God for guidance and protection.



DATE | Sunday, November 6, 2011
DAY | All Saints Sunday
HYMN | **Shall We Gather at the River** *ELW* 423, Stanza 3
TUNE | HANSON PLACE

Ere we reach the shining river,
lay we ev'ry burden down;
grace our spirits will deliver,
and provide a robe and crown.

Yes we'll gather at the river,
the beautiful, the beautiful river;
gather with the saints at the river
that flows by the throne of God.

The author and composer, Robert Lowry, has said of his hymn, *Shall We Gather at the River* – “One afternoon in July, 1864, when I was pastor at Hanson Place Baptist Church, Brooklyn, the weather was oppressively hot, and I was lying on a lounge in a state of physical exhaustion. I felt almost incapable of bodily exertion, and my imagination began to take itself wings. Visions of the future passed before me with startling vividness. Brightest of all were the throne, the heavenly river, and the gathering of the saints. My soul seemed to take new life from that celestial outlook. I began to wonder why the hymn writers had said so much about the ‘river of death’ and so little about the ‘pure water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.’ As I mused, the words began to construct themselves. They came first as a question of Christian inquiry, ‘Shall we gather?’ Then they broke out in a chorus, ‘Yes, we’ll gather.’ On this question and answer the hymn developed itself.”



DATE | Sunday, November 13, 2011
DAY | Lectionary 33 / Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN | **How Great Thou Art** *ELW* 856, Stanza 4
TUNE | O STORE GUD

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation,
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!

Then I shall bow in humble adoration
and there proclaim, “My God, how great thou art!”

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
how great thou art! How great thou art!

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
how great thou art! How great thou art!

Stuart K. Hine translated, adapted, and enlarged the text of *How Great Thou Art* from a Russian translation of a German translation of the original Swedish hymn by Carl G. Boberg. (Westermeyer, 2010: 742) The text sung today is thus quite different from Boberg’s original. Similarly, the tune was changed from its original meter of three beats to a measure to the current version with four beats to a measure. Some of the folk character of the text and tune have been lost in translation. The hymn gained popularity from its use by Billy Graham in Toronto in 1955. Its vivid imagery and hints of verses from the Psalms have endowed it with a personal tone and a lasting beauty.



DATE	Sunday, November 20, 2011
DAY	Lectionary 34 / Christ the King
HYMN	Crown Him with Many Crowns <i>ELW</i> 855, Stanza 5
TUNE	DIADEMATA

Crown him the Lord of years,
the potentate of time,
creator of the rolling spheres,
ineffably sublime.

all hail, Redeemer, hail!
For thou hast died for me;
thy praise and glory shall not fail
throughout eternity.

To illustrate the text, “and on his head were many crowns” (Revelation 19:12), *Crown Him with Many Crowns* was written by Matthew Bridges and Godfrey Thring, (each providing six stanzas). The ELW selected five stanzas from the twelve, all of which are beautiful poetry. Stanza five is selected for this collection not only because of its beautiful poetry, but also because of its use of “potentate” (monarch) and “ineffably”, two words unique in hymns. The tune, DIADEMATA, suggests “diadems” or “crowns” and matches the striking first line of poetry with an equally memorable first line of music, thus making this hymn most appropriate for *Christ the King Sunday!*



DATE | Thursday, November 24, 2011
DAY | Day of Thanksgiving (U.S.A.)
HYMN | **Come, Ye Thankful People, Come** *ELW* 693, Stanza 2
TUNE | ST. GEORGE'S, WINDSOR

All the world is God's own field,
fruit unto his praise to yield;
wheat and tares together sown,
unto joy or sorrow grown.

First the blade, and then the ear,
then the full corn shall appear.
Lord of harvest, grant that we
wholesome grain and pure may be.

This stanza of the favorite Thanksgiving hymn joins celebration of the abundance of creation with the parable of the weeds among the wheat in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 and the parable of the growing seed in Mark 4: 26-29: "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.



DATE | Sunday, November 27, 2011
DAY | First Sunday of Advent
HYMN | **Before the World Began** – V.1 (Iona: Sing Glory 318, Stanza 1)
TUNE | INCARNATION

Before the world began
one Word was there;
grounded in God he was,
rooted in care;

by him all things were made,
in him was love displayed,
through him God spoke and said,
'I am for you'.

Like many hymns that come from the Iona Community, this tune is reminiscent of a Celtic folk melody. The text of the stanza is a paraphrase of the beginning verses of the Gospel of John: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.* (John 1: 1-4) On this Sunday we mark the beginning of Advent, a time when we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Word of God, and a time when we look forward to the coming again of God's son at the end of the age.



DATE	Sunday, December 4, 2011
DAY	Second Sunday of Advent
HYMN	On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry <i>ELW</i> 249, Stanza 2 (Charles Coffin, tr. John Chandler and others)
TUNE	PUER NOBIS

Then cleansed be every life from sin;
make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts prepare
for Christ to come and enter there.

The stanza of the advent hymn echoes the 'Baptist's cry' in Matthew 3:2: "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near*", which is foretold in Isaiah: "*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'*" (Matthew 3:3; Isaiah 40:3).



DATE	Sunday, December 11, 2011
DAY	Third Sunday of Advent
HYMN	Tell Out, My Soul Stanza 1 (Timothy Dudley-Smith)
TUNE	WOODLANDS

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;
Tender to me the promise of his word:
In God my savior shall my heart rejoice.

Timothy Dudley-Smith eschews the usual gentle tune for Mary's *Magnificat*, in favor of the rousing one written by Walter Greatorex. Dudley-Smith considered his poem “unsingable” before finding this tune which is now synonymous with this glorious advent hymn (Poulton, 2011).



DATE | Sunday, December 18, 2011
DAY | Fourth Sunday of Advent
HYMN | **Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus** *ELW* 254, Stanza 1 (Charles Wesley)
TUNE | JEFFERSON

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us;
let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) is one of the most important English hymn writers, and may be among the most important in any language. At around age 30, Wesley went on a mission trip to America, from which he returned deeply affected by the horrors of slavery he witnessed there. For the majority of his working life thereafter, Wesley's output focused on freedom: from slavery, sin and fear (Donavan, 2006). Long associated with Advent, *Come, thou long expected Jesus* is a hymn that looks forward to the second coming – a time of freedom and salvation for all God's people.



DATE	Saturday, December 24, 2011
DAY	Nativity of Our Lord (I), Christmas Eve
HYMN	O Little Town of Bethlehem <i>ELW 279</i> , Stanza 3 (Phillips Brooks)
TUNE	ST. LOUIS

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming; but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

Phillips Brooks wrote the text of this carol for his Sunday School at Holy Trinity Church for their Christmas service in 1968, after having visited the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve some years before (Westermeyer, 2010: 55). This stanza encapsulates for many the feelings of wonder and awe that accompany the Christmas Eve service.



DATE	Sunday, December 25, 2011
DAY	Nativity of Our Lord (II), Christmas Day
HYMN	Lo, How a Rose 'Ere Blooming <i>ELW 272</i> , Stanza 3
TUNE	ES IST EIN ROS

This flow'r, whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air,
dispels with glorious splendor the darkness ev'rywhere.

True man, yet very God,
from sin and death he saves us and lightens ev'ry load.

This beautifully poetic hymn was discovered in a manuscript from the 1580s at St. Alban's Carthusian monastery in Trier. It originally had 23 stanzas, leading from the stump of Jesse in Isaiah 11:1 up to the rose that represents our Saviour, Jesus Christ (Westemeyer. 2010: 47). This stanza recalls the first words of the Old Testament in Genesis 1: 1-3, as well as Jesus' statement in John 9: 5: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." The tune also dates from around the fifteenth century and has a unique sound world in comparison to other well-known Christmas carols, making it all the more wondrous.



DATE	Sunday, January 1, 2012
DAY	Name of Jesus
HYMN	O Savior, Precious Savior <i>ELW</i> 820, Stanza 1
TUNE	ANGEL'S STORY

O Savior, precious savior, whom yet unseen we love;
O name of might and favor, all other names above:
We worship thee; we bless thee; to thee alone we sing;
We praise thee and confess thee, our holy Lord and King.

Written by Frances R. Havergal (1836-1879), each verse is filled with devotion to Jesus. The hymn ends with a prayer for fulfillment, when the faithful will sing our adoration in the very presence with our Savior, Lord, and King. This festival recalls how Mary and Joseph fulfilled the Jewish law that every baby boy be circumcised and named on the eighth day of life. On this eighth day of Christmas, the Church celebrates this event in Jesus' life. Jesus' name is a reminder of God's salvation given to us through him. As Joseph is told at the beginning of Matthew's gospel, "[Mary] will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11).



DATE	Sunday, January 1, 2012
DAY	First Sunday of Christmas
HYMN	Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence <i>ELW</i> 490, Stanza 2
TUNE	PICARDY

King of kings, yet born of Mary,
as of old on earth he stood,
Lord of lords in human vesture,
in the body and the blood,
he will give to all the faithful his own self for heav'nly food.

The text for this hymn comes from the Liturgy of St. James, which dates from the mid-fifth century. The first phrase is a paraphrase of Habakkuk 2:20, "But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him!" The text also refers to Isaiah's vision of the six-winged seraphs in the temple, singing the Sanctus. The Communion hymn calls to mind both Christ's birth at Christmas and his coming at the end of days. The French folk tune with which it is paired is strictly in the minor mode and enhances the profound tone of the text.



DATE | Friday, January 6, 2012
DAY | Epiphany of Our Lord
HYMN | **Beautiful Savior** *ELW* 838, Stanza 3
TUNE | SCHÖNSTER HERR JESU

Fair is the sunshine,
Fair is the moonlight,
Bright the sparkling stars on high;

Jesus shines brighter,
Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels in the sky.

Epiphany is the season of light, the season of revelation. It celebrates the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles in the visit of the Magi (wise men, the astrologers from the East). The popular hymn stanza is filled with images of light, reflecting the prevalence of the scriptural image.

Luke 1:79 Zachariah's song – *"...to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

John 1:4-5 *...in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

John 12:46 *I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness.*

1 Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

The translation is by Joseph A. Seiss (1823-1904) and is referred to as "a distinctly Lutheran translation" by Marilyn Kay Stulken in *Hymnal Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship* (1981).



DATE | Sunday, January 8, 2012
DAY | Baptism of Our Lord
HYMN | **When Jesus Came to Jordan** *ELW* 305
TUNE | KING'S LYNN

Stanza 1

When Jesus came to Jordan to be baptized by John,
he did not come for pardon but as the Sinless One.
He came to share repentance with all who mourn their sins,
to speak the vital sentence with which good news begins.

Stanza 2

He came to share temptation, our utmost woe and loss,
for us and our salvation to die upon the cross.
So when the dove descended on him, the Son of Man,
the hidden years had ended, the age of grace began.

This hymn, also by Fred Pratt Green, first appeared in 1980 and is a mini-sermon on Jesus' baptism. Green takes us from Epiphany through the temptation of Lent, the death on the cross, the resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Ralph Vaughan Williams collected the folk tune, KING'S LYNN in 1904. Its simple ABB'A form and modal harmony provide a strong foundation for Green's text. (Westermeyer, 2010: 89-90)



DATE	Sunday, January 15, 2012
DAY	Second Sunday after Epiphany / Lectionary 2
HYMN	Hail to the Lord's Anointed <i>ELW</i> 311, Stanza 3
TUNE	FREUT EUCH, IHR LIEBEN

You shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth;
love, joy, and hope, like flowers, spring in your path to birth.
Before you on the mountains shall peace, the herald, go;
and righteousness in fountains from hill to valley flow.

James Montgomery wrote this paraphrase of Psalm 72 in 1821 in Yorkshire, England. This third stanza recalls stanzas 6 and 7 of Psalm 72: *May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth. In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.* As we celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, this hymn Stanza also recalls the famous line from his I Have a Dream speech, “We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”



DATE | Sunday, January 22, 2012
DAY | Third Sunday after Epiphany / Lectionary 3
HYMN | **We Are Called** ELW720, Stanza 1
TUNE | WE ARE CALLED

Come! Live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom,
to live in the freedom of the city of God.

We are called to act with justice,
we are called to love tenderly;
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.

The first stanza of this hymn by David Haas recalls Matthew 5:16: *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.* The refrain is a paraphrase of Micah 6:8: *He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* As we hear the stories of Jesus calling his disciples to follow him, this hymn reminds us of our call to live as Christians throughout our lives.



DATE | Sunday, January 29, 2012
DAY | Fourth Sunday after Epiphany / Lectionary 4
HYMN | **Christ, Be Our Light** ELW715, Stanza 5
TUNE | CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
signs of your kingdom come.

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

The hymn by Bernadette Farrell uses 2 Corinthians 4:6 as the basis for its refrain: *For it is God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* The first four stanzas express longing for the signs of God’s kingdom, while this fifth stanza names us with our many gifts as the signs of the kingdom. In a similar way, the tune progresses from a lower E minor in the verses to a higher G major in the refrain, emphasizing the transforming effect of Christ’s light in our lives.



DATE	Sunday, February 5, 2012
DAY	Fifth Sunday after Epiphany / Lectionary 5
HYMN	Lord of Light ELW 688, Stanza 2
TUNE	ABBOT'S LEIGH

By the toil of faithful workers in some far outlying field,
by the courage where the radiance of the cross is still revealed,
by the victories of meekness, through reproach and suff'ring won:
Father, as in highest heaven, so on earth your will be done.

The text uses a petition from the Lord's Prayer as its refrain: Matthew 6:10: *Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* The verses were constructed by Howell E. Lewis from a hymn by Charlotte Elliot. Elliot's text focused on resigning to God's will, while Lewis emphasized active participation in the divine purpose (Westermeyer, 2010: 543-4). This distinction is especially evident in the second stanza, where some of the ways in which we can be involved in the will of God are laid out.

The tune ABBOT'S LEIGH, was written by Cyril V. Taylor on a Sunday morning in 1941 in the English village of that name. He wrote it for the text, "Glorious things of thee are spoken," the tune of which (AUSTRIA) had been co-opted by the Nazis (Westermeyer, 2010: 357).



DATE	Sunday, February 12, 2012
DAY	Sixth Sunday after Epiphany / Lectionary 6
HYMN	Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways <i>ELW</i> 772, Stanza 2
TUNE	EVAN

Order my footsteps by your word and make my heart sincere;
let sin have no dominion, Lord, but keep my conscience clear.

The text of this hymn is a part of a paraphrase of Psalm 119 by Isaac Watts. This psalm, the longest in the Bible, contains 176 verses. Watts organized the verses by topic when making his arrangement, and collected them into eighteen sections. The hymn comprises four of the original six verses of the eleventh section, which Watts called “Breathing after Holiness.” (Westermeyer, 2010: 636) The second stanza is based upon verse 133 of Psalm 119: *Keep my steps steady according to your promise, and never let iniquity have dominion over me.*

The tune EVAN by William H. Havergal occurs elsewhere in a 4/2 meter, as opposed to the 3/2 meter in ELW. (Westermeyer, 2010: 637) The accented syllables of the text in both versions sometimes differ from the musical accents of the meter (in our version, “-der” of “Order” in stanza two is accented in the music), but the simple AABA construction of the tune lends itself to congregational song.



DATE	Sunday, February 19, 2012
DAY	Transfiguration of Our Lord
HYMN	Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies <i>ELW</i> 553, Stanza 3
TUNE	RATISBON

Visit then this soul of mine,
pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
fill me, radiancy divine,

scatter all my unbelief;
more and more thyself display,
shining to the perfect day.

Charles Wesley's hymn of 1740 contains many biblical references in its linking of the images of Christ and light. The most notable ones are from Luke 1:78-79: *By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace, and from Malachi 4:2: But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings.*

The text was paired with the tune RATISBON in 1847. Though both have been edited and altered over the years, the version used today is the original pairing. (Westermeyer, 2010: 389). The third stanza continues the plea of the first two that Christ, the light of the world, draw near to us.



DATE	Wednesday, February 22, 2012
DAY	Ash Wednesday
HYMN	My Song is Love Unknown <i>ELW</i> 343, Stanza 1
TUNE	LOVE UNKNOWN

My song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me,
love to the loveless shown
that they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I that for my sake
my Lord should take frail flesh and die?

The text of this hymn, written by Samuel Crossman around 1664, is thought to be inspired by the poetry of George Herbert (Westermeyer 2010: 143). It is a meditation on the wonder of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, rooted in the text from Galatians 6: 14 *'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* The tune, by John Ireland, suits the text so well, it is hard to believe that it was written in under an hour (Christiansen: 2007).



DATE | Sunday, February 26, 2012
DAY | First Sunday in Lent
HYMN | **Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross** *ELW* 335, Stanza 1
TUNE | NEAR THE CROSS

Jesus, keep me near the cross,
There's a precious fountain;
free to all, a healing stream
flows from Calv'ry's mountain.

In the cross, in the cross
be my glory ever,
till my ransomed soul shall find
rest beyond the river.

An old favorite of many, the hymn heralds the Lenten season. The cross is the center of Lent. The refrain has a very Lutheran perspective – our theology is a theology of the cross, not a theology of glory. Our only glory is in the cross. *“For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.”* (1 Corinthians 1:18, 22-25)

Fanny Crosby (1820-1915) wrote the text. Blind from infancy, she wrote many hymns of witness to the faith given through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Generations of Lutheran children have been nurtured by her words.



DATE	Sunday, March 4, 2012
DAY	Second Sunday in Lent
HYMN	As the Deer Runs to the River <i>ELW</i> 331, Stanza 1
TUNE	JULION

As the deer runs to the river,
parched and weary from the chase,
we have come from hurt and hurry,
thirsting for your healing grace.

Jesus, source of living water,
may we drink of you and live!

The first line of this hymn sets the tone and provides the imagery that runs through the text. The word “run” suggests urgency, and the word “water” connects us to our need for Christ, the source of living water.

The first stanza is from the opening verses of Psalm 42. Many Christians have sung that psalm in times of discouragement and struggle, especially when oppressed. There are times in our lives when we come to worship “from hurt and hurry.” In pondering this text, consider what it must be like for Christians who try to gather for worship in places of persecution and hardship.

The tune chosen for this hymn in the new *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal* comes from the early Lutheran tradition. The stanzas are in two long, identical phrases, moving solidly by quarter notes throughout, with a third related line for the refrain, making the tune very accessible. (PICARDY is an alternate tune.)

The text is written by Herman Stuempfle (1923-2007), considered by many to be one of the best hymn writers of our day. He served as professor of preaching, dean, and finally president of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

(Adapted from *Songs of Searching and Salvation* (Issue #82) by Emily R. Brink)



DATE | Sunday, March 11, 2012
DAY | Third Sunday in Lent
HYMN | **Beneath the Cross of Jesus** *ELW* 338, Stanza 2
TUNE | ST. CHRISTOPHER

Upon that cross of Jesus,
my eye at times can see
the very dying form of one
who suffered there for me.

And from my contrite heart, with tears,
two wonders I confess:
the wonders of his glorious love
and my own worthlessness.

The two phrases ending this stanza call us to reflect up the gift of God's forgiveness and love won on the cross, at great cost by grace alone. We are unworthy and unable to earn God's love; it is a gift. Elizabeth C. Clephane (1830-1869) wrote the words of this favorite hymn the year before she died. The text was published four years after her death, at age 39, as were all of her hymn writings.



DATE | Sunday, March 18, 2012
DAY | Fourth Sunday in Lent
HYMN | **Surely It Is God Who Saves Me** *WOV 635*, Stanza 1
TUNE | RAQUEL

Surely it is God who saves me;
I shall trust and have no fear,
for the Lord defends and shields me,
and his saving help is near.

So rejoice as you draw water
from salvation's living spring;
in the day of your deliverance
thank the Lord, his mercies sing.

Stanza one is Isaiah 12:3. It recalls images of the deliverance from Egypt. The image of water, living spring, calls to mind God's provision of water in the desert for the people of Israel, as well as the living water of Jesus (John 4).



DATE	Sunday, March 25, 2012
DAY	Fifth Sunday in Lent
HYMN	Canticle of the Turning <i>ELW723</i> , Stanza 1
TUNE	STAR OF COUNTY DOWN

My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on the servant's plight, and my weakness you did not spurn,
so from east to west shall my name be blest. Could the world be about to turn?

My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all the tears, for the dawn draw near, and the world is about to turn.

Based on the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:39-56), the theme of justice is strong. Contradictions seem to abound as the hymn turns us around, looking at the absurd values of the world and the greatness and power of God that turns the world upside down. All seem to point to Paul's words – *But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God.* (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). The final line of the refrain echoes Revelation 21:4 – [God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.



DATE	Sunday, April 1, 2012
DAY	Sunday of the Passion / Palm Sunday
HYMN	Jesus, Remember Me <i>ELW</i> 616
TUNE	REMEMBER ME

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Week six of Lent is Palm/Passion Sunday. The customary hymn for this week is *All Glory, Laud and Honor*. Based on Luke 23:42 (the words of one of the criminals crucified with Jesus), this 'Taize' chant points us to the full meaning of Passion Sunday and Holy Week. "I am the sinner for whom Jesus died. And, I look forward to the day when, because of his death and resurrection, Jesus will welcome me into the kingdom that at this time is, for me, yet to come."



DATE | Thursday, April 5, 2012
DAY | Maundy Thursday
HYMN | **One Bread, One Body** *ELW* 496, Stanza 1
TUNE | ONE BREAD, ONE BODY

One bread, one body,
One Lord of all;
One cup of blessing which we bless,
And we, though many
Throughout the earth
Are one body in this one Lord

Gentile or Jew
Servant or free,
Woman or man, no more.

As we gather around the Lord's Table, the statements of the Apostle Paul become a clear reality. We pray this day that it might be so among us.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17 – *The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*

Galatians 3:28 *There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*



DATE	Thursday, April 6, 2012
DAY	Good Friday
HYMN	When I Survey the Wondrous Cross <i>ELW</i> 803
TUNE	HAMBURG

See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Adjectives are a powerful part of the English language. They can change the image of a plain, ordinary house to a grand mansion in the woods with a peaceful river flowing through the backyard. Hymn writers struggle to articulate a part of our faith poetically. Their art began in the early church and still exists today. Isaac Watts, one of the church's greatest hymn writers, wrote *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*, achieving new heights of passionate devotional poetry while using only five adjectives. The purely descriptive adjectives are 'wondrous', 'richest', 'vain', 'rich', and 'amazing'. Yet it must be agreed that this hymn is one of the most penetrating in the Lutheran hymnal. Each stanza is written with strong, clear, simple thoughts.

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, written originally for use in the Communion Service, was inspired by Paul's impassioned declaration in Galatians 6:14, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.* This statement is a climax to his argument that one does not have to become a Jew before one can become a Christian. From this profound statement, Isaac Watts derives five stanzas of poetry to portray the Prince of Glory and his throne, the cross.



DATE	Sunday, April 8, 2012
DAY	Resurrection of Our Lord, Easter Day
HYMN	Jesus Christ Is Risen Today <i>ELW</i> 365, Stanza 1
TUNE	EASTER HYMN

Jesus Christ is ris'n today, Alleluia!
our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
who did once upon the cross, Alleluia!
suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

Every Sunday is a celebration of the Easter story. Throughout the season, we focus on that even more in our hymnody. Dating back to the 14th century, *Jesus Christ Is Risen Today* is one of the most familiar hymns to Christians today. Each line of this hymn begins with a short seven-syllable phrase, followed by a resounding “Alleluia.”



DATE | Sunday, April 15, 2012
DAY | Second Sunday of Easter
HYMN | **Thine Is the Glory** *ELW* 376, Stanza 1
TUNE | JUDAS MACCABEUS

Thine is the glory,
risen conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry
thou o'er death hast won!
Angels in bright raiment
rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes
where the body lay.

Thine is the glory,
risen conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry
thou o'er death hast won!

The author of this hymn, Edmond Budry, was born and died in Vevey, Switzerland where he served as a Free Church pastor for thirty-five years and composed many French hymn texts. Referencing 1 Corinthians 15:55 “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” the beginning of *Thine Is the Glory* immediately reminds us that our Savior conquered death with his resurrection. The text also continues the story of Easter with references to both the rolling away of the stone and the folded grave-clothes found by the disciples. The tune, JUDAS MACCABEUS, comes from George Frideric Handel’s oratorio of that name.



DATE | Sunday, April 22, 2012
DAY | Third Sunday of Easter
HYMN | **Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia** *ELW* 364, Stanza 4
TUNE | MFURAHINI, HALELUYA

“Go spread the news: he’s not in the grave.
He has arisen this world to save.
Jesus’ redeeming labors are done.
Even the battle with sin is won.”

Let us sing praise to him with endless joy.
Death’s fearful sting he has come to destroy.
Our sin forgiving, alleluia!
Jesus is living, alleluia!

Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia is a 20th century hymn written by Tanzanian seminarian Bernard Kyamanywa. Paul Westermeyer (2010, p 174) says, “What we have here is an announcement of Christ’s resurrection with a narrative about it in five stanzas followed by an exuberant congregational refrain.” The stanza used here reminds us of *our* part in the Easter story. We are to go out into the world and proclaim, “He’s not in the grave!”



DATE	Sunday, April 29, 2012
DAY	Fourth Sunday of Easter
HYMN	We Walk by Faith <i>ELW</i> 635, Stanza 2
TUNE	SHANTI

We may not touch your hands and side,
nor follow where you trod;
but in your promise we rejoice,
and cry, “My Lord and God!”

Henry Alford wrote this hymn for the commemoration of St. Thomas the Apostle. It begins with 2 Corinthians 5:7, *For we walk by faith, not by sight*. It also quotes from the account of Jesus and Thomas in John 20:19-29. The text of stanza two reminds us that, even though we cannot touch the wounds like Thomas, we are faithful Christians who can daily rejoice in God’s promise of salvation.



DATE | Sunday, May 6, 2012
DAY | Fifth Sunday of Easter
HYMN | **Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen** *ELW 377, Stanza 5*
TUNE | EARTH AND ALL STARS

City of God,
Easter forever,
golden Jerusalem, Jesus the Lamb,
river of life,
saints and archangels,
sing with creation to God the I Am!

Jesus is risen and we shall arise.
Give God the glory! Alleluia!

The text of this hymn is interesting; as in other texts by Herbert F. Brokering, it is a stream of consciousness. Many phrases express various themes of the Easter story, such as trumpets, light, splendor, Lamb, the Emmaus road, eyes opened, shouts of Alleluia, and eternal life in paradise. Stanza five contains themes from Revelation with references to the saints and angels singing neverending praises to God. Combined with a tune that is simply fun to sing and a beautiful poetic text, Brokering's hymn is a rather festive way to celebrate our risen Lord.



DATE | Sunday, May 13, 2012
DAY | Sixth Sunday of Easter
HYMN | **Christ Is Risen! Alleluia!** *ELW* 382, Stanza 2
TUNE | MORGENLIED

Christ is risen! All the sadness
of our Lenten fast is o'er
through the open gates of gladness
he returns to life once more;
death and hell before him bending
see him rise, the victor now,
angels on his steps attending,
glory round his wounded brow.

Christ is risen! Alleluia!
Risen our victorious head!
Sing his praises! Alleluia!
Christ is risen from the dead!

Christ Is Risen! Alleluia! is another bright and joyous Easter hymn. John Monsell's text in stanza two provides beautiful poetry describing the awesome power of Christ's resurrection. In this stanza we not only sing about death and hell bending before Christ rising, but also the angels attending to Him, bowing before his feet, and singing his praises. The tune, MORGENLIED, is happy and jumpy to match the joyful text.



DATE	Thursday, May 17, 2012
DAY	Ascension of Our Lord
HYMN	A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing! <i>ELW</i> 393, Stanza 4
TUNE	LASST UNS ERFREUEN

“You see him now, ascending high
up to the portals of the sky.”

Alleluia! Alleluia!

“Here-after Jesus you shall see returning in great majesty.”

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

The Day of Ascension is celebrated 40 days after Easter, the Resurrection of Our Lord. Filled with shouts of Alleluia, *A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing!* is (like many of the other Easter hymns selected for this collection) paired with a tune that begs the singer to belt out his or her praises! Luke 24:50-53 – *Then [Jesus] led [the disciples] out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.* The story of the Ascension of our Lord is also recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (1:3-11) where it is told in one sentence: “*When [Jesus] had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight*” (Acts 1:9).

The Latin hymn is attributed to the Venerable Bede (c. 672-735), an English monk, who is also known as a historian and theologian. The text of this stanza not only witnesses to the ascension of Jesus, but also anticipates his coming in glory at the end of time. As the angel said to the disciples, “*Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.*” (Acts 1:11) On this day we celebrate our Lord returning to heaven with God the Father and await his return to reclaim His creation.



DATE	Sunday, May 20, 2012
DAY	Seventh Sunday of Easter
HYMN	Thine the Amen <i>ELW</i> 826, Stanza 2
TUNE	THINE

Thine the life eternally thine the promise let there be
 thine the vision this the tree all the earth on bended knee
 gone the nailing gone the railing gone the pleading gone the cry
 gone the sighing gone the dying what was loss lifted high

Herbert Brokering wrote this hymn at Holden Village, the origin of our Lenten worship liturgy comes from, during a retreat in the summer of 1981. It was the tenth hymn he wrote in ten days. Each morning a colleague of Brokering's led a bible study. It was then Brokering's responsibility to compose a hymn that afternoon based on the day's bible study. Brokering is quoted as saying, "We *sang* each study the following morning. This hymn is on the great Eucharistic theology in Revelation. It was to be a *then* to the *now*." The "Now" that Brokering mentions refers to Jaroslav Vajda's *Now the Silence*. *Now the Silence* has no punctuation at all, and *Thine the Amen* only has punctuation at the end of each stanza. This technique was used to allow each hymn to be a list of simple things one should expect to worship. Vajda even goes as far in his hymn to avoid any rhyming or clichés.



DATE	Sunday, May 27, 2012
DAY	Day of Pentecost
HYMN	Like the Murmur of the Dove's Song <i>ELW</i> 403, Stanza 2
TUNE	BRIDGEFOOM

To the members of Christ's Body,
to the branches of the vine,
to the church in faith assembled,
to her midst as gift and sign:
come, Holy Spirit, come.

Church. Spirit. Gift. Faith. A simple but profound prayer inviting and seeking the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is what this Day of Pentecost is all about.

In *A Year of Grace: Hymns for the Church Year* (1990), Carl P. Daw, Jr., demonstrates that this hymn offers Pauline, Johannine and Lucan understandings of the Church – all of which share recognition of the Holy Spirit as a divine gift. This consonance is especially apparent in the second stanza. Paul sees the Spirit in the body of Christ (Romans 12:4-5 and I Corinthians 12:12-13). The Gospel of John represents Christ as the true vine (John 15:1-5). Luke reveals the work of the Spirit in the assembled community gathered in faith (Acts 2:1) (St. Romain, 2010)



DATE | Sunday, June 3, 2012
DAY | The Holy Trinity / First Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN | **Come, Join the Dance of Trinity** *ELW* 412, Stanza 1
TUNE | KINGSFOLD

Come, join the dance of Trinity,
before all worlds begun
the interweaving of the Three,
the Father, Spirit, Son.

The universe of space and time
did not arise by chance,
but as the Three, in love and hope,
made room within their dance.

Set to an English folk tune, Richard Leach's text takes a very poetic approach to explain the Trinity. Leach takes one of the hardest concepts for most Christians to understand and portrays the three in one as a dance with all three woven together. Stanza one (above) refers to the three in one at the beginning of creation, as seen in Proverbs 8:1–4, 22–31. Stanza two explains that the dance of the Trinity has been given flesh as Christ, who was born in Bethlehem and died for our sins on a cross. However, when death tried to “confine the dance, God rolled away the stone.” Stanza three refers to the Holy Spirit's role in the Trinity. Finally, stanza four serves as a song of praise to the Trinity as one being.



DATE	Sunday, June 10, 2012
DAY	Lectionary 10 / Second Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! <i>ELW</i> 413, Stanza 1
TUNE	NICAEA

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.

Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!

God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Alfred lord Tennyson thought that this hymn was the world's greatest (Tennyson, 1897: 401). Written by Reginald Heber for Trinity Sunday, the text is based on the Sanctus and on Revelation 4:8, in which the heavenly hosts sing, *"Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come."*



DATE	Sunday, June 17, 2012
DAY	Lectionary 11 / Third Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether <i>ELW</i> 470, Stanza 1
TUNE	UNION SEMINARY

Draw us in the Spirit's tether,
for when humbly in your name
two or three are met together,
you are in the midst of them.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Touch we now your garment's hem.

The hymn by Percy Dearner connects two passages from the Gospel of Matthew that seem to point to the simplicity of prayer. The first is the promise of Jesus' presence from Matthew 18:20: "*For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.*" The second, from Matthew 14:35-36, reassures us that with enough faith, simply to touch the hem of Jesus' garment can be enough to answer prayers for healing: "*After the people of that place recognized him, they sent word throughout the region and brought all who were sick to him, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed*".



DATE | Sunday, June 24, 2012
DAY | John the Baptist
HYMN | **Comfort, Comfort Now My People** *ELW 256, Stanza 2*
TUNE | FREU DICH SEHR

For the herald's voice is crying
in the desert far and near,
Calling us to true repentance,
since the reign of God is here.

Oh, that warning cry obey!
Now prepare for God a way.
Valleys, rise to greet the Savior;
hill, bow down in humble favor.

The voice of John the Baptist is as important to hear today as it was in first-century Palestine. John the Baptist is a unique figure in Christian memory, a hinge between the Old Testament prophets and the first Christians. In the gospel stories he recognizes Jesus as one greater than himself, one for whose coming he prepares the way. But still from his prison he asks if Jesus is truly the Expected One. He is a figure of perpetual Advent and, in that way, stands for all of us who may be Christian believers but still wait and wonder, discern and doubt.

John the Baptist said, “[Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease.” And so his birth is celebrated half a year before Jesus’, just as the daylight in the northern hemisphere begins to wane. Jesus honored John as being the greatest prophet. (from Sundaysandseasons.com)



DATE | Sunday, June 24, 2012
DAY | Lectionary 12 / Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN | **Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing** *ELW* 807, Stanza 2
TUNE | NETTLETON

Here I raise my Ebenezer,
“Hither to thy help I’ve come”;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger
wand’ring from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger,
interposed his precious blood.

Stanza two of *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing* begins with the phrase, “Here I raise my Ebenezer.” People are constantly asking, “What’s an Ebenezer?” An Ebenezer is a stone of remembrance. 1 Samuel 7:12 says, *Samuel took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Jeshanah. He named it Ebenezer—the stone of help—for he said, ‘Up to this point the Lord has helped us!’* That stone then represented a fresh beginning (like the new beginning we receive in Christ’s mercy) and served as a reminder for generations to come. Some people keep prayer journal to record their prayers to God and how he answers them, so they can examine their journey. A prayer journal can also be an Ebenezer.



DATE	Sunday, July 1, 2012
DAY	Lectionary 13 / Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	Great God, Your Love Has Called Us Here <i>ELW</i> 358, Stanza 1
TUNE	RYBURN

Great God, your love has called us here,
as we, by love, for love were made.
Your living likeness still we bear,
though marred, dishonored, disobeyed.
We come, with all our heart and mind
your call to hear, your love to find.

Brian Wren, a prolific living hymn writer, wrote the hymn in April 1973. A connecting thread in Wren's hymns is a voice of inclusivity and inclusive language. He is passionate about congregational song and has written extensively on the subject. This hymn beautifully displays Wren's ability to bring the love and earthly life of Jesus into the troubles of our time, humbling us in the process.



DATE	Sunday, July 8, 2012
DAY	Lectionary 14 / Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	The Day Thou Gavest <i>ELW</i> 569, Stanza 1
TUNE	ST. CLEMENT

The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended,
The darkness falls at thy behest;
To thee our morning hymns ascended,
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.

This beautifully structured and well-loved hymn by John Ellerton seems ‘to draw into itself the beginning and end of things,’ (J. R. Watson, 1997). Indeed, Paul Westermeyer points out that it moves from Genesis (1:3 *God give darkness and light*) to Revelation (5:13, *all creatures own God’s sway*) with the faithful in between (Westermeyer, 2010: 406).



DATE | Sunday, July 15, 2012
DAY | Lectionary 15 / Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN | **Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling** *ELW* 608, Stanza 3
TUNE | THOMPSON

Oh, for the wonderful love he has promised,
promised for you and for me!
Though we have sinned, he has mercy and pardon,
pardon for you and for me.

“Come home, come home!
You who are weary, come home.”
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, “O sinner, come home!”

This hymn, by Will L. Thompson, reminds us of Jesus’ teachings in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). No matter how far we stray, we can still hear his gentle call to “come home”.



DATE	Sunday, July 22, 2012
DAY	Lectionary 16 / Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	Abide with Me <i>ELW</i> 629, Stanza 5
TUNE	EVENTIDE

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes,
shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

Luke 24: 29, the events upon the road to Emmaus, is the setting for the hymn by Henry F. Lyte: *“Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent”*. In it, Lyte compares our lives to the span of a day, doubtless inspired by the psalm: *For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night* (Psalm 90: 4).



DATE	Sunday, July 29, 2012
DAY	Lectionary 17 / Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	The Church's One Foundation <i>ELW</i> 654, Stanza 5
TUNE	AURELIA

Yet she on earth has union with God, the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won.
Oh, blessed heavenly chorus! Lord, save us by your grace,
that we, like saints before us, may see you face to face.

The text of this hymn by Samuel J. Stone begins with a reference to the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 3, verses 10-11: *According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.* Stone "wrote this hymn in 1866 on the ninth article of the Apostles Creed, headed 'The holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints.'" (Westermeyer, 2010: 503) The hymn includes a description of the church as Christ's bride, an image that can be traced through many parts of the Bible, perhaps most notably in Revelation 19:7-8: *"Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

The tune by S.S. Wesley is the only one of his 130 tunes that remains in circulation. (Westermeyer, 2010, 377) Its use of shocking, held dissonances on the down beats of the sixth and fourteenth measures drives the melody forward and draws attention to important words in each stanza of the text.



DATE | Sunday, August 5, 2012
DAY | Lectionary 18 / Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN | **Great Is Thy Faithfulness** *ELW* 733, Stanza 1
TUNE | FAITHFULNESS

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not;
as thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided;
great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.

Thomas O. Chrisholm wrote this text in 1923. He was ordained a Methodist minister, but served as a pastor for only a year before falling ill and changing professions; he became an insurance agent. He wrote actively, composing more than 1200 poems in his lifetime. (Westermeyer, 2010: 593) This text quotes from Lamentations 3:22-23: *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

William M. Runyan composed a tune for the text after receiving several submissions from Chrisholm in 1923. He was the son of a Methodist pastor and was ordained in 1891. Interestingly, he switched jobs in 1924 because he was becoming deaf, but this change did not prevent him from writing one of the most enduring tunes from the period. (Westermeyer, 2010: 593)



DATE	Sunday, August 12, 2012
DAY	Lectionary 19 / Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	All My Hope on God Is Founded <i>ELW</i> 757, Stanza 2
TUNE	MICHAEL

Mortal pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray our trust;
what with care and toil we fashion,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But thy power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

Herbert Howells wrote the tune for this hymn by Robert Bridges in 1930 and named it after his son, Michael, who died as a child. It is a beautiful song to sing and to listen to and the words ‘communicate a powerful theme with compelling immediacy’ (Westermeyer, 2010: 618). This stanza reminds us of the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12: 13-21, where Jesus exhorts the crowd to be on their guard against greed in the form of storing up earthy treasures, instead of putting ‘all our hope’ in the One who provides eternal goodness.



DATE	Sunday, August 19, 2012
DAY	Lectionary 20 / Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	Be Thou My Vision <i>ELW</i> 793, Stanza 3
TUNE	SLANE

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,
thou mine inheritance, now and always:
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.

This Irish hymn is a meditation on “vision.” The word occurs as bookends in the text, and the inner phrases expand upon the idea. The original text is found in two manuscripts from the eighth century, and the version we sing is a selection from the metrical translation by Eleanor H. Hull. (Westermeyer, 2010, 664) The third stanza references Jesus’ words from Matthew 6:19-21: *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*



DATE	Sunday, August 26, 2012
DAY	Lectionary 21 / Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart <i>ELW</i> 800, Stanza 2
TUNE	MORECAMBE

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
no sudden rending of the veil of clay,
no angel visitant, no opening skies;
but take the dimness of my soul away.

George Croly's hymn, written in the first person, is an intimate request for God to come into our hearts and change us from the inside out. This stanza uses imagery from biblical accounts of revelation and interactions with the Spirit, but ultimately chooses a simple prayer, to which we can all relate, to ignite the light of Christ in our souls.



DATE	Sunday, September 2, 2012
DAY	Lectionary 22 / Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
HYMN	Earth and All Stars! <i>ELW</i> 731, Stanza 4
TUNE	EARTH AND ALL STARS

Classrooms and labs!
Loud boiling test tubes!
Sing to the Lord a new song!
Athlete and band!
Loud cheering people!
Sing to the Lord a new song!

God has done marvelous things.
I too sing praises with a new song!

Herbert Brokering's text, "Earth and All Stars," calls the universe to unite and "Sing to the Lord a new song." In addition to addressing the natural universe that Psalm 148 catalogs ("mountains and hills," "beasts and cattle," "birds of the air," etc.), "Earth and All Stars" also calls on music, industry, construction, education, sports, and philosophy, the entire human enterprise, to join the song. Each image is bound together by the recurring phrase found in each stanza, "Sing to the Lord a new song! He has done marvelous things. I too will praise him with a new song!"

Brokering, a Lutheran minister born in 1926, composed this text in 1964 on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of St. Olaf College. With phrases like "Classroom and labs!" and "Athlete and band!" it is easy to see the academic world references in stanzas four and five. As children and teachers are returning to school, it is particularly appropriate to focus on this text.



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The following persons were involved in selecting the hymn stanzas in this publication. The selection reflects their views and priorities and is a teaching tool in their settings. It is not intended to be a complete, definitive statement of the greatest hymn stanzas – that list would be much more numerous than 52.

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