

Planning the Use of Songs in Worship

When I first started introducing contemporary music styles into our Lutheran congregation's traditional, liturgical worship service, a common question was, "Why are we no longer using the Liturgy?". Well, we were, just not the musical liturgy printed in the hymnal. We were adding to or replacing the organ and piano with a worship band, and the chants and hymns with worship and praise songs. I began writing "contemporary" versions of the musical liturgy, maintaining the common texts, to help make it easier for worshippers to adjust.

Today, as worship bands and praise songs have become more common and replaced the sung liturgy with spoken text, the opposite reaction has come about: a desire to reintroduce chant and psalms back into the liturgy in a way that retains a worship and praise sound and feel. As a result, I have revisited and revised my earlier efforts at mixing the two styles.

The basic, historical liturgy or pattern for Christian worship is Gather, Word, Meal and Send. We are gathered together by God's Spirit; spoken to through God's Word; fed with Christ's presence through Holy Communion; and sent out by God's Spirit. I have numbered and lettered the musical selections in this collection according to their historical order of use in the liturgy:

#1's are options for the Gathering section;

- *Glory to God* and *This Is the Feast* are hymns of praise; only one would be used on a given Sunday
- There are two *Kyrie's*; use only one on a given Sunday

#2's are part of the Word section;

- The *Psalm Tone* is used for chanting a Psalm, if desired
- *Alleluia* (used most of the year) and *Return to the Lord* (used during Lent and Advent) are Gospel Acclamations; only one would be used on a given Sunday
- *Creed* is a song version of the Apostle's Creed, which could be used in place of or as a companion to the spoken Apostle's or Nicene Creed, or other Statement of Faith

#3's are associated with the Meal;

- *From the Fruit of Your Vineyard* can be sung during or following the offering collection
- *Hosanna in the Highest* is sung prior to the blessing of the bread and wine
- *Lamb of God* may be sung during distribution of the bread & wine
- *Thank the Lord* may be sung at the end of distribution

#4 is a Sending song and could be used as a Benediction and/or the Sending Song.

The letters a, b, c, etc. following the numbers reflect the music order if more than one piece from that number category is used.

Among congregations that use the liturgical format, each may use it in a different way, such as regularly using specific selections and seldom or never using others, or changing usage regularly according to seasons, holidays, the Church year, etc. One or more selections from each category might be used, or you may choose to use no selections from a category. Hymns or worship songs may replace or supplement a liturgical selection. See the section in your Church's hymnal on the Pattern for Worship, or consult with your Pastor regarding more specific uses of the liturgy in worship.