



THE BRIDGE

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR
CONGREGATIONS OF THE
SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA SYNOD, ELCA

CONNECTING THE
CONGREGATIONAL, SYNODICAL, AND
CHURCHWIDE EXPRESSIONS OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH IN AMERICA.



SINGING IN THE CHURCH

All God's people have sung throughout recorded history. The Israelites sang after their deliverance from Egypt. David sang in time of trouble and rejoicing. Mary and Simeon sang songs of thanksgiving. John, on the island of Patmos, heard the glorious songs of the angels in his vision. As Paul Westermeyer has said, "The story is a song to be sung" (Westermeyer, p. 34).

Music serves both a mnemonic and communal purpose. Music helps people who sing together remember their story, and the repeated memory of that common story binds together members of the group. Music helps people become one in identity and purpose. Because of music's ability to form the community, it has been a vital part of the Christian church over the centuries.

Music is God's creation. It is a gift to God's people to use in praise and adoration and in prayer. In Luther's words, music "comes from the sphere of miraculous audible things, just like the Word of God. The Spirit sees nothing but God's benefits in the world and therefore begins to sing" (Schalk, p. 35). Music communicates and expresses faith in ways beyond mere words. For Luther, music was a practical art closely tied to theology, to be used in the praise of God and in the proclamation of the Gospel. When music is cultivated at the highest levels of artistic excellence, the perfect goodness and wisdom of God are displayed through the gift. That our Lord accepts even the humblest of our musical gifts does not excuse musicians from always aspiring to grow in ability. Seeing music as a gift from God provides the foundation for our understanding of the role of music in worship.

Within the context of the historical liturgy, music functions not as an ornament or entertainment, but rather as an integral part of the liturgy, carrying prayer and praise and illuminating the proclamation of the Word. The music of the liturgy invites all—congregation, choir, instrumentalists and pastors—to participate. Because each group is a part of

the whole, each has its own role as it takes a turn leading prayer and praise with the entire assembly. Music's most important function is to illuminate the text that allows us to see Christ and the action of God in our lives. Music that overshadows the text and draws attention to itself violates its purpose. The music that we sing should help us make common things holy, link our faith to the communal life of the assembly, and move us to embrace the church at all times and in all places. For that reason, our music is both old and new, familiar and unfamiliar, and of many styles and ethnic roots. Effective music in worship is varied but the best that each genre has to offer.

Excerpt from "Music in Liturgy," ELCA. To read the full article, go to www.elca.org/worship/faq/music/liturgical_music.html

RESOURCES

- Halter, Carl, and Carl Schalk, ed. *A Handbook of Church Music*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978.
- Schalk, Carl. *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988.

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MONTHLY BIBLE VERSE

We are a synod joined in Bible study. This Bible verse was selected by Harold Usgaard, bishop of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, for everyone in the synod to study.

"Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing."

PSALM 100:2



ABOUT OUR SYNOD

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod is a faith community of 130,000 baptized people in 184 congregations as well as related institutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Its geographic area includes 15 counties in the southeastern corner of Minnesota.

The Bridge is a monthly publication of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA. For more information, contact the synod office:

SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA SYNOD, ELCA
1001 14TH ST. NW, SUITE 300
ROCHESTER, MN 55901-2551
(507) 280-9457
WWW.SEMNSYNOD.ORG