

Training Sessions for New Hymnal a Success

Vision: Called into God's Marvelous Light: To Be Christ-Centered Disciples

Objective: Strengthening worship

By Neal Erickson, Director of Music Ministry
St. Olaf Lutheran Church, Austin

Green to red (or cranberry, as it is officially called) marks the transition of many Southeastern Minnesota congregations to our new hymnal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW). This fall, over 500 pastors, choir directors, organists, vocalists, instrumentalists, and other lay leaders participated in three training sessions on the new hymnal. The singing by the training participants was stunning and the comments at the breaks helpful. Our congregations are obviously blessed with very capable worship and music leadership.

I was fortunate to have been part of the process of engaging our synod to learn about the ELCA's new worship resource. The time has passed quickly since January 2006 when Bishop Usgaard called me to participate in the synod training team. Our team's journey began in June with three days of training in Chicago. Pastor Tammy Dahlvang (Glenville), Pat Hinz (lay person, Adams), Patricia Lundeen (musician, Winona) and Pastor Dave Rossow (Byron) all splendidly managed the dozens of details required to make the three training sessions happen. I am so grateful for our team's "chemistry" which made this challenging project so enjoyable. Their energy and wisdom generated so many thoughtful discussions regarding our presentations.

I hope a large number of you will be able to place ELW in your pews. Many of you are already discussing how you will introduce it in your church; some are using it now. At St. Olaf in Austin, we plan to begin our ELW adventure in mid-January. The Worship and Music Board decided we should learn Setting One for communion Sundays and use Service of the Word on the other Sundays. With that in mind, we don't plan on singing many new hymns for a few weeks! Using childrens' and adult voices and instrumentalists will all be part of the mix as we learn to "sing a new song."

Please stay in touch as you uncover your own ways of exploring our new worship book. My email at St. Olaf Church is nerickso@stolafchurch.org

Thanks to the synod for its encouragement and to all of you who were able to attend the training sessions.



2007: A Synod Sharing Our Faith Stories

Stories of Songs, Phones and Women

By Cathy Mannel, AIM
Congregational Renewal Team

*I love to tell the story; I'll sing this theme in glory
And tell the old, old story, Of Jesus and his love.*
(K. Hankley)

Recently, I heard someone say "As we tell our stories, we offer support to one another." While mutual sharing strengthens and expands the faith community, sharing our stories knows no age requirements. Telling the "old, old story" takes a lifetime. Two women well into their eighties demonstrated this to me. Living in a midsize town, each woman utilized the phone to spread God's message of love.

Every night, Effie would call people on her prayer list. Most of them were homebound, and Effie's phone call was a welcomed visit. After hearing about their day, Effie would sing one of her prayer songs—her favorite being "My Faith Looks Up to Thee." Effie's prayer songs became a benediction for the day, a prayer for each person's life.

Across town, Ruth was the neighborhood's grandmother. Each day, she gave cookies to the children when they came home from school. Having someone ask about their day and offer them a treat, was just what these "latch key kids" needed and wanted.

When not befriending the neighborhood school children, Ruth was busy on the phone calling people on their birthdays. After her initial hello, Ruth played the birthday song for them on her electric organ. Young and old, church members, townspeople, they all looked forward to Ruth's birthday greeting.

An old gospel tune speaks about the joy, safety, and security that people experience by leaning upon God.

*What a fellowship, what a joy divine, Leaning on the
everlasting arms;
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine, Leaning
on the everlasting arms.*

As we share our stories, we lean on each other and God. It's in the sharing--that human to human contact--that God's everlasting arms surround, welcome, strengthen, comfort, and guide each of us.

God bless you in your story telling.