

Report of the District Worship Committee

Committee Members:

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WELS California Pastors' Conference
St. Mark's Lutheran Church; Citrus Heights, CA
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School of Worship Enrichment

The School of Worship Enrichment (SoWE) is a weekend event that enables participating congregations to analyze existing worship practices and to plan strategies for beneficial innovation and renewal. Several congregations meet together at the host church. The customary two-day SoWE schedule includes lectures on the theology, purpose, and forms for worship, demonstration of musical samples for choirs and services, break-out groups for congregations' short-term planning, and participation in several model services. A new one-day schedule will be used at selected locations this fall. The obvious advantage to the one-day schedule is that participants only need to give up one day of their time; this format may be especially useful in locations where the two-day schedule might deter participation (especially in parts of our district where congregations are widely spread out from one another). The disadvantage is that some breakout time and the model services are deleted from the schedule.

The next SoWE in our district is planned for Tucson, Arizona on March 1-2, 2014. Four congregations will be participating; consultants/presenters will be Pastor Aaron Christie, Pastor Jon Bauer, Teacher Kevin Bode, and choir director Kate Tiefel. We have tentative plans for another SoWE in the Las Vegas area in early 2015 during the Epiphany season.

Hymnal Project Website

The WELS Hymnal Project has begun its initial work under the leadership of project director Pastor Michael Schultz. The 13-member executive committee held its first meeting in September, where members of the seven subcommittees were suggested. The subcommittees are [1] Hymnody, [2] Rites, [3] Psalmody, [4] Scripture, [5] Literature, [6] Technology, and [7] Communications. You can discover more at the project's website, www.welshymnal.com. The project website not only informs you about the hymnal's progress, but it includes forms for WELS members to submit their own feedback and ideas.

WELS National Worship Conference

The seventh triennial WELS worship conference will be held July 22-25, 2014 at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin. This will be the fourth time the conference will be held at Carthage, the first time since 2002. More information is available at www.wels.net/worship/2014-national-worship-conference.

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The conference is designed not only for congregational worship leaders, but anyone interested in the various aspects of worship. It will feature sessions on music, architecture, visual art, and liturgy and preaching. Opportunities at the conference include:

- 50+ presentations/workshops
- Concerts and recitals
- Pastor Jon Hein, director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling, will present the keynote address on *Compelling Worship*
- 125 voice Festival Choir with full orchestra, directed by James Nowack and Katherine Tiefel
- 100 voice high school Honor Choir with full orchestra, directed by Jon Laabs
- 70 voice children's choir for children presently in grades 4-8 (with unchanged voices), directed by Kurt Cereske

Hymnology Curriculum

A new hymnology curriculum for Lutheran elementary schools is being prepared under the direction of teacher Kevin Bode, a member of the C/W and a new member of our district worship committee. This is a standalone curriculum (independent from *Christlight*) with three levels: K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. Students will learn a core of 8-11 hymns every year, with options for another 20-23 hymns. Students who attend an LES from Kindergarten through eighth grade would learn approximately 85 hymns over their time in school from this curriculum. This curriculum could also be used with Sunday Schools, homeschool situations, teen groups, and possibly also adult groups.

HymnSoft

At long last, the upgraded version of HymnSoft is now available! For the [full menu of products](#), go to NPH's website www.nph.net, click, "E-resources" in the left-hand column, then select "music," and finally select "Christian Worship resources." Several versions are available, including the basic HymnSoft program with MIDI files, and a CD with M4A files with a high-quality organ and piano sound that can be played on any computer or device (e.g. iPod), even without the regular HymnSoft software.

Practical Resources in Online Reports

An initiative of our district worship committee is to direct our worship leaders to practical resources and to offer practical ideas that will assist our congregations' worship lives. These resources and ideas will be included in an expanded online version of the reports given at pastors' conferences and the district convention. The printed reports will list the resources, and the online version of the reports will include complete information (descriptions and links to resources, full information for practical ideas). This idea is just coming to fruition, so there is not a plethora of practical ideas that will be found in the online version of this report once it is posted, but in this "first installment," you will be able to find (at least):

- An idea for a midweek Lent preaching series (used by both northern California circuits)
- A new resource for handbells to accompany congregational hymns from MorningStar Music

You can expect to see the online version of this report with additional resources in a few days.

ONLINE ADDENDUM: PRACTICAL RESOURCES

Midweek Lent Preaching Series

If you are looking for another Lenten preaching series idea for your midweek services, here is one that was used in both northern California circuits in successive years (2011 in the Golden Gate Circuit, 2012 in the Sierra Circuit). The series originally comes from CPH in 2010 and was titled, "[The Miracles of Lent](#)." The series was adapted by both circuits to fit their situations, including some practical changes to the original sermon series. The suggested adaptations here generally reflect the way the Sacramento area congregations handled the series in 2012:

Ash Wednesday

Sermon Theme: The Miracle of Forgiveness Text: Luke 18:9-14 (Gospel for Ash Wednesday)

Because there were five pastors in the Sacramento area preaching rotation, Ash Wednesday's sermon was not a part of the pulpit exchange, but it was a part of the sermon series. Each pastor preached an Ash Wednesday sermon at his own parish that was not repeated at other churches in succeeding weeks. The three regularly appointed readings for Ash Wednesday were used, and the sermon was based on the Ash Wednesday Gospel suggested in *Christian Worship*. In the remaining five midweek services, the Passion History was taken from the synoptic Gospel for that year of the lectionary (Year A: Matthew, Year B: Mark, Year C: Luke) and divided into five parts (Upper Room, Gethsemane, Sanhedrin, Pilate, Calvary) according to the plan in *Christian Worship: Occasional Services*.

Midweek Services 2-6

Sermon Theme 2: The Miraculous Darkness	Text: Matthew 27:45
Sermon Theme 3: The Miracle of the Father Forsaking the Son	Text: Matthew 27:46
Sermon Theme 4: The Miracle of the Death of God	Text: Matthew 27:50
Sermon Theme 5: The Miraculous Tearing of the Temple Curtain	Text: Matthew 27:51a
Sermon Theme 6: The Miraculous Raising of the Saints from Death	Text: Matthew 27:52-53
Additional Option A: The Miraculous Response from God's Creation	Text: Matthew 27:51b
Additional Option B: The Miraculous Faith of the Roman Soldier	Text: Matthew 27:54

Holy Week and Easter

Maundy Thursday Sermon Theme: The Miraculous in Holy Communion	Text: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Good Friday Sermon Theme: The Miracle of Good Friday	Text: 1 Peter 3:18
Easter Sunday Sermon Theme: The Miracle of Easter	Text: Matthew 28:1-10

If either of the optional sermons for the midweek services are used, then midweek sermon theme #4, "The Miracle of the Death of God," would make a good option for the Good Friday sermon. In that case, the preacher might opt for using John 19:30 as the text since John's Gospel is customarily used for worship on Good Friday. Likewise, the preacher might opt for whatever Easter Gospel text is being used in his service if the account from Matthew is not being used.

Hymn Arrangements for Handbells

There are not many congregations in our district that have active handbell choirs, and those that do might not have much in the area of music that accompanies the congregation's singing. Two new volumes from MorningStar Music provide reasonably accessible arrangements of common hymns with introductions and festive final stanzas for organ and handbells. Purchasing the volumes allows the owner to make as many copies as you need for your group. You can find them at these links:

- [Let Praises Ring, Volume 1](#) (general hymns represented)
- [Let Praises Ring, Volume 2](#) (Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter seasons are primarily represented)

Other Helpful Links

- www.paramentics.com – Liturgical graphics that match the CW lectionary, by WELS member Ian Welch
- www.churchmusicsolutions.net – This site offers a “virtual organist” service
- www.liturgysolutions.com – Downloadable settings for the Psalm, Verse, and Hymn of the Day, and more