

Minnesota District Worship Committee Report

September 2023

Who We Are

Rev. Craig Engel, Prof. Craig Hirschmann and Teacher Mike Marquardt serve as members of Minnesota District Worship Committee. **Pastor Joel Gawrisch** has served as the coordinator for the committee since 2021, filling out the term initially held by Teacher Mike Marquardt. Please reach out with worship-related questions and feedback. Joel Gawrisch: joelg@wels.us

Activity in the Past Year with Special Reference to Hymnal Introduction

- In-person congregational, pastoral conference, and district Leadership Workshop to introduce resources, demonstrate flexible use of resources, and answer questions.
- Support to help promote purchase of CW resources.

Christian Worship Hymnal Suite

Service Builder Playlist

Playlist is simple and intuitive to use. Answers to FAQ's can be directly from Service Builder: <https://help.christianworship.com/hc/en-us>. This offers FAQ, live chat, and "submit a request" options. See below for more information.

Floor Committee Synod Convention Report

The Floor Committee assigned to evaluate *Christian Worship Hymnal* included the following paragraph in its report:

The services and music of the new hymnal seem to require a high level of musicianship and significant preparation, with some items seeming to require a concert-level ability to do well. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but we could see congregations with fewer musical resources having some struggles. Simplified accompaniments may be welcome for some congregations. Some members have found it difficult to sing some of the psalms, chants, and other liturgical parts. The books for musicians are cumbersome to transport and to use. Perhaps there could be a different organization of material to ease in playing for worship. With those comments noted, the committee does not mean to disparage the project or the finished product. The committee thanks the hymnal project participants for a wealth of resources and the beauty of what they have brought together.

WELS Commission on Worship Administrator Bryan Gerlach responds (edited):

...not every congregation should expect to use every musical resource provided for hymns, liturgies, psalter – whether based on organist/pianist ability or size of congregation. Especially smaller and newer congregations are better served by a careful cultivation of – at first – a limited repertoire. See Jon Bauer's comments on this in [Worship the Lord #119](#).

With this background, I offer the following summary observations:

1. The vast majority of hymnal content is within the ability of a trained organist. (Of course, this doesn't mean that everyone who plays organ in WELS worship is adequately trained.) "Significant preparation" may still be required, whether that be two weeks to learn a new Gloria setting or four. But this has always been true. While this level of difficulty expects more of an organist, it also makes the music far more interesting for the singer.
2. Easy accompaniments for both piano and organ are available (see the bottom of [this NPH page](#)).
3. Simply because the hymnal contains a broad range of music does not mean that every congregation should attempt to master every item. For example, while a large congregation with strong musical leadership (and a higher-than-average musical literacy) might happily manage all four settings of The Service (and more!), a small congregation might choose only one setting and then use metrical canticles (hymn tunes) for other musical variety in The Service. [Such variety encourages] a long and durable shelf life.
4. Some congregations have a wide mix of keyboard talent available. One person might play only piano and need the easy accompaniment volumes. One church might rely on its only organist to play some services and then use Service Builder's Playlist add-on for other services.
5. About the thick accompaniment volumes:
 - The intent is to provide a wide variety of resources (more service settings, more psalm choices, more acclamations, alternate hymn accompaniments, sometimes both piano and organ settings) so that musicians do not need to go hunting for such variety.
 - The cost of the alternate accompaniments for hymns alone (not counting the standard settings), if purchased separately in multiple collections, would far surpass the cost of the three-volume set of accompaniments for hymns. As such, many keyboardists or churches would never acquire such variety.
 - With the thick volumes, organists cannot stack on the music rack several books in order of use. But this really isn't a problem. The flow of The Service makes it easy for the organist to be ready to play the next musical element even if it means removing one thick volume from the music rack and replacing it with another. Unlike some services in CW93, most short dialogues are spoken instead of sung. This, along with "downtime" during lessons, allows ample time to have ready whatever is next – even if both hands are needed to remove one volume and place another.
 - From DWC Joel Gawrisch: The larger volumes can be easily divided and rebound into thinner volumes through a local printer.

In Case You Missed It...

My Christian Worship

A note-taking journal for use during worship and throughout the week, My Christian Worship is meant to enhance and facilitate a more mindful participative worship experience, a more personal connection to the hymnal, and personal devotional use throughout the week. Features/Benefits:

- Tips to help get the most out of time spent in God's Word and worship.
- Lists of passages from God's Word that provide guidance, comfort, encouragement, and strength in a variety of situations.
- Helpful prayers to be used in worship and throughout the week.
- Tool to organize and take notes during the service to help with retention.

- Suggested Christian Worship: Hymnal devotional resources for use throughout the week.
- Complimentary 2-Lesson Bible Study to help Christians best utilize My Christian Worship in their daily walk with Jesus.

Foundations – the book, not the free web resource

A new book in the new hymnal suite, *Foundations*, is now available: [Christian Worship: Foundations](#). Written for pastors but valuable for all who care about Lutheran worship, this book explores a wide variety of worship topics including the history of worship in the church at large and in WELS, the church year, various rites and services, various roles in worship, art and music choices, the culture of worship, and outreach. This book is designed to help God’s people grow in their understanding of Christian worship principles and practices.

Both this book and [The Foundation](#) (the free resources from Congregational Services) are invaluable for those planning worship.

The non-festival half of the Year B planning resources from [The Foundation](#) is also now available. Impactful worship planning and execution will benefit from using both resources: [Christian Worship: Foundations](#) and [The Foundation](#).

Christian Worship: Service Builder – Playlist add-on

Playlist became available in June. While the *Playlist* option is meant to serve congregations without live keyboard players, it is also beneficial for other reasons. Like the primary *Service Builder* program, it is available on a trial basis—only without ability to **export** a playlist of audio files. This trial feature allows one to **hear audio samples**. But please note that while these samples from within the program sound pretty good on a computer with decent speakers, the actual downloaded mp3 files are of far higher quality. And when played over a quality church system with decent amp and speakers, they sound wonderful.

One way to use the trial audio samples is to help a pastor or worship planner without piano skills to hear what a new hymn sounds like—and to become comfortable with it before helping to lead it in worship.

To demonstrate the features and benefits of *Playlist*, a webinar is available that covers all the essentials for fully utilizing this amazing new tool. Watch the webinar and subscribe to *Playlist* [here](#).

Several FAQs are available:

- [Preparing a Playlist](#)
- [Common Questions on Playlists](#)
- [What hymns and psalms are included in Playlist?](#) *A spreadsheet is available that is periodically updated. All hymns and hymnal psalms are included along with the vast majority of liturgical songs. Some psalter psalms not yet included will be added as recordings are completed and copyright permissions are secured.*

2024 National Conference on Worship, Music & the Arts

Save the date:

July 30-August 2, 2024

See wels.net/worshipconference for details

Respectfully submitted,
Joel J. Gawrisch