

THE SUNDAY ASSEMBLY



Using *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*
Volume One

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Augsburg Fortress

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Preface to the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* Leader Guides

E*vangelical Lutheran Worship* includes a number of related print editions and other resources developed to support the worship life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. The core print editions of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, released in late 2006, include the following:

Pew (Assembly) Edition

Leaders Edition and Leaders Desk Edition

Accompaniment Edition: Liturgies

Accompaniment Edition: Service Music and Hymns.

An encounter with these core editions and their introductions is important to an understanding of the goals and principles embodied in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

In addition to the core materials, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* includes other published resources that extend the usefulness of the core editions and respond to the developing needs of the church in mission. The *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* leader guides, which include the present volume, supplement the core editions in a variety of ways.

These resources are intended to provide worship leaders and planners with support for *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* in ways that would not be possible within the core editions themselves. Although the assembly edition includes more interpretive material than its predecessors, such as the annotated patterns for worship that complement the notes within the services, it provides only minimal guidance for leading worship in a variety of settings. Although the leaders edition includes a more extensive section titled Notes on the Services, it is not designed to accommodate deeper historical context, theological reflection, or extensive practical counsel for those who want to lead worship with understanding and confidence.

The leader guides include a set of three volumes, Using *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. This set addresses as its primary audience pastors, seminarians, and church musicians—people who together take the lead in preparing the assembly’s worship week by week. In a time when many congregations have implemented a broader sharing in worship leadership and planning, however, the contents of these three volumes will be valuable also for assisting ministers with various roles, altar guilds and sacristans, worship committees, and worshipers who are seeking deeper understanding.

The Sunday Assembly, first in this set of three volumes, includes a general introduction to worship that is evangelical, Lutheran, and ecumenical. This is followed by in-depth historical, theological, and practical reflections on the service of Holy Communion and the Service of the Word. *The Christian Life: Baptism and Life Passages*, the second volume in this set of three, takes up the service of Holy Baptism and related services such as Affirmation of Baptism, together with the services of Healing, Funeral, and Marriage. *Keeping Time: The Church’s Years*, the third volume in this set, addresses the church’s calendar of Sundays, festivals, and seasons; the place of the lectionary and other propers; and the cycle of daily prayer.

The leader guides also include two volumes focused on assembly song. *Musicians Guide to Evangelical Lutheran Worship* presents essays on the musical leadership of assembly song in a variety of styles and genres, and offers music performance helps for each piece of liturgical music and every hymn in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. The *Hymnal Companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship* includes detailed background on the words and music of the hymns, together with an overview of the role of hymnody in the church’s worship. Both of these volumes, while having particular appeal to church musicians, will be useful also to pastors, seminarians, worship committees, choir members, and other worshipers.

Other reference and interpretive resources will be included among the leader guides as needed. *Indexes for Worship Planning* is one such volume, with an extensive list of suggested hymns for the church year and an expanded set of other indexes.

Many of the church’s gifted teachers have contributed to the writing and assembling of the leader guides. They have sought to discern and give additional focus to the vision for worship among Lutherans that

emerged from the five-year Renewing Worship process (2001–2005), which engaged thousands of people across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in encountering provisional materials, in sharing creative gifts, and in evaluating various stages of the proposal. To be sure, this vision is one marked by a great diversity of thought and practice, a diversity the contributors seek to reflect in these volumes. Yet these gifted teachers also bring to this work their own distinctive points of view, shaped by their own experiences and by their encounters with other teachers, rostered leaders, and worshiping communities around the world.

The *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* leader guides thus do not intend to provide definitive answers or official positions in matters related to worship among Lutherans. In these volumes, however, we are invited to engage in conversation with teachers of the church, to consider how their insights and guidance may best inform and inspire the many different contexts in which local leaders guide the worship life of their communities. In so doing, these leader guides in their own ways seek to do what also the core editions set out to do: “to make more transparent the principle of fostering unity without imposing uniformity,” so that ultimately all these resources might “be servants through which the Holy Spirit will call out the church, gather us around Jesus Christ in word and sacrament, and send us, enlivened, to share the good news of life in God” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Introduction, p. 8).

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Evangelical Lutheran Worship and the Assembly on Sunday

E*vang*elical Lutheran Worship, a book bound in a deep-red color, lies open on the desk.

Its contents can be surveyed on page 5. The red tabs on the outside edges of the first third of its pages correspond to sections of worship materials: The Church Year, Holy Communion, Holy Baptism, Lent and the Three Days, Life Passages, Daily Prayer. Where those tabs stop, the Assembly Song begins: first the 150 Psalms, then Service Music, beginning with a Kyrie at #151 and ending with the Great Litany at #238, then Hymns and National Songs, #239–893. The Additional Resources at the end of the book include a Daily Lectionary, notes on Scripture and Worship, the Small Catechism of Martin Luther, and various indexes. The important Introduction and General Notes on pages 6–9 can be read. The Leaders Edition, with yet further expansions, resources, and Notes on the Services, offers support for the congregation’s use of the book itself. The whole complex of materials is ready to be studied, understood, and used.

This book, *The Sunday Assembly*, is about that deep-red resource as it may come to be employed in your congregation, especially on Sunday, but also at other times when you are gathered. We will explore the contents of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (AE, for assembly/pew edition) and its Leaders Edition (LE), with an accent on the materials for the Holy Communion and for the related Service of the Word. In this volume we seek to engage readers about the ways those services in particular may be used by worshipping communities. This chapter and the three immediately following are introductory. Chapter 2 is about the centrality of the Holy Communion in Lutheran practice. Chapter 3 is about the basic structure of the service. Chapter 4 is about music and the arts in worship. Chapter 5 is about leaders in the assembly. In chapters 6–10 we examine each part of the liturgy, exploring its meanings and its options for actual practice. Additional volumes in this series address such topics as the relationship between *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and baptismal life, the church’s year and

daily prayer, helps for leading the church's song, and a variety of reference resources.

But while this book and the series are about the red book, in a larger sense, this book—especially in this chapter—is about the *title* of the red book. We need to think about worship that is evangelical and Lutheran in the present time. We need to think about how that worship may be taking place regularly in Sunday assemblies. And we need to think about how that worship is not only evangelical and Lutheran but also *ecumenical*—how it is related to what other Christians around the world are doing, as *all* of our worship is gathered by the Spirit into God's mission of life-giving mercy for the world.

Evangelical, Lutheran, Ecumenical

Evangelical Lutheran Worship is intended, in the first place, as a resource for communities of people in North America and the Caribbean to do worship that is both evangelical and Lutheran in this first part of the twenty-first century. Through formal denominational action, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* has been “commended for use” in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and “approved for use” and “commended . . . as its primary worship resource” in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. The book inherits much of the tradition and many of the insights that marked other worship books used before it among those churches and their predecessor bodies—especially *The Lutheran Hymnal* of 1941, *Service Book and Hymnal* of 1958, *Lutheran Book of Worship* of 1978, and the supplementary *With One Voice* of 1995. It is the result of a widely participatory process of reflection, composition, review, and editing that sought to inquire how those insights and that tradition might best be continued, refreshed, and enlarged now, in the practice of current Lutheran worshipping communities.

But the book intends also to welcome any community that wishes to use it. Its resources are not only evangelical and Lutheran, not confined to the church bodies that span the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean region. They are also ecumenical. By being faithfully Lutheran and evangelical, these resources also offer gifts that are deeply ecumenical and widely global in their resonance. Note that on the book's spine is a single word: *Worship*. That is all. Perhaps the book will be picked up by communities in other parts of the world. Perhaps it will assist gatherings that are not specifically called Lutheran. Certainly, it

will be used by assemblies—in homes and schools and hospitals, but also in large meetings—that are not formally constituted as congregations. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* seeks to be a resource for worship that is evangelical, Lutheran, and ecumenical, offering its assistance to any assembly that is interested in those characteristics.

But what are those characteristics? What is it to be evangelical? Or Lutheran? And what do we mean by ecumenical in this context?

Evangelical, Lutheran, Ecumenical

Worship can be called *evangelical* when it is centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ—the *evangel*, the good news of his life-giving death and resurrection—and when it is genuinely interested in continually welcoming people into this gospel. Currently, the word evangelical has a number of connotations throughout the world. American English has especially applied the word to those Christians who are inheritors of the practices of American frontier revivals, with their accent on experiences of emotional response, individual conversion, and individual salvation. “Evangelical” has come to be synonymous with this theological emphasis on personal decision, and even with certain political emphases that have come to be related to this individualism.

Lutherans generally do not use the word in this way. Rather than religious individualism, they mean by *evangelical* their own deep interest in communities that gather together around the gospel of Jesus Christ—around the gospel-books that tell the story of Jesus, around all the scriptures that bear witness to God’s judgment and mercy, around preaching that speaks God’s gift of forgiveness and life in Christ, and around the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper that proclaim and give this same gospel in visible and tangible ways. For Lutherans, it is the presence of these things that makes worship evangelical, not the quality of our response. Lutherans believe that the Holy Spirit brings people to gather around this gospel-gift, and—by enlivening the word and the sacraments, the “means of grace”—brings them to trust and believe in God again. Lutherans think that the people who gather are thus formed together by the Spirit to embody and give away to others the very gospel that they celebrate. Interestingly, in many other countries throughout the world and in many other languages, the Lutheran churches are usually called not by the name of Martin Luther, but by the word evangelical. For example, in Germany they

are the *evangelische Kirchen*, the evangelical churches—that is, churches that understand themselves to be centered in the gospel, the *euaggelion*, the *evangel*.

In any case, for Lutherans, worship is *evangelical* when—

- it is worship in word and sacrament,
- the gospel of Jesus Christ stands forth in clarity as a gift of God in that word and those sacraments, in preaching and singing, baptizing and forgiving and communing,
- everyone is welcome to this life-giving, faith-making gospel-gift, and
- the assembly is sent to bear witness to this gift in the world.

Evangelical worship, by this understanding, does not so much focus on what we do or decide as on what God has done, is doing, and will do. Evangelical worship knows that all people—young and old, insiders and outsiders, old-timers and newcomers alike—are in need of this gift, this word of forgiveness, this taste of mercy and life, bringing us again and again to faith. Lutherans hope that this gospel in word and sacraments and this open accessibility to all people mark their own gatherings for worship. But they rejoice whenever and wherever accessible, gospel-centered worship in word and sacraments is found. A community does not need to call itself Lutheran to be evangelical.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship intends to help worship be evangelical in exactly this sense. It serves best not simply as a resource for any kind of worship—but for worship that finds its center in the gospel of Jesus Christ. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship's* accents on—

- the word and the sacraments as the heart of worship;
 - the presence and gift of Jesus Christ in the assembly;
 - the need we all have for God's forgiveness and grace;
 - the importance of the preaching of God's word of law and gospel;
 - prayers that reflect the wideness of God's mercy for the whole world;
 - the normal practice of the holy communion every Sunday;
 - baptism enacted within the assembly and remembered with thanksgiving;
 - accessible, biblically-formed language that embraces all; and
 - the sending of the assembly in mission and witness
- are *evangelical* accents!

Evangelical, *Lutheran*, Ecumenical

These evangelical accents, however, are also classic *Lutheran* accents, for all the Lutheran churches understand themselves to be evangelical churches, whether or not that term is in their official title. More may be said about Lutheran worship, however. Lutherans confess that the God they trust and praise is a *triune* God. They believe that this God has created and continues to sustain all things. They believe that this same God has acted in Jesus Christ to save sinners and justify the ungodly, giving both the word and the sacraments so that the assembly that is called “the church” will be centered in Jesus Christ. And they believe that this same God has sent the Spirit to bring us all to faith through this word and these sacraments and so to bring us to faith-active-in-love, turned toward our neighbor and toward the whole world in its deepest needs.

Furthermore, Lutherans confess that the use of the gift of word and sacrament is what unites the church, rather than the required use of uniformly-practiced human ceremonies, whether new or old. Among Lutherans, pastors are appointed to serve this word and these sacraments in local assemblies. And Lutherans confess that the whole participating assembly—not just the clergy—makes up the church. These articles of Lutheran confession come to expression in worship. A Lutheran service of worship is not at its heart something we intend to do for God, but something we believe that God is doing for us and for the world. Faithful *Lutheran* worship is thus marked by—

- trinitarian faith;
- trust that God’s gift of the world is good and is to be cared for;
- the knowledge that all of us are sinners but that God has acted in Christ to save us;
- the reliable centrality of the word and sacraments that proclaim these things;
- a diversity of local ceremonial practice;
- a strong willingness to receive the patterns of worship that have been used by the church down through the ages;
- the use of song, richly varied in forms and genres, as one principal way that all the people are invited to participate in the whole service; and thus by
- a participating, singing assembly drawn together by the Spirit of Christ in the word and the sacraments and sent into the world to serve.

The word *assembly* recurs again and again in the pages of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. This too is a Lutheran accent, though not exclusively. The use of this word rehearses the basic Lutheran confession concerning the church: “It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one, holy Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the sacraments are administered according to the gospel” (Augsburg Confession 7:1).

More deeply, however, this usage recalls *biblical* language, namely the New Testament word for church—*ekklesia*, a called-out gathering, a new assembly around Christ like that around the word of God in Deuteronomy 18:16 (“on the day of the assembly”) or Nehemiah 8:2 (“Ezra brought the law before the assembly”). The usage also points to the communally active involvement of everyone who is so gathered and thus points to the remarkable paradox of any gathering for Christian worship: God acts here, but God acts on, in, and under our coming together as an assembly. Just so, the bread that we break is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16), given by God and not by us. Just so, the man Jesus whom we encounter is our God (John 20:28), coming toward us, full of grace and truth.

What is Lutheran worship? It is—

- a local and open assembly of people in need,
- gathered by the Holy Spirit
- to encounter God’s grace in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen one,
- given by God through word and sacraments,
- so that these people together might signify how much God loves the world,
- might themselves come again to faith in God,
- and might so turn in love and service to their neighbors.

In worship, God gives to us so that we might in turn give to the needy world. This idea is itself a gift, needed in the world.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship means to be a *Lutheran* book by—

- inviting us to be an assembly, actively gathered around word and sacraments;
- its very accent on song as a principal means of assembly participation;
- its strong expression of trinitarian faith;

- its invitation to the trust that God acts in the assembly of worship; and by
- its varied options for a local community to use for these central things.

The evangelical and Lutheran character of the book can be seen in yet other ways. The great tradition of Lutheran hymnody forms the backbone of its hymn collection, while the collection is also fleshed out with a diversity of song from around the world. The evangelical and Lutheran accent on baptism as a gift that gives us an identity and constitutes the church recurs again and again in the services, as in the very beginning of the Sunday services. The words at communion—that twice repeated “for you”—echo the assertions of the Small Catechism of Martin Luther (the Catechism itself is included in the book). The evangelical interest in sharing the gospel and the Lutheran interest in the well-being of the world are echoed by the missional accents of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. “Go in peace. Share the good news.” Or “Go in peace. Remember the poor.” These optional dismissals may conclude its Sunday services. And the important guiding reflections on word and sacrament, made by both the Canadian church and the U.S. church and adopted by their churchwide assemblies—the 1991 *Statement on Sacramental Practices* of the ELCIC and the 1997 statement on *The Use of the Means of Grace* of the ELCA (both printed in the appendixes of this book)—have functioned to shape much of the contents of the book. The very first words of the introduction in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* are drawn from *The Use of the Means of Grace* (Principle 1):

Jesus Christ is the living and abiding Word of God. By the power of the Spirit, this very Word of God, which is Jesus Christ, is read in the Scriptures, proclaimed in preaching, announced in the forgiveness of sins, eaten and drunk in the Holy Communion, and encountered in the bodily presence of the Christian community.

But there is even more. The Lutheran character of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* can also be seen in the many ways the book affirms and extends the worship renewal marked out by *Lutheran Book of*

Worship of 1978. That book came to be known for introducing many important characteristics into North American Lutheran worship, characteristics that built on deep Lutheran conviction and well-grounded Lutheran practice as well as on Lutheran commitment to ecumenical developments. Through *Lutheran Book of Worship*, a Lutheran version of the ecumenical three-year lectionary spread widely in North American congregations, becoming the practice of the overwhelming majority of them. Lay assisting ministers were given integral worship leadership roles—leading prayer and other appointed parts of the service, reading scripture, ministering communion, animating song. Still other emphases included the strong celebration of baptism and its regular remembrance, the recovery of psalm singing in the Sunday liturgy, the local composition of Sunday intercessions, the importance of the hymn of the day, the use of current English language forms marked by biblical images and by inclusive words for humankind, the use of ecumenically drafted texts for prayers many churches hold in common, notable examples of evangelical prayers of thanksgiving at the table, the use of a dismissal to service at the end of the liturgy, the recovery of the liturgies of Holy Week and the Vigil of Easter, the use of a light-service and a sung litany in Evening Prayer, the inclusion of Prayer at the Close of the Day among the daily prayer forms available in the congregation's book, the availability of psalm prayers to conclude any psalm used in daily prayer, the commemoration of Christian women and men throughout history who are models of faith, and a widening circle of world hymnody.

All these features and emphases continue to be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, sometimes with yet further development, sometimes with helpful redirection based on a generation of use. The three-year lectionary, for example, is now the ecumenically shared Revised Common Lectionary, revised partly with significant Lutheran input. The prayers we have in common now include the most recent ecumenical versions of the Nicene and Apostles' creeds, the dialogue of the great thanksgiving, and the canticles in daily prayer. The language of the services includes careful crafting of the ways we speak of God and of humankind. A service that includes musical portions in both English and Spanish is possible with this book. The collection of prayers at the table of the Lord has continued to grow. The list of matters for the preparation of local intercessions includes prayer for the well-being

of creation. The psalm prayers have been redrafted and refreshed. The services for Ash Wednesday, the Sunday of the Passion, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Vigil of Easter are now included in the assembly's book, not only in the Leaders Edition. So is a singing version of all of the psalms. The collection of psalm tones has been revised and expanded. The list of commemorated Christians from the past has been richly reframed. The hymn list draws widely from throughout the world, sometimes making one or more stanzas available in a great variety of original languages. And the evangelical Lutheran accents on lay assisting ministers, on the hymn of the day, on baptism, on sending to witness and service, and on accessible forms of daily prayer all continue in strength. The worship renewal that became familiar to many Lutherans through *Lutheran Book of Worship* is alive—continuing, changing, meeting new needs—in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

The visual art in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* is another evangelical and Lutheran feature that was present in a limited way in *Lutheran Book of Worship* but is now greatly enriched and integrated with the contents. Unlike some other Christians, Lutherans have never rejected the use of images to celebrate the gospel of Jesus and show forth both the goodness and the need of God's world. The very cover of the book carries a symbolic image of the cross as the tree of life, holding out leaves for the healing of the nations of the world (Rev. 22:2), for the healing of each person who comes into the assembly and picks up the book. It is as if in holding this book and its resources for an assembly around the gospel, we—in our deep need for healing—hold a handful of the leaves of the tree of life. This image is repeated throughout the book. The tree of life that is Jesus Christ and his gospel—the heart of any evangelical assembly—recurs in yet other forms (AE pp. 11, 245, 266, 333, 339), as do many other images: Christ and the disciples at Emmaus; the assembly itself, in realistic and more symbolic forms; a baptism in a great, cross-shaped font; people marking life passages; and several graphic symbols of the elements of worship. While these images are only printed in a book, they may invite you to look again at the images in the room that may now or could sometime in the future surround and interpret your assembly as it gathers around the gospel.

But Lutheran worship has one further characteristic, shared by *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. It is sometimes challenging and difficult. To plan and lead a service that is participatory and yet accentuates God's

activity and not ours takes hard work, considerable skill, self-criticism, communal trust, and a good deal of love on the part of an assembly's leaders. It also takes simple humility and trust in the God who acts in word and sacraments. Something like the same thing can be said of all of the other seemingly contradictory pairs that mark worship that is evangelical and Lutheran: worship that is centered yet welcoming, Lutheran but also ecumenical, local but more than local, traditional but also contemporary, faithfully biblical but honest to the current times, uniting but not required or compelled, free but reliable. It is easy to fall off on one side or the other of any of these important, balanced pairs. In the past, for example, Lutherans were often regarded as impossibly traditional and conservative, never trying anything new. Today, some congregations have fled from tradition, wanting to be marked only by the contemporary. Evangelical Lutheran worship, at its best, is both, finding the sources for authentic tradition and genuine contemporaneity in the gift of the gospel of Jesus Christ, set out today in the faithful word and the accessible sacraments. Some Lutheran Christians long for a central authority to issue the rules of worship that must be followed. Other Lutheran Christians refuse anything they did not create themselves. Neither approach will work. Both seem to assume that there's a single "right way." Instead, Lutherans confess that word and sacraments are the gifts from God that unite us—and they must be made the constantly renewed center of our gatherings by teaching and love, not constraint. The deep-red worship book will not automatically make all this work easier. The book itself will require study and work for us to know its contents, to perceive its reasons, to see its possibilities. But *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* is intended to be a significant resource in each local place for the balancing act that marks faithful worship that is evangelical and Lutheran.

Evangelical, Lutheran, Ecumenical

We have already seen that faithful Lutheran worship is, by the best definition, ecumenical. That is, from the start, Lutherans—evangelical Christians of the Lutheran Reformation—never intended to create new forms of worship but rather to try to ensure that the good, received forms of the church of the ages were always filled with the gospel. That initial stance has meant that the ongoing changes and reforms in worldwide ecumenical Christianity—the trinitarian

Christianity that has come to be called “catholic” in the broadest sense of that word—have also gained the attention of Lutherans. The winds of healthful change blowing through various Christian communions in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century influenced *Lutheran Book of Worship*. They are also found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Furthermore, Lutherans have hoped to urge other Christians to place the gospel in word and sacraments at the heart of their own assemblies. Shared with other Christians, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* can be such an encouragement, such a proposal.

In describing worship that is ecumenical today, these characteristics, all shared by *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* with wide numbers of Christian communities throughout the world, are worthy of mention:

- the shape of the Sunday service as gathering, word, meal, and sending;
- the recovery of the idea that in worship the assembly is central and active, God’s people receiving God’s gifts and responding with praise and thanksgiving;
- the ecumenical three-year lectionary and a related lectionary for daily prayer;
- the importance of preaching, intercessions, holy communion, and the ministry of the forgiveness of sins;
- the role of an ordained presiding minister;
- the importance of Sunday and the general shape of the church year;
- the recovery of gospel-focused patterns for thanksgiving at the Lord’s table;
- the recovery of the liturgies of the Three Days;
- the centrality of baptism for Christian identity, the celebration of baptism in the Sunday Assembly, and the recovery of a welcoming process for bringing people to the font;
- the shape of daily prayer, especially the recovered congregational forms of morning prayer, evening prayer, and night prayer;
- the texts and prayers held in common among the churches; and
- a long list of hymns shared with many other Christian communities.

But while we may recognize these ecumenical traits of the book, they will serve more profoundly if they actually lead local assemblies to an ecumenical practice. A local assembly, gathered around the gospel in word and sacraments, can long for signs of communion to be exchanged

with other such assemblies—in its own neighborhood and around the world. It can seriously and regularly pray for the health and renewal of other churches and their leaders. It can engage in the common work of witness and service together with other congregations. It can recognize and study together with others the shared lectionary and the shared liturgical pattern. It can even explore the possibility of a shared process of baptismal formation for people coming newly to Christian faith. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* can be a resource for such a vision.

But, in considering the current meaning of the title of the book, there remain yet other balancing acts. Worship that is evangelical and Lutheran must be ecumenical. It must also be both traditional and contemporary and both local and more-than-local. And this worship takes place on Sunday. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* means to put a book in the hands of the people that can be a resource for these things.

Traditional but Also Contemporary

Evangelical Lutheran Worship stands in the church's long tradition of handing on to contemporary assemblies both the worship of its forebears in the faith and the new songs and expressions of current practice. This is consistent with Martin Luther's own liturgical reforms and the earliest Lutheran practices. Luther retained the structure of the Western catholic form while adding contemporary adaptations. One of the most notable new developments that flourished during that time was encouragement for new musical expressions in familiar language. The emergence of the chorale as the primary congregational song of this period is evidence of that new practice. Luther encouraged poets and musicians to develop new resources and to publish them in hope of making worship accessible and understandable to all the people.

How far back does our own liturgical tradition reach? It reaches fully and deeply back to biblical roots, both Old and New Testaments. Beginning with the biblical witness, our liturgical texts combine words of scripture with other Christian texts to form the tapestry we now hear as the familiar prayers, responses, and songs of worship. For a look at many of the scriptural texts that ground Lutheran liturgy today, see pages AE 1155–1159. They outline the key foundational biblical passages for the services of Holy Communion and Holy Baptism. We can see how scripture weaves its way through the prayers we pray, the texts we say, and the songs we sing. Our worship is scriptural to the core.