



All Creation Sings

HYMNS IN OUR HANDS

An Adult Forum Outline for Congregations Adopting *All Creation Sings* in Print

To the Leader: Welcome! We are glad your congregation will be adopting print copies of *All Creation Sings*. Use this outline to plan an adult forum or other education time inviting your congregation to think about *printed* worship resources, including *All Creation Sings*—both the contents and what it feels like to hold a book in print versus reading its content in a worship folder/bulletin or on a screen. You will need a copy of *All Creation Sings* to lead this conversation. If possible, provide additional copies so that each table or small group can have at least one copy to review.

Opening Prayer and Introduction (5 minutes)

Open your gathering time with one of the prayers from *All Creation Sings*. We suggest using this one adapted from The Church's Ministries section.

O God, through the ages you have called from among your people those who will carry out the ministry of word and service in the church. Let your blessing rest on all who answer that call, especially poets, composers, musicians, and worship leaders. Give to them all faith to serve you with gladness; sustain them with a living hope; and kindle in them your love, so that they see in every neighbor the face of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Describe the purpose of this forum—your congregation will be purchasing copies of *All Creation Sings*, the worship supplement to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Your congregation may already be using the hymns, liturgies, prayers, and other content from *All Creation Sings* that is available through your SundaysandSeasons.com subscription. Maybe the content is all new to you! This adult forum time is designed to introduce your church community to the range of content in this purple-covered volume.

Questions to Get Started (15-20 minutes)

Spend a few minutes asking some of these questions. Depending on group size, you could ask the entire group to respond or invite small groups to form and share their answers.

- When you were a child (or if you are a young person now), what parts of the church did you love to explore? What books did you pick up in the library? What pews did you climb under?
- What are your first memories of using a hymnal in church? Share with the whole group or in your small group.
- Does anyone have a hymn number memorized for a song in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*? The blue-covered *With One Voice*? The green-covered *Lutheran Book of Worship*? If your congregation has used printed hymnals, take some time to see if anyone recalls specific hymns and their numbers.

- **Who is memorialized on name plates in hymnals?** Bring a collection of previous hymnals with name plates of saints in the church that folks might know and remember. Handling worship books with our loved ones named inside is a way of including the saints in worship.
- **What sorts of feelings or emotions come to the surface when I say the titles of these hymns?** Share some of these titles along with any hymns that may have significant meaning for your congregation: “Abide with me,” “Amazing grace,” “Lift high the cross,” “Jesus Christ is risen today,” “Ah, holy Jesus,” “O come, all ye faithful.” Music has such a direct connection to emotion. People in your assembled group may have specific and touching stories to share about specific songs and their associated emotions.
- **Have you ever sung a song that encouraged you to think about God in a different way? What was it? How has that image stuck with you?** You can share that *All Creation Sings* uses a variety of images for God in its songs and in the list that begins on page 268.
- **How can a printed book like *All Creation Sings* help our church provide these hymns, prayers, and songs for each other and visitors in a way that is different than content that is printed in bulletins or on a screen?** Invite conversation about how favorite hymns are something people can access whenever they need to by looking them up in a hymnal. By providing pew editions, your church invites everyone to browse and look up these hymns, read their words, and sing them. If they are just in bulletins or screens, no one has access to them once that Sunday is over.
- **If you walked into your worship space and had never been there before, what do you think you would learn about what this congregation believes and sings?**

What Happens When We Worship? (5 minutes)

Use your worship folder/bulletin to review the “Gathering, Word, Meal, Sending” order of worship, highlighting those parts where communal action is the primary activity. Point out how much of the order of worship is sung. Talk about why that is and how it benefits and builds up the community. This conversation can lead into talking about importance of communal song and pointing out the many features of *All Creation Sings* that are explored below.

Introducing All Creation Sings (30 minutes)

All Creation Sings includes 200 songs. Even though many are new-to-you songs, some are immediately accessible. Walk through some of the songs and plan to sing some. If you do not have enough print copies of *All Creation Sings* but subscribe to SundaysandSeasons.com, you can reprint songs or project them.

Familiar tunes: These are songs that have familiar tunes and are instantly usable for many congregations. The comfort of the familiar tune with different words means the congregation can confidently sing new texts that shape their faith.

- 922 When we are tested
- 938 Christ has risen while earth slumbers
- 944 O Spirit all-embracing
- 950 Oh, when the saints go marching in
- 951 Deep river
- 991 Go to the world
- 1000 God’s work, our hands
- 1040 Love has brought us here together
- 1049 Before the waters nourished earth
- 1050 Sometimes our only song is weeping
- 1064 Earth is full of wit and wisdom

Songs with refrains: Refrains make it easy for a congregation to ease into learning a song. A soloist or small group can sing the verses and indicate when the assembly should join in.

- 949 Keep your lamps trimmed and burning
- 1084 God, be the love to search and keep me
- 1043 Spirit, open my heart

Short ritual songs: The short, repetitive nature helps assemblies pick these up quickly. These short songs are great for communion or other times that involve movement.

- 918 Now is the time of grace
- 928 Pave the way with branches
- 967 This is Christ's body
- 968 Feed us with hunger for justice
- 970 We come now to your table
- 961 Come to the table
- 974 Listen to the word
- 981 All who are thirsty
- 982 Many will come
- 1011 Holy God

In addition to reviewing some of these songs and singing them together, you can also explore the two liturgical settings and when you might use them in your congregation. Settings 1 through 10 are found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and on SundaysandSeasons.com. Setting 11 begins on page 8 of ACS and is a bilingual liturgy in Spanish and English. The pew edition features side-by-side columns of Spanish and English text, allowing everyone to see both languages throughout the service. Setting 12 is a service for holy communion that begins on page 29 and offers options for evening worship. A service of word and prayer begins on page 42 and is followed by dozens of prayers (pages 46–55), thanksgivings (56–60), and resources for lament (61–66).

Resources in the back of the hymnal include more than one hundred scriptural images for God (see page 268) along with several indexes for looking up hymns by topic, source, tune, meter and first line/title.

Explore these resources for as long as time allows, sharing ideas for use in your context, and seeking feedback about how *All Creation Sings* would support your worship together. Throughout the exploration, emphasize how *All Creation Sings* (and other printed worship resources) in your pews/chairs help convey what your church believes, who you think God is, and who your congregation hopes to be in the world. A church with *All Creation Sings* in its worship space makes a theological statement to someone even if they never open it up.

When your time together ends, gather the group for the closing prayer.

Closing Prayer (1 minute)

Close your time together with this prayer from the Public Church section.

Mighty and merciful God, lover of justice and equity, you call us to support the weak, to help those who suffer, and to honor all people. By the power of your Holy Spirit, make us advocates for your justice and instruments of your peace, so that all may be reconciled in your beloved community; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.