


According to Rev. Michael Schultz, director of the WELS Hymnal Project, one of the most important criteria used for selecting hymns to be included in the next hymnal is the text. "There is one changeless truth that drives everything about our hymnal project, including the selection of hymns: letting God's forgiving love in Christ be proclaimed, heard, and sung," he says.

Since the Hymnody Committee first started meeting four years ago, committee members have reviewed words and music from all existing CW and CWS hymns, are going through hymns from dozens of other hymnals and online resources, and have received hundreds of submissions for new hymns. The 12-member committee also has reviewed usage statistics, conducted a "favorite hymns" survey, and worked with more than 125 congregations to field test an array of musical resources for six current *Christian Worship* hymns as well as six new hymns not currently found in WELS' published resources.

Schultz says the targeted release date for the pew edition of the new hymnal is Advent 2021.

A new nine-part series about hymns and their use in our congregations is starting with the July issue of *Forward in Christ*. Read the first article.


Learn more about the WELS Hymnal Project and review this month's list of hymns at welshymnal.com. 

NPH launches new website

Northwestern Publishing House (NPH), WELS' official publisher and Christian retailer, recently launched its new website at nph.net. The site was completely redesigned and reorganized for today's consumer.

The new site provides an enhanced customer experience through

- intuitive search and filtering capabilities plus easier navigation to help customers find what they are looking for more quickly;
- larger images and more information to assist customers in making purchase decisions;
- an efficient and convenient checkout;
- easy access to account information, order tracking, and order history; and
- a mobile-friendly design.

Other new features include the ability to create wish lists, see recommendations, and share information on books with others. Quick links are available so that customers can sign up to receive NPH news and special offers and get started with the EXTRA Rewards Program, through which NPH donates a percentage of a customer's purchases to a local church or school. 

TOGETHER



June 20, 2017

Rev. Jon Hein accepts call

Rev. Jon Hein recently announced that he has accepted the divine call to serve full time as the director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling (CCC). Hein will be relocating to the Milwaukee area later this summer and will be based at the WELS Center for Mission and Ministry in Waukesha, Wis.

Hein has served as the first director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling while also serving in a part-time role at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in Summerville, S.C. In his new call he will serve full time in his position as director for the commission; he will also replace Rev. Bryan Gerlach as the coordinator for all of the commissions that comprise Congregational Services (Evangelism, Worship, Adult Discipleship, Youth and Family Ministry, Christian Schools, Special Ministries). Additionally, he will serve as an advisory member of the Synodical Council.

The CCC was formed to assist congregations in the evaluation of their ministry programs. As a part of that process, the CCC is able to direct congregations to resources that will help to address needs in their congregations and to plan future ministry efforts.

In addition to building a network of counselors in every district and overseeing their work, Hein also has spent two years conducting a detailed study of demographic trends and ministry issues. The study has looked at the challenges facing our synod posed by demographic changes and cultural shifts. Hein's study, his evaluation, and the CCC's recommendations for addressing these challenges will be highlighted at this summer's synod convention.

We thank God for leading Hein to accept this new call and pray for God's blessings on the efforts of Hein and on all of the commissions of Congregational Services as they help strengthen and equip congregations throughout the synod.

Serving in Christ,
President Mark Schroeder 



To sign up for the e-mail version, visit wels.net/together.

Worship conference celebrates Lutheran worship

The WELS Commission on Worship hosted the 2017 National Conference on Worship Music and the Arts June 13–16 at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wis. More than 1,000 people attended the conference, which included a focus on Martin Luther's contributions to worship as part of the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Rachel Crites, the sole organist/pianist at Shepherd of the Hills, Anchorage, Alaska, is grateful that her congregation sponsored her conference registration and travel. She notes, "Being around other musicians is really a boost for me. I've attended the last four conferences. The last two have had a lot of sessions about the new hymnal, which have helped me understand how it will—or won't, in some cases—work for our small congregation so far away from the epicenter of WELS."

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, director of WELS Commission on Worship, says that the conference is planned with attendees like Crites in mind. "Attendees will gain some practical ideas and be challenged by fresh insights. But perhaps for most of us the conference is a triennial battery charge—an inspirational encouragement to return to parishes of any size and do our best."


This particular conference included

- morning and evening worship services;

- a plenary address by Rev. Michael Schultz, the director of the WELS Hymnal Project, who offered a Reformation perspective on worship;
- more than 50 breakout sessions;
- performances by WELS musicians in a wide variety of styles;
- a children's choir and high school honor choir;
- a collaborative art project that was displayed at the closing service; and
- a juried art exhibit.

For Dawn Torth, though, the highlight is always the same. "I love the worship services and to see the variety of things that can be done to praise God," says Torth, a choir director at St. John, Mukwonago, Wis., who attended her third worship conference this year. "At this conference, I particularly liked the chanting in worship, including the lessons. It really gave me new perspective on familiar verses."

Funding from Thrivent Financial made it possible for leadership teams from around the country to attend the conference.

To view the conference's opening festival concert or closing worship service, visit livestream.com/welslive. 

Showing Christ's love to spread the gospel

At its June 14, 2017, meeting, WELS Christian Aid and Relief approved humanitarian aid grants totaling \$327,475 for fiscal year

2017-18. These projects help WELS home and world missionaries reflect Christ's love to the people of their community and open doors to share the gospel. Major items include support for health clinics, borehole drilling to provide clean water, support for a women's skill center, home-based care for the chronically ill and dying, food assistance to the needy, adult literacy classes, food and nutrition for orphans and refugees, midwife training classes, and medical equipment.

Rev. Bob Hein, chairman of WELS Christian Aid and Relief, says, "What a blessing to use the gifts of God's people to help our missionaries build bridges for the gospel. Offering humanitarian aid is a great way to put Christ's love in action and create opportunities to tell precious souls about Jesus."

In Africa, Christian Aid and Relief will continue to assist various medical clinics and missions like the Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMP) in Malawi. CAMP operates four clinics that serve the Lutheran Church of Central Africa. In Zambia, funding will assist a home-based care program for the physical and spiritual care of the chronically ill and dying, as people there struggle with AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other terminal illnesses.

In Europe, funding will assist ministry programs that assist the needy and orphanages with food, clothing, Christian literature, clothing, and medicine in Russia, Albania, Ukraine, and Bulgaria. This type of assistance can open the door to sharing the good news of Jesus with the communities.

In total, aid will be reaching 16 different countries, providing food, water, education, medical care, and more. By partnering with WELS World and Home Missions, WELS missionaries, and congregations of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, these projects reflect Christ's love through acts of kindness to people in need and provides opportunities to share God's Word.

To learn more about WELS Christian Aid and Relief, visit wels.net/relief. 

Choosing hymns for the next hymnal

The WELS Hymnal Project wants your feedback as it works on finalizing which of the more than 700 hymns from *Christian Worship* (CW) and *Christian Worship: Supplement* (CWS) will be included in the new hymnal.

Every month the WELS Hymnal Project will post a selection of hymns online, indicating which hymns are slated to be kept and which are slated to be cut. You can view the monthly list at wels hymnal.com and, if you want, choose up to 10 hymns from the cut list that you would like to see kept in the new hymnal.

Currently, the Hymnody Committee has slated 470 hymns from CW and CWS to be included in the next hymnal. These selections will account for about two-thirds of the approximately 650 total hymns, with the remaining one-third consisting of hymns or hymn settings new to WELS.