


To learn more or purchase Year A of the Hymns for Life curriculum, visit online.nph.net/hymnsforlife or call 800-662-6022. Year B will be released in the summer of 2021, and Year C will be released in the summer of 2022. All three years of the curriculum have been developed to coincide seamlessly with the new Christian Worship, which will be released in 2021. 

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The importance of your Congregation Mission Offering

Fall is the time of year when most congregations begin to discuss and plan their budgets for the coming year. Ministry plans are developed, and then those plans are prayerfully adopted in keeping with the anticipated financial resources.


The ministry of a congregation is not limited to what is done locally. Some congregations are members of federations that support Lutheran high schools; others cooperate with neighboring congregations to carry out important joint ministries nearby. And, since our congregations are members of a synod, they also recognize that they join with all the other congregations of the synod to carry out ministry together that individual congregations could not easily do alone.

Fall is also the time when synod administrators are developing the synod's ministry financial plan (budget) for the next two years. Like the budget in your congregation, the ministry financial plan is much more than a list of line items with dollar amounts attached. More accurately, it is a description of the synod's plan for ministry, along with the resources needed to carry it out. The plan is based on careful estimates of the financial resources that, God willing, will be available from all sources. Those sources include gifts from individuals, grants from foundations, bequests, and income from investments. But the most important source of financial support comes from congregations like yours through what we call Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO). Congregations throughout the synod inform synod planners what they intend to send as their gift to support our work together.

Your congregation's mission offering is used to operate our system of ministerial education, where young people are trained to serve as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers in congregations like yours. Your gifts to the synod train national pastors in our rapidly growing sister synods in Malawi, Zambia, Ethiopia, and Kenya. Your support enables us to share the gospel with hundreds of thousands of people in Latin America through modern communication tools and helps to operate orphanages in India where hundreds of children learn to know their Savior. Your gifts of love and faith provide needed assistance to sister church bodies like the Ukrainian Lutheran Church as they face huge challenges. Your offerings enable WELS to establish and support home missions in places like Houston, Texas, and to enable campus ministries to serve young people at many different universities. Your generous gifts support the work of WELS Congregational Services, which provides resources and advice to congregations as they carry out their local ministries. And, yes, you provide the financial means for the less exciting but necessary administration and structure

that support all the ministry we do. These are only a few of the many ways in which your mission offerings are used.

As your congregation decides what its Congregation Mission Offering will be, don't just think of the dollars. Think of the faces of the people around the world whose lives and eternities will be changed by the power of the saving gospel. Be a voice that advocates for generous support of this work. Talk to your congregational leaders and with your fellow members. And pray that God will continue to bless the work we do together in his name.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder 

ALHS Online starts 10th year of online education

This fall, ALHS Online (Association of Lutheran High Schools Online) entered its 10th year of offering online classes.

ALHS Online started as a collaborative effort of the WELS Association of Lutheran High Schools to offer high quality online courses to expand the course offerings of WELS high schools. Enrollment and class offerings have increased every year, from an average of 30 students per semester and 5 courses in the 2011-12 school year to more than 300 students and 28 courses per semester in the 2020-21 school year.

These courses provide supplemental educational opportunities for students, especially from WELS' smaller high schools. Ms. Micayla Bork, a sophomore at Wisconsin Lutheran College, took several courses through ALHS Online that were not offered at her high school, Apostles Lutheran High School, San Jose, Calif. "What I appreciated most about these courses are the important life skills they taught me," she says. "Not only did I learn the material, but I learned


how to be successful in an online class. Overall, they really prepared me for college."

Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School (MVL), New Ulm, Minn., is the largest yearly user of the program, with between 40 and 50 students a semester taking online courses. "The teachers from ALHS Online really go above and beyond to try to meet the needs of the kids," says Dr. Tim Plath, MVL principal and also one of the founding members of ALHS Online. Besides paying for the classes for its students, MVL provides time during the school day for online learning. Plath says students take a variety of the courses offered, with AP Psychology and AP U.S. History being especially popular.

Since its inception, ALHS Online also has added math and foreign language courses for seventh and eighth grade students (students from 32 Lutheran elementary schools are taking courses this year) and a four-year high school religion curriculum.

ALHS Online was recently accredited by the Middle States Association as a learning service provider. Dr. James Grunwald, superintendent of ALHS Online, says that besides being a good

peer review for the organization, accreditation "gives the parents of the students who we work with the assurance that we have high quality teachers and educational programs."

Learn more at alhs.org 

Hymns for Life: preserving a priceless spiritual treasure

For many Christians, hymns are woven into the fabric of our faith lives. "Jesus Loves Me" may be the first song we learn as a toddler; "Amazing Grace" may be the last song that passes our lips before Jesus carries us home. Hymns have the power to convict and comfort, to instruct and inspire. And for many, a beloved hymn may be a memory that lingers when others are stolen by age or disease.

In 2012, the WELS Commission on Worship discussed the importance of preserving our rich hymn heritage—ensuring that the next generation of believers doesn't lose this priceless spiritual treasure. In response, the Hymns for Life Committee was established to craft a three-year hymnology curriculum for WELS teachers to use in their primary, middle, and upper grade classrooms. Content from the curriculum can also be incorporated into Sunday school programs.

"The Hymns for Life curriculum is designed to impress the biblical truths expressed in hymns on the hearts and minds of young believers," says Mr. Jeremy Bakken, publishing editor of the project. The title of the curriculum sums it up simply: hymns learned in childhood will stay with children for an entire lifetime. Bakken continues,

"Our prayer is that students will appreciate these hymns and recall their spiritual truths in every stage of life."

The curriculum helps students learn from and appreciate all components of a hymn: from its scriptural truths to the poetry of its language to the joy and beauty of its music.

Mr. Kevin Bode, teacher and music director at Emmanuel Lutheran School, Tempe, Ariz., is the curriculum development chair of the Hymns for Life Committee. As a teacher, he understands the need to connect young believers with hymns: "This curriculum is so important because hymns are a powerful blessing God has given us. They keep us close to him amidst all the chaos and evil around us."

In fact, Bode has put the curriculum into practice in his own classroom. Each week, he introduces students to the content of a hymn, which is then sung each day. Once students are comfortable with the melody, Bode adds musical variations or physical movements to bring out the joy of the music: "They are simple to do, keep the hymn fresh, and students find them fun to do," he adds.

According to Bode, two powerful elements come together in the Hymns for Life curriculum: music and biblical teachings. "Music moves the soul and has a way of touching our emotions, and we want to give students the chance to experience this. And we know the power of biblical truths and the words of Jesus. Hymn lyrics remind students what God has already done for them, is doing right now, and will continue to do for them until they are safe in his arms."