Using *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* in a Contemporary Setting

Evangelical Lutheran Worship is designed for use in many different ministry settings and congregational contexts. Our unity in Christ is reflected in our gathering around the Word and the sacraments – the means of grace. Still, local worship practice among Lutherans in North America is increasingly varied. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* celebrates our unity in ways that support variety.

> *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* continues to emphasize that "freedom and flexibility in worship is a Lutheran inheritance, and there is room for ample variety in ceremony, music, and liturgical form" (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, Introduction). And, through its design and through a variety of interpretive materials herein, it seeks to make more transparent the principle of fostering unity without imposing uniformity. — *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Introduction

Why use this new resource?

Evangelical Lutheran Worship goes beyond *Lutheran Book of Worship* and its predecessors in emphasizing freedom and flexibility in worship. It still draws from historic sources, features approaches to worship that have time-tested value for enhancing participation, and uses carefully crafted language and music. By design, it provides for local adaptation which may benefit communities of faith that use contemporary worship models. Contemporary worship leaders, praise teams, pastors who develop sermon series', and others will find helpful insights and guidance within this new resource.

Whether in a contemporary or traditional setting, people are called to worship, confess sins, and receive the promise of forgiveness. In all Christian assemblies we read from the Bible and encounter Christ Jesus in preaching. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are central to every worshiping community. Having undergone a rigorous theological and liturgical review, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* presents a rich treasury of resources that supports both the best of our inherited tradition and our shared mission of reaching beyond where we may have reached before. This new resource, and many of the anticipated resources that will be developed to surround and support it, builds on practices that have stood the test of time even as it encourages freedom and creativity in bringing faith to expression.

Local use of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, either in print or electronic form, provides a reminder and a sign that each local congregation or worshiping community is connected to the church of Christ in all places.

Patterns for worship

Most of the services in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* are introduced with a description. These descriptions are beneficial for teaching the central components of worship to all who gather and for reminding worship leaders what we are about. The descriptions are not prescriptive. Rather than delineating how things should be done, they open up the meaning of the actions of worship.

Descriptions are followed by an outline or shape of the worship. These descriptive frameworks are especially helpful for local adaptation. They identify essential elements of Christian worship while providing a "window" into the ways that worship is often enriched or enhanced. More than some of the specific texts included in the services themselves, these patterns for worship serve as helpful guides.

An increasing number of churches that follow contemporary worship models are rethinking the form or structure for local worship services, looking for imaginative ways to make worship more balanced and meaningful. There is great value in remembering and following the pattern for Christian worship presented in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. The biblically informed pattern of Gathering, Word, Meal, and Sending provides a foundation for imaginative expression. The gathering itself of the community, the word proclaimed and received, the meal shared, and the sending into the world—all of this is God's mission and supports God's mission in the world.

The framework for the service of Holy Communion (see pages 91-93 of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* pew edition) presents the central elements of the service in bold type with primary emphasis on the proclamation of the word and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In both the gathering and sending, many options are available. Consider this description associated with the Gathering Song:

> *The time of gathering song may be brief or extended, and may include one or more of the following: hymns, psalms, a Kyrie, a canticle of praise. During this time, the presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.*

This is a place in the worship where a carefully planned medley or set of contemporary songs may involve and surround God's people as worship begins. In and around this time of singing, which may be led by a song leader or praise team, the greeting and the prayer of the day can find a natural place.

The key in planning is to anticipate what choices are likely to involve the whole assembly in worship.

Freedom of expression

Evangelical Lutheran Worship supports leadership in a variety of styles. Some leaders may read word for word from a printed text, others may lead from a prepared outline, while others may speak extemporaneously. In whatever way you lead worship, care and time should be given to preparation. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* honors the practice of using "these or similar words." Crafting an original prayer or adapting a text from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* takes seriously the importance of what the worshipers receive or hear. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* provides assistance with rubrics throughout the services which are designed to draw the people into the action. Attention to those descriptive rubrics is beneficial to leaders whose leadership suggests thoughtful spontaneity. The pattern for the Prayers of Intercession in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (see pages 127-128) provides additional helpful guidance. Creativity and imagination should be used in gathering up the assembly in prayer, attending to a variety of petitions:

Prayers reflect the wideness of God's mercy for the whole world—
for the church universal, its ministry, and the mission of the gospel;
for the well-being of creation;
for peace and justice in the world, the nations and those in authority, the community;
for the poor, oppressed, sick, bereaved, lonely;
for all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit;
for the congregation, and for special concerns.
Additional prayers may come from the assembly.
Prayers of thanksgiving for the faithful departed may include those who recently have died and those commemorated on the church's calendar.

Learning varied ways to conclude prayer petitions serves the needs of worship communities regardless of style.

Each portion of the prayers concludes with these or similar words.

Lord, in your mercy,	*or*	. . . let us pray.	*or*	Hear us, O God.
hear our prayer.		**Have mercy, O God.**		**Your mercy is great.**

The artwork in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* is intentionally provocative, in that it seeks to encourage reflection on the action of worship. At the same time it reminds us that worship involves all of our senses, pushing us to remember that the incorporation of art, media, drama, dance, music, gesture, and movement can enhance worship when contributing to the clear proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. Upcoming resources in the unfolding family of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* materials will assist worship leaders and preachers in the shared task of proclamation in their particular context.

Making the most of technology

Evangelical Lutheran Worship is both a book and a set of electronic and web resources. While many churches will use the book along with printed bulletins or worship folders, text, music, and images for projection are provided on CD-ROM and as part of the worship planning tool, www.sundaysandseasons.com. Additional media art resources will be available in the near future.

Music

Evangelical Lutheran Worship contains over 750 hymns, songs, and service music in a collection that reflects the wide diversity of music sung in ELCA and ELCIC congregations. Think of this collection as a core—music in a variety of musical styles and languages that our Lutheran churches share. However, no book can contain all the music every Lutheran congregation desires for worship. You may choose to use other resources along with *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, such as *This Far by Faith*, *Worship and Praise Songbook*, and other resources available from Augsburg Fortress or from a variety of other publishers. While hymn and song arrangements in a contemporary style will follow in future publications and electronic resources, many local musicians are capable of bringing the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* collection to expression in ways that engage and even excite worshipers in contemporary worship settings.

This is but a beginning of the various ways that *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and the emerging resources that will surround it might be seen as beneficial to those who worship in more contemporary forms. Local creativity and experimentation will undoubtedly lead to the discovering of new and helpful ways to worship together.

To offer additional ideas and to watch for new ways to think about and use *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, visit www.elca.org/worship.

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