



Introduction

ReClaim: Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home was born out of an awareness that the clarity of Martin Luther's understanding of the worship service was being lost in the pressure to be ecumenical. In recent decades, Lutheran liturgies have come in line with the liturgical revival of Vatican II in the 1960s. While these efforts to be ecumenical are laudable, Luther's teaching that the center of the Christian worship service is what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, the proclamation of the gospel, has not been as clearly presented as it was in his liturgy.

This hymnal holds to what is sound and authentic. "Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass," reads Article XXIV of the Augsburg Confession. "Almost all the customary ceremonies are also retained." Church orders at the time of the Reformation cherished liturgical treasures from the past: finely constructed collect prayers from the Roman rhetorical schools, the fourth-century Nicene Creed, at home in the liturgy since the twelfth century, as well as the *Gloria in Excelsis*, the queen of all Christian hymns.

The liturgy from Martin Luther's era first appeared in English in the 1888 *Common Service*, compiled according

to "the consensus of the pure Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century." For Lutherans, church happens when people gather around the Word. The primary thrust of the service should be proclamation: the sermon, the sacraments, the reading of Scripture, confession and absolution, and the hymns. When Martin Luther worked on the various orders for the weekly Christian service along with baptism, weddings, and funerals, he sought to remove any hint that what we brought to worship, except our repentant hearts, should be celebrated.

Eversince Henry Melchior Muhlenburg, the great American Lutheran patriarch, dreamed that Lutherans in the United States of America could become "one church with one book," Lutherans have tried to realize his dream. Prepared by a committee of Eastern Lutherans who consulted the best evangelical services of the sixteenth century in Germany, the 1888 *Common Service* became the most widely used service among American Lutherans in the twentieth century.

To remain faithful to that witness, we have chosen to update the language and music of the *Common Service* for those Lutherans who desire a faithful evangelical order of service.

Thus the version of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion, contained in this resource is an updated version of the oldest Lutheran service from Luther's time, cleansed of the Eucharistic prayer as well as any notion of the paschal mystery in which we participate in the death of Christ—and therefore in the atonement. There is no "bringing of the gifts" and no ceremony around the offering. The service does have a clear exhortation to the communicants that both binds and looses the sinner according to Jesus' command. While the music of worship can be varied, as we show in our three musical settings of the service, in folk style, jazz, and traditional chant, we believe that the words in the liturgy are more important than the music and should be the same in every setting.

In that same spirit of being faithful to our Lutheran confessions, the committee has prepared an order for baptism that returns to a clear focus on what Scripture has to say about it. We give little attention to the water of baptism, as is popular in some circles. We affirm the response to the question in Luther's Small Catechism, "How can water do such great things? It is not the water that does these things, but the Word of God connected with the water."

We do not include a prayer for the Holy Spirit to come on the one baptized, but proclaim that the Holy Spirit comes by God's own Word and promise. We have restored the promises of the parents and sponsors to that of raising children in the Lutheran faith using the Bible and the catechism. We have

also restored the solemn promise of the sponsors to see to the spiritual nurture of the child, no matter what happens to the parents.

Likewise, the order for a wedding returns to a focus on Scripture and what it has to say to those about to marry. It includes a strong emphasis on the love of a man and woman for each other as they publicly declare before God and the gathered community their promise to live faithfully with each other. These promises help to establish more stable and Christian homes in our midst. Because the service of marriage in The Book of Common Prayer is most commonly known and remembered in the English-speaking world, we have adapted that service with its traditional vows for our service.

The order for a funeral has been restored to the traditional reading of Scripture, especially what is known as the Way of Salvation, so that the living can hear the good news of salvation and be soberly admonished to take care for their own souls. There are no prayers for the dead, no celebration of the life of the deceased, only one place for the eulogy and a strong urging that the sermon be the gospel of Jesus Christ, not further eulogizing of the dead. These words and hymns are most comforting to mourners who at the time of the funeral are looking for the Word of God.

We included only the Evening Prayer (Vespers) service in the book because it is the most commonly used of the daily prayer offices in congregational life. We have included a General Order for Prayer, which can be used as a devotional aid

in a variety of small group settings, encouraging such small groups to make use of reflection on Scripture and Martin Luther's Small Catechism, which is also provided in this resource.

In addition, we have provided an evangelical liturgy for confirmation along with orders for public and private confession. Selected Psalms, pointed for use in public worship, are also an invaluable part of the hymnal. And we are using the English Standard Version (ESV) translation of the Bible, which we consider to be faithful and eloquent for reading aloud in public services.

This book includes services that help pastors and congregations raise up their children in the evangelical Lutheran faith. Consistent use of these services helps shape people in their faith. As the ancient saying says, "the way you pray becomes the way you believe." So we have worked to provide services in language that will be memorable and eloquent. For Lutherans, however, the sermon and the hymns are the two parts of the service where worship planners are called upon to be creative, providing the congregation with appropriate and seasonal proclamation and instruction. Collect prayers as well as suggestions for supplementary intercessory prayers are available on our website (www.reclaimresources.org).

One will observe that the selection of hymns in this resource is smaller than in many contemporary hymnals. This is for two reasons. First, a common complaint about hymnals is that they are too cumbersome. For this reason we have sought to create a resource that

is physically lightweight while heavy in content. Second, it is our conviction that it is better for a congregation to know a smaller number of classic hymns well than to possess only passing familiarity with a great number of hymns. Repetition is how one learns hymns, so we suggest that congregations and families use these hymns throughout the year, repeating them frequently so they can be memorized. Many of the hymns we have included are among those considered by American Lutherans to be favorites, and these hymns come from a wide variety of times and places in the great tradition of our Christian faith. We have also included an index of miscellaneous information about the hymns in this resource, hoping that this information will enhance peoples' appreciation of these treasures.

As already noted, *ReClaim: Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home* also includes Luther's Small Catechism for teaching in the church and use in the home during the week. It has been the central teaching document of Lutherans over the ages, and it has helped give Lutherans a shelter in the storms of life. It can be used for daily devotions with the family, personal study, and in church on Sunday mornings. With its simple language and pure tone, it is a precious treasure. We can do no better for our children than to teach it to them. We suggest families sing a hymn, read some brief Scripture, repeat a portion of the catechism, and pray one of the prayers of Martin Luther for morning, meals, and evening every day or as frequently as possible in their busy lives.

ReClaim: Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home was completed because of the support of many devoted and dedicated friends for whom we praise God. Observing the hard work of the committee was a duty and delight that has shown how fundamental the way we worship is in the shaping of our faith and life around the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are grateful to all the people who gave of themselves unstintingly as the project proceeded. It is our hope and prayer that this resource will be a

blessing to the Church and aid in the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ for many years to come.

Gracia Grindal



Editor-in-Chief

On behalf of the ReClaim Resources
Board of Directors

