

VIVA VOX

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by Ralph Gehrke & Kurt Eggert

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THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST: "THE LIVING VOICE"

This is the second of a contemplated series of circular letters which will be sent out to you from time to time. The general purpose is to help stimulate us pastors and church musicians to fresh efforts to make musical parts of our Sunday service ever more and more a living, gospel-centered experience.

Specifically, these letters are to tie in with our recently begun church music seminars – bringing you a review of discussions of the last meeting, and information about the next session, plus suggestions for future meetings.

Also, it is our deep and sincere desire that these letters, like the seminars, be an open forum, so that by a free and frank exchange of ideas we may help and edify one another.

We therefore invite any and all receiving these letters to contribute. Please send your questions, comments on the seminar discussions, ideas, practical suggestions, and pro or con reactions to either of the undersigned editors of "Viva Vox."

Ralph Gerhke

Kurt Eggert

IN THIS ISSUE...

THE MEETING AT TRINITY - A summary of our discussions at our last meeting of the Seminar at Watertown.

SERVICE GUIDE for the Sundays of the Church Year, from Trinity XIX to the end of the Christmas Season.

POSSESSING OUR HERITAGE - Suggestions for helping congregations to an active use of the better Lutheran chorales.

MUSINGS - A page of comments and suggestions for the future. We invite you to contribute to this page...

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - Information about the Church Music Seminar, its nature and purpose, etc.

NEXT MUSIC SEMINAR

Reformation Hymn Festival for Choirs – Zion Lutheran Church, Columbus, WI. Begins at 2:30 p.m. Plan to attend.

Program:

Hymn-sing of Lutheran Chorales
Three extended chorales of J.S. Bach (organ and male octet)
Reformation Talk: The Hymn and the Reformation Choir – 1955
Practical Demonstration: Singing the Vesper Psalmody
Reformation Vesper Service
Luncheon

Reformation Sunday, October 30th

MUSIC MUSINGS

MUSIC WORKSHOP?

We wonder how many would be interested in a Church Music Workshop, to be held perhaps on a weekend during the school year. The idea would be to try to give help in solving some of the more practical problems of organists and choirmasters in particular.

Perhaps the biggest single problem of the church organist and choir director is to find the right music for the services. He is often at a loss to find music that is 1) playable (or singable), proper and edifying for worship, and 2) fitting for the particular Sunday of the church year. At such a workshop as here suggested, we might sing through some music, hear some played, and look through additional music for ourselves. Thus we could plan our service music for at least several seasons of the church year.

Time might be given for exchange of ideas on choir rehearsals, or some might be interested in elementary pointers on conducting. Others might welcome a discussion of the peculiar problems facing the organist who plays one of the electronic organs, etc.

We think there are very many ways in which such a weekend workshop could be made interesting and valuable to us. Further planning, however, depends on YOU! If you feel this would be a worthwhile thing, please write to your editors and give us your reaction and suggestions as to what kind of program you would like to see, as well as your thinking as to the best time to hold it. If it were held during the school year, we could perhaps meet on a Friday evening for a supper and session thereafter, and continue all day Saturday, closing with a musical program on Saturday evening.

BOOKS

Every pastor, organist, and choirmaster should own or at least read "The Practice of Sacred Music" by Prof. Carl Halter. (This book was referred to in the last issue of "Viva Vox" but with title wrongly quoted.) The book is brief, practical, and above all looks at our church music from the right point of view. Book like this are exceedingly rare. There are chapters on the meaning of our worship, on playing the liturgy and hymns, on the choice of choir and organ music, and an especially valuable chapter on organ registration and design. – 95 pages; \$2.50. Available from NPH.

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of VIVA VOX will bring you a copy of a complete Narrative Service, that is, a service in which brief explanations of the different parts of the liturgy are

given as the service progresses. Perhaps you care to try such a narrative service in your congregation, using either the service as given in VIVA VOX or an adaptation of it or your own.

Included in the next issue will also be the service guide for the remaining Sundays of the church year – Epiphany to Trinity XVIII. Your comments on this would also be welcome. Would you like also comments on the Introit, Gradual, Collect for each Sunday? Suggestions for Preludes according to various grades of difficulty? What will help you?

It was on the rainy afternoon of the Second Sunday after Easter that our second “Church Music Seminar” was held in beautiful, new Trinity, in Watertown, WI. Our meeting was opened with a prayer by the pastor, the Rev. Kurt Timmel, who also served as the chairman.

The first topic for discussion was the question: How do the Propers (Introits, Graduals, etc.) contribute to our Sunday worship? The first of three panelists, the Rev. Emil Toepel of Sun Prairie, pointed out that the Propers are the variable part of the liturgy (in contrast to those parts which are the same every Sunday and are called “The Ordinary”: the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo and Sanctus). The function of the Propers, he stated, is to re-echo, point up, and elaborate the message of the Gospel for the Day. Taking them up one by one, he briefly explained the nature and function of each: Introit, Collect, Epistle, Gradual, Gospel, Sermon, and Proper Preface.

Pastor Henry Gieschen of Fort Atkinson next dealt with a knotty problem in our understanding of the Propers: using as specific examples of the Introits and Graduals for the Second and Third Sundays after Easter, he discussed the relation of the Introits and Graduals to the Gospels for those Sundays. He began his remarks with an expression of appreciation for the excellent use of an Introit taken from a penitential psalm that was sung in a chaste and clear manner by an unseen cantor at the opening service of the Synodical Conference Convention at Chicago. He also expressed his own long-time admiration of “die schoenen Antiphonen” (Kliefoth) in the old German Agenda. He declared that he was, however, unable to point out any very evident connection between the Gospel for the Second Sunday after Easter (John 10, “The Good Shepherd”) and the Introit taken from Psalm 33.

(Introit: The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord: by the word of the Lord were the heavens made.

Ps. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright, Glory be to the Father, etc.) – Hymnal p. 69

Pastor Gieschen felt that it would have been better if the Shepherd Psalm (Ps. 23) had been used in this Introit. The Gradual for that Sunday does have a very evident connection with the Gospel, containing even a quotation from it.

(Gradual: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

*V. Then was the Lord Jesus known of the disciples in the breaking of bread.
Hallelujah!*

*V. I am the Good Shepherd: and know my sheep and am known of mine.
Hallelujah!) – Hymnal p. 70*

The connection between the Gospel for the Third Sunday after Easter (John 16 – the disciples' sorrow at their separation from the Lord and their rejoicing at their permanent reunion with him) and the verses from Psalm 66 used in the Introit for that Sunday is not an immediately apparent connection. Hence Pastor Gieschen felt that the antiphons of the German agenda for these Sundays were preferable because they are more easily understandable.

*In the German agenda the first antiphon for the Third Sunday after Easter points to and prepares us for the Epistle Lesson (rather than the Gospel):
“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Points to I Peter 2:11-20)*

The Gradual points to and prepares for the Gospel: “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee... saith the Lord thy Redeemer.” (Points to John 16:16-23)

The final antiphon of the liturgy harks back to and contains a brief summary of the Gospel Lesson: “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

In the discussion that followed Pastor Gieschen's presentation it was pointed out that the connection between the Propers in our hymnal and the Gospel for the Day is not always to be seen on the surface, but that often there is only a correspondence in tone or in general theme. Sometimes a little study of the whole psalm from which the Introit is taken will make the connection between the Gospel for the Day and the Introit understandable.

“Perhaps a practice of the Old Lutheran Church holds a partial solution to our problems of making the Propers meaningful to us worshipers.” That was the point of another comment from the floor which described the practice of substituting for the Introit and Gradual hymns which paraphrased the entire psalm. We have some of these Introit- and Gradual-Songs in our hymnal: Luther's “A Mighty Fortress” for Psalm 46; and “May God Bestow on Us His Grace” for Psalm 67; Gramann's “My Soul, Now Bless Thy Maker” etc. At one time the Lutheran Church had a complete set of Gradual-hymns to take the place of the Gradual for each Sunday and to reflect the message of the Gospel for the Day. For instance:

First Sunday in Advent: "Savior of the Nations, Come"

Last Sunday of the Church Year: "Wake, Awake, For Night Is Flying"

The use of such Gradual-hymns between the Epistle and Gospel (perhaps sung alternately by choir and congregation) might well serve as a satisfying basis for our use of the Propers in the service, at least occasionally.

Discussion of these points led up to a practical demonstration by Pastor Kurt Eggert of "Using the Propers Musically in the Service." There are many ways of singing the Propers: They may be sung in unison, in barred chant, in harmonized settings by one of the old Lutheran masters, or in a metrical (hymn) version.

Rexographed sheets enabled us to follow carefully the tape recorded singing of the Sunday's Introit and Gradual by the choir of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Farmington. To fully appreciate this, one has to actually hear the Introits and Graduals as they were sung by the choir, first in unison and then in parts; and one also has to sing along, as we did. Thus we learned how this sort of singing of these Propers (mostly according to settings edited by Professor Buszin in his "The Introits" and "The Graduals for the Church Year" – CPH) can give a more living, devotional tone to our worship than the mere reading of them. Pastor Eggert also presented other examples of Graduals and Seasonal Sentences for choir use during the Lenten and Easter seasons. Thus we learned from firsthand participation how to use the Propers musically.

Perhaps all of our choirs and congregations are not ready to begin this use of the Introits and Graduals in their services (although this demonstration proved that it is possible even with a small choir). Nevertheless such a discussion has helped all of us to avoid using the Propers thoughtlessly as an empty form, but rather to study and appreciate them as real aids toward a living celebration of the great message of the Gospel on each Sunday.

The last part of the Seminar was occupied by a practical demonstration of the use of the psalms and their responsories. Prof. Hilton Oswald had gathered a group of eight Northwestern College volunteers to comprise a "schola" or "kleiner Kreis" which sang for us the musically-more-complex antiphons, and which also guided us in our singing of the Easter Psalm 118. The Antiphon, "The Lord Is Risen! Hallelujah! He is risen indeed. Hallelujah!" (which recurred again and again at appropriate points in the psalm) gave a wonderful Easter interpretation to the psalm. What was distinctive about Professor Oswald's carefully rexographed "Psalmody" was his judicious interspersing of appropriate verses of the Easter chorale "The Joyous Easter Day Is Here." These verses were sung later by all of us as our contribution to the psalmody in the Vesper Service that followed.

As is our custom, the Seminar closed with a Vesper Service in which the host pastor, Pastor K. Timmel, served as liturgist, Pastor I.G. Uetzmann as preacher, and

teacher Kurt Oswald as organist. The choir of Trinity congregation, under the direction of Teacher Hertha Sievert, sang an Easter anthem from the organ loft; the College boys sang their antiphons in the Psalmody from the transept; and all of us joined in singing the Psalm, the Chorales, and the regular Vesper liturgy. Our service was a celebration of God's gospel by various groups in the worshiping congregation – all of it reflecting and re-echoing the comforting Gospel for the Day: the Good Shepherd, who gave his life and rose again that we might be his sheep and be of his fold, both now and forever.

Finally, after arrangements had been made to meet on the next Reformation Sunday as the guests of Zion Congregation in Columbus, we adjourned to the basement where the choir of Trinity Church had prepared a very tasty luncheon and where we closed a profitable afternoon with good fellowship.

2 POSSESSING OUR HERITAGE

Suggestions for furthering congregational appreciation of the better Lutheran hymns

2

2.1 ANTIPHONAL SINGING

One of the most frequent suggestions at our church music seminars for furthering the appreciation of the better Lutheran hymns in our congregations has been the recommendation of antiphonal (alternate, responsive) singing between congregation and choir. Antiphonal singing of the hymns may be used whether the choir sings in harmony or unison, whether it is small or large, whether it is musically far-advanced or just beginning. This method of singing the chorales was the universal practice in the great age of Lutheran music, is again common in many parts of Germany today, and has even been used recently to great advantage in some of our own congregations.

What are the advantages of antiphonal singing of hymns?

1. It enables the congregation to learn the better hymns more easily (by alternate listening and singing);
2. It focuses attention on the text of the hymn;
3. It helps the choir feel its proper relationship to the congregation – a part of the worshipping congregation rather than a kind of outside group that is giving a performance to please an audience;
4. It enables a congregation to sing all verses of such a great chorale as “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice” without destroying the magnificent unity of its thought by cutting off after four or five verses;
5. It enables that part of the congregation that has been musically trained (the choir) to interpret the message of particular verses of the hymn in the wonderful settings of the old Lutheran masters (e.g. Bach’s excellent harmonization of verse six of “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice”).

2.2 HYMN-SINGS

Antiphonal singing alone, valuable as it is, will not, however, accomplish a revival in the use of the better Lutheran chorales. We must face the fact that the old church modes and the varied rhythm of many chorales pose more problems to the modern congregation than do the flattened-out melodies of a later date, even though in the end the congregation may learn to love the chorales much more because of their genuine musical verve and superior Gospel-preachment.

Though special song services for the purpose of learning three or four new hymns can be arranged on occasion, and though the meetings of various groups in the congregation offer opportunities for practicing the better chorales, something more is certainly needed. One of the most effective methods for cultivating an appreciation in the entire congregation is that of holding hymn-sings after the Sunday service at various times in the Church Year (e.g. during Advent in preparation for Christmas; in Pre-Lent in preparation for Lent; during the joyous Easter season; etc.).

Suggested length for such a hymn-sing is about ten minutes. It may begin immediately after the Benediction (before the postlude and the accompanying dispersing of the congregation). After a few brief, well-prepared words of introduction (concerning the basic thought of the text or interesting origin of the hymn, etc.), the choir may sing the entire hymn for the congregation, and then phrases of it (to lead the congregation). If the choir alternates with the congregation according to a pattern arranged in advance by the “director” (pastor, organist, choir-director, or anyone else qualified and called to do so), it will be surprising in how short a time the congregation can learn even otherwise difficult melodies – and that with joy and enthusiasm. The Easter sequence hymn “Christ Is Arisen” (TLH 187) is well within the reach of every congregation and can be sung for instance as a response to the Epistle Lesson by the whole congregation on every Sunday of the Easter season. Such a custom gives an Easter tone to the entire season which few other customs can give.

2.3 PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION

At our first seminar in Farmington, Pastor Kurt Eggert gave a practical demonstration of a hymn-sing, using the choir of Immanuel congregation to lead our seminar group in the alternate singing of hymn 247, “God the Father, Be Our Stay.” He pointed out that this is one of our finest but now unfortunately less sung Lutheran chorales – a hymn that asks in simple wise for “the big things in Christianity” (God’s help, forgiveness of sins, life, protection from the devil, courageous faith). He also pointed out the fine manner in which the sturdy melody fits this sturdy prayer of the Church Militant.

Lines 1-2 of this hymn correspond musically to lines 3-4; likewise lines 5-8 correspond to lines 9-12. Hence these are natural alternate parts, and so the choir sang lines 1-2, while we, as the “congregation”, sang in response lines 3-4; again the choir sang lines 5-8, while we responded with lines 9-12. Finally all joined together in the confident and jubilant ending of lines 13 and 14: “Amen, Amen, this be done; So sing we Hallelujah!” Another way of practicing this chorale might be to alternate between choir and congregation in every line (choir 1, cong 2, choir 3, cong 4, etc.) until both join together in the last two lines. If it began in this manner, a congregation would soon learn to sing and appreciate not only the melody but also the text of this great chorale.

3 STEPS TOWARD INTRODUCING ANTIPHONAL SINGING

3

In the ensuing discussion at Farmington as to what steps are to be taken in introducing antiphonal singing, it was pointed out that a genuine appreciation of and a love for the chorales and the Gospel they proclaim is the primary requisite. If such love and appreciation are present with the pastors and church musicians, then it will be fairly easy to lead the congregation in that direction. The practical problems will be solved. For instance, how shall the congregation be made aware of which verses of a given hymn it is to sing and which the choir? This can be done in the Sunday bulletin – the congregation soon learns to watch for this. The first times the pastor could simply announce it or point the people to the bulletin. Or the information could be placed directly on the hymn board if large enough. Simply the number of the hymn and under it the various verses the congregation is to sing. Possibly colored numbers could be used for those hymns to be sung antiphonally. After the custom of antiphonal singing is no longer strange in a congregation, no extra helps may be necessary. The congregation will know from the way the organ is stopped down at the end of a given verse that the choir is to sing the next alone.

The practical problems involved in introducing and using antiphonal singing are not great. A little effort will be well rewarded here.

4 QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR CHURCH MUSIC SEMINAR

4

What is our purpose?

Our general purpose, as we have stated it on the cover page, is to stimulate us pastors and church musicians to fresh efforts to make the musical parts of our Sunday service ever more and more a living, Gospel-centered experience.

Therefore, we are encouraging each other to examine, critically, our own Sunday service – our own pastoral preparations, our own choir music, our own organ playing, and the way in which our congregation is participating in the service.

Who belongs to the seminar?

Any pastor, choir director, or organist of our church who is interested in attending. We also welcome anyone else who would like to participate in discussions centering around church music and our worship.

Thus far, the members of the seminar number about sixty, coming mostly from the area surrounding Watertown. If you have not received an invitation to attend the meetings, or know of anyone else desiring an invitation, please contact one of the editors of this paper, and an invitation will be sent for the next meeting of the group.

Where are the seminars held?

We hope the group can continue to meet at a different church each time. Thus far Seminar meetings have been held at Immanuel's, Farmington, and at Trinity, Watertown. The next group meeting (with the choirs) will be at Zion's, Columbus (October 30th). We would welcome an invitation from some congregation for an afternoon a week or two after Easter.

How often does the seminar meet?

Opinions expressed so far seem to favor two meetings a year, one in fall, the other very shortly after Easter.

SERVICE GUIDE FOR THE SUNDAYS OF THE CHURCH YEAR

In the first issue of VIVA VOX a service guide was included for the Sundays from Easter through Pentecost. The following pages bring you Sunday summaries from the third part of the Trinity season through the Christmas-tide.

It is hoped that this guide will be of some use to busy pastors, organists and choir-masters in planning the variable parts of the service so as to keep them unified and in tune with the church year.

TRINITY III: THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SATAN

"Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

MICHAELMAS, SEPTEMBER 29TH

"God's Holy Angels"

"Are they (God's holy angels) not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14)

The Gospel: Matthew 18:1-11 (Jesus shows the divine power that protects his little ones)

The Epistle: Revelation 12:7-12a (The heavenly hosts win the victory)

At the turning points in history Michael, the protector of God's people, appears. The angels' battle against the powers of darkness is the other side of the coin from Christ's victory over Satan. As an echo to this battle there sounds forth in the heavenly world the song of victory: "The enemy is defeated through the blood of the Lamb!" On earth, however, the church must endure the attack of the wicked one, until his time comes.

Hymn of the Week: 254 Lord God, We All to Thee Give Praise

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY (FIRST SUNDAY AFTER MICHAELMAS)

"The healing of the paralytic"

"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved." (Jeremiah 17:14)

The Gospel: Matthew 9:1-8 (Jesus heals body and soul)

Jesus looks deeply; he sees the inner nature of a man; he sees it is ill and disturbed, but he also sees the people who are open and ready for his help. This help is the forgiveness of sins. He is the promised Son of Man who has power to make a new beginning and to bring everything back to order. This order reaches out even to the body of man and renews man from the bottom up.

Hymn of the Week: 569 O Lord, I Sing with Lips and Heart

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
(SECOND SUNDAY AFTER MICHAELMAS)

"The Lord's Supper"

"The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: 'The Lord knoweth them that are his', and, 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'"

The Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14 (The invitation to the royal marriage feast)

After God's call was despised by those who were first invited, the invitations go to those who might be thought unworthy. These are called unto the feast from the highways and byways of the world.

But whoever thinks that he can come as he is, without being changed, is like the man who takes his place at the festive board without a wedding garment – he falls victim to God's judgment.

Hymn of the Week: 324 Jesus Sinners Doth Receive or 260 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
(THIRD SUNDAY AFTER MICHAELMAS)

"Spiritual armor"

"If a man also strive for the mastery, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." (II Timothy 2:5)

The Gospel: John 4:47-54 (Jesus brings a nobleman to the true faith)

Christ's lordship over the troubles of this world is exalted and commanding. He saves from death, and quickens by his almighty Word alone. He has the power to say to the troubled father: "Go thy way; thy son liveth." The father trusts this promise and is enabled to see the fulfillment. Because this man's faith is based

not upon “signs and wonders”, but upon Christ’s Word alone, it is true and genuine faith which continues to work.

Hymn of the Week: 261 Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
(FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER MICHAELMAS)

“In debt to God”

“There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.” (Psalm 130:4)

The Gospel: Matthew 18:23-35 (The unmerciful servant)

You and the brother who has wronged you are both in great debt to God. You keep on living only because God bears with you in great longsuffering and even forgives you your debt. Because of this forgiveness God is to be feared: Whoever refuses forgiving mercy to his brother puts himself outside the circle of God’s grace and falls victim to his wrath.

Hymn of the Week: 321 O Faithful God, Thanks Be to Thee

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
(FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER MICHAELMAS)

“The Church in the world”

“The King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, to whom be honor and power everlasting!” (I Timothy 6:15f)

The Gospel: Matthew 22:15-22 (The tribute money; claims of the state)

The State has a certain claim on you; it serves you; give back to the State what belongs to it! But above all: Give back to God what belongs to God! He created you in his image, therefore carry his image upon you – give yourself as an offering to him. You are to give your whole self as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, for God alone has the total claim on all of you.

Hymn of the Week: 524 In Thee, Lord, Have I Put My Trust

FESTIVAL OF THE REFORMATION

“I am the Lord, thy God; thou shalt have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:2f)

The Gospel: John 2:13-22 (Christ cleansing and renewing the Church)

Christ is zealous for the sanctity of the temple and by his deed raises up for all time to come a meaningful “sign”: he will come as judge to a secularized church—piety that has degenerated into a racket, the bartering of pious self-aggrandizement, has no place in his church. The sign of his might: he makes himself the cornerstone of the New Temple. On this cornerstone we are built up by the Spirit to be God’s temple of living stones.

Hymn of the Week: 377 Salvation Unto Us Has Come

TRINITY IV: THE END-TIME; CHRISTIAN HOPE

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning.” (Luke 12:35)

— The End of the Church Year —

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY (SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER MICHAELMAS)

“Death’s conqueror”

“Give thanks unto the Father, who hath made us to be meet partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” (Colossians 1:12)

The Gospel: Matthew 9:18-26 (Jairus’ daughter raised; woman with the issue of blood healed)

Here two people are helped through faith. This faith is evoked and aroused by Christ, the Lord of Life. From him the powers of healing go forth; he recalls the life that has flown away. If such a thing happens in the realm of earthly life, how much greater will not the power of the risen Savior be in the world of death: “He that believeth in me hath eternal life.”

Hymn of the Week: 590 In the Midst of Earthly Life

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY (SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER MICHAELMAS)

“Signs of the End”

“He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” (Matthew 24:13)

The Gospel: Matthew 24:15-28

In history's last troublesome crises there will be no possibility of witnessing; flight will be the only alternative left; their witnessing will be finished. The surging flood of hatred against Christ will undermine what is godly and holy; false prophets will stir up the world and mislead it; the Antichrist will be in the holy place. But just then Christ's rulership breaks through. It comes like a bolt of lightning that flames across the whole wide heaven from east to west.

Hymn of the Week: 407 Farewell, I Gladly Bid Thee

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
(SECOND LAST SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR)

"The last judgment"

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." (II Corinthians 5:10)

The Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46 (Judgment Day)

Just as God's eye saw through Adam's hiding place, so nothing will remain hidden before the eyes of the World Judge; nothing will remain hidden in the twilight of uncertainty. Then it will be clear that at all times Christ has been the secret witness of every genuine deed of love and mercy, and also of every deed of unrighteousness and iniquity. It will be shown forth that Christ himself has met us in the people who received our aid.

Hymn of the Week: 611 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
(THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR)

"Wise and foolish virgins"

"Let your loins be girded about and your lamps burning." (Luke 12:35)

The Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13 (The Ten Virgins)

This parable concerning our preparedness means: In the hour of the bridegroom's coming it will become clear, who is prepared and who is not. Right through the midst of this group of ten virgins there runs the sharp line of separation – so it will be in the visible church. Therefore we ought to live toward "that day and hour" which are unknown to us. Only he who prepares himself daily with watching and prayer will enter with the heavenly bridegroom into the wedding feast.

Hymn of the Week: 609 Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying

Note: The Trinity Sundays 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 24 may be omitted in shorter Trinity seasons. This will allow a celebration of the important last cycle of the Trinity season (Trinity IV -- The End Time) every church year.

ADVENT

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

"The LORD who comes"

"Behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation." (Zechariah 9:9)

The Gospel: Matthew 21:1-9 (The heavenly King enters)

The heavenly King comes without worldly power, yet he announces his claims to Lordship, calling the world to a decision. He comes into the world that closes itself to him in hostility. Yet this poor and beggarly king has power quite different from that of other kings and emperors, because he is "just and having salvation."

Hymn for the Week: 73 Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates or 53 O Lord, How Shall I Meet Thee

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

"The coming Redeemer"

"Look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21:28)

The Gospel: Luke 21:25-33 (Christ's day dawns for all mankind)

The great catastrophes of the world are for the Christian not a cause for fear, but for hope and for preparation for the coming of God's kingdom.

Hymn for the Week: 611 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near or 67 The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

"Our Lord's forerunner, John the Baptist"

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord; behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand." (Isaiah 40:3,10)

The Gospel: Matthew 11:2-10 (John the Baptist's trouble and Christ's comfort)

John the Baptist suffered the misgivings and doubts of the world before Christ's coming, but the comfort of Christ greets him also in his bonds: the world is being changed; the old is being made new; the dead being made alive. John saw the salvation of God and witnesses to his coming. He is Christ's forerunner.

Hymn for the Week: 63 On Jordan's Bank, the Baptist's Cry or 75 Ye Sons of Men, Oh, Hearken

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

"The approaching joy"

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior."
(Luke 1:46)

The Gospel: John 1:19-28 (John the Baptist witnesses of Jesus)

John the Baptist wants to be nothing but the voice which announces to the world the immediate nearness of him "who is and was, and is to come." We also rejoice at his presence and at his coming to us.

Hymn for the Week: 74 Once He Came in Blessing or 62 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

CHRISTMAS SEASON

"God Sent Forth His Son"

CHRISTMAS

"The Birth of Our Lord"

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:14)

The Gospel: Luke 2:1-14 (The Christmas Story)

In contrast to the Roman emperor who apparently determines the historical situation, the real King of the world comes in poverty and lowliness. However, the angels of heaven announce his true worth, and he brings us great joy.

The Hymn for the Festival: 80 All Praise to Thee or 103 To Shepherds As They Watched by Night

THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

“Old Simeon”

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy Word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” (Luke 2:29-30)

The Gospel: Luke 2:33-40 (The Christchild, a sign set for the destruction and salvation of many)

Old Simeon stands on the threshold between the Old and the New, so his song is appropriate for the last Sunday in the year. In Christ God has set up a sign in the world over which many fall and perish, but on which many others build and are saved.

Hymn for the Week: 137 In Peace and Joy I Now Depart or 103 To Shepherds As They Watched by Night

NEW YEAR’S DAY

“In the name of Jesus” (Day of Christ’s circumcision and naming)

“And whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Colossians 1:17)

The Gospel: Luke 2:21

In the circumcision and naming of the Christ-child (“Jesus” means “Savior”) we have a guarantee of our salvation, a pledge for each successive year here on earth.

The Hymn for the Festival: 122 Now Let Us Come before Him

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS (SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR’S)

“In God’s Protection”

“He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.” (Psalm 91:11)

The Gospel: Matthew 2:19-23

The “holy family” must flee before the wrath of the world, but is guarded by God’s providence and the protection of his holy angels.

Hymn for the Week: 265 Thine Honor Save, O Christ, Our Lord or 528 If God
Himself Be for Me