

The Hymn-of-the-Week Plan

by R. Gehrke

One of the important recent developments in the field of church music has been, it seems to me, the appearance, or, better, the re-appearance of the Hymn-of-the-Week Plan, that is, the plan whereby each Sunday or festival has its own particular hymn. Such a hymn is sometimes called the *de-tempore* hymn, that is, a hymn that fits the time, the general season and the specific day of the church year. Such a hymn is also sometimes called the Gradual Hymn because the historic place for the chief hymn in the Service is between Epistle and Gospel where the Gradual is sung. And such a hymn may also be called the Hymn of the Week, since it is sung in the minor services throughout the rest of the week; or it may be called simply The Hymn. There is very good precedent for the use of the Hymn-of-the-Week Plan. And a brief introduction into its history may clarify its nature and use. For essentially this hymn is a response to the Word of God. It is part of that continual reciprocal rhythm between God's Word and our human response that runs through the entire Service. Such response to the reading of the Word is, historically speaking, part of the heritage that the early Christian Service took over from the pre-Christian Jewish congregation. For just as in the synagogue service each reading was responded to with a psalm, so in the Early Church the reading of the Word was followed by the response of a Psalm or Psalm verses. The response to the first reading was the so-called Gradual Psalm; the response to the second reading was the so-called Hallelujah Psalm; and the response to the Gospel for the Day was the Credo, that magnificent hymn-like confession of our faith which has the same function as the Psalm, being in this case the congregation's response to the Gospel for the Day.

All these various songs (the Gradual Psalm, the Hallelujah Psalm, the Credo) had a special role in the Service. They were an adoring meditation on the Word, which had been heard. Here opportunity for adoration and meditation was given. The eminent liturgical scholar Joseph Jungmann says, "These songs were not designed to fill up a pause in the Service (while, presumably, liturgical actions were going on) but stood between the readings as independent parts of the Service, as periods of pious meditation and joyous singing, now that the Word of God had struck human ears." The Creed was at first sung by the congregation, and not just by the trained choir as was the case later. The congregation also took part in the singing of the Gradual- and Hallelujah-Psalms by joining in on the refrain-like antiphon.

The Origin of the Plan

When Luther reformed the Service, in his *Formula Missae*, the Latin mass for use in large churches that had choir schools, he retained the Gradual in the rather sophisticated form then current. In the *German Mass (Deutsche Messe)* designed for smaller congregations in villages etc., however, Luther gave the Gradual back to the congregation, *making a significant change in its form*. For, since the Gradual had in the course of time become a rather sophisticated and complicated song sung by the Gregorian solo-cantor and the choir, Luther replaced it by what was to be the psalm's direct successor, *the hymn sung by the congregation*. In fact, often in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this chief hymn of the Service was simply called The German Psalm (*Der deutsche Psalm*). Many Reformation-Age church constitutions followed Luther's suggestions and prescribed the hymns he suggested. And so it came about that already in the sixteenth century a rather definite series of hymns developed which assigned to each Sunday and festival a special hymn, one that usually reflected the Gospel for the Day. Nicolaus Selnecker's *Church Hymns (Kirchengesaenge)* of the year 1587 make this clear. Paul Graff in his great history of Lutheran worship (significantly called *Geschichte der Aufloesung der alten Gottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangel. Kirche Deutschlands*) gives a rather clear picture of the nature of the Hymn-of-the-Week Plan that was more or less in force even through the days of Pietism and Enlightenment until the Plan was entirely lost at the end of the eighteenth century in the Age of Rationalism. Since a contemporary Hymn-of-the-Week Plan is appended to this study, the reader might find it interesting, for a moment, to turn to that part of it which deals with the Easter Season from Easter through

Pentecost and compare it with what was current in Germany in the Post-Reformation Age, as Paul Graff has collected the information for us (op. cit. p. 133). For Easter Sunday the *de-tempore* hymns were “*Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der den Tod ueberwandt*” (unfortunately not yet available in our Lutheran Hymnal) and “Christ is Arisen.” For Quasimodogeniti Graff reports that the *de-tempore* hymns in the various orders were “entirely different.” For Misericordias Domini, Good Shepherd Sunday, the Hymn was “*Der Herr is mein getreuer Hirt;*” for Jubilate it was “*Kommt her zu mir, spricht Gottes Sohn;*” for Cantate, Sing-Sunday, it was “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice” (as with us); for Rogate, Prayer Sunday, it was “Our Father, Thou in Heav’n Above;” for Ascension Day it was “*Christ fuhr gen Himmel;*” for Exaudi it was “*Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns haelt;*” for Pentecost it was “Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest.” Such was the standard series throughout the days of Lutheran Orthodoxy in the seventeenth century and even into the eighteenth century. Signs of weakening, however, became more and more evident. For example, Peter Sohren’s hymnbook of the year 1683, which boasts 1100 hymns and which is significantly entitled *Musical Foretaste of the Exultant Souls in Eternal Life (Musikalischer Vorschmack der jauchzenden Seelen im ewigen Leben*—this Pietistic hymnal nevertheless still retains an index of “the Psalms and Church Hymns that agree with the Gospel and Epistle texts through the entire year.” We know that this order was still in force in Bach’s day. It was only after the old traditional order of readings of the Gospel and Epistle pericopes was no longer followed and the number of lessons read in church was reduced to only one that the Gradual Hymn, which “rimed with the Gospel,” lost out.

Christhard Mahrenholz in his wonderful little Bach-Centennial address *Johann Sebastian Bach und der Gottesdienst seiner Zeit (Musik und Kirche, Sept.–Okt. 1950, pp. 145ff)* gives us interesting illumination on Bach’s fight against the inroads which were tending to dissolve the *de-tempore* Hymn Plan. In speaking of Bach’s tenacious retention of the old chorales and his use of them as *cantus-firmus* themes, he says, “This uncompromising holding fast to the traditional series of hymns was not restricted to the field of his own cantatas, but extended to the singing of the congregation. And this established the fact that Bach was not interested in only the more artistic and musically sophisticated side of well-ordered church music. It was traditional in the Lutheran Church of Bach’s day that the cantor, as the appropriate trained professional, had the duty of watching over the selection of hymns. He made the selection from a number of hymns established for each individual Sunday. Here Bach was uncompromising, as is clear from the well-known incident of his quarrel with the Pastor of St. Thomas Church about the choosing of hymns. Even otherwise sympathetic biographers of Bach think that in this instance Bach was showing himself in a rather bad light; after he had once granted Pastor Gaudlitz the right to choose the hymns, these critics feel, he should not have dared again, after a year, to take back this prerogative by appealing to his rights as Cantor of St. Thomas! “But,” Mahrenholz comments, “Bach could delegate the choice of hymns to Pastor Gaudlitz only within the framework of the existing order of hymns. Gaudlitz, however, did *not* confine himself to that order. That is the only reason why Bach took back what he had first granted to the pastor. Characteristically Bach explained his action by stating that it was his duty to keep vigilant watch that the hymns be chosen ‘according to the order of their Gospels and of the Dresden Hymnbook, which has prescribed their order in that manner.’ Since Pastor Gaudlitz chose hymns ‘that were not customary’ (*die nicht ueblich waren*), i.e., that did not fit the *de-tempore*, Bach for the sake of ‘well-ordered church music’ (*regulierte Kirchenmusik*, Bach’s ideal) had to take back to himself the function that was his right and duty as Cantor of St. Thomas.

“In protecting this clear-cut liturgical series of *de-tempore* hymns Bach was guarding against a misunderstanding that considers church music only decorative addition to the Service. Even as every Sunday had its Hymn of the Week, its Lessons, its Sermon, so every Sunday also had its church music which was an organic part of the Service.”

The Loss of the Plan

Philipp Reich, in *Das Wochenlied* (p. 4f.), traces the reasons for the eventual loss of this very wholesome liturgical order to three main causes. (1) First, the growth in the number of hymns in the hymnbooks of the last part of the post-Bach age meant that there were also a growing number of hymns assigned to each

respective Sunday. And as has often happened, a larger selection of hymns in a hymnbook is always made available only at the expense of the “canon,” the solid core of good, time-tested solid hymns. (2) There was a second reason for the loss of the Hymn-of-the-Week series. The Main Hymn in the Reformation Age had not been the Sermon Hymn (that is the hymn that is sung before the Sermon; if anything was sung in the Reformation Age at that point in the Service it was only a *suspira*, a small prayer verse), the main hymn had been the Gradual Hymn, what we are here calling the Hymn of the Week. Only after the Sermon had become the exclusive center of the Service did the hymns or the hymn stanzas that framed it necessarily have to relate to its specific theme. (3) Thirdly, with the restriction of the Service to the Sermon as the only focal point (and the concomitant loss of the Old Lutheran understanding and use of the Sacrament) the Reformation Age’s entire understanding of the Service was lost, and, as Paul Graff has shown, eventually a vital understanding of the Church Year was also lost. A *Zeitgeist* that took its cue from the prevailing movements of Enlightenment and Rationalism made its influence felt in the Service; the Church Year had to take a back seat to the civil year. Soon the dissolution of the *de-tempore* hymn series was an established fact.

A reconsideration of the Hymn-of-the-Week problems came only with the attempts at liturgical re-creation in the nineteenth century in the works of such men as Freiherr von Liliencron and Ludwig Schoeberlein, who championed the re-introduction of the Hymn-of-the-Week Plan. But, it seems, the time for such restoration was not propitious. Even the great Bavarian hymnologist, Friedrich Layriz (known to so many of us because Dr. Walther and his friends introduced his *Choralbuch* settings with their original Reformation-Age vivacity and color into so many of our congregations in the Middle West, with the result that through him we have in many respects inherited the results of the great hymnological researches of people like Winterfeld and can sing the best hymns in their original rhythmical settings)—even this man Layriz opposed the plan because he had no understanding of its greatness. I have often wondered and speculated as to what would now be the situation in our midst if Layriz had accepted Liliencron’s suggestions, and if Dr. Walther and the men around him who gave us such a wonderful little hymnal with all the old Lutheran treasures, a heritage from which whole generations of our people have lived amidst the un-liturgical surroundings of pioneer, Mid-West immigrant conceptions, would have espoused the cause of the Hymn-of-the-Week Plan, and if it would have become as much a part of the pattern of an orthodox Lutheran congregation of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as things like the Lutheran *Gemeindeschule, der Lutheraner*, and the Layriz *Choralbuch* became. I venture the opinion that we would be a much stronger church today, not only musically, but also liturgically and doctrinally (the best Reformation theology is found in its hymns!), for such a Hymn-of-the-Week Plan is able to bring us into living contact with this great heritage. But, as it turned out, the efforts for restoration in this respect were officially rejected in Germany, and, to my knowledge, never faced up to here in America.

The Plan Restored

The honor for having revived and to a certain extent restored the Hymn-of-the-Week Plan in recent times goes to a number of contemporary German scholars, pastors, and church musicians, foremost among whom are Christhard Mahrenholz and Pastor Wilhelm Thomas. In 1934 in the midst of the *Kirchenkampf* when the Christian church in Germany realized that it was being threatened in its very existence by an anti-Christian nationalistic power that was already seeking to infiltrate the church, these men, at the Pentecost Session of the Executive Board of the German Choral Union, realized, as Mahrenholz himself tells the story (cf. *Reich, Das Wochenlied*, p. 5f), that the crisis could not be met by clever church-political maneuvering but only by confessing the Gospel as it was given to the Church in its Confessions and in its heritage. And it was these men who raised the basic demand for the series of original Lutheran Gradual Hymns as the basis of their church music work. Other German pastors and church musicians added their contributions to bring out a realization of the plan, notably Dr. Konrad Ameln and Walter Reindel. And despite the evil days that had descended upon them the Plan did take root. After the war (in 1948) the Plan was revised. And now the new *Evangelische Kirchengesangbuch* presents the entire series to all territorial churches, and we are told that it has found

widespread acceptance in all parts of Germany, also in the Free Churches. Before proceeding to practical questions it is perhaps wise to emphasize several points if we are to understand the nature of this Plan.

In substituting a congregation's hymn for the ancient church's psalm the Reformation created something decidedly new. In liturgical practice Luther gave the congregation's hymn the same function and rank as the psalm had possessed. But—though the old pre-Reformation Gradual Psalm in most cases was primarily an expression of meditative adoration, the Lutheran Hymn has a *complex* character: it is adoration and meditation; the best hymns of our heritage, the ones included in the Hymn-of-the-Week series, always have this element in them. But they are more than adoration. They have, accompanying this devotional aspect, a strong *proclamation* aspect, sometimes direct, sometimes indirect. They not only praise God, as do psalms of praise and thanksgiving; they also, like many psalms, “proclaim the wonders He hath done, how His right arm the victory won.” In his recent study of the types of psalms Claus Westermann (*Das Loben Gottes in den Psalmen*) even cites as an example of the type of “Descriptive Psalms of Praise” Luther's “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice.” Our chorales, our “German psalms,” are the direct successors of the Biblical psalms.

The advantages of a parish music program, which includes the Hymn-of-the-Week Plan, are very great. By using such a plan a congregation gradually grows more and more into the Church Year; the most important hymns of its hymnal are kept alive in its consciousness by being sung and interpreted in a meaningful manner annually; the congregation is also in a measure protected from an all-too-frequent subjectivism and one-sidedness in the use of its hymnal. Moreover, such a hymn program can be correlated with the hymn singing that is done in meetings of various groups and societies, in the parish education of the young, and in the devotions of the home, strengthening the bond between private home and public church worship. The church musician is enabled to plan his work far in advance and does not have to wait until shortly before Sunday to find out what hymns will be sung. The church choirs will gradually realize what their position really is. In this way the entire parish music program comes closer to Bach's ideal of being “well-ordered church music.”

Finally, we turn to some practical aspects of such a plan. The plan appended will enable you to form your own considered opinion of its merits. It is based on the work done by the German Lutheran Liturgical Conference; but that plan, as we have heard, goes back, except for some modifications, to the golden age of Lutheran Church Music. The author of this article has adapted it to our American Synodical Conference conditions, using those hymns now available to us in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. An analysis of the melodies in this plan will show that most of the hymns come from the age of the finest Lutheran church music. It does not mean that the congregation that adopts this plan cannot sing other hymns in other parts of the service, but this plan will represent the solid core of hymns which it will consider standard.

All practical aspects cannot be dealt with in this paper.¹ Two practical aspects, however, do deserve special consideration; and the last part of this paper will deal with them. Closely related to, and almost part of this recommendation of the Hymn-of-the-Week Plan is the suggestion that these hymns be sung antiphonally. This is the first practical aspect, which must briefly be elucidated.

Antiphonal Hymn Singing

From earliest days psalms were sung in the church antiphonally, that is, in such a way that two parts of the congregation or two choirs, often facing one another, sang alternate verses of a psalm, thus inciting one another by the reciprocal, lively rhythm of alternate tension and relaxation. In a similar manner in the Reformation age hymns were sung antiphonally between the unison-singing congregation and either a choir singing unison or a choir singing parts in harmony or the organ (organ chorale!). The congregation was thus usually busy every other stanza; when it was not singing, its “partner”—choir or organ—could bring into play the entire treasure of church music in order to unfold and interpret the melody or *cantus firmus* and thus interpret the content of the hymn for the hearers. In this way genuinely artistic music becomes an organic part of the Divine Service; the congregation is drawn into the music-making of choir and organ even as choir and organ

¹ A forthcoming publication by the Music Department of Concordia Publishing House will give practical help in this respect.

by their subjection to the *cantus firmus* of the congregation's hymn show that they know that they are not called independently to lord it over the congregation, but rather to serve it in its worship. This plan gives a definite task to the organ and to instrumental music. And as far as the choir is concerned, it can have no more beautiful task than that given to it by antiphonal singing, because the choir functions not only as the congregation's "rival," interpreting the Word of God contained in the hymn for the congregation, but the choir is also the congregation's "partner," as its precentor, leader, and teacher, singing out the melodies and in this way contributing much more to the hymn-education of the congregation than even the best organ playing can do. By alternate listening and singing the congregation can learn these fine Lutheran hymns much more easily—even those in the old church modes and those with intricate and varied rhythms; its attention is focused on the content of the hymn; it can 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 stanzas. Moreover, such antiphonal singing will lead the choir *away from* the mistaken ideal of "beautifying the service" with added selections and will lead it *toward* the great ideal of performing a genuine service to the congregation as a liturgical group which is ready and happy to help the congregation toward all the blessings of genuine worship.

The goal of antiphonal singing ought to be the singing of all stanzas of The Hymn of the Week. In the antiphonal treatment of hymns all possible combinations should be exploited (choir alternating with congregation, organ or other instrumental music alternating with congregation, women alternating with men, choir and congregation in unison, alternation by stanzas, alternation by pairs of lines, even alternate singing of stanzas from two different hymns). Unison singing by the choir should not be despised; the goal of having the choir sing every Sunday is impossible in many places if the choir must always sing in parts. What is more important is that the Hymn of the Week have its regular place in the Service every Sunday, even if the choir at first can alternate with the congregation only in unison singing.

An appreciation of and love for the best hymns and for the Gospel they proclaim is the primary requisite for introducing antiphonal singing. If such love and appreciation is present with pastor and church musicians, then it will be fairly easy to lead the congregation in that direction and solve the practical problems, such as how to make the congregation aware of which stanzas of a given hymn it is to sing and which the choir will sing (bulletin, announcement, hymn-board with colored numbers for the stanzas of the Hymn to be sung by the congregation antiphonally). The practical problems are not great.

Acquainting the Congregation With New Hymns

The second practical aspect that needs attention in this paper is one that has perhaps long since been popping up in the reader's mind as he reads this essay: How are you going to acquaint the congregation with these fine, but often unknown hymns? This problem must be faced head on, if this plan is to be more than an academic proposal.

In general, people do not like to have new hymn tunes "sprung on them" in the Service; they perhaps rightly feel that that is not the time or place for a floundering sort of "practicing" of unfamiliar hymns. On the other hand, some sort of "practicing" of unfamiliar hymns is necessary, since it is a tragic fact that many congregations are able to sing only about one-fifth of the hymns in the hymnal with complete assurance, and often that one fifth represents hymns of a decidedly sentimental and subjective nature. Some congregations, it is true, still have a living heritage of many fine chorales, but even in their case that treasure must be augmented by many more fine hymns that are not yet well known. And 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 "measured" melodies of a later age, even though in the end the congregation will learn to love the chorales much more because of their genuine musical verve and superior Gospel preachment. For these reasons those who are responsible for the music in the Service and especially for the selection of the hymns will have to make special provisions if the congregation is to be enabled to sing the finest hymns.

Now, of course, special Song Services can and should be arranged wherever possible, in order to teach the congregation, say, three or four new hymns in a carefully organized and prepared program (which will

include also an address perhaps and various other interesting church music selections); more promising, however, than the institution of such a special Song Service now and then (which might not reach the entire congregation) would be the utilization of part of the time allotted to the parish's traditional "sacred concerts" or "special services" (such as Anniversary Services, Christmas Concerts, etc.) for the learning of several new congregational hymns. Also, meetings of the various groups in the congregation offer opportunities for learning the better hymns—in fact, a goal to strive for would be: no meeting without the singing of at least the Hymn of the Week!

But perhaps the most practical of all methods of acquainting the congregation with the better hymns would be to institute *Hymn Sings* at the end of the Sunday Service in given periods of the Church Year. For instance, it may be implemented during Advent in preparation for Christmas, or during the last Sundays in Lent in preparation for Easter, or during Trinity III in preparation for Trinity IV. The suggested length for such a Hymn-Sing is 10 minutes, no longer! It should begin immediately after the Benediction (before the ushers come to the front and face the congregation—in fact, in their stead "the leading group" will come to the front and face the congregation) *before* the Postlude and the dispersing of the people. Naturally the size and situation of each congregation varies, but in the following we are thinking of even a fairly large congregation where the practicing of hymns is fraught with greater difficulties than in smaller congregations.

Careful pre-planning for the Hymn-Sing and pre-practice of the new hymn by "the leading group" (the choir, volunteers from the choir, or, if necessary, some other capable group, such as upper-grade school children or the confirmands) is absolutely necessary, as is also the full cooperation of all concerned (pastor, organist, choir director and "leading group"). Otherwise the Hymn-Sing will not be effective. Within the congregation there must already have been formed a live "cell" of singers, which has mastered the new hymn and is therefore capable of leading the congregation. This "cell" should ideally include not only "the leading group" but also the school children of the upper grades who have been taught the new hymn and who will be in the church (perhaps even at assigned places) to aid with the "practice."

The "leading group" should take its place at the front of the church, facing the congregation. After a few, *brief*, well-prepared words of introduction (concerning the general thought of the new hymn, or its relation to the Church Year, or even perhaps its origin or background) "the leading group" may sing in unison the entire hymn for the congregation (it may do this, if necessary, antiphonally, alternating between men and women, boys and girls, precentor and group, right and left, etc.); then the "leader" (pastor, organist, choir-director, or anyone else qualified and called to do so) should ask the congregation to read the first stanza prayerfully together. This serves to impress the text, frees them for more attention later to the melody, loosens up their voices, and beyond that allows the foregoing presentation of the hymn to impress itself more deeply.

Next, individual units (never less than a whole line and often the first two lines) are sung by the "leading group" and immediately after repeated by the congregation. If necessary, the leader may ask the congregation to repeat the units twice or even three times (avoiding, however, all pedantry!) It is imperative, however, that "the leading group" resists the temptation to sing along with the congregation. That would mislead the congregation to a comfortable dependence on "the leading group"; also the congregation would in that case not follow so attentively, nor put its memory to work so much because it would know it could depend on "the leading group" to carry it along. After the first unit has been mastered, the second is attacked in a similar manner. Before, however, proceeding to the third unit the first two units should be sung together as they come. In this manner the entire first stanza is practiced and mastered.

After the first stanza has been sung, a "change of scene" is brought about by asking the congregation to rise; then "the leading group" sings the entire first stanza, and the congregation answers with the same stanza in exactly the same manner; thus the entire hymn is completed. A word of commendation or encouragement or even a prayer-wish such as "May the Christ-child grant this prayer to every one of us!" finishes the practice of the new hymn.

In this manner a new hymn can be learned in, say, 6 or 7 minutes, leaving 3 or 4 minutes of the Hymn-Sing for practicing all or part of a recently learned hymn. The plan works best if one starts early and prepares the Hymn at least three Sundays before it is to be sung in the Service as the Hymn of the Week. Then when the

congregation sings it out on its appointed Sunday, it will be amazed how well it can sing the new hymn. Over a period of five or six years such a careful program can rejuvenate congregational singing as well as put the entire Hymn-of-the-Week Plan into vital use.

Suggested Hymn-of-the-Week Plan

Advent 1 The Lord Who Comes “Behold, thy King cometh ante thee; He is just and having salvation.” The Gospel: Matt. 21:1–9, Christ, the Heavenly King, Enters His City.

Hymn of the Week: Savior of the Nations, Come (95)

Advent 2 The Coming Redeemer “Look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.” The Gospel: Luke 21:25–36, Christ’s Day Dawns for All Mankind.

Hymn of the Week: The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us (67)

Advent 3 Our Lord’s Forerunner “Prepare ye the way of the Lord; Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand.” The Gospel: Mt. 11:2–10, John the Baptist’s Tribulation and Christ’s Consolation.

Hymn of the Week: Ye Sons of Men, Oh Hearken (75)

Advent 4 The Approaching Joy “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.” The Gospel: John 1:19–28, The Lord’s Forerunner Bears Witness unto the Greater One for Whom He Will Prepare the Way.

Hymn of the Week: Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel (62)

Christmas The Birth of Our Lord “The WORD was made flesh and dwelt among us.” The Gospels: Luke 2:1–14 and John 1:1–14, The Appearance of God in the Flesh.

Hymn of the Week: All Praise to Thee, Eternal God (80)

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.” The Gospel: Luke 2:33–40, Simeon and Anna.

Hymn of the Week: To Shepherds As They Watched by Night (103)

New Year In the Name of Jesus “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” The Gospel: Luke 2:21, The Circumcision and Naming of the Christ-Child.

Hymn: The Old Year Now Hath Passed Away (125)

Epiphany The Glory of Christ “The darkness is past and the true Light now shineth” The Gospels: Matt. 2:1–12, The Wise Men and Matt. 3:13–17, The Baptism of Christ.

Hymn: As With Gladness Men of Old (127)

Epiphany 1 The Son of God “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” The Gospel: Luke 2:41–52, The Son of God is Manifested in the Holy Temple of His City.

Hymn of the Week: Of the Father’s Love Begotten (98)

Epiphany 2 The Bringer of Joy “The Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.” The Gospel: John 2:1–11, The Lord’s First Miracle Shows that the Time of Grace Predicted by the Prophets is Now Here.

Hymn of the Week: Songs of Thankfulness and Praise (134)

Epiphany 3 The Body’s Savior “He maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.” The Gospel: Matt. 8:1–14, To the Leper Christ Manifests Himself as the Body’s Savior, and to the Centurion as the Gentiles’ Savior.

Hymn of the Week: All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above (19)

Epiphany 4 The Lord of Nature “Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the Sons of God” The Gospel: Matt. 23–27, In the Stilling of the Storm our Lord Manifests His Majesty as the Lord of Nature.

Hymn of the Week: Seek Where Ye May to Find a Way (383)

Epiphany 5 The Lord of History “The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” The Gospel: Matt. 13:24–30, The Believers’ Patient Waiting over against the Course of History.

Hymn of the Week: Lord Jesus Christ, With Us Abide (292)

Epiphany 6 Our Lord’s Transfiguration “God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” The Gospel: Matt. 17:1.9, Before His Passion Our Lord’s Glory Shines Forth.

Hymn of the Week: How Lovely Shines the Morning Star (343)

Septuagesima Wages and Grace “We do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses but for Thy great mercies.” The Gospel: Matt. 20:1–16, The Laborers in the Lord’s Vineyard Receive the “Reward” of Grace.

Hymn of the Week: Salvation Unto Us Has Come (377)

Sexagesima The Four-fold Field “Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart.” The Gospel: Luke 8:4–15, The Parable of the Sower and the Four Kinds of Ground on which the Good Seed is Cast.

Hymn of the Week: May God Bestow on Us His Grace (500)

Quinquagesima Up to Jerusalem! “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished.” (The Gospel: Luke 18:31–43, Christ Opens Our Eyes so that we Find the Way to Life, the Way on which He Travels up to Jerusalem as God’s Lamb.

Hymn of the Week: Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus (409)

Invocavit Temptation “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested: that He might destroy the works of the Devil.” The Gospel: Matt. 4:1–11, Our Lord’s Temptation in the Wilderness.

Hymn of the Week: God the Father, Be Our Stay (247)

Reminiscere The Servant of the Lord “The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” The Gospel: Matt. 15:21–28, The Syro-Phoenician Woman Perceives behind our Lord’s “No” a Final and Permanent “Yes” that Extends Even to the Gentiles.

Hymn of the Week: When in the Hour of Utmost Need (522)

Oculi The Lamb of God “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” The Gospel: Luke 11:14–28, Christ’s Opening the Mouth of the Dumb is a Victorious Break-through into Satan’s Realm.

Hymn of the Week: Lord of Our Life and God of our Salvation (258)

Laetare The Bread of Life “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” The Gospel: John 6:1–15, In the Feeding of the Five Thousand Christ Shows Himself as the true Bread of Life for All People.

Hymn of the Week: Jesus, Priceless Treasure (347)

Judica The Great High Priest “For their sakes I sanctify Myself that also be sanctified through the faith.” The Gospel: John 8:46–59, Christ Reveals the Secret of His High-priestly Office: He was “Before Abraham.”

Hymn of the Week: The Royal Banners Forward Go (168)

Palm Sunday The Man of Sorrows “He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He hath poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors and He bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.” The Gospel: Matt. 21:1–9, Jesus Enters His City as King, Riding on to His Death.

Hymn of the Week: A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth (142)

- Maundy Thursday* The Lord's Supper "Given and shed FOR YOU for the remission of sins." The Gospel: John 13:1–15, Our Lord's Washing of the Disciples' Feet.
Hymn: Jesus Christ, our Blessed Savior (311)
- Good Friday* The Lamb of God "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The Gospel: John 18:1–19:42. The Passion.
Hymn: A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth (142)
- Easter* Resurrection "I was dead; but behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." The Gospel: Mark 16:1–8, The Angel Proclaims the Resurrection Message.
Hymn of the Week: Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands (195)
- Easter 1 Quasimodogeniti* In What Garments "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The Gospel: John 20:19–31, The Risen Lord Gives His Disciples the Authority to Forgive Sins, the Gift of the Holy Ghost, and Overcomes the Doubter, Thomas.
Hymn of the Week: Ye Sons and Daughters of the King (208)
- Easter 2 Misericordias Domini* The Good Shepherd "I am the Good Shepherd. My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life." The Gospel: John 10:11–16, Christ Jesus is the Good Shepherd because He Sacrificed Himself for His Flock.
Hymn of the Week: The King of Love My Shepherd Is (431)
- Easter 3 Jubilate* The New Creation "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new." The Gospel: John 16:16–24, Concerning much fruit." The Gospel: John 6:1–15, In the Feeding of the Five the Sorrow of Separation for our Lord and the Joy of Permanent Reunion with Him.
Hymn of the Week: O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe (263)
- Easter 4 Cantate* The Singing Church "Sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done wonders." The Gospel: John 16:5–15, Jesus Explains the Work of the Holy Ghost.
Hymn of the Week: Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice (387)
- Easter 5 Rogate* The Praying Church "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." The Gospel: John 16:23–30, Praying in the Name of Jesus.
Hymn of the Week: Our Father Thou in Heav'n Above (458)
- Ascension* Our Lord's Ascension "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." The Gospel: Mark 16:14–20, The Exalted Lord Shows Himself to be the Lord unto Whom All Power in Heaven and Earth is Given.
Hymn: A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing (212)
- Exaudi* The Expectant Church "Thus saith the Lord: I will pour out the Spirit of grace and supplication." The Gospel: John 15:26–16:4, Christ Prepares His Disciples for the Cross They Will Have to Bear.
Hymn of the Week: If God Had Not Been On Our Side (267)
- Pentecost* The Church of the Spirit "Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." The Gospel: John 14:23–31, The Work of the Holy Ghost.
Hymn of the Week: Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord (224)*
- Trinity Sunday* The Triune God "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." The Gospel: John 3:1–15, The Miracle of Re-Birth.
Hymn of the Week: We All Believe in One True God (251)
- Trinity 1* Apostles and Prophets "Christ says unto His disciples: 'He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me.'" The Gospel: Luke 16:19–31, The Rich Man and Lazarus.
Hymn of the Week: We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost (231)

- Trinity 2* The Great Invitation “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The Gospel: Luke 14:16–24, The Invitation to the Great Supper.
Hymn of the Week: Awake, Thou Spirit, Who Didst Fire (494)
- Trinity 3* The Word of Reconciliation “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.”
The Gospel: Luke 15:1–10, The Lost That was Found.
Hymn of the Week: In Thee Alone, O Christ, My Lord (319)
- Trinity 4* The Congregation of Sinners “Bear ye one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.”
The Gospel: Luke 6:36–42, Compassionate Brotherliness.
Hymn of the Week: Creator Spirit, By Whose Aid (236)
- Trinity 5* Following Jesus “He that putteth his hand to the plow and looks backward is not fit for the Kingdom of God.” The Gospel: Luke 5:1–11, The Calling of Peter.
Hymn of the Week: Come, Follow Me, The Savior Spake (421)
- Trinity 6* The New Righteousness “Fear not; for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.” The Gospel: Matt. 5:20–26, Reconciliation with One’s Neighbor; or better an Epistle Sunday: Romans 6:3–11, Baptism!
Hymn of the Week: All Mankind Fell in Adam’s Fall (369)
- Trinity 7* The Sanctification of Our Bodies “Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” The Epistle: Rom. 6:19–23, The Apostle Summons Us to Stand under either Blessings or Curses, Life or Death.
Hymn of the Week: All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above (19)
- Trinity 8* Fruits of the Spirit “Walk as the children of Light, for the fruit of the Spirit is all goodness and righteousness and truth.” The Gospel: Matt. 7:15–23, Bringing Forth Genuine Fruits
Hymn of the Week: O Holy Spirit, Grant Us Grace (293)
- Trinity 9* The Wise Steward “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” The Gospel: Luke 16:1–9, The “Exemplary” Wisdom of the Children of This World.
The Hymn of the Week: One Thing’s Needful; Lord, This Treasure (366)
- Trinity 10* The Lord and His people “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” The Gospel: Luke 19:41–48, Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem and Cleanses the Temple.
Hymn of the Week: Lord, To Thee I Make Confession (326)
- Trinity 11* Pharisee and Publican “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” The Gospel: Luke 18:9–14, True Godliness is Seen not in the Pharisee but in the Publican.
Hymn of the Week: From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee (329)
- Trinity 12* The Great Healing of the Sick “A bruised reed shall He not break, and a smoking flax shall He not quench.” The Gospel: Mark 7:31–37, Healing the Deaf and Dumb Man.
Hymn of the Week: My Soul, Now Bless Thy Maker (34)
- Trinity 13* The Good Samaritan “Christ says, ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’ ” The Gospel: Luke 10:23–37, The Good Samaritan.
Hymn of the Week: O Holy Spirit, Grant Us Grace (293)
- Trinity 14* The Thankful Samaritan “Bless the Lord, o my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” The Gospel: Luke 17:11–19, Healing the Ten Lepers.
Hymn of the Week: From God Shall Naught Divide Me (393)
- Trinity 15* Earthly Goods “Cast all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” The Gospel: Matt. 6:24–34, Fret Not!
Hymn of the Week: In God My Faithful God (526)
- Trinity 16* Great Comfort “Jesus Christ hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light.” The Gospel: Luke 7:11–17, Christ Raises the Young Man from Nain.
Hymn of the Week: The Will of God is Always Best (517)

Trinity 17 Christian Freedom “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” The Gospel: Luke 14:1–11, Christ Frees the Man Sick with Dropsy for a Life of Love and Humility. The Epistle is important: The True Unity of the Church.

Hymn of the Week: The Church’s One Foundation (473)

Trinity 18 The Foremost Commandment “And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loveth God love his brother also.” The Gospel: Matt. 22:34–46, The Twofold Command of Love to God and to One’s Neighbor and the Question Concerning Christ. “What Think Ye of Him?”

Hymn of the Week: Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart (429)

Michaelmas (Sept. 29th) God’s holy Angels “God’s angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” The Gospel: Matt. 18:1–11, Jesus Shows the Divine Power that Protects His Little Ones. The Epistle, Rev. 12:7–12a tells How the Heavenly Hosts Win the Victory.

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

Trinity 20 The Great 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: Matt. 22:1–14, The Invitation to the Royal Marriage Feast.

Hymn of the Week: O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold (260)

Trinity 21 Spiritual Armor “If a man also strive for mastery, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.” The Epistle, Eph. 6:10–17, describes Our Spiritual Armor.

Hymn of the Week: Lord, Keep Us Steadfast In Thy Word (261)

Trinity 22 In Debt to God “There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.” The Gospel: Matt. 18:23–35, The Unmerciful Servant.

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

Trinity 23 The Church in the World “The King of kings and Lord of lords, Who only hath immortality, to Whom be honor and power everlasting.” The Gospel: Matt. 22:15–22, The Tribute Money.

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

Trinity 24 Death’s Conqueror “Give thanks unto the Father Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” The Gospel: Matt. 9:18–26, Jairus’ Daughter Raised.

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

Trinity 25 Signs of the End “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” The Gospel: Matt. 24:15–28, Signs of the End.

Hymn of the Week: Farewell I Gladly Bid Thee (407)

Trinity 26 The Last Judgment “For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.” The Gospel: Matt. 25:31–46, The Last Judgment.

Hymn of the Week: The Day is Surely Drawing Near (611)

Trinity 27 Wise and Foolish Virgins “Let your loins be girded about and your lamps burning.” The Gospel: Matt. 25:1–13, The Ten Virgins.

Hymn of the Week: Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying (609)