



**NEW SCANDINAVIA
LUTHERAN CHURCH
MAY
NEWSLETTER 2024**

PASTOR SARA NEWS

*O sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Sing to the LORD, bless the Lord's name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare the Lord's glory among the nations,
his marvellous works among all the peoples.*

Psalm 96:1-3

There is a strange thing about me- maybe you have this too. Every morning, I wake up with a song in my head. I've gotten used to it, but it can be strange. Some days the song might be from a musical. Some days it might be a child's lullaby. Some days I wake up with a portion of a liturgy stuck in my brain and I can't get it out. Some days there are songs I don't like and there it is, stuck in my brain until another song clears it out. Today I woke up with the song "Hello" by Adele. Is it a favorite song of mine? No. But it was there and eventually, I managed to forget about it, which was a good thing because not knowing the words to a stuck song is really annoying. And after explaining this, "Hello" is back in my brain again. ARGH!

A couple of weeks ago I attended a concert in St. Paul. The singer/actor, Mandy Patinkin, spent the night singing a huge variety of songs; from musicals, songs I knew as a child, songs from movies, and even his version of Bohemian Rhapsody, by Freddy Mercury. It was a strange setlist, at least for this Tony and Emmy award winner. But maybe that is what made the concert so good. Maybe it was a sense of randomness in these preselected songs. Maybe it made the evening fuller because he went from a song that literally had people around me in tears to singing "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" in Yiddish. I like variety. I like hearing new songs while holding on to songs I have known for years.

I have been asked about the method of hymn selection from the moment I began a leadership role, especially when looking at worship and liturgy. I will agree with many of you that it is much easier to sing the same songs over and over. I was one of those people for many years. There is nothing wrong with the song "Holy, Holy, Holy" so why can't we sing it every Sunday? I used to cringe

when our new pastor, fresh out of seminary, would open us up to some of the crazy songs in that “new” green hymnal they called *Lutheran Book of Worship*. Why change if it’s not broken? Let’s be honest, have you found yourself asking that?

When I began seminary, I was shocked how many new (to me) songs we would sing in chapel that came out of the “cranberry” hymnal (Evangelical Lutheran Worship). I too grumbled and wondered when we would sing “Holy, Holy, Holy” or “Blessed Be the Ties That Bind”. I began attending St. John’s Lutheran Church in St. Donatus (about 20 minutes south of Dubuque, IA) and wondered why they were not using “Setting 3” but a crazy “Setting 8” for their liturgy. Even more, every afternoon worship service during “Summer Greek” was helping solidify my love for Holden Evening Prayer (new to me, even though I had already made several trips to Holden Village).

When the time came for first-year seminary students to be part of a worship-planning team, things began to make sense- as to why we weren’t singing the same songs over and over. The Sacristan and the Dean of Chapel would come to the planning meetings with a spreadsheet listing all the songs in the ELW and during each school year, a specific song would not be sung more than twice. This method opened all of us up to songs we would have never considered singing. It was this idea that rolled over to my internship site as they too liked the idea of exploring new songs. Even so, I was shocked when planning my last Sunday internship service and picked a song that I learned in seminary and still love to this day. My supervisor said she had never sung that song before and after my sending service, it became one of her favorites as well.

Let me do a quick explanation as to how I pick hymns. First know that I don’t pick a hymn that I don’t know myself- I can’t lead if I can’t sing it. Second, there are many songs that I just assume we have either sung or that have been around so long that I figure everyone knows it. Many of the hymns are selected using a program/website called “Sundays and Seasons”. This program is a wonderful resource for worship materials, not just hymns. Every time I am planning a service, I will check out the suggested hymns for the day. The songs suggested are all connected to the various texts selected for each week. So, a few weeks ago, when it was “Good Shepherd Sunday”, many of the texts selected focused on that theme but there were also hymns that were connected to the first and second reading. Some weeks I go through the suggested hymns and say “nope”, either because we just did that song, or I don’t know the song and am not comfortable leading it. When that happens, I try to find an alternative that might work with the texts for the week or sometimes I pick a familiar song. There is more to the whole hymn-picking process but that is a quick synopsis of my hymn picking plan. Anyways.....

Why do I like adding new songs?

First, I usually don’t think about it being new or old. I pick a hymn for what it says. I believe that more songs open us up to a bigger picture of who God is. Think about how we might understand grace if we have never heard “*Amazing Grace*” or our connection with Jesus if we never sang “What a friend we have in Jesus.” How would we picture the night of Jesus’ birth if we never sang “Silent Night?”

New songs open us up to our own missions in the world and what we can do to welcome others as in the hymn *We Are Called*, #720

“Come! Open you heart! Show your mercy to all those in fear! We are called to be hope for the hopeless so hatred and blindness will be no more. We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly; we are called to serve one another, to walk humbly with God.”

New songs open us up to new rhythms from around the world that make us want to get up and move with instructions for mission in the world as in “*The Lord Now Sends Us Forth*” #538

“The Lord now sends us forth with hands to service and give,
to make of all the earth a better place to live.” (repeat)

“The angels are not sent into our world of pain
to do what we were meant to do in Jesus’ name;
that falls to you and me and all who are made free.

Help us, O Lord, we pray, to do your will today.” (repeat)

New songs that put words to our cries like “How Long, O God” #698

“Your grace, O God, seems far away: will healing ever come?

Our broken lives lie broken still; will night give way to dawn?

This summer/fall we are going to learn new songs or maybe it’s that we will sing some of the new(ish) ones so that they become more familiar. I have laid it out so that each song will be sung for three consecutive weeks before moving on to another. Will you like all of the songs? Of course not but some of the songs aren’t my favorite either. Are we going to learn all of the songs in the ELW? No. Let me ask this- how do we know if we may like something else if we don’t try? (If you are never given an opportunity to try lemon meringue pie, how do you know if you like it or not?) So, stick with me. I think it will be a fun summer and who knows, you might wake up some morning with one of these hymns stuck in your head.

God’s peace be with you

Pastor Sara

P.S. The hymn I selected for my internship sending service was “Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” #808

Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey;

I’ll tell ev’rybody about you wherever I go:

you alone are our life and our peace and our love.

Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey.