# A FESTIVAL OF HYMNS CELEBRATING THE ONGOING REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH

#### ALCM Hymn Festival – July, 2012

Performance suggestions by Dr. Donald L. Armitage

This festival is designed to celebrate the reformative work of Martin Luther as it is expressed in his hymns and tunes, and in the hymns and tunes from Christian peoples around the world in the centuries since. The church year provides the organizational structure of the festival. Hymns have been chosen to help us sing the salvation story beginning with the Reformation and moving through all the major festivals from Advent to Holy Trinity. Martin Luther and the Lutheran chorale are well represented and are probably familiar to most of us. The hymns and tunes from other countries, especially China, Tanzania and Argentina are possibly less well known. For information about all the hymns in the festival including historical materials, see **Hymnal Companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship**, Augsburg Fortress © 2010. For performance ideas with suggestions about style, tempo, and instrumental media, see **Musicians Guide to Evangelical Lutheran Worship**, Augsburg Fortress © 2007. I will refer to this book several times in the following comments.

The following brief comments are only suggestions for presenting the festival. My intention is that the hymns that are grouped together (Advent-Christmas-Epiphany, Lent-Easter, and Pentecost) be sung without interpolated comments and, depending on the skills of the keyboard players, musically flow one to another where it seems appropriate. Susan Cherwien's reflections are read in the breaks between those groups.

\*Hymns contained in this Hymn Festival are referenced in the hymnals in which they appear. Variations in stanza content and number occur between the provided resources. Local planners are free to select the resource that best fits their setting, or chose an alternative hymn that reflects the theme of the event.

## Reformation

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" ELW 503 & 504 LSB 656 & 657\* CW 200\*

Alternate between the isorhythmic and rhythmic versions of the tune, such as:

Stanzas 1 and 4 Isorhythmic (ELW 504, LSB 657)

Stanzas 2 and 3 Rhythmic (ELW 503, LSB 656, CW 200)

If one of the versions is unfamiliar, perhaps a choir could sing the one stanza, with the assembly joining on the other. The hymn should be sung with great vigor.

### Reflection 1

# **Advent though Epiphany**

#### "Unexpected and Mysterious" ELW 258

The introduction/interlude flows directly into and out of stanzas. It must be included each time, perhaps played on a solo instrument. Keep the movement of all parts very horizontal and flowing. The primary accompaniment is a trio sonata and, if possible, should be used. A simplified version is provided, as needed.

Stanza 1 Baritone or tenor soloist
Stanza 2 Treble solo trebles of the choir
Stanza 3 Everyone with instrumental descant

An instrumental descant is available in *The Hymnal 1982* (Episcopal) #469.

#### "From Heaven Above" ELW 268 LSB 358 CW 38

Introduction 1<sup>st</sup> phrase play melody only using bright registration

2<sup>nd</sup> phrase add the bass line 3<sup>rd</sup> phrase add the alto line 4<sup>th</sup> phrase add the tenor line

This creates a less abrupt transition from the mystery of the preceding hymn to the jubilation of

this hymn.

Stanza 1 All
Stanza 2 Men
Stanza 3 Women
Stanza 12 Choir or All

Stanzas 13-14 All

#### "Midnight Stars Make Bright the Skies"

Mingxing canlan ye wei yang

Introduction Melody played by solo flute or cello

(or by a solo voice on the syllable oo opening to ah in measures 9 to the end)

Stanza 1 Men with cello

Stanza 2 Everyone with both cello and flute

See the **Musicians Guide** for additional performance information and suggestions.

**ELW 280** 

#### "Christ When for Us You Were Baptized" ELW 304

Stanza 1 All

Stanza 2 Baritone solo

Stanza 3 Everyone in harmony Stanza 4 Everyone in unison

# Reflection 2

## **Lent and Easter**

"Bless Now, O God, the Journey" ELW 326

Sing straight through, perhaps with stanza 2 in harmony. Sing boldly.

"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" ELW 351 & 352 LSB 449 & 450 CW 105

If the rhythmic version is unfamiliar, stanza 2 may best be sung by a soloist or choir with everyone singing stanza 3. The harmonization at #351 is by J. S. Bach and may by sung by a choir or, if possible, by all.

Stanzas 1 and 4 Isorhythmic

(ELW 351; stanza one in harmony by choir; stanza 4 in harmony or in unison by all)

Stanzas 2 and 3 Rhythmic

(ELW 352; stanza 2 in unison by solo or choir; stanza 3 in unison by all)

"Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands" ELW 370 LSB 458 CW 141

To be sung (and played) in a strong, joyful manner. Remember that the penultimate note in each of the first two lines is an accented note. Treat it as a downbeat. Keep a half-note pulse and make sure the quarter-note pickups are crisp and energetic.

"Christ has Arisen, Alleluia" ELW 364 LSB 466

Mfurahini, haleluya

Introduction Begin the introduction to this hymn with a drum beat that actually starts in the last measure of the

preceding hymn (see the **Musicians Guide** for suggested rhythms and performance practices).

Stanzas 2-3 Paul Westermeyer suggests that this hymn has the shape of a 'call and response' song. So consider,

stanzas 1 through 3, a solo voice (or quartet) sings the verses with everyone singing refrain, in

harmony, if possible.

Stanzas 4 and 5 Everyone sings everything. Use whatever rhythm instruments you have. Keep hymn jubilant, even

ecstatic.

"Day of Arising" ELW 374

Introduction This text and tune take us to the road to Emmaus. Begin the introduction with a solo instrument

unaccompanied that presents the tune flowing quietly out from the preceding hymn. As the

introduction continues, gradually add keyboard parts.

Stanza 1 Men

Stanza 2 Trebles

Stanza 3 Baritone or tenor solo

Stanza 4 All

## **Pentecost**

"O Living Breath of God"

**ELW 407** 

Soplo de Dios viviente

This Scandinavian folk tune came to us via Latin America. Consider leading with a gentle Latin accompaniment. See the **Musicians Guide** for suggestions of rhythmic formulas and patterns)

Introduction Where possible, have the melody played on a solo instrument with guitar accompaniment;

Stanzas Sing gently, but joyfully. In the final stanza, repeat last few bars as a round gradually getting softer. The

hymn closes quietly.

"God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind"

**ELW 400** 

After a moment of silent reflection, this remarkable text and wonderful Welsh tune, with which it is paired, explode into being, reminding us again of the sheer physical power of God demonstrated on that day.

## Reflection 4/Offering/Benediction

# **Holy Trinity**

"Holy God, We Praise Your Name"

**ELW 414** 

LSB 940

**CW 278** 

The festival concludes as it began with a hymn from Germany. This one, however, with its roots in the Roman Catholic Church, represents a strong ecumenical consensus, a sign that the Church is ever-reforming. The assembly stands and sings boldly, either in unison or in harmony, depending on the arrangement being used.