

THE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FOR MUSICIANS, INC.

Leading to the
Leadership Program for Musicians Certificate in Church Music

A program of
The Episcopal Church,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
Presbyterian Association of Musicians,
And
United Church of Christ Musicians Association

Hymnody of the Christian Church

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with denomination-specific material
added by denominational liaisons to the LPM board

*(To see the full document you may purchase the course
through Anna Leppert-Largent at 989-791-3025 or*

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Introduction to the Course

This course is designed to give LPM participants an overview of the history of hymnody in the Christian church.

Rationale for Organization

Sessions 1 and 2 deal with hymnody in general, rather than with a specific genre or era. The goal of these sessions is for participants to gain a firm grounding both theologically and practically. Session 1 engages participants in the “what,” “why,” and “how” questions: What are hymns? Why do we sing them? How do hymn writers craft hymns? Session 2 is a kind of verbal map to assist participants in navigating a hymnal, a skill needed not only in the remaining sessions of this course, but in their role as church musicians.

Beginning with Session 3 and moving through to Session 9, the course progresses chronologically, with one key exception. Session 7, “The Rediscovery of Early Christian Hymnody,” precedes all other hymnody chronologically, yet its inclusion in the singing practices of Christian congregations occurred much later, particularly by those associated with the nineteenth-century Oxford and Cambridge movements in England. For this reason, these early Christian hymns are treated following nineteenth-century British hymnody (Session 6).

Session 10 is also a “what,” “how,” and “why” kind of chapter: What does hymnody in the church look like in our current time? What are the challenges and gifts of the diverse expressions available to us? How do we sing songs of other cultures? Why and how do discussions of worship style impact hymnody and the role of church musicians?

Limits and Lenses

History is often written by the “winners.” This truth affects how we look at hymnody. For example, people like Luther, Watts, and Wesley are featured prominently, but it certainly took other, less-noticed and less-prominent people to help these hymnic “giants” make the strides they did.

The sheer content of this course requires broad strokes, hence the tendency to focus on the “giants.” It will be important for the instructors to help participants gain a sense of the larger picture, and especially learn how trends and tensions resurface in similar ways in different eras and climates.

This course is clearly written from a Western European lens: England, Western Europe, and America are the primary regions that influenced a majority of Christian hymnody. Now in the twenty-first century, we regularly sing folk songs of many lands, yet such a practice is quite recent. Much, but certainly not all, of Christian song grew out of the established church, particularly monastic communities. The voices of the “folk” were often overlooked. Ralph Vaughan Williams made a radical shift when he embraced

traditional English folk songs and incorporated them into the church's musical repertoire. A similar thing happened in America when shape-note hymns (White spirituals) from Appalachia and African American spirituals began to appear in hymnals. It is important to remember that the song of the church was continually influenced by the musical practices of the surrounding culture, even when these had not yet found a place in the core hymnody of the church.

Terminology

Strictly speaking, the term "hymn," as used in the field of hymnology, refers to the text; a hymn does not need a musical setting. Yet many continually use the word "hymn" when meaning the combination of text and tune. Because of this practice, the course will frequently employ the terms "hymn text" or "hymn tune" as a means of clarification.

You will note that in Session 10 the terminology "hymns and songs" appears. This acknowledges that although this course addresses hymns in the strictest sense as a form of poetry, many of the sung expressions of the church would not be classified as such: simple refrains from Taizé and popular praise choruses, for example. Instructors can help participants see the benefits of many forms of both hymns and songs.

Textbooks and Other Materials for Participants

The **required textbook** for all participants is David W. Music and Milburn Price, *A Survey of Christian Hymnody*, 4th ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing Company, 1999).

Also, participants will need the **hymnal of their own denomination**. It is strongly encouraged that each participant also own a copy of the **hymnal of another denomination**. Instructors will need a copy of the hymnal for each denomination represented in the class. Hymnal companions for various hymnals should also be available for class use.

The **reading for Session 10** is pp. 289-320 from Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: The Church and Music* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1998). Augsburg Fortress Publishers has given permission for LPM instructors to reprint these pages for their participants. The following notice must appear on each copy:

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At the end of this course are pages that may be reproduced and given to participants at the beginning of, or in advance of, Session One. They include the required readings, additional reading suggestions, assignments, and excerpts from the instructor's materials needed for activities and assignments. You will notice that, throughout the instructor's material, suggestions are given as to whether a particular activity might be done in class or as an assignment. These designations have been removed from the participant handouts, allowing for greater flexibility.

There are also pages at the end of the course that include numbers in the four LPM denominational hymnals for all texts and tunes mentioned in the course. This may be used by the leader and/or reprinted for participant use.

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Session 1 First Things: The Nature and Role of Christian Hymnody

Assigned Reading

Music and Price, *A Survey of Christian Hymnody*, Introduction, ix-xviii.

If possible, participants should be encouraged to read this before the first class session.

Standard 1

Participants will reflect upon their own experiences of hymn singing, why the church sings hymns, and the vital role of hymns in Christian worship and ministry.

Benchmark 1.1: Participants will reflect upon and share one experience in which a hymn has had a profound impact on them in some way.

Benchmark 1.2: Participants will be able to describe and recognize how hymns function as praise, prayer, proclamation, and story, and how they both express and form Christian faith.

Standard 2

Participants will learn the various tools of the hymn writer's trade.

Benchmark 2: In a written assignment, participants will demonstrate knowledge of the rhyme schemes, meters, and poetic devices used by hymn writers.