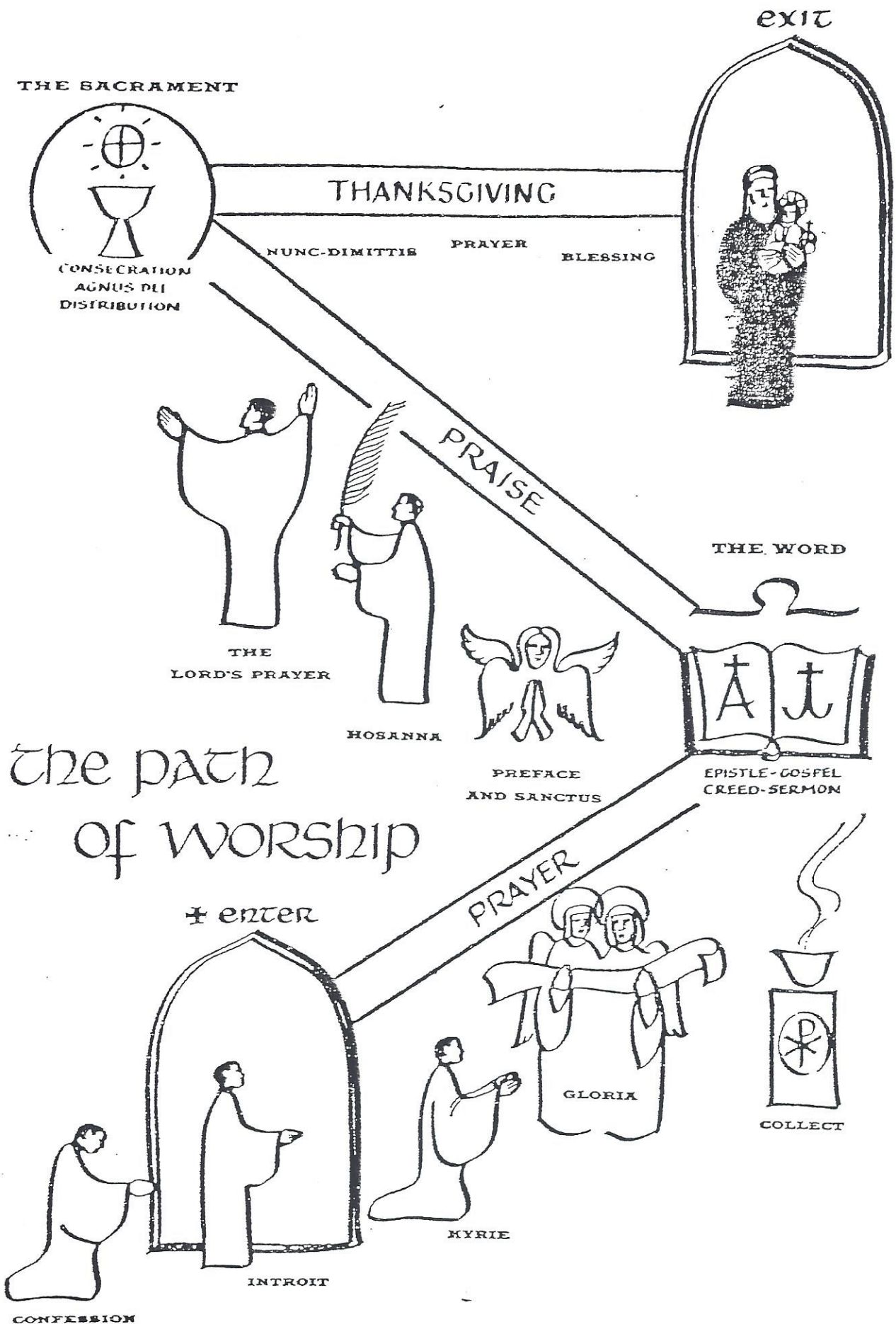
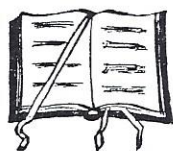


"Planning the Service" by Ralph Gehrke, 1961



Planning the Service



The importance of thorough and proper planning of the Sunday services on the part of pastors, organists, and choir directors cannot be overestimated. When the members of a Christian congregation assemble for worship on a Sunday morning, they

rightfully expect that those in charge of the service have prepared everything carefully from beginning to end. Each Sunday has a specific theme, which is enunciated in the propers for the day (see Table I in the Appendix, page 10). Everything in the service — the hymns, the organ music, the sermon, the choir motet or anthem — must be related to the theme of the day, or there will be confusion.

This planning book is designed to provide those who are called to plan the music for the divine service with a workbook that is so arranged that they may do their planning with all the pertinent materials in view and with concrete suggestions which can lead to the establishment of a music program in the individual parish that is in keeping with the best traditions of the church.

Since music is one of the principal vehicles of congregational worship, those who are called to plan and direct such church music should be thoroughly aware of its context both as to the church year and as to the liturgy. The purpose of the following introductory articles is to review briefly various aspects of church music so that this planning book may be used to fullest advantage, and to provide especially the musician who has not been trained in church music with some practical suggestions as to how he is to proceed. For specific suggestions on the use of this workbook, see "How to Use This Book," page 8.

A meaningful church music program must be constructed with two definite factors in mind: the church year and the traditional structure of the divine service with its varied liturgical elements. Using these elements as the bases for planning, each church musician can construct a clear-cut musical program long in advance of the rehearsal and practice periods, so that finally all the music which is used in the service can without distraction contribute to the worship of the congregation and the general unity of the Service.

Planning the music for the service is an *art*, one to which even the talented musician will have to devote patient study and the wisdom gained from long experience. What is here recommended is therefore not meant to be a dogmatic directive but rather a helpful suggestion. May the booklet perform its modest bit toward making the music of our parish services become

what it should be: a reflection of that heavenly divine service that is always going on unseen in the universe, where the angels and angelic representatives of all creation join in the worship of the Triune God (Rev. 4 and 5), a worship in which we justified sinners may add our chorus as we gather around Word and Sacrament in the service.

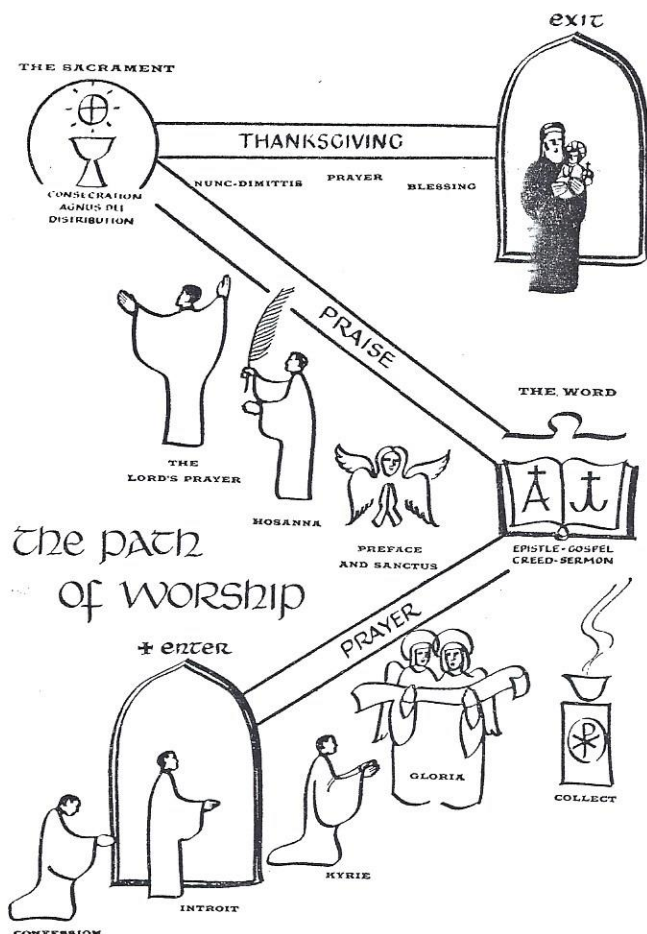
The Liturgy

The responsible church musician must understand both the basic structure or pattern of the Liturgy and the character of each of its various elements. Otherwise he will not be able to interpret them musically with understanding and appreciation. One way to gain insight into the basic structure of the historic divine service is to look at it as a path of worship that leads the worshipers to God's wondrous gifts of Word and Sacrament. Word and Sacrament are the divinely instituted means of grace by which God comes to us in the divine service,¹ and therefore they are the focal points toward which we move as we worship. We can, for convenience' sake, also group together the various individual liturgical elements of the service as "paths" of prayer, of praise, and of thanksgiving, on which we travel to and from these two high points at which God speaks to us through His Word and feeds us with His Sacrament. God's gifts are the heart of our worship; our prayers and praise are but our response to His initiative. Therefore all genuine understanding of the liturgy and of worship flows from a correct understanding and faithful use of these means of grace. The following diagram and explanation is a popular way of representing this path graphically; those who want more detailed information should consult books like Luther Reed's *The Lutheran Liturgy*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960).



We begin our worship with the *Confession of Sins*, preparing to draw near to God by confessing our sins and receiving in the words of absolution full forgiveness. As we enter the actual Path of Worship, the *Introit* sets the tone for this day's service, reflecting the attitude with which we approach our God on this particular day when we shall celebrate that event in the history of salvation which is to be commemorated according to the church year. Next, as we draw near to hear God's message, we enter upon a *PATH OF PRAYER*, first crying to Him for mercy in the *Kyrie*, then greet-

¹ This planning book concerns itself directly only with the chief service, the Holy Communion, but its suggestions will apply also in many respects to the minor services, Matins and Vespers.



ing Him with the joyous *Gloria in Excelsis*, and finally, just before He gives us His message, praying in the *Collect* for that special gift which we want from Him on this day.

Now comes the climax of the first half of the service: the reading and preaching of God's Word. Between the reading of the *Epistle* and the *Gospel* our response to the Word is given in the psalm verses that make up the *Gradual* and the *Alleluia Verse* or the *Gradual and Tract* or the *Greater Alleluia*; and between the *Gospel* and the *Sermon* our response to the Word is given in our confession of the *Creed*, which proclaims all the central truths of God's Word that we believe. The *Sermon*, we realize, is not just man's word but, more important, God's Word, God's Law and God's Gospel proclaimed by God's minister. After the *Sermon* we respond with the *Offertory*, with the offering of ourselves and our gifts, and we prepare for the next part of the service in the *Prayer of the Church*, or *General Prayer*.

The next section of our worship (leading us toward the second high point of the service) can well be termed the PATH OF PRAISE, for, as we are about to receive the great gift of our Lord's body and blood, we mortals are filled with reverent joy: we encourage

one another to "lift up our hearts" and "to give thanks unto the Lord our God" in the *Preface*, and then we break out into praise as we join the heavenly host in singing the *Sanctus*; we greet Him who comes in the name of the Lord with the joyous *Hosanna*; and we pray the *Lord's Prayer* just before the consecration of the earthly elements takes place with our Lord's own *Words of Institution*.

The second high point of the service is THE HOLY SUPPER OF OUR LORD, in which He gives us His very body and blood and says, "For you." No wonder we who are about to receive the Sacrament call upon Him in the *Agnus Dei* as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. The *Distribution* should not be an anticlimax musically but is the time for real Communion music, for genuine rejoicing in the Real Presence of our Lord with His body and blood, with well-planned choir, organ, and congregational music.

The last part of our service is the PATH OF THANKSGIVING, when in deep thankfulness for what we have received in Word and Sacrament we sing aged Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis*, giving thanks for the Sacrament, and receive the *Benediction* before we leave the church to go back to our various paths in this world.

The Choir in the Service

"The primary function of the Choir is to lead the Congregation in the singing of the Liturgy and the Hymns, and to sing the Propers of the Liturgy when they are beyond the capacity of the Congregation."² It is not, therefore, the function of the choir to



add any new liturgical elements to the service; rather, the choir, as the musically trained members of the congregation, is to aid the rest of the congregation in their joint worship. Ideally, therefore, the choir should participate only when it is "substituting" for the rest of the congregation in one of the regular parts of the service. For example, "The Introit for the Day with the *Gloria Patri* should be sung by the Choir. . . . The *Gradual* for the Day . . . should be sung by the Choir."² Or the choir may sing other settings of the Ordinary. For example, during the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, when the *Gloria in Excelsis* is not sung, it might sing other settings of the *Kyrie*, such as "Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above" (TLH 6), which will help the congregation understand the meaning and nature of the *Kyrie* it sings every Sunday. During the

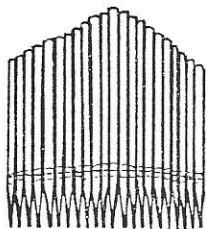
² "General Rubrics," *The Lutheran Liturgy* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n. d.), pp. 419, 420.

Hymns in the Service

Christmas and Easter seasons it might sing other settings of the Gloria in Excelsis. It may sing a motet or anthem on Psalm 23 to substitute for, or augment and interpret, the Gradual for Good Shepherd Sunday. It may sing alternate stanzas of a hymn in order to help the congregation understand and sing the hymn better (cf. the section on "Antiphonal Hymn Singing," p. 6). One of the most appropriate times for choir participation in the service is during the distribution of Holy Communion.

The choir should, however, never simply add songs or anthems to the service "in order to beautify it," as if the choir were not part of the congregation itself but rather a kind of parish concert choir and as if the congregation were a kind of listening concert audience. Such anthems, pleasant and helpful as they may otherwise be, usually undermine the real work of a genuine church choir and in the long run serve to dampen rather than to stimulate congregational worship. The choir should not be deprived of that sense of purpose and exhilaration which comes from vital participation in the liturgy every Sunday.

The Organist in the Service



The function of the organist, like that of the choir, is not to add any new musical parts to the service but to interpret and accompany those parts of the liturgy that call for the special interpretation and accompaniment which an organ can give. Traditionally the

organist has two functions: (a) as an accompanist to the hymn singing and liturgy (and this is an art in itself, if the accompaniment is to be unobtrusive and still really contribute to the singing) and (b) as an "independent" musician who plays the preludes, voluntaries, interludes, and postludes. Yet it should never be forgotten that a true prelude introduces; a true interlude joins; a true postlude brings to a close. Therefore, while the organist is certainly free to choose all this music, yet he is bound to select it in keeping with the parts of the liturgy which he is introducing, joining, or bringing to a close. This does not mean that the organist must restrict himself to thematic selections on the hymn tunes he is interpreting; "free preludes" appropriate to the general theme and tone of the day or to the part of the liturgy of which they are a part are certainly in order. One of the challenging and also promising functions of the organist appears in connection with the antiphonal singing of a hymn, when the organist plays an organ chorale as an independent interpreter of one of the stanzas which the congregation silently follows. But we shall enlarge upon this under "Antiphonal Hymn Singing."

Hymns should not be considered casual additions but integral parts of the service, either as substitutes for one of the parts of the Ordinary (See Appendix, Table II, page 10), or as metrical versions of appropriate Introit or Gradual Psalms (See Appendix, Table III, page 10); or, in a similar manner, they are



to be looked upon as propers of the service, responding to the main lesson of the day (usually the Gospel, though occasionally the Epistle³). This means, of course, that the hymn must answer the twofold requirement of being appropriate to the church year and of being appropriate also to that point in the liturgy at which it is used. The hymn suggestions of this planning book have been made with such requirements in mind and represent an attempt to get the right hymns at the right places. Naturally there is much room here for differences of taste, of opinion, of parish conditions, etc., but in any case the suggestions should encourage those who give careful thought to these things to make intelligent choices of their own. We have in some cases suggested introductory hymns and closing hymns, but in every case we have recommended the use of one Hymn of the Week to be the main hymn of that day (cf. the next section: "The Hymn-of-the-Week Plan"). A great deal of experience is needed to fit our large and complex hymnological heritage to the needs of the individual parish. Each person, especially each pastor, must study the hymnological heritage of the church and become so fully acquainted with it that he will be able to choose hymns that are suitable for each Sunday and festival of the church year. He must realize that hymns have personalities — personalities which express themselves in characteristic texts and tunes; he must get to know the main types of tunes, such as plainsong, Reformation chorale, measured chorale, pietistic chorale, psalm tunes (French, Scottish, and Old English), florid tunes, the church hymn, folk songs, and modern tunes.⁴ Something of the original purpose and background, and of the general theology that shaped each hymn should be known. It is wise to keep a cumulative listing of all the hymns that are sung, marking the new hymn tunes used. This will enable both present and future pastors and church musicians to understand the "hymn situation" of each parish.

³ Sundays when the Epistle gives the main Sunday theme: Judica (Lent 5), The Great High Priest; Michaelmas, Rev. 12. The Holy Angels; Trinity 6, Baptism, New Righteousness; Trinity 7, Sanctification of Our Bodies; Trinity 21, Spiritual Armor.

⁴ A most helpful introduction to such study is found in chapters 5 and 6 of Henry E. Horn, *O Sing Unto the Lord* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1956).