

A Brief History of Hymnals in the LCMS

By Michael Poynter

1847—Kirchengesangbuch fur Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden ungeanderter Augsburgischer Confession— (German) (Hymnal for Evangelical-Lutheran Congregations of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession)

With the encouragement of Dr. C.F.W. Walther, the first president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Kirchengesangbuch was the first hymnal produced for this newly formed church body. This hymnal was published in German since this was the language spoken in the worship life of these congregations.

1912—Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book (ELH)

Published by the English Synod (now a part of the LCMS). It is the first English Hymnal to be used in the LCMS.

1941—The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)

The first English hymnal produced by the LCMS through the efforts of the Intersynodical Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics for the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. It was authorized for use by the Synodical Conference.

1969—Worship Supplement (WS)

In 1965, The LCMS in Convention resolved to cooperate with other major Lutheran Church bodies in America in developing a Hymnal for all Lutherans. At the invitation of The LCMS, representatives from 4 other Lutheran Church bodies came together to form the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) in February of 1966. WS was a foretaste of the efforts from this hymnal project.

1978—Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW)

This is the hymnal adopted by the Lutheran Church of America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and other smaller Lutheran church bodies, most of which now constitute the ELCA.

Because of major theological concerns about LBW, the LCMS, in its 1977 convention, resolved to suspend approval of LBW until a blue-ribbon committee could assess congregational concerns. The committee found a phenomenal amount of Biblical and theological error in LBW, but recommended “LBW be accepted with modifications.”

1982—Lutheran Worship (LW)

The 1979 convention adopted the recommendations of the Special Hymnal Review Committee and, in 1982, the new hymnal for The LCMS was published under the name Lutheran Worship. LW is adopted by the LCMS as its first official hymnal.

1998—Hymnal Supplement 98 (HS-98)

With the encouragement of Dr. A. L. Barry, tenth president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Commission on Worship in 1997 announced plans to produce a new hymnal combining the best of both hymnals as well as new material. HS-98 was published as a foretaste of the upcoming hymnal scheduled for release in 2007.

2006—Lutheran Service Book (LSB)

LSB is adopted as the second official hymnal by the 2004 Synodical Convention by 88% of the delegates. It is published ahead of schedule in the summer of 2006, ready to begin the new Church year with Advent.

2040—2050—A New Hymnal Efforts will probably begin in the development of a new Lutheran Hymnal