



# Ever Unfolding: *All Creation Sings* as a Supplement to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*

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**H**ymnals are a snapshot in time. They capture the present moment in a denomination's worship and hymnody patterns, but they also embed the history of a faith community as well as its aspirations for the future. That's one reason so many people love to collect them: they are not neutral collections of songs, but curated exhibits that give us insights into the past, present, and imagined future worship life of a particular people.

Hymnal supplements, then, offer us an even more unique snapshot. Supplements uphold their predecessor core resource while filling in gaps that have since been identified. Supplements add to the hymnody of the core resource but aren't trying to merely publish what

*Developing new hymnals and worship collections can be a very complicated process. In this article, David Sims, Senior Music Editor at Fortress Press recounts the elements that had to come together to result in a very recent hymnal supplement, All Creation Sings. This account illustrates the complexities of such a production, and the elements involved.*

was left on the cutting room floor, or what would have been included if the primary hymnal were able to be bigger at the start. It's a chance to affirm what still works, find or create what is missing, and dream again about what the future church will need for the next 15–20 years.

This essay is about the process of taking that snapshot. *All Creation Sings* is a worship book<sup>1</sup>, but it is also an endeavor, an intentional process of reflection, creativity, and imagination.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ELCA SUPPLEMENTS AND WORSHIP RENEWAL

In 1978, Augsburg Publishing House published *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW),<sup>2</sup> the result of years of study by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was founded ten years later in 1988, along with its newly-merged publishing house Augsburg Fortress. In 1995, Augsburg Fortress published *With One Voice* (WOV),<sup>3</sup> the first hymnal specifically created by the ELCA. The title of the book is an allusion its diverse hymnody now collected in one place, but also references that this is a hymnal for the merging of the ELCA's predecessor bodies, now singing (and worshipping) with one voice. WOV is clearly a supplement to LBW: the visual design and graphics follow LBW style; the hymns are numbered starting at 601 in order to continue the numbering where LBW left off at 569; hymns are not duplicated from LBW, so standard beloved hymns are not found in both resources.

The need for more culturally-specific hymnals followed, resulting in the Spanish-language hymnal *Libro de Liturgia y Cántico* (LLC)<sup>4</sup> and *This Far by Faith* (TTF)<sup>5</sup> for African-American communities.

<sup>1</sup> Augsburg Fortress, the publishing house of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, properly calls *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, *All Creation Sings*, and other similar books “worship books” rather than “hymnals” because they contain liturgy, prayers, calendars, rites, and other materials needed for the complete worship of a community. See, for example, the title *Service Book and Hymnal*—one book, but named as if it has two separate but related functions. For this essay, however, the term “hymnal” is used for ease and alignment with our common cultural understanding of that word.

<sup>2</sup> *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> *With One Voice: A Lutheran Resource for Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> *Libro de Liturgia y Cántico* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> *This Far by Faith: An African American Resource for Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999).

These resources are more distinct: they have their own visual designs, they are hardbound, and there is some limited crossover and duplication of hymns from earlier hymnals such as LBW, enabling them to more easily stand alone.<sup>6</sup> The goal of LLC and TFF was not supplemental in the same way as WOV; their aim was to recognize that Jesus's incarnation is itself a "model and mandate" for worshiping God in specific local cultures, and that "contextualization is a necessary task for the Church's mission in the world, so that the Gospel can be ever more deeply rooted in diverse local cultures."<sup>7</sup>

The Renewing Worship activities at the ELCA from 2000–2005 culminated in the publication of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW)<sup>8</sup> in 2006, the first primary hymnal since LBW. From the beginning, ELW was seen as just one step in the ongoing worship renewal of the church, acknowledging that liturgy and hymnody should continually evolve and change. A portion of every sale is reinvested in a worship resource fund at the ELCA, which gave rise to projects like the bilingual *Santa Comunion*<sup>9</sup> liturgy and three extensive sourcebooks of liturgical music, generated by composers in conversation with one another around topics such as Lent and the Three Days or Life Passages.

The ELCA Worship Jubilee event in 2015 started conversations about the possibility of a supplement to ELW, and the ELCA continued to publish social statements that advocated for renewed worship resources supportive of the church's newly-articulated mission in those areas, such as "Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action" (2019).<sup>10</sup> The ELCA and Augsburg Fortress also conducted research to learn what pastors, musicians, and other leaders in the church felt was needed, and the result was a call to prepare a supplemental resource to ELW, in the same spirit as WOV.

<sup>6</sup> In the case of LLC, it has to function more as an independent resource as it's entirely in Spanish, and LBW is not.

<sup>7</sup> *The Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1996) in *This Far by Faith*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> *Santa Comunion | Holy Communion* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> "Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action," (Chicago: Division for Church in Society, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2019).

## THE START OF A SUPPLEMENT

The work of preparing what would eventually become *All Creation Sings* (ACS)<sup>11</sup> was led by the worship and music staff at the ELCA and Augsburg Fortress, who organized several working groups of church leaders: a Liturgy Working Group, a Hymnody Working Group, a call for public submissions of texts and tunes, and panels of reviewers who reviewed drafts the working groups created and provided feedback.

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One of the most important discussions centered on how self-sufficient ACS needed to be. Should one assume that every user would also have an ELW nearby? Or would there be times when only ACS was available, such as in chapels or outdoor ministries or other settings? The groups decided that ACS should primarily be supplemental, but to assume that groups could worship only from ACS if needed, especially in settings such as contemplative prayer services.

After several years of work, ACS was published on November 30, 2020, amidst a global pandemic that kept assemblies from gathering or singing. The name turned out to be prophetic and bittersweet: the rest of creation would have to sing on our behalf until we found a way to safely gather again.

## WHAT'S SUPPLEMENTAL ABOUT THE DESIGN?

The design decisions that changed in ACS are all related to the goal of signifying growth, movement, and inclusion. ACS keeps the same trim size as ELW, the same typefaces, the same secondary red

<sup>11</sup> *All Creation Sings: Evangelical Lutheran Worship Supplement* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2020).

color and the same music engraving fonts and style. While the design of the cross graphic is the same as ELW, designed by Nicholas Markell, the rest of the artwork was newly commissioned from artist Julie Lonneman. Her task was to create artwork with the same two-color palette as ELW that would harmonize with the ELW family but have a more fluid feel. The artwork before Setting 12 is a good example. Without using gradients or individual strokes, this image balances the crisp lines of ELW artwork with a sense of unfolding stars. Because this setting is meant to have options for evening celebrations of the eucharist (as well as during the morning), the starry sky is balanced by the rising sun on the parament.

The addition of narrative notes under some hymns is a new element introduced in ACS. Set in the contrasting *sans serif* typeface under a line rule at the bottom of the hymn, these brief notes are included when an approximate phonetic pronunciation of the original language is especially helpful or necessary (ACS #1007); when possible uses for the hymn might be particularly helpful to point out (ACS #997); or when the context of a hymn's creation might be important to know, such as "Holy woman, graceful giver" being a celebration of the ordination of women in the ELCA (ACS #1001). These notes attempt to give context and the tools needed for full participation of the assembly without being prescriptive or limiting the creativity of worship leaders. While there are a few additional notes in the Accompaniment Edition, the Pew Edition contains nearly all of them as well. This continues the tradition of giving the assembly as much worship material as possible: liturgies, prayers, indexes, and notes are not just for worship leaders, but for everyone.

The covers of the Accompaniment, Leaders, and Guitar Editions features the cross and leaves artwork from ELW, enlarged and debossed into the cover material. Rather than being set squarely on the cover, the artwork begins and ends off the page, as if it trails on into the unknown. This is a purposeful design decision, meant to indicate that this volume is a small part of the unfolding worship of the church, which started before ACS and has already continued on.

## WHAT'S SUPPLEMENTAL ABOUT THE LITURGIES?

The ELCA conducted research in 2018 to determine what kinds of worship resources congregations needed and felt were lacking now that twelve years had passed since the publication of ELW. The range of answers indicated a number of areas where a supplemental book could be of great use. An increasing number of congregations answered that they worship in both English and Spanish and needed a holy communion liturgy that was bilingual. This led to the development of Setting 11, which sets the liturgy in parallel columns and embeds music from a variety of sources; this liturgy is discussed further below.<sup>12</sup>

Others answered that they now hold eucharistic services in the evening, perhaps on Saturday or Sunday nights, and needed a setting that embraced the evening as part of the liturgical language but was still centered on holy communion. Setting 12 may be used at any time of day but provides options that are especially suitable for evening use.<sup>13</sup> For example, the Confession and Forgiveness might begin, “Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, creator of the stars of night, companion at the evening table, breath over the deep waters.”<sup>14</sup> Instead of a setting of “This is the Feast,” Setting 12 provides a Magnificat setting, which could be sung in the morning but has deep associations with evening worship. In a nod to the Emmaus story, the words “Be known to us, Lord Jesus, in the breaking of the bread. Alleluia,”<sup>15</sup> may be sung instead of a “Lamb of God” at the beginning of communion distribution, taken from Luke 24:30–31.

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<sup>12</sup> ACS, 8–28.

<sup>13</sup> ACS, 29–41.

<sup>14</sup> ACS, 29.

<sup>15</sup> ACS, 40.

Many assemblies also indicated the need for a liturgy that was more contemplative than the “Service of the Word” in ELW, perhaps for midweek evening services. The “Service of Word and Prayer” answers this call, providing an open-ended framework for a service filled with silence, meditation, scripture, and prayer.<sup>16</sup> The Accompaniment and Leaders Editions provide much more guidance for worship leaders preparing and leading this liturgy, which keeps the service to only four pages in the Pew Edition, adding to the spare and minimalist experience. Anticipating that many assemblies will choose to hold this service during Advent and Lent, each prayer has options for general use as well as Advent- and Lent-specific options.

#### WHAT’S SUPPLEMENTAL ABOUT THE PRAYERS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES?

ACS continues the tradition of LBW, ELW, and other previous hymnals by providing prayers for various occasions, here titled “Prayers, Thanksgivings, and Laments.”<sup>17</sup> (This inclusion is one of the strongest reasons these books are more properly called “worship books” instead of “hymnals”.) ACS expands greatly upon the ELW list, delving deeper into the needs of Christian life. These include: prayers for creation, one each for the water, air, land, farmland, and animals; prayers for victims of gun violence; healing from breaches of trust; prayers to name and end racial prejudice in our own lives and in systems of oppression; prayers of thanksgiving for the varied spectrum of gender and gender identity; prayers for the loss of memory, either for oneself or for a caretaker; a prayer at the end of a marriage.

The “Scriptural Images for God” is a direct response to the ELCA’s social statement *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*.<sup>18</sup> It is a list of one hundred images for God with their scriptural citation, such as “glory,” “shade,” “hiding place,” “laboring mother,” “parent,” or to the delight of children holding ACS, “monster-slayer” (taken from Psalm 74:13–14). It’s an act of the democratization of worship materials that this incredible list is found in the Pew Edition of ACS. Such a reference is for everyone, not just worship leaders. It put into everyone’s hands

<sup>16</sup> ACS, 42–45.

<sup>17</sup> ACS, 46–61

<sup>18</sup> ACS, 268–271.

some of the myriad ways God is imagined in the Bible, opening the doors to deeper understanding of scripture as well as making plain the ways our worship language heavily relies on some images more than any others.

The list of Scriptural Images brings up an important argument for physical copies of worship resources in an increasingly digital age. Worship materials belong to everyone, and worship materials usually take longer to understand and contemplate than the brief instant in which they are spoken, heard, or sung in worship. Providing physical books in the worship space allows everyone to access these materials at any time and sends the message that these words, melodies, and concepts are meant to be embodied, handled, examined, and studied.

#### WHAT'S SUPPLEMENTAL ABOUT THE HYMNS?

The hymns in ACS are organized into the same topical categories (and in the same order) as ELW, beginning with Advent and ending with the topic Praise, Thanksgiving.<sup>19</sup> The priorities from the ELCA research were clear: worship leaders asked for hymns that went deeper into areas like aging, dying, and life transitions; care of creation; healing; justice and peace; sending hymns that are connected to worship and mission; hymns for specific seasons of the church year; and hymns for some Sundays in the Revised Common Lectionary that needed more support.

Leaders also felt very strongly that hymns should come from a variety of sources, more representative of God's people, with emphasis on decreasing the disparity in contributions by women and BIPOC contributors. Part of that openness and expansiveness beyond ELW was an intentional effort to include more "short songs" for worship. These are songs or hymns that are brief and usually meant to be sung multiple times or as congregational responses. They are also usually able to be led without accompaniment and taught "paperlessly," that is, singing together without printed or projected words or music, which can be ideal for small retreats, outdoor settings, or darkened midweek services, in addition to weekly worship. These include songs with a simple, intuitive melody line such as "Feed us with hunger for

<sup>19</sup> With only 200 hymns, a few categories from ELW were combined or dropped, such as joining "Creation, Stewardship" into one topic.



justice” (ACS #978), layered songs with simultaneous parts such as “Open my heart” (ACS #1079) or call-and-response hymns such as “Guide my feet” (ACS #987).

The hymns “Let my spirit always sing” (ACS #1020) and “When we must bear persistent pain” (ACS #1014) are good examples of hymns about aging and life transitions that expand beyond the images presented in ELW. Shirley Erena Murray’s hymn “Let My Spirit Always Sing” deals forthrightly with changes in our bodies as we age, naming them out loud as we sing them in church. Even though our hearts are wintering, or though our bodies are confined, or though we must be open to change, we are still able to let our spirits sing, still able to trust that God’s love does not fade.<sup>20</sup>

“When We Must Bear Persistent Pain,” with lyrics by Ruth Duck, names the reality of chronic pain, whether physical or emotional, and acknowledges that physical healing is not always possible. One of the paradigms of healing stories from scripture and in hymns has long been that praying for healing brings relief, or that restoration of health is a result of faithful living and a gracious God. Our lived reality, of course, is that illness, decline, or disability is not a moral sentence imposed by our beliefs. Duck’s second stanza sings this way:

Support us as we learn new ways  
to care for bodies newly frail.  
Help us endure, and live and love.  
Hear our complaint when patience fails.<sup>21</sup>

It acknowledges that bodies change, asking not for healing as much as support in order to adapt, and a promise that God still listens when our patience reaches a limit.

David Lohman’s hymn “God, We Gather As Your People” (ACS #1038) sings of welcome and the wide embrace of the community of Christ; this is not necessarily unique in hymnody, and there are a number of hymns about welcome in ELW. Where this hymn breaks new ground in a Lutheran hymnal supplement is in its third stanza:

<sup>20</sup> Shirley Erena Murray, “Let My Spirit Always Sing,” (Carol Stream, Illinois: Hope Publishing Company, 1996)

<sup>21</sup> Ruth Duck, “When We Must Bear Persistent Pain,” (Chicago: GIA Publications Inc., 2005).

Oh, we pray for all the young lives cut short by fear  
and shame,  
so afraid of who they are and whom they love.  
May the message now be banished that your love is  
for the few;  
may their faith in you renew.<sup>22</sup>

LGBTQIA+ people have been and continue to be not only excluded from the church but actively targeted and abused. This hymn names that reality, names that too many individuals have died by suicide, been forced to hide their lives, or have abandoned churches which have shut them out, and asks that those still inside the church do the work of banishing that discrimination and praying for a renewed relationship with a God that never stopped loving all of God's children.

## SETTING 11

“Holy Communion Setting 11” provides a study in how all of these facets and goals were turned into a finished liturgy. The research indicated a need for a bilingual liturgy in order to serve the growing number of congregations worshiping in both Spanish and English simultaneously. The goal of the liturgy was to present the service of holy communion in a way that could be successfully bilingual, as well as led entirely in English, entirely in Spanish, or a mixture of the two.

### *Content*

Most of the work of translating had already been accomplished with *Santa Comuni3n*, but the translation received another round of review by native Spanish-speaking worship leaders. The first design decision some might notice is the switch from the title “Setting Eleven / Liturgia Once” to “Setting 11 / Liturgia 11.” While ELW communion settings are titled with the number spelled as a word, this changed to numerals in ACS because the Spanish word for eleven is *once*, which is also an English word with a different meaning.

<sup>22</sup> David Lohman, “God, We Gather As Your People / *For All the Children*” (Minneapolis: Welcome Song Music, admin. Augsburg Fortress, 2007).

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In the search for bilingual liturgical music, some of the suggestions were originally conceived in Spanish before being translated and some originally in English. The committee felt that centering music from the Spanish-speaking community was a core goal of the project, one that expanded the breadth of our church's song. It also leads to much more satisfactory text underlay, as it was easier to fit English translations to the Spanish originals. The only piece commissioned for this liturgy was the Kyrie, written by Ana Hernández. Her challenge was to write a bilingual Kyrie that ended in D minor (setting up the key of the Gloria to follow).

### *Design*

Several layout ideas presented themselves for this setting. Should the languages be divided by page across a spread, so that one language is always be on the left page, and one language always on the right, as in *Santa Comunción*? Should the languages share a page but be set in two parallel columns? Should the languages alternate line by line, perhaps set off by a different color or weight? The precedence of type weight (roman, bold, italic) and color as an indication of leader, assembly, and rubric information made this type of solution impractical, so the editorial team decided they had to be differentiated by position on the page. Samples splitting them across the spread, one on the left page and one on the right, seemed to keep them too distinct, as it would be possible to only follow along on one page of the spread and never encounter the other language. Instead, each language shares a page, in two parallel columns, with no line rule between them. This allowed several advantages. First, it mirrors how the assembly worships together, sitting

or standing shoulder to shoulder with folks speaking a different language. Second, it allowed for shorter line lengths that could be broken in similar phrases for each language, meaning that worshipers could easily follow along in both columns if they were bilingual or trying to learn the other language. Because Spanish tends to have slightly more characters than English, the columns aren't exactly an equal width: the Spanish column is slightly wider.

This arrangement also means that the embedded music graphics span both columns. After more trials, the team decided to set both languages in roman type, rather than set Spanish in italics as is done in the hymn section, and to set the Spanish first. This achieved several goals: 1) the typography matches the spoken words around it; 2) neither is set off as visually different in a bilingual setting; 3) the Spanish is closest to the music notation, aiding worshipers who might be trying to learn Spanish, assumed to be the majority of people.

The result of all of these decisions is a setting that is rooted firmly in the Holy Communion text of ELW but expanded to include Spanish in a way that mirrors how worshipers encounter one another in the assembly: side by side, joining in prayer and song.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Worship continually adapts and changes, and hymnals and their supplements provide snapshots of a church's past and hopes for the future. In response to the life of our planet and its creatures, the patterns of worship and languages of prayer, and the joys and pains of the church's worshipers, ACS endeavors to supplement the church's song with new and timely resources for God and God's creatures. ⊕

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