

No Time for Hymnology?

—

Kevin Bode, David Porth, Kate Tiefel

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1 A - bidde with me, fast falls the e - ven - tide.
 2 Swift to its close ebbs out life's lit - tle day;
 3 Come not in ter - rors, as the King of kings,
 4 Thou on my head in ear - ly youth didst smile,

The dark - ness deep - ens; Lord, with me a - bidde.
 earth's joys grow dim, its glo - ries pass a - way;
 but kind and good, with heal - ing in thy wings,
 and though re - bel - lious and per - verse mean - while,

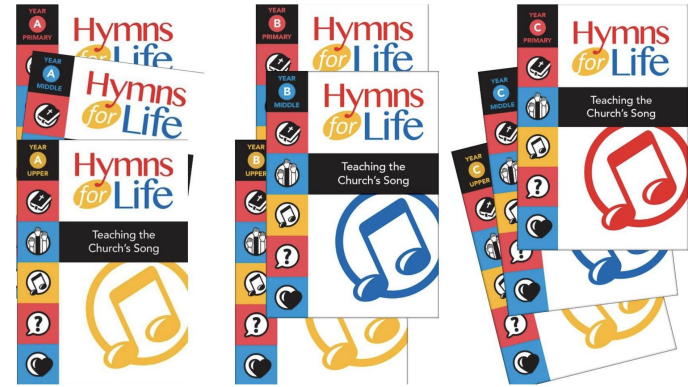
When oth - er help - ers fail and com - forts flee,
 change and de - cay in all a - round I see;
 tears for all woes, a heart for ev - 'ry plea;
 thou hast not left me oft as I left thee;

help of the help - less, O a - bidde with me.
 O thou who chang - est not, a - bidde with me.
 come, Friend of sin - ners, thus a - bidde with me.
 on to the close, O Lord, a - bidde with me.

Overview

Hymns for Life: What is it?

- K-8 hymnology curriculum
- 90 hymns to teach
- Three age levels—Primary Level (K-2nd), Middle Level (3rd-5th), and Upper Level (6th-8th)—within a three-year cycle, labeled Year A, Year B, and Year C.
- 12 of the 90 hymns are CORE hymns: their value and worth have proven superior (teach every year or every other)

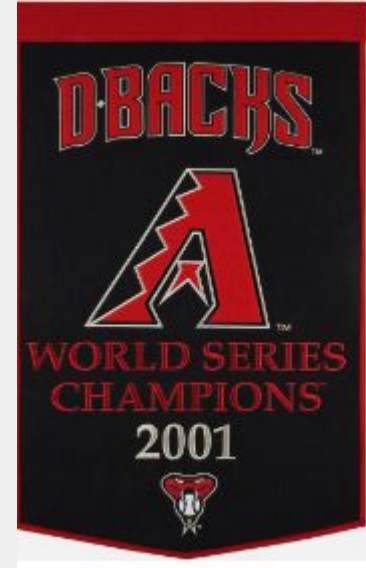


| | Year A | Year B | Year C |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|
| Advent | Savior of the Nations, Come | O Come, O Come, Emmanuel | Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers |
| Christmas | Where Shepherds Lately Knelt | Of the Father's Love Begotten | From Heaven Above to Earth I Come |
| Baptism of Jesus | God's Own Child I Gladly Say It | God's Own Child I Gladly Say It | God's Own Child I Gladly Say It |
| Epiphany | As with Gladness Men of Old How Lovely Shines the Morning Star | To Jordan's River Came Our Lord How Lovely Shines the Morning Star | I Want to Walk as a Child of God How Lovely Shines the Morning Star |
| Transfiguration | Beautiful Savior | Thy Strong Word | Down from the Mount of Glory |
| Ash Wednesday | When I Survey the Wondrous Cross | Jesus Sinners Does Receive | Chief of Sinners Though I Be |
| Lent | O Sacred Head, Now Wounded Lamb of God, Pure and Holy | O Sacred Head, Now Wounded Glory Be to Jesus | O Sacred Head, Now Wounded Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted |
| Palm Sunday | Hosanna, Loud Hosanna | All Glory, Laud, and Honor | Ride On, Ride On in Majesty |
| Holy Thursday | Draw Near, Draw Near (Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord) | Here, O My Lord, I See You Face to Face | Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness |
| Good Friday | God Was There on Calvary | Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle | O Perfect Life of Love |
| Easter | I Know That My Redeemer Lives Awake, My Heart, with Gladness This Is the Feast of Victory | I Know That My Redeemer Lives O Sons and Daughters of the King* At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing (or Communion) | I Know That My Redeemer Lives Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands* He's Risen, He's Risen |
| Good Shepherd | Jesus, Shepherd of the Sheep | Children of the Heavenly Father | I Am Jesus' Little Lamb |
| Ascension | Crown Him with Many Crowns | My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less* | In Christ Alone |
| Pentecost | Holy Spirit, Love Divine | Come Holy Ghost, Creator Blest | Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord |
| Reformation | A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* | A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* | A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* |
| Thanksgiving | Now Thank We All Our God* | Now Thank We All Our God* | Now Thank We All Our God* |
| Second Coming | Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying | Jerusalem, the Golden* | For All the Saints |
| General | Go, My Children, with My Blessing God Loved the World So That He Gave Hark, the Voice of Jesus Crying Now the Light Has Gone Away Salvation unto Us Has Come Take My Life and Let It Be* Blessed Jesus, at Your Word Christ Is with Me From Depths of Woe, Lord God, I Cry Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word My Song Is Love Unknown* Now Rest Beneath Night's Shadow Praise to the Lord, the Almighty The Church's One Foundation What a Friend We Have in Jesus When Peace Like a River | Go, My Children, with My Blessing God Loved the World So That He Gave Hark, the Voice of Jesus Crying Now the Light Has Gone Away Salvation unto Us Has Come Take My Life and Let It Be* Abide with Me God's Word Is Our Great Heritage I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus Jesus, Priceless Treasure Lord, Open Now My Heart to Hear Luther's Morning and Evening Prayer Not unto Us O Light of Gentile Nations Precious Lord, Take My Hand What Grace Is This With the Lord Begin Your Task | Go, My Children, with My Blessing God Loved the World So That He Gave Hark, the Voice of Jesus Crying Now the Light Has Gone Away Salvation unto Us Has Come Take My Life and Let It Be* Abide, O Dearest Jesus Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled Father, We Praise You How Great Thou Art Jesus, Still Lead On Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See O God, Our Help in Ages Past O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is On My Heart Imprint Your Image Sweet the Moments, Rich in Blessing |

What's included?

- Resources that saves you time and that also pays tribute to our “L” blood type: LUTHERAN heritage!
- All digital
- Slide templates
- Teacher scripted lesson plan (intro, background, questions centered on 1 thought, a generous amount of cross-curricular activities)
- Audio recordings of every hymn sung by WELS children's choirs
- Audio recordings of the hymn played on piano and organ
- Models of how to assign hymns for the entire year
- Teacher devotions
- and????

Introduction



What does the victory banner of
Easter mean to us?

Background: what do they have in common?



Stanza 2

What does the victory banner of Easter
mean to us?

The foe was triumphant when on Calvary
the Lord of creation was nailed to the tree.
In Satan's domain did the hosts shout and jeer,
for Jesus was slain, whom the evil ones fear.



Biblical Connections

What does the victory banner of Easter
mean to us?

14 The LORD God said to the serpent:

Because you have done this,
you are cursed more than all the livestock,
and more than every wild animal.

You shall crawl on your belly,
and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. **15** I will put hostility between
you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed.^[a]

He will crush your head,
and you will crush his heel.



Activities

ACTIVITIES

Memory Activity

Memorize stanzas 1,2

Musical Activity

Popcorn Singing

(For this to work, students will need to be able to identify their pitch in the music. If students cannot read music, the teacher can assign pitches verbally and have students mark them, or a prepared photocopy with the pitches identified by color or pitch name can be distributed.) Assign specific notes to students. Simply ask, “Who wants a D?” “Who wants an E?” etc. When it’s a particular student’s turn to sing, he or she should pop up. Sounds and words will randomly “pop” around the room!

Hymnal Activity

Hunt for Talent

Have students look for another hymn for which one person wrote both the text and the tune. It's quite uncommon for the same person to do both. That's talent!

Visual Activity

Raise the Banner

If Christ really did raise a victory banner, what would it look like? Obtain cloth for each student and something to attach it to serve as a pole, or do one giant banner as a class. Design it appropriately.

Writing Activity

Home, Home on the (Ar)range!

Ask the students: If you could control how this hymn gets played and what instruments play it, what would you do? Outline your musical arrangement. What instruments should be used? What kind of dynamics would be used? How should singers perform the hymn? Who should sing? To answer these questions, look at and consider both the text and the melody. Then, offer some creative ways to present this hymn. There are many moods conveyed in this particular hymn.

Extra, Extra, Read All About It!

Have students write an article, social media post, or television news story that is breaking news about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Feel free to proofread, copy, and display for others to see around the Easter season!

Speaking and Listening Activity

Lights, Camera, Action!

Stanzas 2,3 of this hymn can easily be brought to life as a skit. Have students create a dialogue and then use action that clearly portrays the events and message of the stanzas. (You could use the “breaking news” idea from the Writing Activity and make television news stories with interviews, commentary, and more.)



Prayer

Sing the Hymn!



| Sunday | Hymns for Life Year A | Hymns for Life Year B | Hymns for Life Year C |
|------------|---|---|---|
| Proper 18B | 624 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (other) | 776 With the Lord Begin Your Task | 778 Father, We Praise You |
| Proper 19B | <i>Flex: Depending on when dates fall throughout the church year, school breaks, or when the school year starts, hymns for this week may come from Proper 18B or cover something omitted later in the year due to scheduling.</i> | | |
| Proper 20B | 441 I Know That My Redeemer Lives | 582 Not unto Us (other) | 405 On My Heart Imprint Your Image |
| Proper 21B | 855 The Church's One Foundation (other) | 782 Luther's Morning and Evening Prayer (2) | 924 Abide, O Dearest Jesus (other) |
| Proper 22B | 947 Lamb of God, Pure and Holy | 497 O Light of Gentile Nations | 510 In Christ Alone |
| Proper 23B | 919 Blessed Jesus, at Your Word (other) | 640 God's Word Is Our Great Heritage (other) | 820 O God, Our Help in Ages Past (other) |
| Proper 24B | 679 God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It (other) | 679 God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It (other) | 679 God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It (other) |
| Proper 25B | 597/598 Now Thank We All Our God | 660 Here, O My Lord, I See You Face to Face | 663 Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness (other) |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| First Sunday after Epiphany—Baptism of Our Lord C | 930 Go, My Children, with My Blessing (other) | 377 To Jordan's River Came Our Lord | 930 Go, My Children, with My Blessing (other) |
| Second Sunday after Epiphany C | 486 Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying (other) | 783 Abide with Me | 578 Chief of Sinners Though I Be (2) |
| Third Sunday after Epiphany C | 558 Salvation unto Us Has Come | 558 Salvation unto Us Has Come | 558 Salvation unto Us Has Come |
| Fourth Sunday after Epiphany C | 695/696 Take My Life and Let It Be (1) | 695/696 Take My Life and Let It Be (1) | 695/696 Take My Life and Let It Be (1) |
| Fifth Sunday after Epiphany C | 745 Hark, the Voice of Jesus Crying | 745 Hark, the Voice of Jesus Crying | 745 Hark, the Voice of Jesus Crying |
| Sixth Sunday after Epiphany C | 662 Draw Near | 816 I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus (1) | 400 Sweet the Moments Rich in Blessing |
| <i>Seventh Sunday after Epiphany C</i> | <i>Flex: Some years will not have a Seventh Sunday after Epiphany. Some years will have it but not have an Eighth Sunday after Epiphany based on when Easter falls, so the hymns for the latter may be studied here. For years that do have the Eighth Sunday after Epiphany, if a school observes a spring break, hymns from that future break week may be studied here.</i> | | |

Value

“‘Tell me a story,’ children say. In the liturgy of the Church we do -- the most important story they will ever hear or learn.”

-Carl Schalk, First Person Singular (1998)

Why teach hymns?

- A hymn naturally links to several core subject areas.
- Hymns remind us of what our triune God has done for us.
- Hymns powerfully preach the story of our sin and the lengths to which Jesus went to save us.
- Hymns teach us how to pray.
- Hymns teach us how to praise our triune God.
- Hymns teach us how to give respect, honor, and glory to our risen King.
- Hymns connect students to Christians from the centuries past.
- [A Letter to Parents](#)

“Hymns that accompany one’s life are one of life’s richest treasures. And so when I became responsible for selecting hymns for my congregation [school] on a weekly basis, I knew that I was equipping them to either live well or not so well.”

*T. David Gordon, “Why Johnny Can’t Sing Hymns”
P & R Publishing Company Phillipsburg, NJ: 2010.*

All-school hymn singing

- Recording: [Emmanuel Chapel audio, Christ Jesus Lay, Emanuel Chapel Video - "Go My Children"](#)
- One of the biggest strengths of a hymn is that it allows the entire body of Christians to participate; that's worship principle 101. The melody doesn't need to be fancy and syncopated and upbeat all the time; it's a means for proclaiming Christ and praising him, from young to old.
- A local, mini worship conference
- Displays
 - School unity
 - Intergenerational church unity - the school as an arm of the larger church ministry, young and old unified as one body of believers
- Children leave our care and training with a repertoire of “songs, hymns, and spiritual songs” to carry them on in lives of faith. That repertoire can be formed accidentally/haphazardly or intentionally with a meaningful, rich curriculum. **We choose.**

“For those congregations that have thriving educational ministries, the end goal is to instill in young people a regular, gospel-motivated habit for worship and connect them to the worshipping assembly for the rest of their lives. No greater joy can be in the heart of Lutheran educators than that their former students are still worshipping regularly far after the time in their classrooms. The very gospel is at stake in our approaches to hymnody and worship, whether they are ill-informed, complacent, and unreflective approaches that are content with the way we have always done it, or well-researched, intentional, and reflective approaches that strive to more excellently proclaim Christ.”

Pastor Jacob Haag

Lutheran heritage - “the singing church”

- Needs to be stewarded, taught, and passed to the next generation; this concept is 500 plus years old.

“Who will teach our children the songs of faith? Home, school, and church all have a part to play. And unless we are ready to give up a generation with no strong roots in the church’s treasury of song, we had better get busy.” -Carl Schalk, *First Person Singular* (1998)

“I have no one to sing and chant about but Christ.” - *Martin Luther*

- We “begin with the end in mind” and teach children worship music that will serve them for their whole lives. What hymns/songs will be sung by their bedside when they enter into glory? Children’s Sunday School and VBS music has a place, but not at the expense of the “meat and potatoes”

Inspirational Activities

- Activities span over a wide range of content areas - teachers are free to choose what is best for their students/themselves

There are four kinds of questions in this curriculum, each indicated with a unique icon:



These questions and their answers are taken directly or indirectly from the hymn text. These questions will also link to other school subjects, for example, writing, grammar, science, etc.



These questions make a connection to a Bible passage, Bible account, and/or the catechism.



These questions make application to the student's faith life. They are thoughtfully crafted with the goal that the student takes a spiritual truth deeply to heart.



These questions are some sort of activity, many of which require some kind of kinesthetic movement or action from the students.

Ease of use for non-music teachers

- Organ, piano, and children's choir recordings are available for every hymn in the curriculum
- Teachers may choose activities that fit within their “music” comfort level and/or choose activities from other content areas.
- School music leaders/coordinators/enthusiasts are the automatic “cheerleaders” for this curriculum to be used within your congregation's classrooms
 - *Demonstration of various teacher-skill levels would be highly recommended*

“The Hymns for Life curriculum is designed to impress the biblical truths expressed in hymns on the hearts and minds of young believers,” says Mr. Jeremy Bakken, publishing editor of the project. The title of the curriculum sums it up simply: hymns learned in childhood will stay with children for an entire lifetime. Bakken continues, “Our prayer is that students will appreciate these hymns and recall their spiritual truths in every stage of life.”

<https://wels.net/hymns-for-life-preserving-a-priceless-spiritual-treasure/>

Hymn lyrics remind students what God has already done for them, is doing right now, and will continue to do for them until they are safe in his arms.”

Kevin Bode

We are responsible for passing a heritage of hymns to the next generation.

“Simply put, heirs of the Reformation recognize if music is this important to Lutheran worship it needs to be part of the curriculum of Lutheran schools. If called workers cut hymnology from the curriculum or simply do not want to teach hymns in their congregations and schools, we will have no one to blame but ourselves when the Lutheran church loses its status as the singing church.”

(p. 14, Pastor Jacob Haag)

“The quality of hymn singing in the public worship of a congregation is determined largely by the hymnody employed in the church school. ... It is well nigh fatal to hold one standard in the more formal church worship and then ‘let the bars down’ in the church school. Having one type of Sunday school hymns and then expecting the children to enjoy and appreciate the hymns announced in church worship is an exercise in futility.”

Syndor, Hymns and Their Uses, 119–20

Hymns serve Christians “cradle to grave”

“Here [in the hymns] the Word of God and its teachings appear as verse wedded to melody, penetrating the heart and delighting the soul. Long before children have learned to read, they have sung. And as the elderly approach their twilight years, the melodies and texts of the church’s song are still recalled, even if their eyesight has faded and their fingers are no longer nimble enough to turn a page. From cradle to grave, the church’s song gives voice to the heartfelt cries and joyful strains of God’s children.”

Introducing Lutheran Service Book

Advocacy

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.”

Step 1 - Win over stakeholders & decision-makers

- Principal
- Pastor
- Curriculum coordinator
- Worship Coordinator/Director of Music
- Musically-inclined teachers
- School Board, Board of Worship

These leaders are most often hard-working servants of the Gospel. Very few will be openly resistant to teaching Hymnology, but many are very busy. Their attention may be divided. It's our job to be advocates who shine a light on this important topic and help drive to implementation.

Meeting with leaders - A GUIDE

- 1) **Describe the PROBLEM.** Describe what your school is currently doing. You should be doing more and/or doing things differently. There is an opportunity to grow.
- 2) **State the VALUE.** Lovingly and passionately talk about the importance of hymnology in your Lutheran school. Share an inspiring story you heard today or from your own experience about how hymn-singing enriched the faith of a child.
- 3) **Offer the SOLUTION.** Explain the *Hymns for Life* curriculum. Your leadership may not be aware of it, or may not be aware of its many features and benefits. Offer “social proof” of other WELS schools similar to yours that have successfully implemented the curriculum.

Step 2 - Overcome hurdles

1) SCHEDULING

When will Hymnology be taught?

2) STAFFING

Who's going to teach it?

3) FINANCES

How will we pay for it?

4) IMPLEMENTATION

Who will oversee it?



SCHEDULING

How does this fit into the schedule?

Remember! We make time for the things we value!

You have **flexibility** and can use different approaches in different grade levels.

- As a stand-alone class (15-45 minutes)
- As a supplement to Word of God/Catechism classes
- As a supplement to Music Class
- As an extended daily devotion (morning or afternoon)

How do we answer those who say “there isn’t time”?



STAFFING

Who teaches it?

Remember! The curriculum comes with high-quality recordings, so no music skills are needed!

- **Classroom teachers**
- **Homeroom teachers**
- **Music teachers**
- **Pastors or Staff Ministers**

How do we respond to teachers who are nervous or resistant?



FINANCES

How will we pay for this? Budgets for the upcoming school year are made very early, often in January-February. Start the conversation early.

- **Buy it all at once**

The entire 3-year curriculum costs around \$2,100.00

- **Buy one year at a time**

While the complete curriculum is a 3-year cycle (A,B,C), consider buying just one year at a time for a lower annual impact on the budget (K-8 - \$700)

- **Buy one grade-band at a time**

Lower Grades - \$199.99

Middle Grades - \$249.99

Upper Grades - \$249.99

- **Add it to the school “Wish List”**



IMPLEMENTATION

Who's in charge? Like any all-school effort, this curriculum needs a “point-person” to steward the program:

- **Onboard and train incoming staff**
- **Answer staff questions**
- **Coordinate with the chapel and/or worship schedules**
- **Initiate staff conversations 1-2 times/year about how things are going**

Who might this be in your school? The best choice for this role is someone with a passion and experience with music and worship who can work well with the worship pastor.

It might be YOU! Your principal will be thankful to have this kind of support.



Best Practices

First Step: lay the foundation with the CORE hymns

- 12 CORE hymns (cream of the crop)

Pick 1 CORE hymn as the **hymn of the month** that gets sung at **every chapel**

- Sing this hymn often in your classrooms
- School/Lutheran culture created and strengthened
- Community: you're now part of something that goes back hundreds of years

| Title |
|-------------------------------------|
| A Mighty Fortress Is Our God |
| A Mighty Fortress Is Our God |
| Go, My Children, with My Blessing |
| God Loved the World So That He Gave |
| God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It |
| Hark, the Voice of Jesus Crying |
| How Lovely Shines the Morning Star |
| I Know That My Redeemer Lives |
| Now Thank We All Our God |
| Now Thank We All Our God |
| Now the Light Has Gone Away |
| O Sacred Head, Now Wounded |
| O Sacred Head, Now Wounded |
| Salvation unto Us Has Come |
| Take My Life and Let It Be |
| Take My Life and Let It Be |

Second Step: sing the hymn every morning

- Online, find the hymns used for a single year; someone organizes a schedule for the year so that every classroom is singing the **same** hymn and new hymn **every** week
- Gather around your piano like the good ol' days
- Student accompanist warning
- **Repetition is 100% effective. Guaranteed. Feeling bored? See musical activities that are guaranteed to work.**

Third Step: purchase a single year and teach!

- As a stand-alone class (15-45 minutes)
- As a supplement to Word of God/Catechism classes
- As a supplement to Music Class
- As an extended daily devotion (morning or afternoon)
- These lessons strike a balance between depth and simplicity; seriousness and playfulness

Fourth Step: sing the hymn on Sundays (chapel is step 1!)

- Or as much as possible



Best practices for the classroom

- Create digital slides (no hymnals when you teach the stanzas! Words on screen)
- Conversational, not lecture; the lessons' "tone" demonstrates this
- Strike a sensitive balance between your Gospel conversation and enjoyable activities (students are attracted to activities that are "outside the box" in their objective)
- Try adapting the "Hymn at Home" worksheet for in-class use and assessment
- Center back to the "Key Question" and ask it at end; they write it down and turn in (easy assessment of attentiveness)
- Zoom interview with living composers

Best practices for chapel and church

- Chapel worship looks like church
- Sing Hymns for Life hymn each week on a schedule

Emanuel, New London, WI - Chapel schedule with Hymnology hymns

Emmanuel, Tempe, AZ - Christ Light & Hymns for Life schedule

Pilgrim, Menomonee Falls, WI - Hymnology Lesson schedule

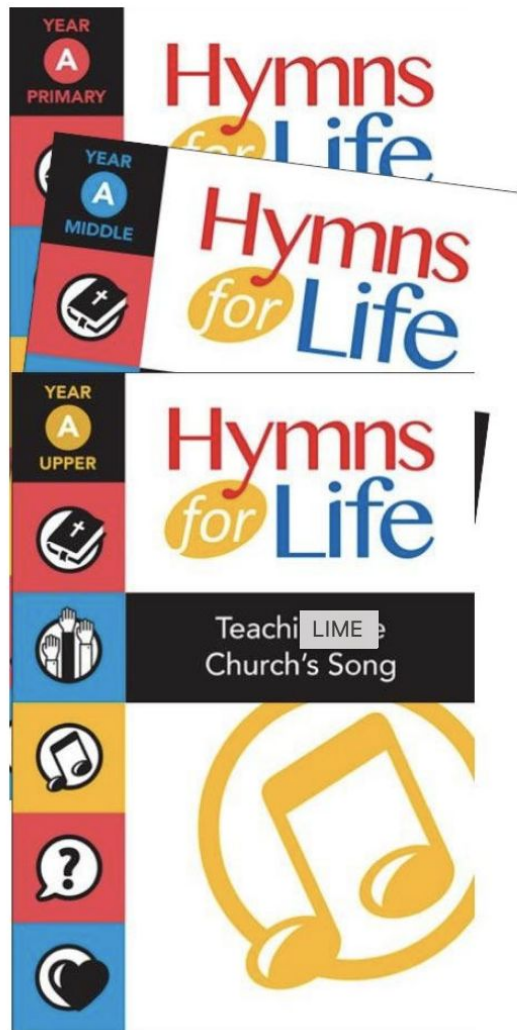
- Student musicians can lead or adorn hymn singing
- Add a note in the weekend bulletin: *“This hymn was studied by the children of Emanuel Lutheran School as their “Hymn of the Week.”*

What about memorization?

- We provide a suggested schedule for memory work. The creators put careful thought into these selected stanzas. Not every stanza is worth memorizing. We understand that this generation is not like the last generation. However, we are undivided on the value of memorizing stanzas. History speaks again and again to the fact that words imprinted on the heart and brain will serve the Christian well for the remainder of their cross-filled life.
- You know your student; adapt the suggested memory level as needed. New students to your school need to memorize at least one stanza. It is not too difficult. All they need is for someone to teach them *how* to memorize.
- Overall, this curriculum is conservative in their approach to the number of stanzas to memorize

Challenges

What challenges are you facing?



Get *Hymns for Life*
curriculum previews and
samples online:

<https://online.nph.net/hymnsforlife>

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