



Some perspectives on tune-only hymns

102 hymns in the new hymnal pew edition are tune-only. About a third of those are tunes where the full setting is found at another hymn in the new hymnal. (In one case the tune-only hymn is right next to the same tune harmonized: 887 and 888.) For another third accompaniments are available in CW93 or *CW Supplement* (for those without access to the new *CW: Accompaniment for Hymns*). Factoring in the availability of CW93 and CWS, only 32 hymns do not have accompaniments readily available apart from *CW: Accompaniment for Hymns*.

Some would prefer to have settings for all hymns and include no tune-only hymns. But consider the disadvantages of this approach.

- 50 or so hymns would have to be omitted so that the hymnal does not become too large. It already is 1/8th inch thicker than CW93. Since the priority was to provide a “singer’s book,” the singer is certainly served better by having the 50 hymns that would have been omitted if settings were included for all hymns.
- A tune-only hymn can fill space that would otherwise have remained empty. See for example 380, 405, 621, 628, 646, 683, 699, 743, 755, 768, 770, 824, 830, 846, 874, 898. There aren’t always in a given season or theme enough short hymns like 387 to fill all such spaces.
- A priority to provide a “singer’s book” means that far more hymns feature settings for four-part harmony singing compared to CW93. (Some CW93 settings were intended only for unison singing.) But some hymns aren’t meant to be sung in harmony. These include chant styles (e.g. 358) and modern hymns with a pianistic accompaniment.
- The average singer, benefiting from a clean tune-only layout, doesn’t benefit from seeing the pianistic accompaniment.
- Some three-page hymns fit nicely on two pages, avoiding the need to flip pages back and forth to follow the entire hymn: CWS 723 vs the new 732, CWS 741 vs 676, CWS 757 vs 828, CWS 759 vs 809. In one case three pages at CWS 758 become one page at CW21 690.
- 810 in the pew edition is one page and two staves on the next page. But in the accompaniment edition it requires seven pages! 577: two pages pew vs ten accompaniment.
- Striking examples of pages saved are also in the psalter. Psalm 132A is two pages in the pew edition but six in the accompaniment volume. Psalm 91C is five pages in the pew edition but 14 in the accompaniment volume!

The new WELS hymnal is not alone in seeing the benefit of some tune-only hymns. The 2006 hymnal of the LC-MS, *Lutheran Service Book*, has 129 tune-only hymns. 38 of those have the full setting at another hymn in the same book, but for 91 the full setting is only in the accompaniment edition – a ratio higher than in the new WELS hymnal.