

For this edition of the Bishop's Unified Newsletter I have asked Brian Wentzel, Director of Music at First Lutheran, Lorain, to contribute an article. Brian has served at First since 2006. He is completing a six-year term on the Synod Worship Committee and was its Chair for the past two years. Brian responded to my last column in which I reflected on some of my Reformation reading and asked for any response to what you might be reading along those lines. Here is Brian's offering.

Peace and blessings,



+Bishop Abraham Allende

In the May/June *Unified* Bishop Allende shared a list of books he was reading about Luther, spurred by the upcoming 500th anniversary of the Reformation. At the end of his column he invited us to share what we've been reading lately, and so for this issue I've put together a list of books on Luther and music.

First on any such list needs to be *Luther's Works, vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns*. If this book is not in your church musician's library, consider giving it to him or her as a Reformation gift! The bulk of this volume is taken up by Luther's Latin and German orders of service and all of his hymns (and the *Te Deum* we sang at the assembly!). But there are also a number of shorter writings, in which Luther makes such famous statements as "next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise."



Brian Wentzel

In 1988 Lutheran musician and scholar Carl Schalk wrote a short pamphlet called *Luther and Music: Paradigms of Praise*. Here Schalk puts Luther's thought about music in the context of his life and times, organizes that thought into categories such as "Music as God's Creation and Gift" and "Music as Liturgical Song," and mixes in his own analysis and opinions. At only \$9, this is another must-read for all Lutheran musicians!

Continuing in a practical vein: in the late 70's Schalk and Carl Halter edited *A Handbook of Church Music and Key Words in Church Music*. These are a bit dated by now, but still are useful reference volumes. My own teacher, Paul Westermeyer, has written a number of very useful books including *The Church Musician*, which lays out theological and practical aspects of the church musician's craft, and *Te Deum:*

The Church and Music, which is a history of church music from the Old Testament to the end of the last century.

For those of us who like to get deep in the scholarly weeds, there are also many wonderful books on Reformation music that have recently been published. Robin Leaver is one of the foremost experts on Luther and music, and his 2007 book, *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications* is a collection of essays he wrote over the previous decade, preceded by a long introduction that ties everything together. Leaver is doing here essentially what Schalk did in his earlier pamphlet, but in 500 pages, 100 of which are footnotes!

Leaver tends to theologize from Luther's texts. Joseph Herl takes a more historical perspective in *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict* (2004). Herl investigates the myth that "before [Luther's] time ... average churchgoers were mute, denied the chance to express themselves in song or speech. But Luther opened the floodgates of song to the people, and suddenly churches were filled with eager singers belting out *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* at the tops of their lungs" (v). From the tone of that excerpt you can guess that Herl's investigations led him to the conclusions that things were quite a bit more complicated than that! Joyce Irwin's *Neither Voice nor Heart Alone: German Lutheran Theology of Music in the Age of the Baroque* takes a similar historical approach. Irwin is not a Lutheran herself, and so has some critical distance; she studies how the rhetoric of the early Lutheran musicians matched up with their practice, and what the differences really were between music in Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic churches.

We Lutherans are blessed to have one of history's greatest musicians as one of our own: J. S. Bach. In 2013 John Eliot Gardiner, a well-known conductor of early music, published *Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven*. This is an incredibly engaging read focusing on Bach's cantatas and other sacred choral works, exploring how Bach's faith is expressed in his music. Beware, though: I received this book as a gift, but it caused me to spend quite a bit of my own money on recordings! Other essential Bach reads include *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters in Documents* and *Johann Sebastian Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig* (Günther Stiller).

Lastly: Bishop Allende shared a few books on his "to read" list, and here are a couple of mine: *Luther's Theology of Music: Spiritual Beauty and Pleasure* (Miikka Anttila, 2013), and *The Whole Church Sings: Congregational Singing in Luther's Wittenberg* (Robin Leaver, 2017). Next time you see me, ask me how they are!

Brian Wentzel
Director of Music, First, Lorain
Chair, NEOS Worship Committee