



*As congregations gradually return to regular weekly gatherings and I am free to travel, I am thankful for the privilege of telling them about mission work around the world.*

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## LSB Hymnal Companion Book Review



I was recently asked to review the new LSB Companion to the Hymns from the standpoint of mission and outreach. This newsletter is dedicated to that review, because it applies directly to my work.



Joseph Herl, Peter C. Reske, Jon D. Vieker, Editors.  
Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns  
St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019  
Volume 1: 1643 pages, volume 2: 931 pages. \$179.99, hardcover



CPH appropriately describes the new *LSB: Companion to the Hymns* as “the definitive resource on the hymnody of *Lutheran Service Book*”. It is indeed that, which makes it an invaluable resource for missions and outreach.

While all Christians are given to share the joy we have in Jesus, that calling/duty finds a specific focus in mission work, and hymns are especially well-suited for this expression. The better we know our hymns, the more we are able to use them, not only to share our joy, but also to teach and confess the faith. This two-volume companion contains a vast treasure of historical, musical, and devotional information, making it an excellent resource for outreach.

The **essays** at the beginning of volume 1 teach and support a broad usage of the hymnal, covering topics such as the value of hymns for catechesis, use of the hymnal as a primary prayer book, and introducing hymnody that is not tied to a particular culture. Encouraging the use of hymnals and demonstrating how hymns unite us is critical in mission work. The variety of topics is both helpful and inspirational.

The **commentaries** are useful for the specialized task of translating hymns into local languages. Sometimes hymn texts evolve as they are translated into other languages or edited for different hymnals. The essay may track those changes, helping to clarify the doctrinal truth. Comparing translations can help a translator grasp the nuances of meaning, resulting in a broader theological understanding.

For instance, the essay for *O Lord, How Shall I Meet You* (334) explains how a first person singular perspective can still be ultimately centered on Christ. Lutheran hymns generally avoid writing in first person and this subtle, but crucial, distinction, is not easily grasped by a non-native English speaker.



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**PLEASE PRAY FOR:**

- *Patience for missionaries who have had to postpone travel to visit family, to carry on their work, and to connect with supporters.*
- *Health, safety, and healing for God's people around the world.*

**GIVE THANKS FOR:**

- *The opportunity to visit several congregations and share the love of Christ with brothers and sisters.*

**PRAISE GOD FOR:**

- *The many congregations who pray for, support, and encourage missionaries around the world..*

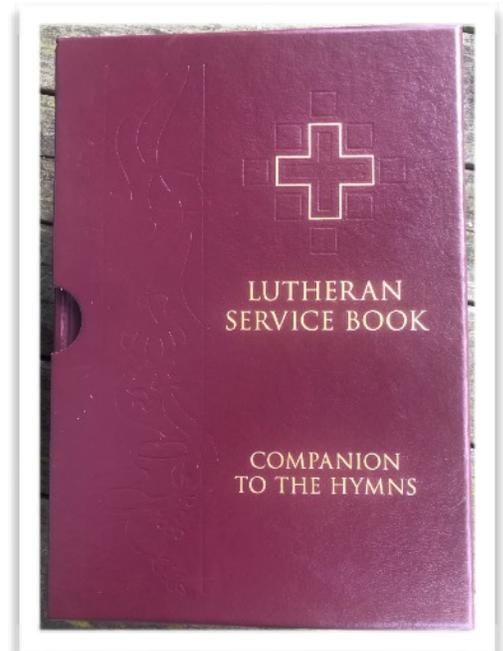
The essay on *If Your Beloved Son, O God* (568) is a good example of how a text can speak to our specific needs, even though it is centuries old. Heermann wrote this hymn during the Thirty Year's War (1618–48), but based it on an eleventh century meditation. Thus, this hymn has comforted Christians for centuries. No time period or culture has escaped hard times. In the midst of our own particular despairs and oppressions, this hymn delivers the Gospel clearly and directly.

Common misconceptions in the mission field are that most LSB hymns are drawn from the LCMS tradition, or from other American or German sources. The **Indices** in Volume 2 provide helpful information to counter these assumptions, with charts for origin of texts by time period, country, and original language.

Music scholars will be especially pleased that the editors have located original sources for all the hymns rather than relying on previous companions. No other hymnal companion has verified information so thoroughly and systematically.

This Companion is also available in digital form, which is especially attractive when traveling and working in the field.

Using music in missions brings with it the responsibility to know our hymnal and hymns well. Knowledge of hymns moves us to a more committed and active use of them, which in turn draws others into them. I highly recommend the LSB Hymnal Companion for this purpose.



*Make a joyful noise to the Lord,  
all the earth; break forth into  
joyous song and sing praises!*

*Psalm 98:4*



There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at [lcms.org/service](http://lcms.org/service). Click on "Service Opportunities."

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