

THE FACES OF THE CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPEAN REGION IN HYMNALS OF THE GLOBAL ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Motivated by the 2023 Kraków assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the article offers an insight into the formation of global hymnals from a Central Eastern European (CEE) perspective. The author – the leader of the international worship team at the event – integrates pragmatic considerations in the fields of music making and church diplomacy with an academic hymnological approach. After looking at the theoretical framework that surrounds worship embedded in different cultures and the complex expression of Lutheran identities through words and music, the article presents a detailed description of musical material from the CEE region in LWF hymnals between 1947 and 2023. The LWF focus is complemented by a few parallels from ecumenical hymnals, drawing attention to the fact that certain musical items tend to overarch hymnals of different confessional families rather than act as distinctive features between them. The discussion centres on criteria defining Lutheran core hymns (Ger. *Kernlied*) of our time from a global perspective and in the CEE region and encourages further research on the decisive factors related to hymn choices during the editorial process of global and local hymnbooks.

KEYWORDS: hymnal • Lutheran • ecumenical • core hymn

INTRODUCTION

Community singing and the choice of repertoire as a way of reflecting identity are cross-cultural phenomena that vary widely across time and geographical space. In this paper, I aim to look at a specific sector within this field, the choice of Lutheran hymnody from Central Eastern Europe (CEE), as it appears in the global assembly hymnals¹ of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), with a few parallels from the ecumenical partners. The article is part of my doctoral research framed by the following research questions: 1) What hymnological criteria contribute to the Lutheran hymnal ‘canon’ on global and local levels? 2) Is it possible to compile a set of parameters that define the key features of

a Lutheran hymn based on the local hymnbook tradition but which are also applicable in the editorial process of global hymnals?

Within this wider framework, this article focuses on the 'core hymn' (Ger. *Kernlied*) concept along with the following questions: 1) Is it possible to identify core hymns from the CEE region based on the international hymn collections under scrutiny? 2) What factors could contribute to internationally used local hymns becoming core hymns?

Interest in these particular questions arises from dual foci: hymnological work done by the LWF across eight decades and the ongoing hymnbook renewal process in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary (ELCH), the home church of the author (for more details, see Hymnbook Renewal n.d.). Local and global hymn collections are in a continuous dialogue as locally published items are selected to global hymnals, and hymns from all continents inspire local hymnbook editors.

The CEE perspective of the article is motivated by the fact that the 2023 assembly of the LWF took place in Kraków, Poland. Thereby, nearly 40 years after the Budapest assembly in 1984, the CEE region was again brought into the focus of the global Lutheran communion. The question of core repertoire is also relevant in the context of the ongoing hymnbook renewals in two LWF member churches in the CEE region, namely Estonia and Hungary.² Therefore global examples are also mirrored against the background of the present editorial processes in these two Lutheran churches in the region.

METHODOLOGY

The article is based on a longitudinal study of LWF hymnals (the hymn corpus includes 530 different musical items in 70 languages published across a time span of 76 years). This is a novel approach insofar as the majority of the musical collections are not available to the public. In view of this, the article displays unobtainable musical examples in their entirety.

During the quantitative research phase, all hymns were labelled with regional markers based on the seven-region system of the LWF (other labels – such as categories referring to different eras of church music – are not discussed here in detail). Initial analysis of the raw data was accompanied by references to related hymnological literature. As most global hymnals are compiled for practical purposes, the theoretical concept behind them is rather opaque. Forewords and related LWF publications offer points of orientation, as the minutiae of theoretical discussions during committee work are scarcely documented.

In a later phase of the doctoral research, in addition to analysing the primary sources in the light of secondary literature, I triangulate the results of the analysis against structured interviews with the few living editors of the earlier collections. As the leader of the International Worship Planning Committee preparing the hymnal for the latest LWF assembly, and a member of the editorial and text committee for Lutheran hymnbook renewal in Hungary, I also draw on hands-on experience in applied hymnology.

After a short introduction to theoretical discussions about Lutheran worship in the global context, the article explores the complex process of the quest for Lutheran iden-

tity. The notion of core hymn is introduced as a possible tool for musical reflection on identity across different periods of time. Based on the multiregional understanding of the LWF, the article then presents musical examples from the CEE region. A detailed description of the entire CEE material in LWF hymnals from 1947 to 2023 presented by their country of origin is followed by a few parallels from other international ecumenical hymnals that show similar patterns of repertoire formation. The musical examples are interpreted against the prospective criteria behind core hymns.

The full span of LWF hymnals complemented with other relevant ecumenical collections constitutes the corpus of my analysis. These materials are referenced using AC, followed by the acronym of the relevant organisation and the year (e.g., AC: LWF 1970).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Lutheran Worship in a Global Context

The LWF is a community of currently 77.5 million Lutherans in 99 countries (Greenaway and Mumia 2023: 6). The communion embraces more than 90% of all Lutherans around the world. Since 1947, delegates from all member churches have convened every six or seven years for an assembly – a week-long conference with 600–800 delegates, guests and staff representing the reconciled diversity of Lutheran traditions. The communion publishes a new hymnal for almost each assembly, with a repertoire representing the core of Lutheran theology, mirroring the multiplicity of Lutheran musical traditions worldwide and with a special emphasis on the assembly theme and the region in which each assembly is being held.

Based on this practical background implying musical choices transpiring over a longer period of time, the LWF has also conducted a 10-year study process on worship and culture.³ As a result of this interrelated sequence of global consultations, three statements were issued and the process also prepared the way to a series of related conferences and publications (Stauffer 1994; 1996; 1999; the whole process summarised and revisited in Wilkey 2014). Two statements are introduced here as essential for the present article.⁴

The Cartigny statement from 1993 (published in Wilkey 2014: 29–34) departed “from the profound recognition that Jesus Christ himself is God incarnate in human culture” (ibid.: 31). The text already identifies the cultural, countercultural and transcultural nature of worship that later became a central part of the theoretical framework. The baptismal emphasis strongly apparent in LWF documents today is already present in this text.

The Nairobi statement from 1996 (published in Wilkey 2014: 137–142) continues by outlining a fourfold model of the transcultural, contextual, countercultural and cross-cultural nature of worship and presents a Christological basis for each:

1. “The resurrected Christ ... is beyond all cultures” (ibid.: 138).
2. “Jesus ... was born into a specific culture of the world. ... God can be encountered in the local cultures of the world” (ibid.: 139) – thus the ‘new’ element of this statement, contextuality, is actually a reinforcement of the initial recogni-

tion. This is also in line with John 1's claim that "the Word takes on a body, in a particular cultural context and at a particular time" (Lange 2014: 164).

3. "Jesus Christ came to transform all people and all cultures, and he calls us not to conform to the world, but to be transformed with it (Romans 12:2)" (in Wilkey 2014: 140).
4. "Jesus came to be the Saviour of all people. He welcomes the treasures of earthly cultures into the city of God" (ibid.: 141). This somewhat opaque formulation leads us to an open question about the eternal nature of cultural 'treasures' as such.

These four cornerstones have become a generally accepted framework for looking at multicultural worship settings. A recent identity document of the LWF adds a further Lutheran criteria to the above: "Consequently, local traditions and material culture according to the Lutheran confessions can be adopted into Christian worship and life as practices that communicate Christ (*was Christum treibet*)" (Rimmer and Schunk 2023: 59).

Although Martin Luther (1522), in his preface to the Epistles of James and Jude, originally used the phrase to refer to the decisive factor for including – or not including – books in the New Testament,⁵ the expression later acquired a broader meaning. Specifically, in theological discourse the phrase is not only applied as a core criterion defining biblical canon but also in other fields of making value-based choices in a Christian setting. Therefore, it also seems to be an adequate governing principle when trying to identify criteria for including (or not including) hymns in a Lutheran hymnal.

Lutheran Identities

Reflecting on the question of Lutheran identity has accompanied the LWF as an organisation from its founding in 1947, and even before that. Its twofold nature as an ecclesial community and as a human formation taking a legal form does not make the discussion easier (Vajta 1983).

The principle of unity in reconciled diversity, widely discussed at the 1977 assembly in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (see assembly statement *Models of Unity* published in Sovik 1977: 173–175), has since been adopted to wide ecumenical use. There, the way to unity was described as one that preserves confessional identities through theological dialogue and mutual correction so that the distinctiveness of each partner is not lost sight of but is transformed and renewed until the differences lose their divisive character and are reconciled to each other. A more concrete liturgical formulation of unity was accomplished in 1984 through "a visible expression in altar and pulpit fellowship" (Mau 1985: 176). However, discussing questions related to Lutheran unity continued to go hand in hand with deliberations on varied identities.

The latest identity document formulates this global experience in the following way:

Being Lutheran does not prescribe one identity. ... Lutherans share normative commitments.... But like Luther's translation of the Bible, these norms are embodied through a diversity of languages, cultures, forms of worship, spirituality, service, and expressions of public witness in minority and majority contexts. For that rea-

son, expressions of the Lutheran tradition have always been negotiated. (Rimmer and Schunk 2023: 4)

In this ongoing process of negotiation, is it still possible for “LWF member churches with diverse identities to recognize each other as belonging to a shared Lutheran tradition” (ibid.: 66)? Does “a Lutheran grammar and vocabulary for intercultural faith” (ibid.: 34) still exist for the community? Or is it rather that “as we negotiate our shared Lutheran identity and expressions of our diverse Lutheran identities, we must ground our personal experiences in ever increasing circles of belonging” (ibid.: 35)?

That is, is it still possible to define a least common multiple overarching different Lutheran identities, or rather is an identity only graspable in transition, possibly finding its new home in a wider ecumenical interpretive framework?

Core Hymn: Identity in Musical Guise

If identity is a highly complex issue to tackle, its musical expression is even more so. Let us now turn our attention to the possible musical forms that confessional identity could take – first of all, the core hymn concept. Originally, the term was introduced to refer to the core material of a certain musical period, more specifically the period of the Reformation. As Friedrich Blume (1965: 22) claims in connection with Luther’s hymns, three traits lead to the rapid spreading and long-lasting vitality of this core repertoire:

1. the hymns have their roots in the core of faith;
2. they speak to the core of faith in the receiver;
3. they have a high practical value, specifically the natural relation between text and melody ensures not only their expressivity but a high aesthetic value.

As the multiple definitions applied by Mart Jaanson (2018) show, the core hymn concept has gradually widened with time. At the closest reading, the term covers hymns published in Lutheran hymnbooks starting with the so-called *Book of Eight Hymns* (Luther 1523–1524) until the death of Martin Luther in 1546. Then the meaning of the term started to expand in concentric circles both geographically and temporally to finally define a core material of musical items overarching different time periods and potentially carrying traits of identification within the given context.⁶

Ongoing scientific discussion (Leube 2008) and core hymn lists⁷ combine the identity factor with historical and pedagogical viewpoints. However, there is no explicit – let alone globally recognised – criteria for core hymns.

A canonical definition based on oral presentations by ELCH music director, editor of the 1981 hymnbook, pastor and organist Gábor Trajtler offers narrow definitive criteria for a verse hymn in general (cited in the Concept of the Hymnbook Renewal n.d.). According to the criteria taught across all levels of Lutheran church music education in Hungary, a church hymn is originally plain chant (and can be used as such, without harmonies), it has an even structure avoiding musical extremities, it follows a logical harmony structure, and it is possible to be accompanied by an organ. A combination of these elements as a possible musical definition for core hymns will be looked at based on the discussion of international hymnals.

The global LWF communion is present in seven regional expressions: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and three European regions – in addition to CEE, Central Western Europe and the Nordic countries. These categories strongly evoke the divisions of the Cold War period but also refer to the historically strong areas of Lutheranism. A balanced representation of geographical areas and awareness of lay, youth and gender inclusion have also increasingly become part of the communion identity. As the historical volume published for the 50th anniversary of the LWF summarises it: “Inclusiveness is yet fully to be achieved in the life of the LWF ... Yet the road toward inclusiveness, *communio*, has not reached its end.” (Schjørring et al. 1997: 297)

As a rather adequate musical mapping of the spread of Lutheranism, the first four LWF hymnals (AC: LWF 1947; AC: LWF 1952; AC: LWF 1957; AC: LWF 1963) primarily included hymns from Germany, the Nordic countries and England, along with a few US items. The next one (AC: LWF 1970) was the first LWF hymnal to contain songs from Asia, the African continent, Latin America, and CEE. Despite the already multilingual nature of the early hymnals, the 1970 edition marked a quantitative leap from five to six European languages to 19. The Budapest hymnal (AC: LWF 1984) continued this process organically. While the earlier collections are dominated by English, German and the Scandinavian languages, from 1970 on, French and Spanish – by then included in the four official languages of the communion – entered the scene. While there was a certain decrease in the number of Nordic translations, the number of languages from the southern hemisphere increased steadily.

From 1984 on, a major shift was observed. The hymnal for the eighth LWF assembly in Curitiba (AC: LWF 1990) was a supplement that was used together with the 1984 collection. After a gradually developing, consistent row of *Laudamus* collections, the Hong Kong (AC: LWF 1997), Winnipeg (AC: LWF 2003),⁸ Windhoek (AC: LWF 2017) and Kraków (AC: LWF 2023) assembly hymnals were all individual compilations with varied foci and editing principles.

Over the course of 76 years, hymnals have gradually grown in size from 36 (AC: LWF 1947) to 154 items (AC: LWF 1984) at the highest (see Figure 1). Obviously, some hymns were deleted from the core material and others have been added, but the final count is 11 hymnals with 530 songs from 10 centuries, in altogether 70 languages.

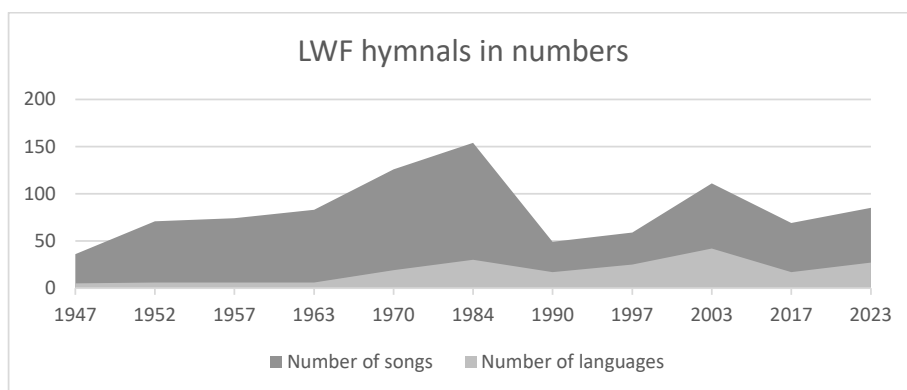


Figure 1. Number of hymns and languages represented in LWF hymnals from 1947 to the present day.

Here I will present a comprehensive picture of hymns from the CEE region in LWF assembly hymnals, in decreasing order of number of hymns representing each country. The comprehensive presentation also reflects on the following dichotomies: tradition vs hymns newly created for the given LWF hymnal, local vs international reputation, additional value originating in a specific national or confessional setting (for example multinational countries and churches, minority Lutherans in a Catholic/Reformed environment).

Poland

The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland is a minority church with a 0.16% representation in an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country. With stronger Lutheran areas in the south of Poland, the church is a founding member of the LWF and pursues active presence in the international Lutheran community. Polish hymns occur in the LWF assembly hymnals ten times in total, but the ten occurrences go back to six different hymns. In the year of the LWF Kraków assembly, the number of Polish hymns published in global Lutheran hymnals doubled. Let us briefly look at the composition of this repertoire.

The first ever 'Polish' hymn used in LWF hymnals "O, Defend Us, God, for Ever" (*Bronźcie, Pani*; AC: LWF 1970: 25; AC: LWF 1984: 5)⁹ is a variant of a German chorale melody "You, O Beautiful Building of the World" (*Du, O schönes Weltgebäude*) by Johann Crüger. However, this hymn doesn't persist in the later LWF repertoire, unlike the following core hymn.

The most prevailing Polish item, "In the Distance Day is Breaking" (*Kiedy ranne wstają zorze*; AC: LWF 1970: 34; AC: LWF 1984: 13; AC: LWF 2003: 76–77, No. 44; AC: LWF 2023: 152–153), also under the title "Morning Hymn" (*Pieśń poranna*), later also widely used in global ecumenical hymnals, has its roots in the Polish Catholic tradition. The musical form of this morning hymn was modified during its international journey. In 1984 (AC: LWF 1984: 13), it still appeared in its original form, repetition was later added to the second part (AC: LWF 2003: 44; AC: CPCE 2006: 146). With the 2023 hymnal, the editors restored the hymn to its original musical form (AC: LWF 2023: 152–153).

The 2023 Kraków assembly made it possible to have a fresh look at Polish material. In conversation with the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, two traditional Polish hymns and two contemporary pieces were included in the 2023 collection (AC: LWF 2023).

"Come, Font of Blessing" (*Witaj, krynico dobra wszelakiego*; AC: LWF 2023: 48–49; see also Figure 2) was written by Michał Marcin Mioduszewski (lyrics in 1838) and Leopold Otto (music in 1864). English and German translations were created for the assembly.



1. Wi - taj, kry - ni - co do - bra wsze - la - kie - go,
1. Come, font of bless - ing, Je - sus dear - est trea - sure
1. Du Gna - den - quel - le, trăn - ke mich mit Lie - be,
Je - zu naj - mil - szy, skar - bie ser - ca me - go.
source of all good - ness, my soul's pur - est plea - sure.
mein dūr - res Herz, o Je - sus, bring zum Blü - hen!

Roz - pal o - zię - ble ser - ce me mi - ło - ścią
Kin - dle in me your love, all fears dis - pel - ling.
Wenn in mir einst ein Win - ter - herz ver - blie - ben.

o - raz nie biań - ską na - pełń je bło - go - ścią.
Make my cold heart a ha - ven for your dwell - ling.
himm - li - sche Se - lig - keit bringt es zum Glü - hen!

Text: Leopold Otto, Poland, 1864. Music: Michał Marcin Mioduszewski, Poland, 1838.
English tr. Mark Sedio. German tr. Curtis Aguirre

English

2. In this bless'd sacrament your body given
offers me grace, the joyful peace of heaven;
peace, holy peace, by love I am surrounded;
grace so unbounding that I am confounded.

3. Here in this cup you quench my thirsty spirit,
washing me clean that I may life inherit.
From evil foes, from enemies protect me;
from fear and danger safely now direct me.

4. O Jesus Christ, ascended, risen Savior,
praise be to you, all glory now and ever.
For by your cross, by no part of my merit
you have redeemed my poor and troubled spirit.

5. Marked by this sign, through water,
word and Spirit,
You made me yours that I may life inherit.
Thus, I shall sing in grateful adoration,
freed by the healing Gospel's consolation.

6. No greater joy, my heart bursts forth in gladness,
filled with your love that casts out fear and sadness;
that, when at last, my days on earth have ended,
I, as your child, am welcomed home to heaven.

German

2. Himmlischer Sämänn, meine Seele speise.
Pflanze in mir dein Wort des ew'gen Friedens.
Groß sei die Ernte, Dir zum Lob, zum Preise,
Im Sakrament dein Leib reicht mir das Leben.

3. Ewiger Weinstock, in Dir ist das Leben.
Der Feind durch Dein Blut ist nun überwunden.
Ach, welche Freude, fließt zu uns, die Reben,
In diesem Mahl, zusammen wir gebunden.

4. O Jesus Christus, Lob sei Dir gesprochen!
Dein Kreuz für mich hast Du allein getragen:
Dein Blut vergossen und Dein Leib gebrochen.
Jetzt, meine Seele, hast du nichts zu klagen.

5. Dir sei gewidmet, Jesus, all mein Wesen!
Wenn mir auch kommen manche Glaubensfragen,
Im Buche meines Lebens sei zu lesen
Dass Du darin Dein Name eingetragen.

6. Mein Herz war wie ein leerer Kelch, der wartet,
Bis Du ihn mit dem Wein der Liebe füllest.
Jetzt in dem Mahl bin ich doch voll begnadet.
Du, Heiland, sanfte, mich in Armen drückest.

Figure 2. Polish hymn "Come, Font of Blessing" with English and German translations (AC: LWF 2023: 48–49).

“King of Mine, King of Glory” (*Królu mój, królu chwały*) is the work of Karol Hławiczka, a teacher and musicologist specialising in Chopin, from 1915. The lively melody carries a text that is passionate and poetic at the same time.

These two Polish hymns were both given important liturgical functions at the 2023 assembly. “Come, Font of Blessing” was sung as a communion hymn in the opening service – also televised for the Polish national broadcast –, while “King of Mine, King of Glory” served as the central hymn of the closing service of the assembly, before the installation of the new leadership.

Finally, there are two contemporary pieces in the 2023 collection: a contemporary round “Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem” (*Shalom Jerushalaim*; see Figure 3)¹⁰ by Leszek Czyż and “Lord, I Come Before Your Throne / Give Me a Clean Heart, God” (*Dziś przychodzę przed Twój tron / Daj czyste serce mi*; see Figure 4), a worship song for confession by Piotr Kominek (AC: LWF 2023: 110–111).

Em Am

Sha - lom, Sha - lom, Je - ru - sza - la - im.

B7 Em

Sha - lom, Sha - lom, Je - ru - sza - la - im.

Am

Sha - lom, Sha - lom, Je - ru - sza - la - im.

G B7 Em

Sha - lom, Sha - lom, Je - ru - sza - la im.

Em Am D G

Sha - lom, Sha - lom, Sha - lom, Sha - lom,

C Am G B Em

Sha - lom Sha - lom, Sha - lom, sha - lom, Je - ru - sza - la - im.

Text and music: Leszek Czyż, Poland. Used with permission.

Figure 3. “Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem” (AC: LWF 2023: 92–93).

In summary, the six Polish musical pieces included in the LWF hymnals consist of four verse hymns also included in the present hymnbook of the Evangelical Church in Poland, and two contemporary compositions from the presently used youth hymnal.

As the usage of “Give Me a Clean Heart, God” in assembly worship shows, the worship preparation team for the Kraków assembly not only had to make musical choices guided by both ecclesial preferences and practical reasons, but they also encountered some specific issues to consider. As a visit to the Auschwitz–Birkenau Memorial and Museum was an integral part of the assembly programme, it became a valid question whether music could offer a helpful channel for discerning the unspeakable or whether silence would be a more meaningful medium.

Dziś przy-cho - dzę przed Twój tron a - by wy - znać wi - nę
 Lord, I come be - fore your throne with a sad and heav - y

mą o Pa - nie, o - czyść ser - ce me.
 heart. O God, wash my sins a - way.

Dziś pod Twój przy-no szę krzyż cię - żar, co przy-gnia - ta
 Here be - neath your cross I stand bear-ing all that weighs me

mnie O Pa - nie, już nie chcę sam go nieść.
 down; O God, do not a - ban - don me.

Daj czy - ste ser - ce mi, o - czyść u - sta me,
 Give me a clean heart, God, o - pen my lips, O Lord,

technij Swe - go Du - cha, bym wie - lbił Cię.
 filled with your Spir - it, I sing your praise.

Text and Music: Piotr Kominek, Poland. Used by permission. English tr. Mark Sedio.

Figure 4. A contemporary confession song from Poland (AC: LWF 2023: 110–111).

A particularly significant moment in this context was the beginning of the morning prayer following the visit to Auschwitz – a first-time experience for many assembly participants. During the worship services before and after the visit, the assembly community reflected musically but also through silence and prayer, lament and confession on humanity's indifference to the evil encountered through the visit to the memorial and to more recent tragedies in the world. "How long, o Lord?" – they asked together with the words of the Bible (Psalm 13). While the 1984 Budapest assembly had Apartheid in the focus of its advocacy work,¹¹ the 2023 Kraków assembly took place in the neighbourhood of an ongoing war. "A Calm and Steadfast Song" (*En stilla og modig sång*) by Norwegian colleagues Carl Petter Opsahl and Heidi Strand Harboe was inspired by this tragic event (see Opsahl 2022).

Hungary

The ELCH is the third largest historical denomination in the country. In a region that went through both Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the Lutheran church serves in an ecumenical environment together with Roman and Greek Catholic and Reformed (Calvinist) sister churches. Despite its moderate size (around 2% of the population), the Lutheran church is fairly active both in local society and internationally. As a founding member of the LWF, the ELCH has also given several leading figures to the communion: a President, two Vice-Presidents and theological consultants among others.

In the LWF hymnals throughout time, Hungary is represented musically by altogether eight pieces, four of which are traditional hymns. The first appearance is an internationally acknowledged Reformation-era hymn "Give Great Thanks to God the Father" (*Nagy hálát adjunk*; AC: LWF 1970: 104; AC: ELCH 1981¹²: 48; AC: LWF 1984: 104) with a smoothly singable German translation by the legendary church musician Ulrich S. Leopold.

The German version of the praise hymn to the Holy Trinity "Give Great Thanks to God the Father" (*Lasset uns danken*) found its way to various international sources during the 20th century. Lately, the hymn has been included on the preliminary list of hymns confirmed by the editorial committee of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church to be included in their new Lutheran hymnbook, under the working title "Give Great Thanks" (*Laulame suurt kiituslaulu*; see AC: EELC n.d.).¹³

"There, in God's Garden" (*Paradicsomnak te szép élő fája*; AC: ELCH 1981: 365, AC: LWF 2017: 60) – with spelling mistakes in the LWF hymnal – is also rooted in the first centuries of Reformation. The hymn appears in the German Lutheran hymnbook as "You, Beautiful Tree of Life of the Paradise" (*Du schöner Lebensbaum des Paradieses*; AC: EG 2016: 96) which actually includes more verses of the original hymn text than the current Lutheran hymnbook in Hungary. Literary, it is notable that both the English and German translations from the 1970s, as well as the recent Spanish version, depart from the original rhyme scheme. Melodically, the Icelandic hymnbook brings forward two alternative melodies for "You Tree of Life" (*Þú lífsins tré*), surprisingly offering the "Shades Mountain" tune, better known on the North American continent as the first choice (tune A), and the original composition as tune B (AC: ELCH 2022: No. 722a, 722b).

Apart from reinforcing the core repertoire of the Reformation and later times, LWF

hymnals also put great emphasis on publishing newly composed hymns – sometimes specially written for the given occasion or topic. “From the Shadow of My Pain” (*Kínok árnyékaiból*; composed by Imre Sulyok, text Sándor Weöres) is a fairly contemporary composition from the period of the Budapest assembly and, at the same time, an example of congregational singing at the highest artistic standard of the time. The hymn was created a few years before the assembly and included in the 1981 hymnbook of the host church. (AC: ELCH 1981: 432; AC: LWF 1984: 124). Sulyok’s setting of a Finnish meal-time prayer “For the Food Which You Keep Giving” (*Urunk, hála, hogy te táplálsz*; AC: ELCH 1981: 71; AC: LWF 2017: 3) also entered the LWF repertoire.

Another hymn included in the 1981 Hungarian hymnbook and appearing in later ecumenical collections, is Gábor Trajtler’s contemporary classic “Jesus, Good Shepherd, Guide” (*Jézus a jó pásztor*; AC: ELCH 1981: 401; AC: LWF 2003: 39). With a text based on the series of sayings in the gospel of John (“Jesus is the ...”) written by Zoltán Dóka, this hymn features a special musical scale called the Hungarian or Gypsy scale. In 1986, the hymn was also adopted into the local Lutheran hymnbook in Finland (now used in conjunction with its 2016 supplement AC: ELCF 2016: 177).

Both the examples above are musically challenging. The *heptatonia secunda* tonality for the former and the 3+2+2+2 rhythmic pattern alternating with 3+2+2 for the latter might be almost too complicated for a wider community to adopt. However, Trajtler’s hymn has become extremely popular in Germany and Finland, having also inspired choir pieces and popular music settings.

The 2023 LWF hymnal also adopted a contemporary song from Hungary, based on Psalm 133 – the psalm of unity in the Bible. “How Good It Is, Oh Do You See” (*Mily gyönyörűség, íme lásd*; music by Dániel Gryllus, text by Zoltán Sumonyi; see Figure 5). This has been used in several international collections (AC: CEC 2013: 53; AC: CEC 2018: 35; AC: WCC 2022: 298–301) although it is not included in any official hymnbook in its home country.

Finally, the 1984 Budapest hymnal included two Hungarian children’s songs: “Blessed Be the Precious Baby” (*Áldott légy, te kisdedecske*; AC: ELCH 1981: 546; AC: LWF 1984: 37), Zoltán Kodály’s version of a folk song, and “Who’s That Sitting on the Ground” (*Pázsitdombon üldögél*), music also by Kodály, text by Dénes Szedő (AC: ELCH 1981: 536; AC: LWF 1984: 113). Neither has an established position in local usage, either in Lutheran or secular circles.

In summary, three Hungarian verse hymns discussed here have not only entered global collections but also continued their way to local hymnbooks, while “From the Shadow of My Pain” could not acquire such a widespread reputation due to its musical complexity. Dániel Gryllus’ psalm “How Good It Is, Oh Do You See” is on its way to becoming an ecumenical favourite at international meetings, although it is not part of the official hymnbooks of any denomination in Hungary.

La la la la etc.

Mily gyö - nyö - rű - ség, í - me lásd, a - mi - kor az a - tyá - fi - ak
How good it is, oh do you see, when God's peo - ple play to - geth - er

e - gyűtt mu - zsi - kál - nak Ott van az ál - dás, hi - szed - é,
as they real - ly were one. There is the bless - ing, do be - lieve:

csak o - da küld a mi U - runk pen - gő cí - te - rá - kat.
God com - pos - es life and mu - sic so his king - dom may come.

Text: Hungarian © Zoltán Sumonyi, Hungary. English © 2022 Kinga Marjatta Pap
Music: © Dániel Gryllus, Hungary

English

2. Like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on Aaron's beard and
further down his long robe.
And when the dew of Hermon falls
on the Mount of Zion to be
seen from all of our globe. La la la la...

3. But nothing compares to the sound
when God's people play together
as they really were one.
Here is the blessing, do believe:
God composes life and music
so his kingdom may come. La la la la...

Figure 5. Psalm 133 in contemporary style (AC: LWF 2023: 88–89).

Czech Republic and Slovakia

The LWF has two member churches in the Czech Republic: The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) and the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession. Together, they form around 1% of the population in one of the most secularised countries in Europe. The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Slovak Republic also has strong historical roots and a presence of around 4% (including Slovakian- and Hungarian-speaking congregations).

Although Slovakian and Czech differ linguistically and are today divided by geopolitical boundaries, the hymnological tradition of the language area expands from common sources. The so-called 'Tranoscius' collection¹⁴ has since 1635 been widely used in both closely related West Slavic languages. From this tradition, we find five occurrences (three different melodies and five texts) in the full line of LWF hymnals.

"O God, Father" (*Otče nebeský*; AC: LWF 1970: 6; AC: LWF 1984: 97) is a recited *Kyrie*¹⁵ connected to a Trinitarian verse hymn "Your Heart, O God, Is Grieved, We Know" (*Známe to, Pane Bože náš*) from the collection of Tranovský (1928 [1635]: 277, No 296).

“Dear Father, God, We Rise to Say” (*Bože Otče, bud’ pochválen*; AC: LWF 1970: 35), by the 17th century author Juraj Zábajnik, originates from the same source (Třanovský 1928 [1635]: 544, No. 673).

The most prevalent ‘Czech’ melody in the corpus has its roots in the German-speaking branch of the Czech Brethren. In addition to two occurrences (AC: LWF 1970: 86; AC: LWF 1984: 87) of the original hymn “Rise, O Sun of Righteousness” (*Slunce pravdy* in AC: ECCB 2021a: 765),¹⁶ there are also two *ad notam* hymns – that is, other texts based on the same melody. There is a text for Easter/Holy Communion: “At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing” (AC: LWF 1984: 84) and also a *Sanctus*¹⁷ compilation text (AC: LWF 2023: 40–41; see Figure 6) that was used at the festive opening service of the whole assembly.



Text: Compilation based on Tranoscius 1636. Latin tr. Kinga Marjatta Pap
Music: Sonne der Gerechtigkeit, Czech Brethren 1566

Figure 6. The wide-spread melody of the Czech Brethren accommodates various texts (AC: LWF 2023: 40–41).

The prevalence of the “Rise, O Sun of Righteousness” tune over time as well as confessional and continental boundaries hints at the strong probability of it becoming a Lutheran core hymn. Although the first two Czech occurrences from LWF hymnals mentioned above represent a strongly legitimised historical collection, due to their direct liturgical function these songs are not eligible to become core hymns.

Estonia

With its 180,000 members, the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC) is historically the most influential – now statistically second strongest – denomination in the country (EELC n.d.; Census 2021 n.d.). In a rather secularised society, EELC is a visible actor with a history going back to the first era of the Reformation, later strengthened by a pietistic lay movement and today also supported by a lively presence in media and schooling.

The musical tradition of Estonia is represented by altogether four occurrences of three songs across time. “My Heart, the Dearest Gift I Know” (*Ma annan oma südame*; AC: LWF 1970: 115, see Figure 7, and AC: EELC 1991: 419, No. 320) is based on a text by German pietistic pastor Johann Caspar Schade, originally “My God, I Bring my Heart to You” (*Mein Gott, das Herz ich bringe dir*). In the 1970 hymnal, the melody is erroneously attributed to Enn Võrk while the current Lutheran hymnbook categorises it as an Estonian folk melody (*ibid.*).

282 Prayer

115 E. Vörk

1. Ma an - nan o - ma sü - da - me,
oh ar - mas Ju - mal Sull' Sa ta - had te -
da en - da - le, see sei - sab mõt - tes mul.

2. Oh avita, et südamest / ma loodan, kannatan /
ja Sinu kallist heldusest / ma ikka rõõmustan.

3. Mu südant endal' valmista / Sa hooneks ilma pael. /
Siis väin Su tempel olla ka / ma igavesti sael.

J. C. Schade (1660-1668)

Gebet / Prayer 283

115 E. Vörk

1. Nimm hin mein Herz, ich weih es dir,
1. My heart, the dear - est gift I know,
o Herr, mein Hilf und Hort. Vor dei - nem Ant -
I yield to you, o Lord. I know, my God,
litz steh ich hier, er - halt mich durch dein Wort.
you want it so, since I be - lieve your word.

2. In allem Leid steh du mir 2. Assist me, Lord, that I re -
bei, / o segne mich allzeit! Lass main / steadfast in hope and
meinen Mund verkündigen / will. / These lips will my great
deine Barmherzigkeit. joy proclaim: / your love
upholds me still.

3. Mein Herz sei deine Woh - 3. Prepare my heart, so it may
nung hier / in dieser dunklen be / your dwelling place be -
Welt; / und lass mich wohnen low: / and when this life its last
einst mit dir / im lichten Him - shall see, / eternal life bestow.
melszelt.

* Otmar Pello * Peeter Vanker

Figure 7. The first Estonian hymn in the row of LWF hymnals (AC: LWF 1970: 115).

"My Heart, the Dearest Gift I Know" is not only notable as the first representative Estonian hymnody in the series of global hymnals but also as a symbolic sign. When the LWF was founded in 1947, the EELC was represented at the festive occasion by its exiled church leader Johan Köpp. The official church body in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic was co-opted to the communion in 1963 under the leadership of Archbishop Jaan Kiivit Sr. In light of this process – and the fact that the 1963 assembly was held in Finland, which at that time did not offer a safe space for symbolic gestures across the border – the inclusion of an Estonian hymn in the 1970 assembly hymnal is an especially meaningful political choice.

Contemporary compositions from Estonia are exemplified by "Chosen, Yes, You Have Chosen Us" (*Sina meid oled valinud*; AC: LWF 2017: 10) by Katrin Luhamets.

The two examples above refer to two strong layers of repertoire in Lutheran music from Estonia: local folk or folklorised melodies and melodic contemporary pieces with piano accompaniment, often written for special occasions (national or regional church song days, choir festivals, etc.). However, neither of those genres prevails in the global ecumenical repertoire, but rather an item not originally written for congregational use. The *Sanctus* part from "Estonian Mass" (*Eesti missa*) by the recently deceased composer Urmas Sisask appears in several ecumenical hymnals. The LWF collection from 2017 has a full Estonian version with English only for the refrain part (AC: LWF 2017: 16), while the 2023 LWF hymnal (AC: LWF 2023: 242–243) only includes the core part of the *Sanctus* (similarly to the AC: WCC 2022 and the AC: CEC 2023) in Estonian, along with a singable English version.

Created at the dawn of regaining national independence in 1992, the “Estonian Mass” is known as the first full mass composition in Estonian. Originally a piece of art music for – in this part – unaccompanied choir, Sisask’s *Sanctus* has enchanted the international audience with its introspective tone and a repetitive structure that swells gradually. Through its musical language, the piece succeeds in creating an atmosphere of sanctity.¹⁸

Thus the three Estonian pieces of music represent three different genres, only the first of which is actually present in the official hymnbook of the church.

Lithuania and Other Countries

In spite of the long history of Lutheranism in the Baltic countries, only one Lithuanian hymn has made it to LWF hymnals, with two appearances of one hymn: “O Holy, Loving Spirit, Come” (*Dvasia Šventoji, ateiki*; AC: LWF 2003: 18; AC: LWF 2023: 128). This Lithuanian folk version of a church hymn will also be included in the upcoming Estonian Lutheran hymnal under the title “Holy Spirit” (Estonian *Püha Vaim*; AC: EELC n.d.). The item borrowed by the Baltic sister church is also present in the official hymnbook of the Evangelical Church of Lithuania, a minority church in a secularised Catholic country (AC: ELCL 2007: 126/II).

Other materials from the CEE region include songs from the non-Lutheran musical tradition. There are two Orthodox liturgical songs from Ukraine: “Halleluja” (*Alleluia*; AC: LWF 2003: 7) and “Lord, Have Mercy” (*Gospodi pomilui*; AC: LWF 2003: 28). Two pieces are from Russia – an Orthodox liturgical melody “Remember Thy Servants, Lord” (AC: LWF 1984: 127, only in English and German) and a traditional Russian melody “Glory to The God” (*Slava voveki*; AC: LWF 2003: 88). These countries form a geographically substantial part of the CEE region. The choice of Orthodox musical material might be related to the fact that it is difficult to identify Lutheran musical characteristics among the very different traditions of typically Lutheran groups in the Ukraine and on Russian territory (Ingrian Finns, Volga Germans, etc.).

PARALLELS FROM THE GLOBAL ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

In order to widen the scope, I would like to briefly point out a few ecumenical parallels. Historically, the Church has been divided into different human formations, and overcoming this painful division is a central element of Christian identity. Consequently, bi- and multilateral dialogues between ecumenical partners and membership in church organisations on the local, European and global level are an important part of church life. All those formations gather regularly at meetings which – in addition to the constitutive ‘business’ part – are characterised by liturgical events based on multilingual hymnals.

The presentation of these parallels relies on the claim that CEE material in Lutheran multilingual hymnals on the one hand and in the songbooks of other confessional families on the other, actually show more similarities than differences. It seems that the selection process of musical items for international events otherwise strongly related to confessional identity is governed by factors that overrule theological considerations.

The ecumenical organisations and church families discussed here differ in their geographical coverage. Some are relevant in or in part of the European context, others have global presence. The Porvoo Communion (PC n.d.) is a community of Anglican and mainly Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches in Europe. The Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE n.d.) embraces a number of Reformed, Lutheran and, more recently, Methodist churches. The Conference of European Churches (CEC n.d.) brings together Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican Christians while the World Council of Churches (WCC n.d.) represents an even wider family of Christian denominations, also including Baptist, Pentecostal and free churches.

Although in contrast to the above organisations, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC n.d.) does not include Lutheran member churches, it is brought in as a parallel organisation of the LWF. (As we will see, the otherwise very clear distinction between the confessional families is not always visible in assembly music.)

In the following section, I provide a brief comparison of musical pieces from the Central Eastern Europe region in a chronological order.

1. *Colours of Grace* (AC: CPCE 2006) is a hymnal compiled for Protestant events in the European context. The collection contains 157 hymns in 20 languages (some of the hymns can be sung in up to nine languages in parallel). The text of the original language is the first to be printed; then follow – if available – the conference languages of the CPCE and after that further languages in alphabetical order. Liturgical items (such as Halleluja, Kyrie, Taizé songs) only appear in the original language, along with a non-singable rough translation. CEE items in this book are briefly summarised: an Orthodox “Halleluja” from Ukraine (ibid.: 55/2), “There, in God’s Garden” from Hungary (ibid.: 102) and “In the Distance Day Is Breaking” from Poland (ibid.: 146, here with four verses *vis-à-vis* the three published in LWF hymnals, representing verses 1–2 and 4 of the original version).

2. The Budapest CEC assembly hymnal *Gloria Deo*¹⁹ (AC: CEC 2013) created for the European ecumenical context contains 21 verse hymns,²⁰ one third of which come from the CEE region. Four out of eight CEE hymns originate from a Hungarian-speaking area. The choice of Hungarian items is varied: “The Shining Sun” (*A fényes nap*; ibid.: 65) is a spiritual folksong with Gregorian origins, while “On the Wings of Wind you Hover” (*A szeleknek élénk szárnyán*; ibid.: 68) is a Romanian carol with Hungarian text (also used in a canon form). The remaining two are contemporary compositions. “Lord, How Close I Once Was to You” (*Uram, közel voltam hozzád*; ibid.: 54–55) by Sándor Berkesi and Ferenc Kádár often appears in youth collections but the melody line is convergent with traditional hymn structure. The collection also includes the first international appearance of “How Good It Is, O Do You See” (ibid.: 53), a contemporary Hungarian psalm setting introduced above.

Other verse hymns from the CEE region include two Romanian items (the traditional Orthodox hymn “Holy God” (*Sfinte Dumnezeule*; ibid.: 50–51) and “Christ Is Risen” (*Hristos a înviat*; ibid.: 76) by Alexandru Podoleanu; a Czech folksong “That God May Love Us” (*Aby nás Pán Bůh miloval*; ibid.: 70) and a contemporary Estonian composition “Can’t You Hear the Distant Bells Are Ringing” (*Kaugel väljal helisevad kellad*; ibid.: 72) by Piret Pormeister-Rips and Heli Viht. Thus, the musical presence of the host region may be called quite proportionate, although not many of the above-mentioned verse hymns were finally used in the liturgies.

3. The hymnal of the Budapest Christian Days of Encounter,²¹ *Salt of the Earth* (AC: CDE 2016) consists of 82 verse hymns, including traditional verse hymns (such as the above-mentioned “Jesus, Good Shepherd, Guide”) complemented with music from the Taizé community and thematic contemporary compositions. From this material, eight songs are supposedly of CEE origin (six Czech and two Hungarian).²² Ladislav Moravetz, one of the main editors of the recently published Lutheran hymnbook of the Czech Brethren²³ is the author of a *Kyrie* (AC: CDE 2016: 2) and a canon based on Genevan Psalter’s²⁴ psalm 136 (ibid.: 22), the latter together with F. Šebasta.

4. Although the Reformed church is quite strongly present in the CEE region, the 2017 Leipzig assembly hymnal of the global Reformed family *Living God* (AC: WCRC 2017) contains only one CEE item: “Rise, O Sun of Righteousness” (ibid.: 106) from the Czech Brethren tradition. The hymn appears in German, English, French, Czech, Hungarian, Croatian, Norwegian and Dutch. The whole worship book is textually hexalingual in English, French, German, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesian and Korean. Looking beyond the region, the global musical material in the book features many authors who are known from other ecumenical collections as well such as John Bell, Andrew Donaldson and Marty Haugen among others.

5. The worship book of the 2022 Karlsruhe WCC assembly *Oasis of Peace* (AC: WCC 2022) has a global ecumenical focus and includes eight items from the CEE region. Six of those are from Orthodox churches, both traditional items and contemporary liturgical compositions. The other two come from a Lutheran environment: a shortened *Sanctus* from Sisask’s “Estonian Mass” (ibid.: 102) and a contemporary Hungarian psalm 133, “How Good It Is, Oh Do You See” (ibid.: 298).

6. The worship book of the 2023 CEC assembly in Tallinn, *Gloria Deo* (AC: CEC 2023) is again of a European ecumenical nature and includes 28 hymns and liturgical pieces. The host country is represented by a proportional selection of different musical styles: Sisask’s *Sanctus* (ibid.: 113), a contemporary blessing by Tõnis Teras (ibid.: 111) and a prayer song by Matis Metsala (ibid.: 119), a folk melody “Does a Bird Have Trouble?” (*Kas on linnukesel muret*; ibid.: 116; see also Figure 8) and a folk variant of a German chorale “Awake, My Heart! Be Singing” (*Mu süda, ärka üles*; ibid.: 124). Further CEE hymns include an Orthodox “Halleluja” from Kyiv (ibid.: 109) and the well-known “Holy God” from Romania (ibid.: 112). In total, one fourth of the musical items in the book represent the CEE region.

These brief examples adequately illustrate the fact that items that have once entered the international ecumenical scene, are more likely to reappear in other environments – existing singable translations may be as equally strong arguments for the inclusion of a given hymn as theological relevance or musical value. Such intersections clearly have practical value at ecumenical meetings in addition to promoting inter-confessional awareness. Yet, other questions remain open. Is it a challenge if we cannot differentiate between hymnals of different church families based on the musical material included? What is the role of confessional identity in a post-ecumenical era?

Kas on linnukesel muret

eesti rahvaviis

Kas on lin - nu - ke - sel mu - ret?

Kust ta saab või mis ta sööb?

Te - ma loo - dab Loo - ja pe - a - le,

tõs - tab lau - lu - hää - le, tõs - tab lau - lu -

hää - le, kau - ni lau - lu - hää - le, kau - ni lau - lu -

hää - le, rõõm - sa lau - lu - hää - le, rõõm - sa lau - lu -

hää - le, ü - les tae - va poo - le, ü - les tae - va poo - le.

Figure 8. Estonian song (AC: CEC 2023: 116).

DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Regional Balance in the Choice of Hymns

Not unlike in the case of songs from the Asia and Africa region, the selection of CEE material in LWF hymnals seems to be rather incidental. An assembly in the given region naturally strengthens the relevance of CEE music. The Budapest assembly hymnal (AC: LWF 1984) added five new regional items to the five songs published earlier so that CEE material finally constituted altogether 6% of the whole collection. The Kraków material (AC: LWF 2023) doubled the number of Polish hymns ever published in earlier hymnals, although in comparison to the Windhoek worship book (AC: LWF 2017), the

musical presence of the host region was still moderate. Music from CEE amounted to 11% of the hymnal while in the Namibia (AC: LWF 2017) and Hong Kong (AC: LWF 1997) assembly collections, one third of the music was related to the Africa and the Asia region respectively.

Looking at the mental map of Lutheran churches in CEE, there are several white spots not represented in this material (see CEE n.d.). Among others, the two Lutheran churches in Latvia (where, unlike in Estonia, the successors of the Lutheran churches at home and worldwide continue to exist as parallel structures), the two in Romania (one of them Hungarian speaking, the other with traditionally German/Saxonian roots) and the Lutheran church in Slovenia are clearly missing from each selection.

Global and CEE Core Hymns

Looking at the interrelated series of LWF collections discussed above, there is a number of individual hymns whose continued presence in the material seems to invariably contribute to expressing Lutheran identity across different decades. From among the global musical corpus of 1947–2023, there are at least two strong candidates: “A Mighty Fortress” (German *Ein feste Burg*; AC: EG 2016: 362) and “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (*Lobe den Herren*; *ibid.*: 303). Both hymns have a direct connection to the first centuries of the Reformation and their reference to the Bible (psalms 46 and 103 respectively) may have further strengthened their practical value.

“A Mighty Fortress” is attributed to Martin Luther himself. The many rhythmic and melodic variants across time and space have not prevented the hymn from entering most global Lutheran collections throughout time. From the 11 available LWF hymnals, it is only missing from the *Supplement to Laudamus* (AC: LWF 1990) that was used together with *Laudamus* (AC: LWF 1984) already including the iconic hymn, and from *Agape* (AC: LWF 2003).

Especially in regions where Lutherans are a minority, “A Mighty Fortress” carries an additional symbolic value as a distinctive hymn that sets Lutherans apart from other ecumenical partners. In Hungary, “A Mighty Fortress” exists not only in a sung version widely used on Reformation Day and other festive services such as confirmation, ordination, etc., but the phrase is also used as a verbal greeting among Lutherans.²⁵

In spite of the strong identity-forming factor of the hymn, there are also challenges embedded in the text. The last verse for instance contains a rather contradictory thought on the possibility of sacrificing our beloved ones for the sake of God’s Word. In non-European regions, the usage of the hymn seems to be rather sporadic, which further weakens the role of the hymn in global Lutheran settings.

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”, originally a German folk melody later applied in different forms, is one of the most popular melodies throughout Christian tradition. The author of the text, Reformed preacher Joachim Neander, was a leading figure of the Pietistic movement. This hymn based on psalm 103 is immensely prevalent across confessional boundaries. In the series of LWF collections, it is present in practically each volume (from AC: LWF 1947: 2 to AC: LWF 2023: 212–213, except *Supplement* (AC: LWF 1990) that only included previously unpublished items).

Hansjakob Becker with his colleagues (2003: 316) claims that, the text is a compilation on the borderline between a psalm paraphrase and a spiritual hymn. Together with another well-known German hymn text by Joachim Neander, “God Is Here Among Us” (*Gott ist gegenwärtig*; see Tersteegen n.d.), the hymn “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” makes a strong reference to the Messianic King.²⁶ Both regal hymns have become recurrent pieces of Lutheran hymnody, despite the fact that their author actually represents a theological current distancing itself from that tradition.

Statistically salient songs can equally be found in the musical material from CEE presented above. “Rise, O Sun of Righteousness”, a hymn from the Czech Brethren tradition, with its ascending melody line holds the statistical record as it appears six times in the international material under scrutiny. Four of these are LWF occurrences: the original form (AC: LWF 1970: 86; AC: LWF 1984: 87) and two *ad notam* variants (AC: LWF 1984: 84 with an Eastern text “At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing”, and AC: LWF 2023: 40 with a *Sanctus* compilation based on the liturgical addendum of the ELCH (AC: ELCH 2007: 619); while the remaining two are found in other ecumenical publications (AC: CDE 2016: 10; AC: WCRC 2017: 106). As it seems, the memorable signal motif offers a firm framework which is capable of carrying variable texts with different connotations.

“In the Distance Day Is Breaking”, the Polish morning hymn appears five times, with four LWF occurrences (AC: LWF 1970: 34; AC: LWF 1984: 13; AC: LWF 2003: 44; AC: LWF 2023: 152–153) and one CPCE occurrence (AC: CPCE 2006: 146). Whoever proposed the originally Catholic hymn to enter *Laudamus* (AC: LWF 1970), started a course of triumph. From the point the hymn was taken on, it has appeared in every second subsequent LWF collection (along with a number of other European and global hymns). In addition to its simple and catchy melody, the appeal of the existing singable translations by Jeffrey T. Meyers to English and Tadeusz Sikora to German may also have played a part in this success story.

“How Good It Is, Oh Do You See”, a contemporary psalm from Hungary belongs to newer congregational music and with its three appearances in the chosen material (AC: CEC 2013: 53; AC: WCC 2022: 298–301; AC: LWF 2023: 88;), it is apparently on its way to becoming an ecumenical core hymn. If we look at it more closely, “How Good It Is, Oh Do You See” actually conforms to the narrow definition by Trajtler given above. Despite its song-like style and typically chord-based musical accompaniment with guitar, lute or similar instruments, “How Good It Is, Oh Do You See” can also be appropriately performed with an organ accompaniment. The ‘la-la-la’ refrain resembling Jewish dance music makes the musical structure slightly more playful than an average church hymn. The recent Reformed hymnbook in Hungary (available both as a paper and electronic version, with unified numbering – AC: RCH 2022a; AC: RCH 2022b) includes a choice of playful psalm texts on folk or other melodies. It is not apparent yet, what direction the hymnbook renewal process of the ELCH will take in this regard.

The popular Estonian *Sanctus* by Urmas Sisask, taken from a mass cycle written for choir with accompaniment, has made its way into four international collections (AC: LWF 2017: 16; AC: WCC 2022: 102–105; AC: CEC 2023: 113; AC: LWF 2023: 242). As mentioned above, this piece is anything but a traditional hymn as it was originally not even composed for church use. At the same time, at least three of the above four melodic criteria could apply to it. It is not very demanding to sing with the soprano line, even without harmonies.

Is it so, then, that irrespective of the historical origin of a hymn, a fortunate combination of content and reception grounded in faith, combined with collateral practical value (cf. Blume 1965: 22) makes a core hymn even in our time? Even if the composer was not aspiring to that aim?

Based on theoretical discussions and analysis I propose a preliminary set of criteria for a Lutheran core hymn. Given the complex nature of hymns interconnecting God's message and church life, text and melody, individual and community being, this combination of features should equally relate to theology, identity, music and church life. The six examples above – two candidates for a global Lutheran core hymn and four candidates for Lutheran core hymns from the CEE region – all conform to the 'minimal core' of Lutheran identity: "what preaches Christ" (see Endnote 5).

"A Mighty Fortress" does that in a very direct manner (verse 2): "You ask who this may be? / The Lord of hosts is he! / Christ Jesus, mighty Lord, / God's only Son adored. / He holds the field victorious." "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" fulfils the criteria by offering a Christological reading of the Book of Psalms, for example, in verse 4: "Ponder anew / what the Almighty can do / if with his love he befriend you". In "In the Distance Day Is Breaking", the new-born day in its glory can remind people of the possibility of daily repentance (cf. first of Martin Luther's Ninety-five Theses; see for example Luther 1997 [1517]) as a tool for justification by grace, faith and Christ alone. "Rise, O Sun of Righteousness" refers to the core event of resurrection through a metaphor of the Church waking from the dead: "Bring your dormant church to life, / Help us, Lord, in all our strife" (singable English version, verse 2). "How Good It Is, Oh Do You See" as a Psalm paraphrase, again directly references the Father (verse 3): "Here is the blessing, do believe: God composes life and music so his kingdom may come". At the same time, the quest for unity may also imply the idea about the Holy Trinity being One. The Christological allusion in *Sanctus* is a direct reference to the Bible (Matthew 21: 9), where Jesus enters Jerusalem: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Based on this Christological cornerstone (the first item in the list below), a combination of the following features is necessary to make a Lutheran core hymn:

- 1) A theological core: "what preaches Christ"
- 2) Narrow melodic criteria
 - originally plain chant (works without harmonies),
 - even structure avoiding musical extremities,
 - follows a logical harmonic structure,
 - possible to be accompanied with organ.
- 3) Identity expression
 - biblical or liturgical reference,
 - content authorised by a key author or era (especially the Reformation),
 - connection to a preceding publication or church tradition,
 - reinforcing confessional, linguistic or national identity in the context of ecumenical partners or other neighbours.
- 4) Pedagogical added value

- memorable music (among others, prominent melodic structure, repetition),
- musical character suited to the given content (cf. "How Good It Is, Oh Do You See" and Sisask's *Sanctus*, which have two opposing characters both perfectly fit for their given function),
- existing singable translation.

SUMMARY

I have looked at a regionally focused segment of hymn repertoire chosen into global Lutheran hymnals and international collections of other ecumenical organisations and tried to identify core hymns. Repeatedly used hymns appearing across different contexts and historical situations are bound to carry analogous traits in their theology, music, identity-forming function and aptitude for church use.

As the six core hymn examples are all of European origin, either from Central Western or Central Eastern Europe, further research is necessary to prove whether the features that define a Lutheran core hymn listed above apply across wider cultural contexts. Future studies will also reflect on the relative order of importance among the above-mentioned factors. The varied geographical origin of hymnal editors, the 76-year timespan of the scrutinised publications and the variety of denominational groups behind the collections hint at the possibility that the humble criteria offered above might apply across a wider variety of contexts.

The historical deliberations in this article also have practical implications in the CEE region today. In this study, I have briefly looked at how CEE music is featured in hymnals of the Lutheran world. As two Lutheran churches in the region – Estonia and Hungary – are presently in the process of ongoing hymnbook renewal, whether core hymns from the Lutheran world – especially from its non-European parts including the most energetic Lutheran communities today²⁷ – will be represented in those new hymnbooks is a highly relevant question.²⁸

ABBREVIATIONS

CDE – Christian Days of Encounter
 CEC – Conference of European Churches
 CEE – Central Eastern Europe
 CPCE – Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe
 ECCB – Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren
 EELC – Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
 ELCF – Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
 ELCH – The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
 ELCI – Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland
 ELCL – Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania
 LWF – Lutheran World Federation
 PCG – Protestant Church in Germany
 RCH – Reformed Church in Hungary
 WCC – World Council of Churches
 WCRC – World Communion of Reformed Churches

NOTES

1 In this article, I use 'hymn' (or 'chorale') as an overall term for songs designated for congregational singing, irrespective of their origin or musical form. As from 1997, the collections include both verse hymns and cyclical forms (sung refrains, canons, etc.), I also refer to the subcategory 'verse hymn'.

2 In Estonia, publication of the new Lutheran hymnbook is planned for 2027 or later, while in Hungary, for 2030 or later.

3 Worship refers to the totality of thought and action forming a church service; however, in this paper I will limit the scope to hymns only.

4 The third, so-called 'Chicago statement', in 1998 (in Wilkey 2014: 293–301) had a more specific focus, as this consultation phase dealt with the cultural dynamics related to baptism and rites of human passage.

5 "That is the true test, by which to judge all books, when we see whether they deal with Christ or not, since all the Scriptures show us Christ (Romans 3:21), and St. Paul will know nothing but Christ (1 Corinthians 15:2). What does not teach Christ is not apostolic, 129 Martin Luther's Prefaces to the Books of the Bible even though St. Peter or Paul taught it; again, what preaches Christ would be apostolic, even though Judas, Annas, Pilate and Herod did it." (See English version in Luther n.d.: 129–130.)

6 That is, for Jaanson (2018), the Lutheran hymnbooks published in the area now called Estonia within 1638 and 1991.

7 For example, 150 core hymns in AC: PCG 1854; 50 hymns in Becker et al. 2003; 33 hymns in *Unsere Kernlieder* 2006 among others.

8 As *Agape* (AC: LWF 2003) was designed for international ecumenical use beyond one LWF Assembly, the next publication – *Koinonia* (Jussila and Ramshaw 2004) – did not include musical material but a broad collection of liturgical texts in the four official languages. The 2010 Stuttgart assembly drew on both publications.

9 If the hymns are numbered in the given collection, I use those numbers as reference. If not, the reference points to the page number within the given hymnal.

10 Where the year of creation is not mentioned, it is not available in the original publication.

11 The main decision of the assembly was to suspend the membership of two white LWF churches from Southern Africa on the basis of their continued support of Apartheid and their failure to end the division of their churches on racial grounds.

12 The present Evangelical Lutheran hymnbook in Hungary exists both as a paper and electronic version, with unified numbering (AC: ELCH 1981; AC: ELCH 2006).

13 Another hymn from the times of Hungarian Reformation, "Our Heart Is Rejoicing" (*Örül mi szívünk*) is part of the present Estonian hymnbook, titled there "Church, a Sacred Place" (*Kirik, püha paik*; AC: EELC 1991) and it is also planned to be included in the new hymnbook – possibly in a restored melodic form.

14 A hymn collection titled *Harp of the Saints* (*Cithara Sanctorum*) by Lutheran priest and hymnwriter from the Cieszyn Silesia Jiří Třanovský (1928 [1635]), originally in biblical Czech.

15 *Kyrie eleison* is a constant part of Christian liturgy. The original Greek phrase means 'have mercy on me, Lord'.

16 The Czech Brethren have published a new hymnbook lately (available both as a paper and electronic version, with unified numbering – AC: ECCB 2021a; AC: ECCB 2021b).

17 *Sanctus* (Lat. 'Holy') is a constant part of the liturgy of the Holy Communion.

18 A performance from the 2004 national song celebration testifies to this (see Edition 49 Music Publishing Company 2008).

19 *Gloria Deo* (Latin ‘Glory of God’) refers to the Latin phrase *Gloria in excelsis Deo* (*Glory to God in the highest*): The song of the angels’ choir on Christmas night in Luke 2:14 and the name of a regular part of Christian liturgy.

20 This collection clearly separates verse hymns from liturgical material that appears in the flow of worship services.

21 The Christian Days of Encounter is a gathering of Lutheran churches from Germany and CEE. The circle of participating churches has constantly widened since the first meeting in 1991. (For more details, see Christian Days of Encounter n.d.)

22 Due to a lack of detailed hymnological data in the publication, the analysis is based on the author’s estimation.

23 See AC: ECCB 2021a and AC: ECCB 2021b.

24 Genevan Psalter is a collection of psalm melodies, composed between 1539 and 1562 in Geneva, Switzerland.

25 Cf. *Laudetur Jesus Christus* (Lat. ‘Praised be Jesus Christ’) in the Catholic tradition.

26 Although the former is also interpreted as a hymn of inward-turning prayer life, the full original text includes ample references to God the perpetual, the majestic and omnipresent who also dwells in us.

27 In 2024, the biggest LWF member churches are to be found in Ethiopia and Tanzania, with 10.4 and 7.9 million members respectively (see LWF Member Churches n.d.).

28 As an example of this process, the list of hymns to be included in the new Estonian hymnbook already contains a few items from Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, Tanzania, and the United States (AC: EELC n.d.).

SOURCES

Author’s materials: AC = Analysis Corpus consisting of hymnals. The acronym of the relevant organisation (e.g. LWF, CEC) and publication year are included.

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