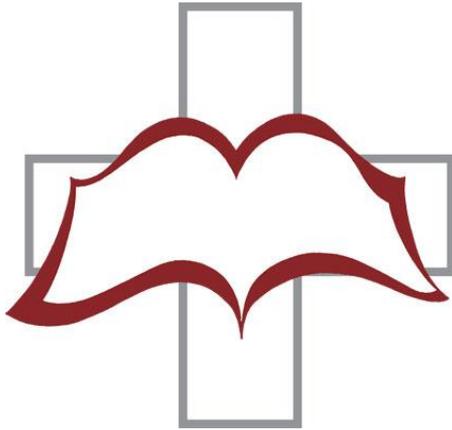


*Immanuel Lutheran
Church*



*A Seasonal Approach to Our
Divine Service Settings*

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Apart from the secretary, pastor, and musicians, very few people realize what goes on behind the scenes of planning a worship service. The pastor carefully chooses his preaching text and theme based on the church lectionary, a three year cycle of Bible readings, as well as the church season (e.g. Advent, Christmas, Easter). Then he gathers with the organists and other musicians, who together chose hymns and liturgy and discuss special choir, ensemble, bell choir, and children's music which specifically fit the day's liturgical theme. And the music is not just thrown into the service, but thoughtfully inserted in certain parts of the service so that the theme and mood of the service flows smoothly from the Opening Hymn, to the Sermon, to Holy Communion, to the Benediction.

One unique gift that this congregation has is the ability to learn and enjoy a variety of musical settings of the divine service and prayer offices. In 2015 the worship committee came up with a plan to rotate services seasonally. The service settings have been carefully chosen to match the changes in the church year.

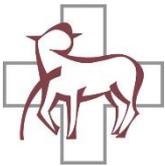
This has two major advantages. **First**, in addition to changes in the color of the paraments, hymns, and readings, the service settings will help distinguish the different seasons of the church year. This will make our choosing of service settings more purposeful. **Secondly**, there will be more continuity. Pastor, musicians, and congregation will get into a rhythm with one service setting before moving on to the next. Also, visitors who are unfamiliar with our liturgy will have a month or so to get used to one setting before moving on to another.

Now I will go through our church season and explain the thought behind our choices.



On **Weekdays**, Tuesday through Friday at 8:30 a.m., we pray the service of Matins. Together we pray for the needs of our members, community, and world and read almost all of the Bible every two years. The Te Deum, Psalm, prayers, and hymn help us to start our day trusting in God's strength and guidance.

In **Advent**, we sing Divine Service Setting One. While both Settings One and Two have the same texts, Setting One has a more hopeful and celebratory tone than Two, which will be used for Lent. The Kyrie Eleison (“Lord Have Mercy”), Sanctus (“Holy”), and Agnus Dei (“Lamb of God”) are all a faster pace and the musical key is more often a major key, which has a happier feel. Advent, while also stressing the repentant preparation for our Lord’s coming, has a less somber mood than Lent. Having a joyful hope while we wait is an emphasis. The Midweek services will use Evening Prayer, either from the Lutheran Service book or from Marty Haugen, which allow us to sing the Magnificat, Mary’s joyful response to the wonderful gift of God’s Son, who made His home within her.



For Sundays after **Christmas** we will use Setting Three, a “high liturgy” with more chanting and a longer history than the other services. This service will be used to highlight the high, joyful feasts of the Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter seasons. The earlier Christmas Eve service will follow the tradition of Lessons and Carols. As we hear the prophecies of Christ and sing beloved hymns we realize that we are very close to the celebration of Christ’s birth and we worship our God who fulfills His promises. The Christmas Eve Midnight and Christmas Day services will include the carol setting of the communion liturgy. And on New Year’s Eve we will use the Rejoice and Be Glad bulletin, a hymn setting of the Divine Service, which we use to celebrate the beginning and end of Jesus’ visible, earthly visitation (The Circumcision and Name of Jesus and The Ascension).

In the **Epiphany** season we’ll make use of Divine Services Three and Five. For day of Epiphany we’ll use Divine Service Five, which connects the revelation of Jesus as the Christ and Son of God with Reformation, our confession of that same truth. Setting Three will be used for the other Epiphany Sundays, helping us to connect the birth of Jesus with the revealing of God’s Son. Epiphany is considered a continuation of the Christmas season.



For the Sundays in **Lent**, we’ll sing Setting Two. In this setting the music takes a little more somber tone than in One, especially the Kyrie with its “Lord, have mercy” sounding like one is crying out. The midweek services will utilize our hymnal’s Evening Prayer, a slightly more somber feel than Marty Haugen’s, though not without its own uplifting Magnificat to remind us that Lent is not without joy in Christ’s saving work. Maundy

Thursday through Easter Vigil have their own unique liturgies which can't be properly explained here.

Beginning with **Easter** Sunrise and Easter Day, we use the Easter hymn settings of the communion liturgy. For Sundays after Easter, we use Divine Service Setting Three for this high liturgical season. And for the Ascension we use Rejoice and Be Glad, remembering the end of Jesus' earthly visitation in visible form.

During the **Pentecost** season we begin with the Day of Pentecost and Holy Trinity and a number of optional feast days. We will sing Setting One through July. In August and September, a time of fewer feast days, we'll sing Setting Four, a service which less liturgical tradition and chanting. In October and November, when the church year stresses more end times motifs, yet includes some very high feast days, we'll return to Setting One. On Reformation we'll use Setting Five, which uses several of Luther's hymns and helps us recall the revelation of the Gospel in Jesus Christ which we celebrated on Epiphany. And our Thanksgiving Service will be Matins, which includes the great thanksgiving song of the ancient Christian Church: the Te Deum.

Throughout the Church Year, we will occasionally use Marty Haugen's *Now the Feast*, depending on how well it fits the theme of the day.

There are many more things we could say about when we use certain parts of the Divine Service throughout the year, like the Alleluias, Gloria, and This Is the Feast, but that is for another place. Hopefully understanding this musical rotation will enhance your celebration of Christ throughout the Church Year.

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