

Five *(more)* Things that Cantors Would Like to Tell Pastors

by Nancy Raabe

“Both Sides Now” is a resource for both clergy and cantors. The column explores the working relationship between the pastor and the musician in a Lutheran congregation. It offers suggestions, advice, and encouragement for all parties who are committed to the sacred vocation of leading worship in today’s world.

I am the best source of feedback on your sermons.

I am there for you at every sermon, in every service. You can count on me to be a sympathetic and supportive ear. Please ask for my input, especially when you’re uncertain how a sermon was received. I can offer thoughts not only on content but also on delivery.

Please don’t cut stanzas from hymns.

Each hymn tells a story through its successive stanzas. We risk distorting the theology of the hymn when we omit parts of that story, especially those parts concerned with Jesus’ death and the reality of human sin. Our faith is shaped by what we sing. If the length of the service is

We offer these reflections amid the likelihood that congregational singing will not resume widely for some time. These thoughts may be applied to online worship as we await that time when we can worship together again.

May God give us the strength and courage we need “for the living of these days.”

a concern, there may be other places where we can trim out a few minutes. If length is not a consideration, I can also point you to stanzas omitted from our hymnals that fill out the hymn’s story and suggest ways we might include those.

Ask me to help with Christian education.

I would be delighted to lead a class or forum on some topic relating to the music of the church. I know a lot about what we sing and why, and I would enjoy sharing some of that with congregation members. I can talk about our hymnal and its history; how to use the hymnal and all that it contains; the importance of congregational song; or how it is that when we sing, we pray twice.

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Consider preaching on a hymn.

This can be a refreshing perspective on God’s word, especially if the hymn you choose is the hymn of the day. Imagine how much richer the experience of singing will then be. Ask me for ideas as we do our worship planning. I can also point you to helpful resources.

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Great text, difficult tune? Let me tell you about the metrical index.

Our hymnals provide us with this incredibly helpful resource for just this purpose. If there's a text that illuminates the content of a service but you think its tune might be problematic, let's explore alternative tunes together. Care must be taken, though, because a tune with the same meter must also support the emphases within the text.

Next time: **Best Practices for Clergy/Cantor Relationships**

Send your comments, experiences, and challenges to nancy@nancyraabe.com for discussion in future columns. May God bless you and your ministry, today and always.



Nancy M. Raabe is the pastor at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Marshall, WI. Pre-

viously Nancy served as music director at congregations in Wisconsin and Ohio. She has written three volumes of *One-Minute Devotions for the Church Musician* based on readings for all three lectionary cycles (St. Louis: MorningStar, 2010, 2011, and 2011).

June 12



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June 19



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— Christopher Wilson

July 17



Leading with body, mind, spirit, voice: the preparation of a conductor — Pearl Shangkuan

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