

Living Our Call, Part 1

by Nancy Raabe

Sing Boldly!

martin Luther didn't say quite this, but he might have. In the introduction to *Eyn geystlich Gesangk Buchleyn* (1524), Luther affirmed the compilation as a means by which "the holy Gospel, which now by the grace of God has risen anew, may be noised and spread abroad."¹

"Noised"—yes!² When you find yourself in worship with your hymnal open and an uplifting musical introduction is preparing you to proclaim the gospel in song, take advantage of this invitation to inspire those around you. Do not mumble through the hymn as do those who are unsure of the notes or uncertain why they are there at all. Instead let your voice rise joyfully from within the gathered body—while not making a spectacle of yourself; my children used to caution me, "Mom! Sing quieter!"

Editor's note: This article begins a six-part series in which ALCM past-president Nancy Raabe will explore how we can pastorally live out our call as church musicians as we effectively, gracefully, faithfully, wisely, and creatively plan, lead, and equip our congregations to worship our risen Lord. Come back next issue for more!



Photo courtesy ALCM. Joan Sanchez-Miller

To this end, do not bury yourself in the hymnal. Lead those around you into vigorous song with a sense of purpose, your book and eyes raised to signal that you see yourself as part of the worshipping body. Hold the hymnal with one or both hands at chest height so your voice projects outward. Glance occasionally into the faces of others around you, as well as up at your worship leaders, to show that you see yourself woven together with them in this sacred act of congregational song. I always look around when I sing and am intrigued that I am almost

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always the only one doing this or showing any expression. Our faces should be as animated as the music we are singing.

Granted, if it's an unfamiliar hymn one must pay attention to the notes. But don't let this eclipse your focus on the text.

Your visible engagement with the hymn may help others discern what their connection with that text and tune might be.

If a particular phrase strikes you, mark it in your hymnal and return to it later to ask God why it caught your attention. What was that phrase calling from you at that moment in time? All hymns are chosen for a purpose—God’s purpose—but that manifests itself differently in each person. In fact, your visible engagement with the hymn may help others discern

what their connection with that text and tune might be.

We cherish our worship books as treasures of limitless faith. What a joy to have the opportunity to return to them weekly—or daily, if you keep a copy at home for devotion as I do. My tattered soft-cover mini *ELW* is coffee-stained and falling apart, but it stays right next to my chair and travels with me wherever I go. Let these truths of faith stream through you and out into the world: “O God, my faithful God, true fountain ever flowing” (*ELW* 806; *LSB* 696; *CW* 93 459; *CW* 21 740).



Nancy Raabe is a retired ELCA pastor who lives with her husband Bill and their dog Jack in

Hatfield, PA. Nancy was president of ALCM 2022–2025 and has served congregations in Ohio, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania in various capacities.

Notes

1. Martin Luther, “Eyn geystlich Gesangk Buchleyn” (1524), trans. Paul Zeller Strodach, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 53, ed. Ulrich S. Leupold (Fortress Press, 1965), 316.
2. Perhaps also “driven” or “brought into play,” but isn’t translator Paul Zeller Strodach’s “noised” more expressive?






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