

One-Minute Devotions for the Church Musician: Cycle A

by Nancy M. Raabe. St. Louis: Birnamwood, 2010.
72 pp. ISBN 978-0-944529-50-8. \$12.00.

Composer, writer, editor and church musician Nancy Raabe serves as composer-in-residence at Bethel Lutheran Church in Grove City, Ohio, and has held various ministry positions in the Columbus, Ohio area. In *One-Minute Devotions for the Church Musician*, she offers a pastorally theological and discerning voice.

Raabe's series is tied to the three-year cycle of scripture readings in the Revised Common Lectionary. This volume corresponds with Year A. Volumes corresponding with cycles B and C are forthcoming. The Gospel reading for each week serves as the basis for every devotion. Each reading concludes with a brief prayer and a quotation from the text of a related hymn that corresponds with the theme drawn from the Scripture passage. In her preface, Raabe offers several suggestions regarding the use of her devotions. This reader found the volume particularly useful in communal devotions with fellow church members, *sharing the devotion during the week preceding the Sunday on which that lesson would be read*. Since it is written for church musicians, choir and ensemble rehearsals offer especially suitable audiences. However, with slight adaptation the book's content is applicable to many congregational settings such as church councils and other small group settings. In addition, Raabe's collection is beneficial even for those who may not follow the lectionary, as many will appreciate her insight into ministry combined with the volume's foundation in Scripture, qualities that transcend use of the lectionary.

Perhaps most impressive is Raabe's skill in pastorally exegeting the weekly scripture passage. Many available devotional materials focus on eisogesis, reading into the text based on our own experience. With devotions geared towards church musicians, this would be an easy route. However, Raabe's short weekly offerings reveal that she did her exegetical homework; she begins with what is clearly rooted in the text. But her efforts do not stop there. Her ability to intersect the meaning of the text with the daily lives of real people, in particular, working church musicians, is a great strength of this book. It is not a condensed commen-

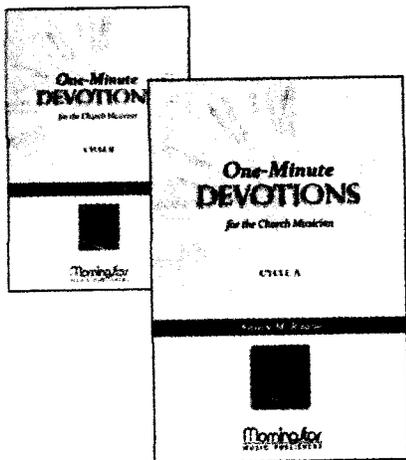
tary on the Scripture passage nor is it a light-hearted, "feel good" daily encouragement. Some of her devotions are quite challenging, posing questions about what it means to live as a servant of God in a world that cares little for God's kingdom. Raabe brings theological depth to the text without sacrificing relevance, readability and applicability.

This reader found Raabe's collection surprisingly refreshing and particularly suitable for communal use in practical music ministry settings. Her series is a fine gift for the practicing church musician.

EMILY SNIDER

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Nancy Raabe

***One-Minute Devotions for the Church Musician:
Cycle A***

and

***One-Minute Devotions for the Church Musician:
Cycle B***

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IN HER RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS of one-minute devotions for Years A and B of the Revised Common Lectionary, Raabe offers church musicians a weekly resource appropriate for personal devotional use. Beyond personal use, however, these one-minute devotions are also extremely fitting for the choral rehearsal room, especially for directors who find themselves wanting to make connections between the readings, hymns, and anthems sung in worship.

Raabe offers extremely helpful tips at the beginning of each book that allow for variety in the ways the devotions can be utilized. For use in choir rehearsals, she suggests handing out copies of the gospel reading for Sunday, inviting someone to read the devotion and closing prayer, allowing time for discussion, and reading aloud the hymn stanza that is included at the end of each devotion. What a powerful tool this resource is for connecting the word of God to the music we sing.

Considering the goal of these books, which is to provide something that can be utilized within a minute (or a little more), Raabe has done a marvelous job of finding a kernel of good news from each Sunday's gospel reading and has explored what God's word might be to us as we prepare to lead the church's song each week. Those who are searching for in-depth Bible study or commentary should not look to these resources, for that is clearly not the intent of these books. That being said, Raabe obviously pays attention to the texts and takes seriously what they have to say.

One excellent example comes from the devotion for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

(Lectionary 5, Year A), in which the gospel reading is Matthew 5:13–20. She writes:

In verse 16 of this passage we find a fine summary of music ministry: "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

The music we choose, and the manner in which we offer it into worship as a vehicle for thanksgiving and transformation, serves not to increase our power and prestige but only to praise God. We are to be beacons of this transformation—no more, no less. Any office of ministry which calls attention to itself is in need of purposeful re-examination. (Year A, p. 22)

These resources provide such numerous reminders as this that our work as church musicians is to focus primarily on the proclamation of Christ and him crucified. Raabe reminds us: "Whether as director, keyboardist, singer, instrumentalist or composer, through God's gift of music we proclaim the good news of the resurrection of Jesus and his victory over death to a world in need" (Year A, p. 6).

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