



+ Where Praises Never End +

A Festival of the Hymnody with Rev. Dr. Stephen Starke
Assisted by Rev. Derek Roberts & Mr. Caleb Hesse

May 17, Year of Our Lord 2026

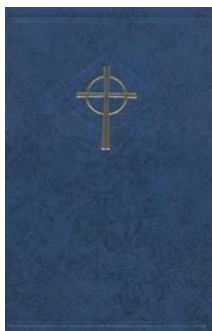
Introduction (adapted from the Introduction to *Lutheran Service Book*)

Within the Lutheran tradition, the wedding of the Word of God to melody was by the reformer himself. Martin Luther had a high regard for music and urged the Church to use it wisely as a vehicle for proclaiming the Gospel. "Next to theology," he wrote, "I accord to music the highest place and the greatest honor." Retaining the best of pre-Reformation hymnody, as well as adding a great number of new hymns to the Church's song, Luther and succeeding generations of hymnwriters continue to inspire the faithful to lift their voices in praise and thanksgiving to the triune God.

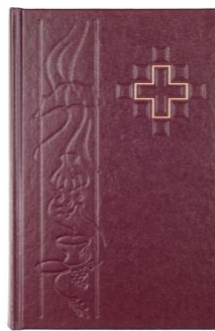
This heritage of word and song has been highly valued throughout the history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Even before the Synod's formation, a new, German language hymnal was already in development, edited by the Synod's first president, C. F. W. Walther. With the transition to English came several books: *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (1889, 1912), *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941), and, most recently, *Lutheran Worship* (1982) and *Lutheran Service Book* (2006). Each of these hymnals not only handed on the treasures of the past but also offered contemporary expressions of word and song in service to the Gospel.



The Lutheran Hymnal. St. Louis:
Concordia Publishing House,
1941.



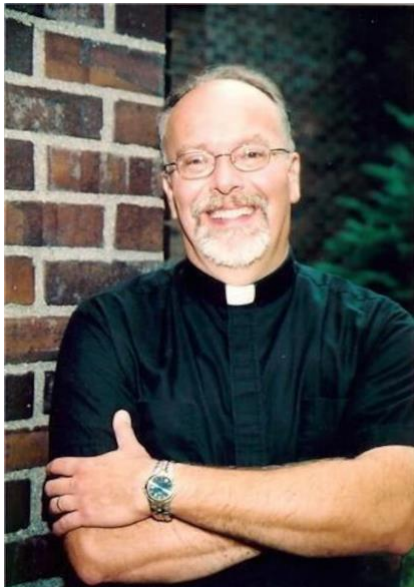
Lutheran Worship. St. Louis:
Concordia Publishing House,
1982.



Lutheran Service Book. St. Louis:
Concordia Publishing House,
2006.

In every age God also blesses His people by raising up hymnwriters who have honed their craft to create rich and fresh expressions of praise. These writers help the Church confess the faith in ways that are both faithful to Scripture and meaningful for worshipers in their own time. Rev. Dr. Stephen Starke contributed to over 30 of the hymns appearing in *Lutheran Service Book*. His work reflects careful attention to biblical themes, doctrinal clarity, and poetic expression suited for congregational singing. Through his texts, many worshipers are given language to articulate prayer, thanksgiving, and proclamation in the context of corporate worship. The Church is blessed by his creative contributions, which continue to support and enrich its hymnody.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Starke



Stephen Paul Starke was born in 1955 in Bay City, Michigan. He graduated from Concordia University in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1975 and from Concordia University Chicago in 1977. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana in May of 1983. He served as Assistant Pastor at St. John Lutheran Church (Mayfair) in Chicago, Illinois from 1983-1985, as Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Middletown, Connecticut from 1985 to 2000, and as Pastor of St. John Ev. Lutheran Church of Amelith in Bay City, Michigan, from 2000 until his retirement at the end of 2020.

From 1996-1997, Pastor Starke served on the Hymn Selection Committee for *Hymnal Supplement 98*, and from 1998-2006 he served as the Chairman of the Hymnody Committee for the Lutheran Hymnal Project which culminated in the release of *Lutheran Service Book* in 2006. In 2005, Concordia Publishing House (CPH) released a book of 122 of Pastor Starke's hymn texts entitled, *O Sing of Christ*. In 2018, CPH released a book of 90 additional hymn texts entitled *Marvel at the Mercy*. He has since written an additional 55 hymns.

Through the years, Pastor Starke has received a number of awards and honorary degrees. In July of 2023, he received the Faithful Servant Award from the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) for his service to the Church as pastor, hymnwriter, and participant in the development of *Lutheran Service Book* and in October of 2025, he received the *Spiritus Christi* award from his alma mater, Concordia University Chicago, in recognition of his contributions to the song of the Church. He and his wife Pat, a retired physical therapist, have been married for 48 years. They have four married children and four granddaughters.

Mr. Caleb Hesse

Caleb Hesse, born to Rev. Dr. Brian and Mrs. Janelle Hesse in 2002, serves professionally as a composer, organist, and pianist within the sacred, secular, and educational fields of music. Born a native Texan, Mr. Hesse completed his education at West Texas A&M University, earning a Bachelor of Music specializing in Music Composition. Throughout his education, Mr. Hesse studied piano and organ at the collegiate level, offering numerous recitals. Additionally, it was during this time that Mr. Hesse's relationship to his high-school sweetheart, Mattie Ickles, developed, leading to their marriage in 2024.

Currently, Mr. Hesse serves as the Director of Worship Arts for Praise Lutheran Church in Maryville, TN. In this role, Mr. Hesse not only continues to showcase his artistry as an organist, pianist, and composer but also contributes to the planning of services, provides music education, and directs the choir program.



When not behind the keyboard or baton, Mr. Hesse enjoys various hobbies such as gardening, gaming, antiquing, cars, and (above all,) playing with his cat Ginger. Mr. Hesse is also a proud brother of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, a professional, national, secret fraternity of music. He also has ties with the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) and the American Guild of Organists (AGO).

Our Stained Glass Windows, Wooden Crucifix, and Where Praises Never End



The stained-glass windows at Praise Lutheran Church serve as a visual confession of the Gospel, shaping the worship space so that what is sung is also seen. The imagery of Christ's saving work, especially in symbols like the Lamb in "Life & the Lamb", reflects the same truths expressed in the Church's hymns. What the congregation confesses and sings aloud in worship is also visually proclaimed in the stained glass. In this way, the windows become a kind of silent hymn, proclaiming in light what the congregation confesses in voice.

This unity is especially evident during the Divine Service, when prayer, praise, and proclamation are sung together. As the hymns fill the nave, shifting natural light brings the stained glass to life, reinforcing the themes being confessed. Worship therefore engages more than hearing alone; Christ is confessed through both sight and sound in a shared act of praise.

At the center of this confession stands the wooden crucifix with the INRI inscription, placed behind the altar to draw attention to Christ's saving work on the cross. It anchors the sung theology of the Church in visible form, directing every hymn of suffering, mercy, and victory back to Him. Together, Word, song, and image converge in a single confession of the crucified and risen Lord.

Here, all things converge into one confession. Light, sound, and form all point to Christ, who is the center of worship and the fulfillment of every hymn. In Him, the Church's praise finds its unity and its end, even as it continues in faith.

A History of Praise Lutheran Church

On April 23, Easter Sunday in the Year of our Lord 2000, Praise Lutheran Church held its first Divine Service and Sunday School in a 1,400-square-foot storefront located at 536 East Broadway Avenue near Washington Street. In June 2001, a small but devoted group gathered to sign the charter establishing a new LCMS congregation in Maryville, Tennessee. Thus, Praise Lutheran Church was formally founded.

In its early years, the congregation met in storefronts and borrowed basements. Despite humble surroundings, the Word of God was faithfully preached and the Sacraments rightly administered. Guidance and support came from Pastor John Schulz, emeritus of First Lutheran, as well as Ray and Lyla Krieg, who had relocated from Arizona and contributed greatly during the church's formative period. The congregation's first pastor was retired Pastor Robert (Bob) Kerekes. His wife, Emma Lu Kerekes, an alumna of First Lutheran in Knoxville, served as pianist for worship services.

Pastor Timothy Rake was the first called and installed pastor, serving from 2001 to 2011. During his tenure, the church purchased and dedicated its building on Big Springs Road in 2007. Members Bob McDermott, Larry Bembas, Chuck Pettyjohn, Gus Schuck, and Dick Mohr played key roles in preparing and adapting the building for worship, study, and fellowship.

During a pastoral vacancy, Pastor Derek Roberts, formerly campus pastor at the University of Tennessee and associate pastor at First Lutheran in Knoxville, served as a guest pastor. He was officially called and installed in February 2012 and continues to serve today. Beginning in 2014, the church undertook a series of capital improvements, experiencing expansion, renovation, and continued growth.

In 2023, Praise Lutheran broke ground on the current sanctuary, narthex, and offices and dedicated the new space in May of 2024. The old building was converted into a Social Hall. Today, Praise Lutheran Church is home to more than 285 members, welcoming people of all ages to receive Christ's Word and Sacraments and to serve one another to the glory of the Triune God.

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Program Prelude: Janice Kaiser

Invocation

Matthew 28:19b; 18:20

P In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

Salutation and Collect of the Day

P The Lord be with you.

C **And with your spirit.**

P Let us pray.

O King of glory, Lord of hosts, uplifted in triumph far above all heavens, leave us not without consolation but send us the Spirit of truth whom You promised from the Father; for You live and reign with Him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**



+ Praises for what is Just by Grace through Faith +

Hymn Narration

Rev. Stephen Starke

Hymn: 404 Jesus, Once with Sinners Numbered



1 Je - sus, once with sin - ners num - bered, Had no blem - ish
 2 John con - fessed Him as the Sav - ior— "Look, the sin - less
 3 This the bap - tism that our Sav - ior Great - ly longed to
 4 Je - sus, once with sin - ners num - bered, Full o - be - dience



of His own; In the wa - ters of the Jor - dan
 Lamb of God!" Yet he dared not loose the san - dals
 un - der - go; This the crim - son cleans - ing need - ed
 was Your path; You, by death, have con - se - crat - ed



His true worth and work were shown: Heav - en o - pened
 Of the One God's love had shod. Oh, how fair the
 So the world God's love might know; This the mis - sion
 Wa - ter in this sav - ing bath: Dy - ing to the



and the Spir - it There de - scend - ed like a
 feet of Je - sus, Bring - ing news of peace to
 of Mes - si - ah As He stepped from Jor - dan's
 sin of Ad - am, Ris - ing to a life of



dove, As the Fa - ther's voice re - sound - ed,
 us, Christ, the her - ald of sal - va - tion,
 stream, He, the cho - sen and a - noint - ed,
 grace; We are count - ed with the righ - teous,



"Hear My Son, the One I love."
 Preach - ing mer - cy from the cross:
 Son of God, sent to re - deem.
 O - ver us the cross You trace.

Hymn: 561 The Tree of Life



1 The tree of life with ev - 'ry good In E - den's
 2 The still - ness of that sa - cred grove Was bro - ken,
 3 What mer - cy God showed to our race, A plan of
 4 Now from that tree of Je - sus' shame Flows life e -



ho - ly or - chard stood, And of its fruit so pure and
 as the ser - pent strove With tempt - ing voice Eve to be -
 res - cue by His grace; In send - ing One from wom - an's
 ter - nal in His name; For all who trust and will be -



sweet God let the man and wom - an eat. Yet in this
 guile And Ad - am too by sin de - file. O day of
 seed, The One to fill our great - est need— For on a
 lieve, Sal - va - tion's liv - ing fruit re - ceive. And of this



gar - den al - so grew An - oth - er tree, of which they
 sad - ness when the breath Of fear and dark - ness, doubt and
 tree up - lift - ed high His on - ly Son for sin would
 fruit so pure and sweet The Lord in - vites the world to



knew; Its love - ly limbs with fruit a -
 death, Its aw - ful poi - son first dis -
 die. Would drink the cup of scorn and
 eat, To find with - in this cross of



dorned A - gainst whose eat - ing God had warned.
 played With - in the world so new - ly made.
 dread To crush the an - cient ser - pent's head!
 wood The tree of life with ev - 'ry good.

Hymn: 572 In the Shattered Bliss of Eden



Choir: 1 In the shat - tered bliss of E - den Dawned the
 2 Days and months and years un - fold - ing Clear - ly
 3 What these sac - ri - fic - es prom - ised From a
 Choir: 4 Lamb of God, once slain for sin - ners, Host, who



day of sac - ri - fice, As our pri - mal par - ents
 showed what sin had wrought: Fall - en Ad - am's chil - dren
 God who sought to bless, Came at last— a sec - ond
 spreads this meal di - vine, Here You pledge our sins are



shud - ered— Sin had caused this dread - ful price!
 learn - ing Les - sons fall - en par - ents taught.
 Ad - am— Priest and King of Righ - teous - ness:
 cov - ered, Pledge re - ceived in bread and wine:



Faith em - barked with this dis - cern - ment: On - ly
 All these sac - ri - fi - cial of - f'ings Crest - ed
 Son of God, in - car - nate Sav - ior, Son of
 "Take and eat; this is My bod - y, Giv - en



God can cov - er sin, As He took their leaf - y
 as a crim - son flood: Pa - tri - archs and priests a -
 Man, both Christ and Lord, Who in na - ked shame would
 on the cross for you. Take and drink; this cup of



gar - ments And He clothed their shame with skin.
 ton - ing For their sins with cleans - ing blood.
 of - fer On the cross His blood out - poured.
 bless - ing Is My blood poured out for you."

5 *Choir only:* Taste and see the bliss of
heaven
Known by saints around the
throne,
Where the Lamb, in closest union,
Lives to love and feed His own.
From His riven side forever
Flows the purest stream of love,
Love that robes us with the raiment
Worn by all who feast above.

6 Gone the bliss of Eden's garden,
Gone the age of sacrifice;
Ours the time of grace and favor,
Ours the call to paradise!
Ever, Lord, impress upon us:
Only You can cover sin—
Take our worthless, self-made
garments;
Clothe our shame and cleanse
within.

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+ Praise in the Presence of God +

Hymn Narration

Rev. Stephen Starke

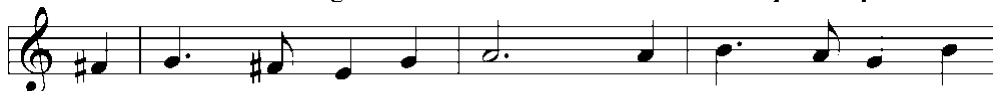
Hymn: 339 Lift Up Your Heads, You Everlasting Doors



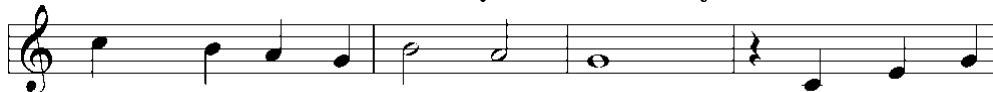
1 Lift up your heads, you ev - er - last - ing doors,
 2 Who is this King of great and glo - rious fame?
 3 Who may as - cend Mount Zi - on's ho - ly hill
 4 "Wor - thy is Christ!" The Lamb who once was slain



And weep no more! O Zi - on's daugh - ter, sing,
 What is His name? Lord God of Sab - a - oth,
 To do God's will? The One whose un - stained hands
 Now lives to reign. He rules our earth - ly ways



To greet your com - ing King; Now wave the vic - tor's
 Of whom the proph - ets wrote, Whose cho - sen, hum - ble
 Can meet the Law's de - mands, Whose pu - ri - ty with -
 As Lord of An - cient Days— O join the end - less



palm And sing the an - cient psalm: "Lift up your
 steed De - clares Him king in - deed! Ho - san - na,
 in Re - veals One free from sin. Come, praise this
 song Sung by the ran - somed throng: "Wor - thy is

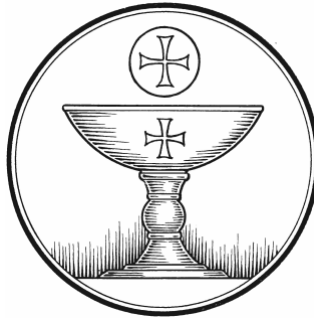


heads, you ev - er - last - ing gates!" Your King a - waits!
 Lord! Mes - si - ah, come and save From sin and grave.
 King who claims the cross as throne— Praise Him a - lone!
 Christ!" The Lamb be praised a - gain! A - men! A - men!

Hymn: 502 Holy Spirit, the Dove Sent from Heaven

- 1 Holy Spirit, the dove sent from heaven, Ever one with the One who is Three,
From the Father You came, Words of peace to proclaim, Come and comfort us, speak
tenderly. You, the fragrance of life we are seeking; Fill Your temple, Your altar make
clean. Joyous shelter of love, Gracious friend from above, In Your care we are resting,
serene.
- 2 Holy Spirit, the fire celestial, Who on Pentecost came as foretold, To descend from on
high And the Church occupy As the cloud filled the temple of old;
All the baptized You seal with Your promise, All believers Your gift there receive,
So that all the elect— All in Christ—may expect
To enjoy what by grace they believe.
- 3 Holy Spirit, the unction of blessing, Sacred oil of the green olive tree,
Giving heat, giving light, As the tent lamps ignite
And as Aaron praised God joyfully. Blessèd living and life-giving water,
Now preserve us from evil within; For in Jesus, God's Son,
All believers are one In this washing that cleanses from sin.
- 4 Holy Spirit, the wind of great power, Source of strength and of peace and of love,
Truest Comforter, plead, As You bring all our need
To the throne of God's glory above. Be the light that enlightens the Scriptures;
Keep our feet from each devilish snare; Only You can make whole
All that troubles our soul; By Your chrism, Christ's triumph we share.

Text: tr. Stephen P. Starke, 1955 Text and tune: Philip W. Blycker, 1939–2023 | Text: © 2004 Stephen P. Starke, admin. Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110020024 | Tune: © 1977 Philip W. Blycker. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 1100200



Hymn: 638 Eat This Bread

Congregation sings the refrain only; Choir to sing the stanzas.

Refrain

Eat this bread, drink this cup, Come to Him and nev-er be hun - gry.

Eat this bread, drink this cup, Trust in Him and you will not thirst.

Cantors from the Choir will sing each of the stanzas below (solo)

- 1 This is His body given for you; this is His blood that was shed for you. *Refrain*
- 2 As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you show His death until He comes again. *Refrain*
- 3 Eat His flesh and drink His blood, and Christ will raise you up on the Last Day. *Refrain*
- 4 Anyone who eats this bread will live forever. *Refrain*
- 5 If we believe and eat this bread, we will have eternal life. *Refrain*

+ Praises with the Church Militant and Triumphant +

Hymn Narration

Rev. Stephen Starke

Hymn: 667 Saints, See the Cloud of Witnesses



1 Saints, see the cloud of wit - ness - es sur - round us;
2 These saints of old re - ceived God's com - men - da - tion;
3 They call to us, "Your tim - id foot - steps length - en;
4 Come, let us fix our sight on Christ who suf - fered,



Their lives of faith en - cour - age and as - tound us.
They lived as pil - grim - heirs of His sal - va - tion.
Throw off sin's weight, your halt - ing weak - ness strength - en.
He faced the cross, His sin - less life He of - fered;



Hear how the Mas - ter praised their faith so
Through faith they con - quered flame and sword and
We kept the faith, we shed our blood, were
He scorned the shame, He died, our death en -



fer - vent: "Well done, My ser - vant!"
gal - lows, God's name to hal - low.
mar - tyred; Our lives we bar - tered."
dur - ing, Our hope se - cur - ing.

5 Lord, give us faith to walk where You are sending,
On paths unmarked, eyes blind as to their ending;
Not knowing where we go, but that You lead us—
With grace precede us.

6 You, Jesus, You alone deserve all glory!
Our lives unfold, embraced within Your story;
Past, present, future—You, the same forever—
You fail us never!

Hymn: 564 Christ Sits at God's Right Hand (Choir only on stanza 4)



1 Christ sits at God's right hand, His sav - ing work com - plete,
2 Christ was that priest God swore, U - nique - ly First and Last,
3 Christ's al - tar was the tree, Where on the world's be - half
Choir: 4 What cost - ly sac - ri - fice To cov - er hu - man sin!



To reign till ev - 'ry foe will lie Be - neath His feet—
Who would in righ - teous - ness and love Be un - sur - passed:
He shed a blood, un - like the blood Of goat or calf,
Who but Christ Je - sus had the right To en - ter in?



All that the Fa - ther planned, The Son sought to ful - fill,
"A priest for - ev - er - more," An oath God would not break,
To seal God's guar - an - tee Of grace that can - not fail;
His blood, that sprin - kled price, So we might be as - sured



When first He said, "Lord, here am I To do Your will,"
"A priest with - in the or - der of Mel - chiz - e - dek."
With blood He en - tered for our good Be - hind the veil.
That our in - her - i - tance in light Has been se - cured.

5 Then let us now draw near, Washed in that precious flood
And enter the Most Holy Place By Jesus' blood.
From hearts that are sincere, Let tongues our hope profess,
And trust anew God's faithful grace That we confess.

D 6 All praise to Christ we bring, Our Lord who intercedes,
Our great High Priest enthroned above Who knows our needs;
And to the Father sing Our songs of thankful praise,
Who with the Spirit reigns in love For endless days.



Closing Narration

Rev. Stephen Starke

Benediction (please stand)

Rev. Derek Roberts

P The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and T give you peace.

C **Amen.**

+ Where Praises Never End +

Hymn: 941 We Praise You and Acknowledge You, O God



1 We praise You and ac-knowl-edge You, O God, to be the Lord,
2 The band of the a-pos-tles in glo-ry sing Your praise;
3 You, Christ, are King of glo-ry, the ev-er-last-ing Son,
4 You sit in splen-did glo-ry, en-throned at God's right hand.



The Fa-ther ev-er-last-ing, by all the earth a-dored.
The fel-low-ship of proph-ets their death-less voic-es raise.
Yet You, with bound-less love, sought to res-cue ev-'ry one:
Up-hold-ing earth and heav-en by forc-es You com-mand.



To You all an-gel pow-ers cry a-loud, the heav-ens sing,
The mar-tys of Your king-dom, a great and no-ble throng,
You laid a-side Your glo-ry, were born of vir-gin's womb,
We know that You will come as our Judge that fi-nal day,



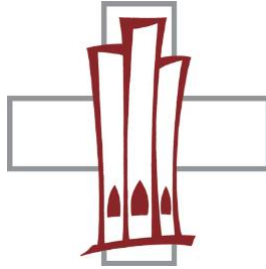
The cher-u-bim and ser-a-phim their prais-es to You bring:
Sing with the ho-ly Church through-out all the world this song:
Were cru-ci-fied for us and were placed in-to a tomb;
So help Your ser-vants You have re-deemed by blood, we pray;



“O ho-ly, ho-ly, ho-ly Lord God of Sab-a-oth;
“O all-ma-jes-tic Fa-ther, Your true and on-ly Son,
Then by Your res-ur-rec-tion You won for us re-prieve—
May we with saints be num-bered where prais-es nev-er end,



Your maj-es-ty and glo-ry fill the heav-ens and the earth!”
And Ho-ly Spir-it, Com-fort-er— for-ev-er Three in One!”
You o-pened heav-en's king-dom to all who would be-lieve.
In glo-ry ev-er-last-ing. A-men, O Lord, a-men!



We Give Thanks and Praise

Thank you for attending Where Praises Never End: A Festival of the Hymnody with Rev. Dr. Stephen Starke, assisted by Rev. Derek Roberts and Mr. Caleb Hesse. We give thanks to God for the gift of sacred music and the opportunity to gather in worship and song.

We praise God for the beauty of hymns that teach, comfort, and proclaim His truth, and for the blessing of joining voices in one shared confession of faith. It is a joy to come together as one people, united in Christ, and strengthened through the gifts He freely gives.

We also extend heartfelt thanks to Dr. Stephen Starke, Mr. Caleb Hesse, and the committee members, Mr. Al Collver, Mr. Mark Yoder, and Pastor Roberts for their time and dedication in planning and carrying out this festival, making it a meaningful and joyful occasion for all who attended. Special thanks are also due to Elissa Upward (office administration), Susan Johnson (piano for choir), Gary Schauerman (organ music during the hymns in which the choir sang), and Janice Kaiser (piano preludes).

Soli Deo Gloria (to God alone be the glory)

Acknowledgments

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