



Dr. Joseph Herl

A Biography

by Emma Stegall

Joseph Lawrence Herl was born in Lockport, NY, on May 27, 1959. As a child, he took piano lessons and played percussion in the school band.

In fall 1977, Herl entered Concordia College in Bronxville, NY, as a pre-seminary student. The first year at Bronxville was spent cobbling together different courses in German under an interdisciplinary major. Realizing that “that [approach] wasn’t going to work,” he switched his major to music the next fall and started organ lessons.¹ While Bronxville was not as challenging academically as he would have liked, Herl made good friends and grew as an individual and Christian during his time there. In his senior year he served as the music director at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hawthorne, NY. Herl graduated from Bronxville in 1981 with a BA in music with a church music emphasis, having received the H. William Mueller Memorial Prize in Classics (1979) and the Elizabeth Margaret Meyer Prize in Music (1981).

Going into his senior year at Bronxville, Herl still planned to attend seminary after graduation. However, during that year, he was accepted into the Institute of Sacred Music at Yale University for a master’s in organ performance, receiving awards that amounted to half the tuition cost. Herl turned this opportunity down for several reasons. Among them, Yale was intimidating because he was not from an educated family: his father had not attended high school, and his mother had not attended college. And although Yale provided half the tuition necessary, this left Herl to “come up

with \$5,000 per year,” which he did not have.² Herl spent the next two years after graduation working in the legal department for Bank of America in New York, saving half of his salary for graduate school tuition. In addition he served (1981–83) as the organist at St. Jacobus Lutheran Church, Woodside, NY.

Graduate School

When looking for a graduate school, Herl had noted that Texas was “awash in oil money,” and credit hours at North Texas State University (in Denton, TX; now the University of North Texas) cost only \$4. The university also had a good reputation for music, which positively affected Herl’s subsequent decision to attend there. With an average graduate course load of 12 credit hours, he paid only \$48 per semester in tuition. Although Herl graduated from North Texas State University in 1985 with an MM in organ performance, it “wasn’t the right program” for him. He loved both books and music, never wanting to be a performer. However, when (as an undergraduate) he had told his organ teacher about his interest in musicology, the teacher scoffed, saying that “musicologists are just failed performers!” Dwelling on this statement for years, Herl tried his best with organ performance. Nevertheless, he found that his heart “wasn’t in it” and that more time was spent in the library than in the practice room.³ Even so, Herl served two churches in Denton during this period: organist at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (1984–85) and music director at St. Paul Lutheran (1985–86).

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In 1986 he also passed the Associate exam of the American Guild of Organists (AGO).

In his last year at North Texas, Herl read *The Music of the English Parish Church*. The work was “so detailed and well-written,” tracing the American shape-note tradition back to its roots in small-town England, “something hardly anyone had suspected.” Deciding “on the spot” that he wanted to study with the author, Nicholas Temperley, Herl applied to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. However, he did not mention why he was attracted to Illinois, wanting “to see what sort of teacher Temperley was before committing to him.”⁴ The application also required a research paper submission, so Herl chose to send one he wrote on the use of the keyboard in the “London” symphonies of Joseph Haydn.

Someone on the admissions committee thought it was interesting and shared it with their professor for British music, who happened to be Nicholas Temperley. Shortly after that, I received a letter from him inviting me to be his research assistant. But he apologized because his project dealt with Christian hymns, not with English instrumental music, and he wasn’t sure whether I would be interested. Of course, that was exactly what I wanted to study, so I jumped at the chance.⁵



Joseph Herl and Nicholas Temperley at a Hymn Society meeting, 1996

So in 1986 Herl started his doctoral study at Illinois with Nicholas Temperley as his mentor. During his doctoral studies he chose to explore a variety of things beyond his dissertation. One of those things was to take some classes. While he shared the stereotypical sentiment that these were mostly stumbling blocks that prevented real work from getting done, there were classes that Herl enjoyed, notably “a seminar on Bach revivals with Malou Haine, a visiting professor from Belgium, and three courses ... from Bruno Nettl, arguably the world’s foremost ethnomusicologist.” There was also an independent study on music bibliography with Don Krummel. Rather than taking courses to prepare for a dissertation, Herl “took either courses that interested him or in areas where he was weak” on the off chance he might have to teach them someday.⁶



Herl taught himself database development and object-oriented programming “to build an interface to work with the data” and then extract and format it for publication.

Starting in his first semester at Illinois, Herl assisted Temperley twenty hours a week in compiling *The Hymn Tune Index: A Census of English-Language Hymn Tunes in Printed Sources from 1535 to 1820*. The project entailed collecting every known hymn tune published in an English-language source, “no matter how difficult it was to obtain.” During the first few years, Herl and others indexed the tunes in each source. On two separate occasions, the university’s computing office shut down the systems used for *The Hymn Tune Index*, forcing the team to “port the project to new platforms,” a more arduous task at that time than with today’s technology. Herl taught himself database development and object-oriented programming “to build an interface to work with the data” and then extract and format it for publication.⁷ When Oxford University Press published this work in four volumes in 1998, most of the typesetting was done by Herl. The final years were spent formatting the volumes for the online version (available at hymntune.library.illinois.edu).

When Herl was not working with Temperley on *The Hymn Tune Index*, he went abroad. Someone from the University of Illinois had told him the school received money from the US government to offer National Research Center Foundation fellowships for study abroad and suggested he apply. The only two requirements were “that the Fellow spend the summer of 1987 in Europe and take courses in two European languages each semester of the next academic year, one of which had to be a minor language.” The fellowship also was accompanied

Hymn Tune Index authors celebrating its publication, 1998

by a nice stipend, “higher than what the University of Illinois was paying.”⁸ Because the fellowship was poorly advertised, only Herl and another student applied; both were given awards.

Approximately six weeks were spent at the Goethe Institute in Göttingen, Germany, taking an intermediate course in German. After the German course ended, Herl attended a meeting of the Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Hymnologie/International Society for Hymnological Studies in Lund, Sweden. From there, he toured Europe with a Eurail Pass, “spending twelve nights sleeping either on the train or in youth hostels.”⁹ One of the stops was Geneva, Switzerland, where Herl visited the headquarters of the World Council of Churches, looking specifically for worship materials from around the globe.

In the office of the Rev. Tosh Arai, I discovered a little booklet called *God Is Here: 15 Songs from Ethiopia*. One of those songs was “What Kind of Love Is This?” and I was taken enough by it that I recommended it for inclusion in *Hymnal Supplement* ’98. It was accepted [#859], and from there, it made its way into the *Lutheran Service Book* as “When I Behold Jesus Christ” [#542].¹⁰

The 1987–88 academic year was spent fulfilling the other requirement of the fellowship: taking courses in two European languages. One course was a continued study in German. For the minor language, Herl first tried Italian. However, “it was taught by the sink-or-swim method, with no instruction in either grammar or vocabulary.” After receiving a D on the first exam, he switched to Swedish and “finished the year with no further problems.”¹¹ During that year, friends heard about the fellowship and asked Herl how they could apply. But the US government had withdrawn all funding for the program.

Additionally, Herl had activities outside the university. Some were for pay, such as his various church jobs, starting in 1989. Among many great memories from Illinois, one of his favorites is



Joe Herl plays the Fritzsche-Schuke organ at the Marienkirche, Wolfenbüttel, Germany, 1992

Among many great memories from Illinois, one of his favorites is the interview to serve as the organist at St. John Lutheran Church in Champaign, where he met his future wife, Jenny, who was on the search committee.

the interview to serve as the organist at St. John Lutheran Church in Champaign, where he met his future wife, Jenny, who was on the search committee; Herl became the organist at St. John, 1989–91. During his time in Illinois, Herl also served as the organist at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, Urbana (1993–94) and First Presbyterian Church, Urbana (1994–95); and as music director at St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church, Champaign (1995–96). He returned to St. John as the choir director (1996–97), then music director (1997–2000). In 1996, Herl received Choirmaster certification with the AGO.

Other jobs were still academic. Herl researched and wrote essays for the companion to *The Hymnal 1982* of The Episcopal Church; he also worked for the LCMS on *Hymnal Supplement '98* and *Hymnal Supplement '98 Handbook*. How this came about is a “right place, right time” scenario:

I was part of a group that Norman Nagel, professor at Concordia Seminary [St. Louis, MO], formed for graduate students with a background in theology. We met once a year and read academic papers for each other. At one such meeting, Ron and Carol Feuerhahn hosted an evening get-together at their home on the seminary campus, and I began talking to Paul Grime, who had just been appointed executive director of the Missouri Synod’s Commission on Worship. We talked at some length, and he was interested to learn that I had some expertise in hymns, since my doctoral work dealt more with liturgical history. The next thing I knew, I received an email inviting me to serve on a committee to produce a supplement to the synod’s 1982 hymnal, *Lutheran Worship*.¹²

During the production of *Hymnal Supplement '98*, Herl was “researching the stories behind the hymns,” contacting several potential authors who could take that research, possibly add their own, and produce historical and practical essays for each hymn.¹³ To his knowledge, the *Hymnal Supplement '98 Handbook* is still the only companion that provides the original-language texts of all translated hymns plus literal prose translations into English.

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(It was a challenge to find someone who could typeset “When I Behold Jesus Christ” in its original language of Amharic!) Herl was proud to have the handbook appear just a month after *Hymnal Supplement '98*. On top of this work, Herl was also a coordinating editor for *CrossAccent* (1997–2002).

Herl was done with classes by the time he was married (1990). However, this time was the peak of *The Hymn Tune Index* work, so Herl spent most of the day on it for several years. He and his wife, the full-time head tutor for chemistry, would take the bus to campus early in the morning and return home together at 5:00 p.m. This replicated a habit of Nicholas Temperley’s that Herl admired: While Temperley was extremely productive, with hundreds of published books and articles, he would “leave work at precisely 5:00 p.m. and go home to his family.”¹⁴

Because Herl constantly learned new things and found multiple topics he wanted to pursue, it took him four years to decide on a dissertation topic. For instance, he discovered Alexander Carmichael’s multivolume set *Carmina Gadelica* (“Songs of the Gaels”) while wandering in the library stacks. Intrigued, he checked it out, read it, and was hooked. Herl spent much time trying to determine whether it would be feasible to write a dissertation on Hebridean folk music. Among other things, he wrote to the Scottish scholar John Lorne Campbell, receiving quite an encouraging reply. Ultimately, though, Herl realized he could not do the topic justice without an excellent command of the Scots Gaelic language and figured it would take him too long to learn it.¹⁵

Another reason Herl took four years to decide on a topic for his dissertation was that Temperley was unfamiliar with Herl's eventual topic. Temperley had warned Herl about that when approached about advising on Herl's dissertation, but Herl "thought highly of Temperley's research and writing" and ultimately decided the pros outweighed the cons. While Temperley had researched church music, he was "largely unfamiliar with" church music from Germany and did not speak the language. This meant that Herl had to figure everything out, "including what the unanswered questions were in Lutheran church music, what the sources were, where the important libraries and archives were, and who else was working in the field," all in a language he was still learning. However, these factors worked in Herl's favor. He became thoroughly familiar with the sources, because he had to work through them all. Furthermore, since Temperley was unfamiliar with German church music, Herl was "free to develop [his] own ideas without any pressure, intentional or otherwise, to conform to what [his] advisor thought." Temperley helped when needed, knowing "how to find weak arguments in a doctoral dissertation."¹⁶



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In the end, Herl settled on a topic involving the liturgy of early Lutheranism, beginning "with the publication of Martin Luther's first Mass order in 1523 and [ending in] about 1780, an era with some uniformity."¹⁷ Herl's dissertation, completed in 2000, explores popular misconceptions about the congregation's involvement in worship and how they occurred.¹⁸ The dissertation was published in 2004 by Oxford University Press as *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict*. In the book's preface, Herl argues that although a choral liturgy predominated, "German congregations sang even before the Reformation." In fact, "it took over two centuries for a service to develop that would be familiar with Lutherans today" (v). The work's sources include several hundred church orders and private agendas, minutes of ecclesiastical visitations, memoranda by clergy, hymnals, hymn-based music compositions, music tutorials, method books, and much more (vi). These are all documented in an extensive bibliography; some are included in appendices as translations or tables.

Herl collected some of these sources while researching (1991–93) at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Germany, on a Fulbright grant. These years spent in Germany meant that Jenny's doctoral work in computer-based chemistry education might be outdated after they returned. Jenny did not flinch, "[making] plans for a trip to a country whose language she did not (at the time) speak" (viii). She also "took two semesters of college German" before they left.¹⁹ Herl was given an extension for this grant because he "spent three months in the hospital recovering from an injury."

I was inside an organ case in Germany, having just repaired the tracker action, when I stood on a trap door I didn't know was there. It popped open, and I fell to the church floor below, breaking my back.²⁰

Joseph Herl and his wife Jenny in the Netherlands, 1992

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Upon returning from Germany, Herl was confronted with "just about the worst thing that can happen to a scholar." Joyce Irwin, a scholar in New York, published *Neither Voice nor Heart Alone: German Lutheran Theology of Music in the Age of the Baroque* (Lang, 1993), drawing essentially the same conclusions Herl had come to in his research, with "nearly all the same primary sources." At that point Herl could have called it quits, but instead he refocused and "found some significant sources that, in some ways, contradicted" what he had found in Germany. His dissertation shifted to "address the tension between these different types of sources." Without the slow progression and setback, Herl's dissertation and subsequent book "would have been much less significant." As a result, he was able "to overturn a fair amount of received wisdom," making the work more useful to other scholars.²¹

Ultimately, it took Herl fourteen years (1986 to 2000) to earn his doctorate. This is partly due to his indecision about a dissertation topic and his work on different projects during this time. However, the most important reason is that so few jobs in his field were available in the 1990s. One year, there were "barely a dozen advertised nationally in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*." Fortunately, because Herl had finished his coursework and "graduate students were cheap labor," the University of Illinois would keep giving Herl money as long as he did not graduate. For Herl, "it was a no-brainer."²² He graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2000 with a doctorate in musicology.

Concordia Professor

Herl had had his "eye on working at a Concordia" since his time at Bronxville. Herl "wanted to be in a position where [he] could have some influence



Full-time members of the music staff at Concordia (Seward, NE): Sitting (left to right) are Kurt von Kampen, Elizabeth Grimpo, Debbie Brutlag, Joseph Herl. Standing are Robert Cody and Jeffrey Blersch.

in making" better the music of his church body (the LCMS). In the mid-1990s he applied for a position in the music department at Concordia College in Seward, NE (now Concordia University, Nebraska). He found out years later that "they were quite interested in [him]," but budget problems "forced the administration to cancel all pending faculty searches" before he could be interviewed.²³

The school posted two music positions in the winter of 1999 into 2000. Herl applied again and this time was brought in for an interview. It was perfectly timed, because Herl was "nearly done" with his doctorate, filing his dissertation a week after the interview.²⁴

The interview made for a very busy day: I met with the president, the academic dean, the finance director, the search committee, and each member of the search committee individually. I also taught three classes, played a mini recital on the organ, and directed a choir rehearsal. I took it all in stride, figuring they were just trying to prepare me for the insane schedule I would face as a faculty member. In any case, the president called me up the next day and offered me the position.²⁵

Herl was one of the few faculty members who had never taught in an elementary school or high school before teaching in higher education, which was unusual at Concordia.

The first semester of teaching at Concordia was difficult. Herl and his wife moved to Seward only two weeks before the semester started, and his office computer arrived on the first day of class. Herl had to teach five different courses that he had never taught before, scheduled at 7:30, 8:30, 10:00, 11:00, and 2:00. This provided “next to no time in between to get ready for the next class,” forcing Herl to read the textbook at the breakfast table to know what he “was supposed to teach that day.” His predecessor, David Held, who had an adjacent office, tried to console Herl by saying, “During my first year, I was sometimes only two weeks ahead of the students in the class.” Herl thought, “Two weeks! I would settle for two *hours*!” By the end of the semester, “the dean had caught on to the fact that [Herl] was having trouble.” Accurate student evaluations can be summarized as saying, “Dr. Herl is a nice man, but he hasn’t a clue how to teach.”²⁶ Furthermore, Herl was one of the few faculty members who had never taught in an elementary school or high school before teaching in higher education, which was unusual at Concordia.

Herl did not want to lose his job, so he found some colleagues to help him. One of them even taught him “all about that mysterious thing called a ‘lesson plan.’” Student evaluations were much better in the second semester, and Herl made significant changes in his second year. A few years later, Herl compared current students’ music theory final exam scores with those from the first year and “found no statistically significant difference.” When Herl mentioned this fact to the dean, he chuckled and said, “That’s the dirty secret of higher education. There is very little correlation between how much students like a course and how

much they learn in it.”²⁷

This was also when *Worship Wars* was published (Oxford Univ. Press, 2004). Herl had previously published choral music with Oxford—“Behold, a Branch Is Growing” and “The Beatitudes”—and thought Oxford would be “a good fit” for his dissertation. Herl had sent in a book proposal to Oxford shortly after arriving in Seward. The acquisitions editor for music at the time happened to be a church musician and the topic interested her, so Herl received a contract. A year passed without further communication, prompting Herl to inquire about the matter. He discovered that the editor and assistant editor had left Oxford for positions elsewhere, and no one still at Oxford knew anything about the book. Fortunately, Herl had the contract, which meant Oxford was obligated to publish *Worship Wars*.²⁸ Daniel Jay Griminger, in a review in the journal *The Hymn*, heralded *Worship Wars* as “the definitive study on [congregational singing] for many years to come.”²⁹ *Worship Wars* also won the Roland H. Bainton Book Prize from The Sixteenth Century Society and Conference for Best Book in Art and Music History.³⁰

Worship Wars is one of two significant works to which Herl contributed in the 2000s. The other is *LSB. Hymnal Supplement ’98* was produced partially as a “trial run” for a future LCMS hymnal, so

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“the same people who worked on the supplement were invited to work on the hymnal, and others were added.”³¹ Herl was part of the hymnody committee for the publication of the hymnal (*LSB*, p. 991).

In 2000, well before the content of the hymnal was established, Herl hired his student Christopher Ahlman to summarize what John Julian’s *Dictionary of Hymnology*³² said about the sources of several hundred hymn texts Herl “was pretty sure would be in the new hymnal.” Over the next few years, Herl added to the information Ahlman had compiled, so when *LSB* was published in 2006, a list of primary and secondary sources for each hymn text was prepared.³³ These were eventually made available to the authors of the hymnal companion hymn essays on a password-protected website.³⁴

After working to compile the sources, and because he had edited the handbook to *Hymnal Supplement ’98*, Herl was “an obvious choice” for an editor of the companion to *LSB*.³⁵ Dr. Daniel Zager, Eastman School of Music (Rochester, NY), and Dr. Carl Schalk, retired from Concordia University Chicago (River Forest, IL), were asked to be co-editors; however, no senior editor was appointed. The three could not agree on what kind of companion should be made.

Dan and I wanted to consult original sources because we knew a lot of errors had crept into hymnal companions, but Carl wanted to get the book out as quickly as possible so it would be more useful. So, nothing much happened at first. Then Carl’s eyesight began to fail, Dan got very busy at Eastman, and I was appointed department chair, which left me no time for that project.³⁶

Herl asked Rev. Dr. Paul Grime, project director for *LSB* and its companion, to relieve him of his position as editor. However, no one else could take on the task, so Grime asked Herl “to hang on and see whether [he] might find some time.” After a year, Grime told Herl that the LCMS Commission on Worship “had received money from the Schwan

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Foundation for Jon Vieker, the commission’s assistant director, to edit the companion along with Peter Reske from Concordia Publishing House.” Herl was more than willing to “turn over the reins.”³⁷ Unfortunately, other aspects of Vieker’s job took too much time, and by 2010 he had been able to do little besides assigning authors and doing an initial read-through of the topical essays. That summer the newly elected LCMS president, Matthew Harrison, selected Vieker as his senior assistant, meaning Vieker had to give up editing the companion.

Herl was asked a second time to edit the *LSB* companion. He agreed but was still the music department chair at Concordia in Seward and “knew [he] would have little time during the next year.”³⁸ “Little time” turned out to be no time. Nothing was done on the project until Dr. Kurt von Kampen took over as department chair in fall 2011. The remaining money from the Schwan Foundation allowed Herl to take a leave of absence from Concordia for the fall semester. Having already consulted with and gained approval from Reske and Vieker, Herl spent the entire fall semester “ordering primary sources of tunes,” since only text sources had been obtained before then. This task continued into the following year. Herl received the McElrath-Eskew Research Grant from The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada in 2012 “to purchase sources for research” on hymn tunes for the companion.³⁹ In the following fall term Herl found time to read through the topical essays. Next were the hymn essays, which Herl worked on for several years while teaching a full load—frequently an overload—at Concordia.

By the time the companion was published in December 2019, Herl had not only provided primary and secondary sources for both hymn texts and tunes but also “written the Historical

Summaries for each hymn, edited the hymn essays, provided a second edit of the topical essays and biographies, prepared most of the indexes and appendixes, and brought together contributions from Mark Bender, Barry Bobb, Samuel Eatherton, Paul Grime, and Kevin Hildebrand to produce the sections on the use of individual hymns”; he had also read through both volumes with Reske and Vieker, his co-editors.⁴⁰



*Three editors of the LSB Hymnal Companion:
Jon Vieker, Peter Reske, and Joe Herl, 2021*

I loved working with Peter. He was so supportive of everything I did, and we saw eye to eye on nearly everything. He is also a very good scholar and took delight in correcting mistakes in the hymn essays when he finally read them. I returned the favor in the biographies, which he edited!⁴¹

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overwhelmed. Herl tried hard not to neglect Jenny and their two children. Jenny helped by arranging mealtimes and other family events to fit Herl’s schedule. As for professional work, including serving as the organist at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Lincoln, NE (2008–), Herl “[tends] to be very organized and generally [works] efficiently.”⁴² It did help that he was intimately familiar with many of the sources from various projects he had done in graduate school.

Herl’s work has not gone unnoticed. In 2018 he received the Award for Excellence in Teaching from Concordia University, Nebraska. Concordia Seminary in St. Louis awarded him an honorary doctorate of letters in May 2022.⁴³

Herl has over 400 unpublished works, including hymn texts and translations, hymn tunes, arrangements of hymn stanzas, hymn settings, liturgical settings and canticles, hymn concertatos and works for solo voice and for choir.⁴⁴ Most were written out of need “for a church service or other event” or because someone asked Herl to write something. He “often found it quicker and easier as a church musician to write something for a particular occasion than to try to find something already published” that fit the situation exactly.

By the time the companion was published in December 2019, Herl had not only provided primary and secondary sources for both hymn texts and tunes but also “written the Historical Summaries for each hymn, edited the hymn essays, provided a second edit of the topical essays and biographies, prepared most of the indexes and appendixes, and brought together contributions from [other writers.]

We are taught in music history class that the Catholics eliminated most medieval sequences after the Council of Trent in the mid-sixteenth century, but what is never reported is that the Lutherans, who were unaffected by the Council of Trent, kept on merrily singing sequences until they stopped using chant altogether around the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Due to changing liturgies or unusual performing forces, most works are unpublishable. For example, Herl had four trumpet players of varying skill levels and a trombonist at one church, “so [he] wrote settings especially for them.”⁴⁵

Herl is still a learner, finding new topics to pursue. At the time of this writing, there are three topics in particular.

New topics to pursue

The use of Gregorian chant and sequences by early Lutherans:

“Somehow, I had never learned in music classes that Lutherans continued to sing Gregorian chant for some two hundred years after the Reformation, so it was a revelation to me to discover that. And then there were the sequences (a chant that follows the Gradual, so called after the Latin word *sequor*, “I follow”). We are taught in music history class that the Catholics eliminated most medieval sequences after the Council of Trent in the mid-sixteenth century, but what is never reported is that the Lutherans, who were unaffected by the Council of Trent, kept on merrily singing sequences until they stopped using chant altogether around the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That fascinated me, so years ago, I assembled as many collections of Gregorian chant intended for Lutheran use as I could identify, mostly on microfilm or microfiche. But I never had the time to do much more than index their contents, so I am gratified to discover that others in the LCMS have become interested in chant. There are now quite a few younger LCMS

Selected Works of Joseph Herl

In addition to the works noted in the accompanying article, Herl has authored the following:

ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

- “A Chorister’s Christmas at the Thomaskirche, Leipzig, 1730,” *CrossAccent* 5B, no. 10 (July 1997): 25–28.
- “Ten Myths about Hymn Singing among Early Lutherans,” *CrossAccent* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 37–47.
- “A New Hymnal: Language Considerations,” *Issues in Christian Education* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 19–21.
- “The Hymns of Jochen Klepper,” *The Hymn* 54, no. 3 (July 2003): 7–15.
- “The Lutheran Roots of Our Hymnody,” in *Hymns in the Life of the Church*. Journal of The Good Shepherd Institute (Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2004), 55–75.
- “Seven Habits of Highly Effective Liturgies: Insights from the Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Thine the Amen: Essays on Lutheran Church Music in Honor of Carl Schalk*, ed. Carlos R. Messerli (Lutheran Univ. Press, 2005), 141–64.
- “Making the Hymnal User-Friendly,” *Logia* 15, no. 3 (Holy Trinity 2006): 67–69.

Lutherans who are working with Gregorian chant, editing it from early sources, and singing it in various services.”⁴⁶

The historical roots of the contemporary worship movement:

“A reviewer of my book *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism* (2004) lamented that I had written nothing about the worship wars of today. That was unfair, of course, because my research had stopped around 1800, but the reviewer’s complaint started me thinking. I realized that I was unaware of the deeper history behind contemporary worship and, further, that as a professor of church music

“What’s So Special About Paul Gerhardt?” *Lutheran Theological Review* 20 (Academic Year 2007–2008), 26–38.

“Jochen Klepper” and “Stephen P. Starke,” in “The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology,” <https://hymnology.hymnsam.co.uk/>, ed. J. R. Watson and Emma Hornby (2013–).

“Earliest Source of CWM RHONDDA Found,” *The Hymn Society Bulletin* (Summer 2015): 98–102.

“Producing a Hymnal Companion Using Primary Sources,” with Peter C. Reske, in *Hymns in Liturgy and Life: Proceedings of the International Joint Conference of Hymnology ...*, ed. Martin J. M. Hoondert (Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Hymnologie, 2017), 81–85.

“German Lutheran Hymnody (1650–1750),” in *Hymns and Hymnody: Historical and Theological Introductions*, ed. Mark A. Lampert, Benjamin K. Forrest, and Vernon M. Whaley (Cascade, 2020), 2:106–15.

“Germany from 1620 to the Present,” in *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns*, ed. Joseph Herl, Peter C. Reske, and Jon D. Viker (Concordia, 2019), 2:27–50.

“Hymns since 1960,” in *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns*, eds. Joseph Herl, Peter C. Reske, and Jon D. Viker (Concordia, 2019), 2:77–99.

“The Latin Liturgy and Juvenile Lutheran Instruction in Sixteenth-Century Germany,” in *Athens and Wittenberg: Poetry, Philosophy, and Luther’s Legacy*, Ed. James A. Kellerman (Brill, 2023), 126–43.

“A Most Popular Hymnal: *Praxis Pietatis Melica*,” in *A New Song We Now Begin: Celebrating the Half Millennium of Lutheran Hymnals, 1524–2024*, ed. Robin A. Leaver (Fortress, 2024), 109–31.

MUSIC

Six Hymn Inventions for Organ (Concordia, 1997).

“Behold, a Branch Is Growing,” SATB, a cappella (Oxford, 1998; reprinted, Concordia, 2011).

“The Beatitudes,” SATB, a cappella (Oxford, 1999).

“Advent Alleluias,” SATB or unison, keyboard (MorningStar, 2007).

“When to Our World the Savior Came,” SATB, keyboard, with optional congregation, flute (MorningStar, 2007).

“Where Shepherds Lately Kneled,” SATB, keyboard, with optional congregation, organ (Concordia, 2008).

“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence,” SAB, congregation, organ (Concordia, 2010).

“While with Ceaseless Course the Sun,” SATB, organ (Concordia, 2010).

“Blow Ye the Trumpet, Blow,” SATB (Concordia, 2025).

at an LCMS university, I had better know about it. The trouble was that there was a lot of heat being generated around the topic at the time but not much light. In the past decade or so, serious scholars have become interested in the subject, but no one has yet shown how the ideas behind today’s practices have antecedents in Lutheran history. That is what I hope to do in my next book, tentatively titled *A History of Contemporary Worship since 1675*.⁴⁷

The role of children in Lutheran worship:

“Regarding children in the Lutheran service, I have long been convinced that reaching children is key to passing on our Lutheran beliefs. The church’s song is critical in this regard because we remember ideas and teachings far better when they are set to music. Ideally, people will learn the songs of the church as small children and will still recall them when they are on their deathbeds. I want to help my church find the best ways to teach that song, that is, to pass on the Christian faith to the next generation.”⁴⁸



Joseph Herl received the Award for Excellence in Teaching from Concordia University, Nebraska, in 2018.

There are a few things one can learn from this hymnologist's career:

- Stay curious and learn new things; some facts are just waiting to be found in a book on the shelf in the library.
- Be creative, but only if it does not keep you from doing other things you love. If faced with a seemingly unsolvable problem, look at it differently; sometimes, it will become something better than you imagined.
- Make time for your loved ones. No matter how busy he got, Herl tried to make time for his wife and daughters, just as his mentor, Nicholas Temperley, modeled for him.
- Most importantly, give thanks to God in every circumstance. Herl's faith is present in every aspect of his life, both career and personal.



Emma Stegall currently serves as Kantor of Ascension of Christ Lutheran Church in Beverly Hills, MI. She recently graduated with a BA in music with a concentration in church music from Concordia University Irvine (CA), where she

was part of the handbell ensembles and orchestras. Stegall has studied organ under Janet Muth and Tom Mueller and currently takes lessons with Jon Eifert. In her spare time she likes to write hymn texts and is interested in diving further into Lutheran hymnology.

Photos courtesy Joseph Herl, used with permission.

Notes

1. Joseph Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
2. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
3. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
4. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
5. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
6. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
7. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
8. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
9. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
10. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
11. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
12. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
13. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
14. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
15. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
16. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
17. Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), v.
18. Joseph Herl, "Congregational Singing in the German Lutheran Church, 1523–1780" (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2000).
19. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
20. Herl, email to the author, November 17, 2024.
21. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
22. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
23. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
24. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
25. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
26. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
27. Herl, email to the author, October 15, 2024.
28. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.

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some facts are just waiting to be
found in a book on the shelf in the
library.*

29. Daniel Jay Grimminger, review of *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict*, by Joseph Herl, *The Hymn* 56, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 65.
30. Herl, email to the author, October 9, 2024.
31. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
32. John Julian, ed., *A Dictionary of Hymnology*, rev. edition (Murray, 1907; reprinted in 2 vol., Dover, 1957).
33. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
34. "Division of Labor," in *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns*, ed. Joseph Herl, Peter C. Reske, and Jon D. Vieker (Concordia, 2019), 1:viii.
35. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
36. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
37. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
38. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
39. Herl, email to author, October 9, 2024.
40. "Division of Labor," in *Lutheran Service Book: Companion*, 1:viii.
41. Herl, email to author, September 9, 2024. In a later (October 19, 2025) email to this journal's editor, Herl added, "I also enjoyed working with [Vieker]."
42. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
43. Herl, email to the author, October 9, 2024.
44. Herl, email to the author, October 17, 2024.
45. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
46. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
47. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.
48. Herl, email to the author, September 9, 2024.



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