

# LCMS

## Worship Library

Title: From Generation to Generation

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### **Forming New Leaders of the Lord's Song**

One of the challenges we face in the church today is the shortage of church workers. There is a shortage not only of pastors and teachers but of musicians as well. Because leading the Lord's song requires both training in music and experience with the liturgy, church musicianship is something that can only be learned within the context of congregational life.

Realizing that it was therefore incumbent upon the congregation to nurture future leaders of the Lord's song, Trinity Lutheran Church, Peoria, Ill., decided seven years ago to embark upon a music apprenticeship program for high school students.

The outline of this program was based on an apprenticeship program suggested by the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) and Lutheran Summer Music Camp (LSM). That program was originally designed to help students earn money for summer music camp by performing various music service projects in their home parish. This aspect of the apprenticeship model was kept by Trinity, which supported the attendance of five apprentices at LSM and of another apprentice at Summer of Music, a camp sponsored by Concordia University–River Forest. As it progressed, however, the apprenticeship grew into a program that uses service in worship to train other students considering full-time service in the church, whether or not they were intending on attending a music camp.

This program has now expanded to Bethany Lutheran Church in Naperville, IL, where the former cantor of Trinity-Peoria, Phil Magness, now serves. (In the Lutheran tradition, a "cantor" [also spelled "kantor"] is the chief musician of the parish. At Trinity and at Bethany, the cantor plans all the music for Divine Services, supervises the preparation of the liturgy, and serves as a full-time member of the program staff.) Over the past seven years, Cantor Magness has mentored 10 students through the apprenticeship program.

What do these apprentices do? The job description for each student describes service in four areas of church music: leadership, administration, scholarship, and performance. The specific tasks in each area are determined by mutual agreement between the cantor and the apprentice based on the gifts and talents of the apprentice and the needs of the parish. The amount of time involved outside of regular worship services is about 16 hours per month. Here are some examples of various duties apprentices have performed at Trinity and Bethany in the past:

### Administration

- assisted in the music library; maintained databases.
- set up the balcony for services; maintained choir folders.
- "note-processed" music for publication in the Sunday bulletin.

### Leadership

- organized special youth instrumental and vocal ensembles.
- led devotions for Sunday School.
- helped organize a prayer vigil.
- selected incense appropriate for different festivals and seasons of the church year.
- helped clean organ pipes and learned how to tune the reed pipes of the organ.
- helped select and order choir robes.

### Performance

- played descants and hymn introductions in the Divine Service.
- led the Psalm and Verse of the Day at services for which there was no choir.
- provided special music for preludes, the gathering of the tithes and offerings, and the distribution of the Lord's Supper.
- participated regularly in at least two ensembles of the parish.

### Scholarship

- wrote an article on the Service of Lessons and Carols for the church bulletin and newsletter.
- arranged descants for hymns and the liturgy; composed settings of the Psalm of the Day and alternate harmonizations of hymns.
- attended classes and conferences on music and liturgy.

As each year progressed, the areas in which the apprentices served continued to expand. New ideas were continually proposed and implemented. Indeed, the number of apprentices itself each year expanded as well. The fourth year into the program, the Board of Worship and Personnel at Trinity decided that the program was so successful that Trinity needed to have two apprentices: one for vocal music and one for instrumental music. A year later another position was added. With the leadership of these apprentices, the overall involvement of high school youth in the liturgy increased to the point that there were 10 high school students singing in the adult choir, 33 serving as acolytes, and 11 others playing regularly in either the handbell choir, the Trinity orchestra, or both.

An important aspect of the apprenticeship mentioned earlier is the opportunity to receive matching funds to attend a summer music camp. A typical apprentice earns \$300 a semester. If the student reserves the stipend in escrow (earmarking it as a scholarship rather than as taxable compensation), the student can have \$600 in his or her account by the end of the academic year. LSM then provides a "1 to 3" matching gift of \$200. AAL members can also receive a \$450 grant for the camp. With an additional grant from the Trinity Foundation, apprentices were able to parlay their stipend of \$600 into a \$1550 scholarship for Lutheran Summer Music Camp. Similar incentives are also available for students who wish to attend other camps.

As the apprentices received hands-on experience in church work, each one considered a possible career in church work. Though most of the students have for now decided to pursue other vocations, several are currently preparing for full-time church work. Nicole King is taking education courses at Illinois Central College and hopes to transfer to Concordia University–River Forest to become a Lutheran schoolteacher. Wesley Aldroubi, currently a junior at Peoria Central High, is considering pastoral ministry. Jen Moder, who counts Cantor Magness as one of her mentors but who became a Trinity apprentice after he took his position at Bethany, is a senior at the University of Illinois studying music education. She would like to serve as a church musician by either teaching at a Lutheran high school or serving as a cantor or director of instrumental music for a parish. Abby Escobar and Susan Gavin are also planning careers in music. Abby, currently a junior at Dunlap High School, is planning on studying vocal performance and choral conducting. Susan, a senior at Naperville Central High School, plans on attending Concordia University Wisconsin next fall and would like to teach music in a Lutheran school.

The other students who have served in this program, Holly Herold, Nick Turner, Nathan Marks, and Billy Trimble, continue to be very active in parish life and are prepared to be lay leaders in their congregations wherever the Lord may lead them. Though pursuing a variety of vocations, all of these young people continue to serve their Lord, putting into practice many of the disciplines they developed as apprentices.

Such a program does not occur in a vacuum. The full support of pastors, staff, and lay leadership is essential to a successful apprenticeship. In addition to pastoral and lay leadership, it is important that members of the congregation, especially the youth and the other musicians of the parish, understand that the apprentices are not "kids being paid to sing in the choir." Rather, these are students performing an important service to the church and receiving training in church work. Therefore the apprentices are officially placed in their positions each year during the Divine Service, articles are written in the church newsletter about the apprenticeship program, and the apprentices are listed in the bulletin as members of the support staff.

Congregations aware of the need to nurture future church workers and leaders will eagerly support an apprenticeship program. In addition to music, apprenticeships can be created for students considering other church vocations as well. As one Trinity parent commented, "We need to do more things like this. The guidance counselors at the public high schools certainly aren't going to encourage students to go into church work!" By creating professional relationships between church workers and students, apprenticeships help young people discover their calling in life, enrich the life of the church, and equip teenagers to be tomorrow's leaders today.

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