Hymns provide Gospel comfort in wake of disasters

In 2014, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod asked our church’s hymn writers to submit hymns to provide Gospel comfort to churches suffering in the wake of disasters. The LCMS received 120 submissions, and a panel of three judges selected six hymns. Please share them with your congregation and continue to pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ who are recovering from disasters.

Introduction

• LCMS Disaster Response — Hymn Resources

Winning hymn

• “Lord and Savior, Do You Hear Us” by Carol Giesler — Accompaniment | Tune

Finalists

• “Your Church on Earth Is Crying” by Lisa M. Clark — Accompaniment | Tune
• “The Cross of Christ Gives Light and Life” by Benjamin M. Culli — Accompaniment | Tune
• “In Days of Grief or Storm and Loss” by Carol Geisler — Accompaniment | Tune
• “God of Mercy, God of Comfort” by Roger Howard — Accompaniment | Tune
• “In Piercing Grief and Deep Distress” by Wilfred L. Karsten — Accompaniment | Tune
“If one member suffers, all suffer together” (1 Cor. 12:26)
should cross and trial grieve me? Christ is near with His cheer; never will He leave me” (LSB #756). These are poignant words that point suffering people, not to the despair of disaster, but to Christ. These hymns, and others like them, bridle the tongue and give the very words that the New Adam longs to speak.

Yet when given the opportunity, the Church continues to search for new expressions of the same faith, even as she seeks to raise up new musicians and hymn writers for the next generation—for the edification of Christ’s holy people, giving them faithful and clear words to speak in the midst of the muddled circumstances of this life. One example of this is “There Is a Time for Everything” (LSB #762). It was written in the context of a culture that would forever remember the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. It is a beautiful hymn that can be sung at any time of the year, in spite of its being formed in response to such a terrible event.

“Lord and Savior, Do You Hear Us”

“Have You turned Your face away?” These are the thoughts of many who suffer. How could God have let something so terrible happen? The presumed, yet erroneous, answer is that He does not care about us. The truth is that Christ intimately knows all about abandonment and suffering. “Yet You, Lord, have known our sorrow; You have shared our grief and pain. As the Lamb for sinners slain, You cried out in silent darkness.”

At the same time, our Lord not only suffers with us, but He has the power to save and give peace to our troubled hearts. “As with Your disciples sailing on the windy, storm-tossed sea, You awoke and heard their plea, stilling storm and wind and water, bid our fear and sorrow cease with Your quiet Word of peace.” This close connection to Jesus calming the storm also makes this hymn a particularly good selection for Proper 7 (Series B), Epiphany 4 (One-Year Series), when this Gospel reading is used, or throughout the season of Lent.

“In Piercing Grief and Deep Distress”

“Fierce doubts and questions rise.” Yet in all things, we know that God is working in the midst of disaster to bring about His good and gracious will. Joseph confessed this truth in regards to his brothers who sold him into slavery: “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (GEN. 50:20A). And while we may never see or understand these things, that doesn’t make them less true. Some things, however, can be seen, such as the many acts of mercy (διακονια) that the church often engages in after a disaster. “Each other’s burdens they will bear, God’s light of mercy shine.”

Possible liturgical uses for this hymn include Proper 3 (Series C), Proper 19 (Series A) or Trinity 4 (One-Year Series) when the account of Joseph and his brothers is heard. It could also be substituted for a hymn in the “Society” section of LSB or the “Hope and Comfort” section.

Likewise, in the summer of 2014, LCMS Disaster Response commissioned a ‘Disaster Response Hymn-Writing Contest.’ The intent was to broaden the resources available to the church in a time of suffering—not just for those who are immediately enduring the suffering, but also for those who may be thousands of miles away, and yet suffer with them in the Body of Christ.

The result of the ‘contest’ surprised everyone involved in the process. Nearly 130 entries were received, six of which were seen as ‘commendable.’ They are presented here (and elsewhere) for the good of the church, to be used in season, and out of season, free of charge to LCMS congregations.

“It is not you that sings, it is the Church that is singing, and you, as a member of the Church, may share in its song.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer
“God of Mercy, God of Comfort”
A common prayer during a time of suffering is one which asks for comfort. Related to this request is the prayer for strength and endurance. This hymn is a prayer for the suffering, that God would “lift their burdens, [and] ease their pain.” It also illustrates nicely the understanding that we are all one in Christ’s Body, and when one part suffers, we all suffer with it. Furthermore, our Lord, the “man of sorrows” (Is. 53:3) walks with us all the way. Our future is in His hands, and all those who put their trust in Him will not be ashamed, for He is the cornerstone.

This hymn can be appropriately used on days when Matthew 11:25-30 is read, such as Proper 9 (Series A), or the Feast of St. Matthias on Feb. 24th.

“Your Church on Earth Is Crying”
The strength of the enemy is frightening to contemplate. Left alone, we would crumble under the weight of oppression, and fear would completely overtake us. Yet we are not alone, and have not been sent out without being fitted for war. The armor of God clothes us and the sword of the Spirit is in our hands. We stand in His truth and are protected by His grace. The battle cry, that ancient song of old, is borne on the lips of the faithful once more as we sing the praise of Him who died, and we await His return to put an end to all discord and strife. Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

This hymn is particularly suited for a number of disasters and conveniently has verses that can be used for times of 1) natural disaster, 2) violence, 3) loss of life, and 4) persecution. It may also be appropriate for All Saints’ Day, or Proper 17 (Series B—Epistle) when the armor of God is described. It could also be substituted for a hymn in the “Church Militant” section of LSB.
“In Days of Grief or Storm and Loss”

This is perhaps the simplest of the six hymns here presented. In all things, O Lord, help us to look to Your cross, and “Give to us, Your Servants, that peach which the world cannot give... [and we,] being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness” (Collect for Peace, Vespers and Evening Prayer). How does God give this peace? Through Word and Sacrament: “Your Body giv’n and Blood once shed, by these our weary faith is fed; in fainting hearts Your Word takes root, with hope and peace its living fruit.”

This hymn is particularly suited for use by the entire congregation, including young children. Liturgically, it could be used on Lent 4 (Series B—Gospel), Holy Cross Day (Old Testament), or the Sixth Sunday of Easter (One-Year Series—Old Testament).

“The Cross of Christ Gives Light and Life”

“When life is torn by sin and hell, by Your own cross You make us well.” Our sin and the visible results of the fall are great in this world. Yet our Lord and His mercy are greater still, for His power is made known in weakness. “For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 COR. 12:10). This ‘strength’ is the result of trusting in someone outside of ourselves, for it is “No longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (GAL. 2:20). So: “Come now with grace and peace divine, in water, Word, in bread and wine. Into our midst Your Spirit send; give faith and comfort to the end.”

This hymn is appropriate for use during the reception of the Lord's Supper. It could also be used on Proper 9 (Series B—Epistle), Proper 6 (Series C—Epistle), or Sexagesima (One-Year Series—Epistle).

Conclusion

It is our hope that these hymns provide another way for the Church to remember our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering; to pray for them in our corporate worship life, and, Lord willing, to stir us up to works of love and mercy.

In the end, the entire Church can (and should) sing these wonderful new hymns, confessing the truth that God is at work in the midst of disaster to bring about His good will of forgiving sins and bringing comfort to terrified consciences. To Him alone be all glory, honor, and praise. Amen.

“...It is our hope that these hymns provide another way for the Church to remember our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering..."
1 Lord and Savior, do You hear us? Have You turned Your face away? Do You know the pain we suffer; And the sinners shed, To Your Father's hands committed, You, dear Lord, have known our sorrow; Savior, bowed Your head. Dying, trusting in Your Father, faithfulness the cross. As we, Lord, receive Your mercy, You our hope is sure. As with Your disciples sailing.

2 Then, Your Father's will accomplished, And Your blood for storm, or loss, May we, patiently enduring, Bear with fear we face each day? Yet You, Lord, have known our sorrow; Savior, bowed Your head. Dying, trusting in Your Father, faithfulness the cross. As we, Lord, receive Your mercy, You our hope is sure. As with Your disciples sailing.

3 When distress and trouble grieve us, Bringing illness, When You have told us There is trouble to endure. Fill our doubting hearts with courage; For in You have shared our grief and pain. As the Lamb for Know-ing You would conquer death, You gave up Your May we then Your mercy share, Giving comfort, On the wind-y, storm-tossed sea, You a-woke and

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Setting: The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941. Public domain.

LASSET UNS MIT JESU ZIEHEN
87 87 877 877
sinners slain, You cried out in silent darkness, Hanging final breath. May we also, though unseen, Trust our hope, and care. For this work may we be nourished, As our heard their plea, Still ing storm and wind and water, Bid our

from the dreadful tree: “Why have You forsaken Me?”
Father to fulfill Ev’ry purpose of His will.
hearts to love are stirred, By Your Supper and Your Word.
fear and sorrow cease With Your quiet Word of peace.
Lord and Savior, Do You Hear Us

1 Lord and Sav - ior, do You hear us? Have You turned Your face a - way? Do You know the pain we suf - fer and the sin - ners shed, To Your Fa - ther's hands com - mit - ted, You, dear storm, or loss, May we, pa - tient - ly en - dur - ing, Bear with to en - dure. Fill our doubt - ing hearts with cour - age, For in

Fear we face each day? Yet You, Lord, have known our sor - row; Sav - ior, bowed Your head. Dy - ing, trust - ing in Your Fa - ther, faith - ful - ness the cross. As we, Lord, re - ceive Your mer - cy, You our hope is sure. As with Your dis - ci - ples sail - ing

You have shared our grief and pain. As the Lamb for Know - ing You would con - quer death, You gave up Your May we then Your mer - cy share, Giv - ing com - fort, On the wind - y, storm-tossed sea, You a - woke and

Sin - ners slain, You cried out in si - lent dark - ness, Hang - ing fi - nal breath. May we al - so, though un - see - ing, Trust our hope, and care. For this work may we be nour - ished, As our heard their plea, Still - ing storm and wind and wa - ter, Bid our

from the dread - ful tree: "Why have You for - sak - en Me?" Fa - ther to ful - fill Ev - 'ry pur - pose of His will. hearts to love are stirred, By Your Sup - per and Your Word. fear and sor - row cease With Your qui - et Word of peace.

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LASSET UNS MIT JESU ZIEHEN

87 87 877 877
Your Church on Earth Is Crying

1 Your Church on earth is crying, “How long, O Lord, how long?”
2 Insert appropriate stanza.
3 Yet Jesus Christ, anointed, Endured our agony
4 The Church as one is serving With each new burden shared.

Your precious ones are dying; The enemy is strong.
The moment God appointed To end sins’s tyranny.
For love without serving, The hands and feet prepared.

Redeemer, we are yearning To see Your holy face.
The promise long awaited: Fulfilled by God’s own Son,
Through altar, font, and Spirit, We join the ancient song.

We trust in Your returning And Your unfailing grace.
His children reinstated The victory is won.
The crown we will inherit, No more to cry, “How long?”

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Setting: Hymn Ancient and Modern, 1861. Public domain.
Natural Disaster
5 The mountains break and crumble;
   The wind and waves rage on.
In darkened fear we stumble;
   Security is gone.
O Father of creation,
   Who set in place each stone,
Provide the consolation
   We find in You alone.

Violence
6 Our treasures left to plunder,
   We face the fearsome sword.
Our walls are torn asunder;
   Our dwelling place abhorred.
Restore our sure foundation;
   Come bare Your mighty arm.
O Rock of our salvation,
   Give peace from dread alarm.

Loss of Life
7 Our spirits ache with sorrow,
   Beloved life is lost.
Bereft of new tomorrow,
   We stagger at the cost.
Speak to our souls, O Savior,
   "Take heart; I give you life.
I won the Father’s favor
   And rescued you from strife."

Persecution
8 The saints beneath the altar
   Cry out, "O Lord, how long?"
In faith, they did not falter
   And joined the martyr throng.
The number ever growing—
   O Father, grant us rest!
When sainted blood is flowing,
   Give strength to stand the test.
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   Give strength to stand the test.
The Cross of Christ Gives Light and Life

1 The cross of Christ gives light and life Mid tumult,
tempest, stress, and strife. Though heavy crosses now we bear, In Jesus’ cross we gladly share.
2 From depths of woe we cry to You; Our broken heart, O Lord, renew. You know our pain, our bleak despair; Lord, quickly come, Lord, hear our prayer.
3 When doubt and darkness dim our world, And clouds of chaos round us swirl, When life is torn by sin and hell, By Your own cross You make us well.
4 Up on the cross You bore the weight of sin and death, of shame and hate. You take our grief and deepest fear; Your cross gives hope and healing here.

5 Come now with grace and peace divine,
In water, Word, in bread and wine.
Into our midst Your Spirit send;
Give faith and comfort to the end.

6 Lord, fix our eyes on Your dear Son,
Who, by the cross, the vict’ry won;
At last, then bring us by Your grace
Where we may see you face to face.

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The Cross of Christ Gives Light and Life

1 The cross of Christ gives light and life Mid tumult,
2 From depths of woe we cry to You; Our broken
3 When doubt and darkness dim our world, And clouds of
4 Up on the cross You bore the weight Of sin and

tempest, stress, and strife. Though heavy crosses
hearts, O Lord, renew. You know our pain, our
chaos round us swirl, When life is torn by
death, of shame and hate. You take our grief and

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Tune: Second Supplement to Psalmody in Miniature, London, 1778;

ROCKINGHAM OLD
LM
In Days of Grief or Storm and Loss

1 In days of grief or storm and loss, Help us, dear
2 Your Body giv’n and Blood once shed, By these our
3 As once our suffer’ring, Lord, You shared And by the
4 Though sorrow’s end we cannot see, Yet by Your

Lord, look to Your cross That, shielded by Your
wearied faith is fed; In fainting hearts Your
cross Your love declared, Move us, Your Body,
Spirit, Lord, may we endure with patience

nail-marked hand, We in Your grace will safely stand.
Word takes root, With hope and peace its living fruit.
that we may In word and deed Your love display.
troubled days And offer humble trust as praise.

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TALLIS’ CANON
L M
In Days of Grief or Storm and Loss

1 In days of grief or storm and loss, Help us, dear
2 Your Body giv'n and Blood once shed, By these our
3 As once our suf'ring, Lord, You shared And by the
4 Though sor-row's end we can-not see, Yet by Your

Lord, look to Your cross That, shield-ed by Your
wear-ry faith is fed; In faint-ing hearts Your
cross Your love de-clared, Move us, Your Bod- y,
Spir-it, Lord, may we En-dure with pa-tience

nail-marked hand, We in Your grace will safe-ly stand.
Word takes root, With hope and peace its liv-ing fruit.
that we may in word and deed Your love dis-play.
troub- led days And of-fer hum-ble trust as praise.
God of Mercy, God of Comfort

1 God of mer - cy, God of com - fort, An - swer now Your
2 May com - pas - sion from Christ’s Bod - y Now en - cir - cle
3 When one hurts, we hurt to - geth - er; Lord, u - nite our
4 Help them, Lord, to face the fu - ture Know - ing that Your

chil - dren’s cries Who are reel - ing from dis - as - ter And can
all who grieve. May our pres - ence soothe and strength - en All who
hearts in prayer. Keep all vic - tims whol - ly trust - ing, Con - fi -
love sur - vives. Walk be - side them, give them cour - age, Help them

scarce - ly raise their eyes. Lift their bur - dens, ease their pain;
strug -gle to be - lieve That Your wis - dom will not end,
 dent that You are there. May Your heal - ing touch be sent
to re - build their lives. On - ly strong foun - da - tions last

Be their sun - shine af - ter rain. Let their trust be
Though their hearts with doubt con - tend. Dry their tears, O
Through Your Word and Sac - ra - ment. Move our hands and
When de - struc - tive storms are past. Je - sus Christ, be
not for - sak - en, That their faith re - mains un - shak - en.
Man of sor - rows, Grant them hope for bright to - mor - rows.
feet for car - ing, For the love of Je - sus shar - ing.
their foun - da - tion, Life and health and res - to - ra - tion.
God of Mercy, God of Comfort

1 God of mercy, God of comfort, Answer now Your children’s cries
2 May compassion from Christ’s Body Now encircle all who grieve. May our presence soothe and strengthen
3 When one hurts, we hurt together; Lord, unite our hearts in prayer. Keep all victims wholly trusting, Confide in love survives. Walk beside them, give them courage, Help them scarcely raise their eyes. Lift their burdens, ease their pain;
4 Help them, Lord, to face the future Knowing that Your struggle to believe That Your wisdom will not end, dent that You are there. May Your healing touch be sent to rebuild their lives. Only strong foundations last

Be their sunshine after rain. Let their trust be Though their hearts with doubt contend. Dry their tears, O Through Your Word and Sacrament. Move our hands and When destructive storms are past. Jesus Christ, be not forsaken, That their faith remains unshaken. Man of sorrows, Grant them hope for bright tomorrow. feet for caring, For the love of Jesus sharing. their foundation, Life and health and restoration.

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In Piercing Grief and Deep Distress

1 In piercing grief and deep distress
2 In piercing grief and deep distress
3 In piercing grief and deep distress
4 Amid our grief, through deep distress

Fierce doubts and questions rise. As shaken sinners
Yes, God is present still. Transforming troubles
Christ suffered in our stead. Despised, forsaken,
Christ rises from the grave. His crowning triumph

we assess If God is good and wise.
to express His good and gracious will.
comfortless; The Son of God was dead.
we possess, We trust His pow’r to save.

Does He design calamity?
He leads us through this vale of tears.
The cruel cross He overcame,
Through Absolution, Font, and Meal
Does He de-light in pain? De-feat-ed, is there
Close by our side He stands, For-giv-ing doubts and
The fi-nal foe to slay; So our life’s strug-gle
Our test-ed faith is fed: A liv-ing hope re-

vic-to-ry? In loss is there yet gain?
quell-ing fears. Our times are in His hands.
we can name A vic-tim of the fray.
newed with zeal, For Je-sus is our Head.

5 In piercing grief and deep distress
God’s people see the need.
While serving neighbors they profess
Their faith in word and deed.
In life together they will share
A fellowship divine.
Each other’s burdens they will bear,
God’s light of mercy shine.

6 In piercing grief and deep distress
The song will still be sung.
The melody of bitterness
Is absent from our tongue.
To Father, Son, and Spirit raise
A joyous, thankful strain,
For even in the darkest days
Our God will ever reign.

Alternate tune: LORD OF LIFE

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KINGSFOLD
C M D
In Piercing Grief and Deep Distress

1 In piercing grief and deep distress
2 In piercing grief and deep distress
3 In piercing grief and deep distress
4 Amid our grief, through deep distress

Fierce doubts and questions rise. As shaken sinners
Yes, God is present still, Transforming troubles
Christ suffered in our stead. Deposed, forsaken,
Christ rises from the grave. His crown ing triumph

We assess If God is good and wise.
To express His good and gracious will.
Comfort less; The Son of God was dead.
We possess, We trust His pow’r to save.

Does He design calamity?
He leads us through this vale of tears.
The cruel cross He overcame,
Through Absolution, Font, and Meal

Does He delight in pain? Defeated, is there
Close by our side He stands, Forgiving doubts and
The final foe to slay; So our life’s struggle
Our tested faith is fed: A living hope re-

Victory? In loss is there yet gain?
Quelling fears. Our times are in His hands.
We can name A victim of the fray.
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KINGSFOLD

C M D
5 In piercing grief and deep distress  
   God's people see the need.  
   While serving neighbors they profess  
   Their faith in word and deed.  
   In life together they will share  
   A fellowship divine.  
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   God's light of mercy shine.

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