



## The Foundation: *for everyone*

By Bryan Gerlach

By now you've probably seen some publicity about *The Foundation*. A video introduction was shared in early October.<sup>1</sup> Maybe you're already making use of resources for Advent. This article makes the bold claim that *The Foundation* offers something for everyone—for every pastor and every congregation. Why? Because worship is the essential foundation of everything a congregation does.

### For everyone

These flexible and varied resources have potential to serve every pastor and every congregation. First, as noted in the introductory video, you can use *The Foundation* even if you don't have the new hymnal. You can easily adapt the worship plan for CW21 in the Year C Planner to CW93. The new lectionary is available in the free test drive version of *CW Service Builder* ([builder.christianworship.com](http://builder.christianworship.com)) and for purchase from Logos. Since the Gospel readings in the new lectionary are almost always identical to the old, you can still use *Planning Christian Worship* ([worship.welsrc.net](http://worship.welsrc.net)) for hymn suggestions if you're still using CW93. Just watch for any hymns that focus on a First or Second Reading that might have changed in CW21. Or if you use the Year C Planner for hymn suggestions, note that a hymn comparison cross reference index is available.<sup>2</sup>

Second, you can pick and choose what you'll use. Maybe you start using season and Sunday themes in Advent, but you're not yet doing social media promotion. So that aspect will wait until Lent or Easter.

### Saving time

I've often said that it would be a delight to be just beginning my years as a pastor in 2021 rather than in 1983. I know that various cultural changes have put new pressures on pastors. Some of these are different or intensified compared to the end of the last century. But a wealth of new resources and technologies certainly are enriching the way pastors carry out their work, especially related to worship. Instead of being a primary user of those new

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resources, I will enjoy the fruit of planning by others from my place in the pew or on the organ bench.

But new resources just take more time, don't they? Where will that time come from? What pastor isn't already plenty busy? Is there any pastor who doesn't wish for more time, whether for ministry tasks or family?

That's what's so exciting about *The Foundation*. This collection of resources doesn't expect you to carve out more time to improve some area of ministry. These resources save you time by giving you things that you don't have to create yourself. These resources have potential to bring blessings in several arenas.

### Improved content

By using resources from *The Foundation*, pastors can hope to offer improved content. That content might be sermons or social media publicity/outreach or a long-range worship plan.

In the earliest days of my ministry and certainly during the years of my schooling (NWC 1976), worship planning was kind of an auto-pilot thing. Lots has changed in the intervening years. A "culture of expectations" changed. People have a higher expectation of excellence in worship (at whatever level is fitting and feasible for each congregation). Denominational loyalty changed. The best

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worship we can offer will help to deepen people's appreciation for Lutheran worship. The breadth of musical styles in worship expanded. The new hymnal takes advantage of broader styles while still recommending options within "Lutheran parameters."

Of course, higher worship expectations might mean higher demands on the pastor's time for planning worship. Anything that can help the pastor with planning and reduce the time required becomes all the more important. Thus, the synergy between *The Foundation*, the Year C Planner, and *CW Service Builder* becomes all the more valuable.

## Preacher's Podcast

The initial podcasts feature Jon Hein, Coordinator of Congregational Services, seminary professors Tom Kock and Sam Degner, and a variety of parish pastors. Kock comments on the podcast:

I expect the Preacher's Podcast to be extremely well received. The combination of two parish pastors talking through that Bible segment along with a seminary professor (who often has expertise in the book the text is found in, or who has expertise on the subject matter addressed in that segment), all guided by a moderator makes for an amazingly organic conversation. The participants take turns addressing various points in the text: Law-Gospel thoughts which could be preached, illustrations, theme-thoughts, etc. We chose to work a year ahead on these. So, the pastors have preached on that text in their congregations. Because of that, they have had the chance to see what worked and what didn't work and can bring great suggestions for segments of the text which might need to be more fully explained or illustrated. For those pastors who are already doing excellent exegetical work, the podcast will simply allow for other perspectives to broaden their thinking. For those who aren't as able to dig into the Greek and Hebrew, or who have faced a challenging week timewise, the podcast will help them to take their text study deeper, allowing their sermon to become even more of a blessing for their people.



Beginning with Easter 2, seminary professor Jonathan Micheel will be involved. He offers the following thoughts about the benefits of these podcasts.

I often found that after doing a text study I got stuck. Not completely stuck, but I would lose momentum—looking at a lot of notes and struggling with how to sort through them, organize my thoughts, and move on to the next steps of outlining and writing. And, of course, at that stage I was also looking for things I had not considered—even if just a fresh illustration, a point for application, or some angle I had not thought of.

This is where the Preacher's Podcast can help. It won't replace a pastor's text study or composition of the sermon. But it may "grease the wheels" a little. Like a circuit meeting where preachers are thinking out loud about a text and how to preach it, the podcast aims to get preachers' mental gears turning. Maybe a preacher will hear a point he hadn't thought of. Or maybe he will hear a point that he had already uncovered, but when he hears it expressed in a slightly different way, it will spark an idea. That's what the preachers who are recording the podcast often report; they begin the recording with their own notes, and then additional thoughts occur to them in the course of the podcast discussion. One thought leads to another. We hope that many preachers will have similar experiences.

*Curated resources that the Lutheran pastor doesn't have to tweak.*

## Devotional resources for adults, families, and children

*The Foundation* is for everyone with devotional resources that take a cue from Sunday themes and reinforce them throughout the week. Beginning in Advent this year the *WELS Family Devotions* provided by the Discipleship office<sup>3</sup> will explore Sundays' themes, diving into them more deeply throughout the following week. These are available in both print (read from a browser) and podcast options. Also, the much beloved *WELS Daily Devotions* will seek to incorporate the prior Sunday's theme throughout the week. This will not only bless the thousands of WELS members who use these devotions but will also allow congregations to share them with guests who worshiped with the congregation on Sunday.

Beginning in Easter 2022 *Transformed*, the weekly youth devotion with a newly added youth Bible study leader's guide, will also sync with *The Foundation's* seasonal and weekly themes.

From the Lutheran Schools office, *Heart Imprints* offers weekly children's devotions based on the *upcoming* Sunday theme. These can be used for a school chapel (LES or ECM), a Sunday School devotion, or a children's message during Sunday worship. The

devotional leader will save time by using these age-appropriate messages that are connected to Sunday worship. Just be sure to coordinate with potential devotion leaders so that the same content isn't used by more than one person in the same week. Note that options are available each week both for Pre-K and K-8. Since these are still in development, they weren't all posted when *The Foundation* website first went live. The *Heart Imprints* for Advent will be available by November 15 at the latest.

## Outreach

*The Foundation* website helps everyone with outreach. For most worship series, there is a promotional video that highlights the seasonal themes. Additional resources include professionally designed promotional graphics for every worship series and a promotional text for each *season* and each *week*. When these resources are featured on your church website or social media pages, members can be encouraged to share them with their unchurched friends.

So, that's several ways *The Foundation* can serve everyone. But to be clear, here's the most important way: the congregation and its guests who worship and benefit from devotions find themselves saturated in gospel-rich messages and worship content.<sup>4</sup> Just as the new hymnal offers curated resources for 21st century Lutheran worship, *The Foundation* offers curated resources that the Lutheran pastor doesn't have to tweak to make them Lutheran. For example, the Lent series is "Crushed"—not some version of "Try harder to resist temptation, like Jesus did."

## No criticism and no guilt

Over the years some might have sensed a lurking message coming from various programs offered by Congregational Services and other efforts at encouraging professional growth or even from a practical essay at a pastors' conference: "You're not doing well enough." To which a fair response in some situations might have been: "But I'm already overwhelmed by time demands and expectations! Where am I supposed to find time to think through and implement this new and improved whatever?" It's always appropriate for pastors and congregations to evaluate if they are doing everything they can for the cause of the gospel or how they might adjust use of time to target higher priorities. Self-assessment and goal setting are important. But it was never the intent of various past programs merely to criticize or induce guilt. And yet some programs were not as immediately practical and out-of-the-box usable as *The Foundation*. Some might have offered lots of good ideas that were more conceptual than practical. They required a lot of effort back home after being introduced at a workshop or consultation.

*Immediately usable resources at a highly affordable price: totally free!*



*The free logo for the Year C Lent series, Crushed.*

*The Foundation* is not like that. It offers immediately usable resources at a highly affordable price: totally free! Here are some comments from pastors who have taken an early look at these resources.

I wanted to thank those who worked on *The Foundation*. What a resource and major time-saver for the busy pastor! I used to do all that stuff on my own (minus the video—I just never did those). I'm not sure where the impetus came from, but all of you should be commended for making it work out so nicely. I'm going to be pushing to incorporate it here where I serve.

This is excellent! I appreciate how it is ministry driven, worship centered, and freely available.

This is exactly what synod is for. Love to see us using our potential. Thank you so much.

I was so excited when I saw this and will be sharing the resources!

The sermon helps in the podcast is gold. Listening to that right after my text study will be part of my weekly sermon preparation.

*What a resource and major time-saver for the busy pastor!*

Those who are producing resources for *The Foundation* hope that you can find something, many things, to use either to produce a better "product" or to accomplish goals in a more efficient way. Or both!

And please give us your feedback. This is a new venture for us in Congregational Services. What works well for you? What doesn't? What else could be part of *The Foundation* package? We plan to conduct a survey sometime after Easter, but your feedback is welcome at any time.

## Introducing new hymns

Not every new hymn is entirely new. Some new texts use familiar tunes. Some old texts from CW93 and CWS have been retuned and paired with a more familiar tune. So don't rule out a hymn title because you associate it with a tune that is unfamiliar. Fifty-one "old" hymns from CW93 and CWS have been retuned. You can quickly find these by noting tune names in green highlight in the Tentative Hymn List. This chart is available at [#6](http://christianworship.com/resources), under "Look Inside." You might want to download or bookmark this chart for quick access along with other important worship planning files.

While some of the retuning makes use of a tune not previously used in CW93 or CWS, most of the retuned hymns use familiar tunes. Some retuned hymns move from one familiar tune to a different familiar tune. Why? It was never just "change for the sake of change." Sometimes it was to use a tune most widely associated with a text. Sometimes it was to avoid overusing a tune. And, of course, some retunes move from a CW93 tune that did not catch on adequately.

Even if a hymn tune is unfamiliar, you can plan for its introduction using ideas in the Year C Planner or your own ideas. Here's a sequence that you'll find in the introductory scripts for the new hymnal but that you can use throughout the year, long after the dates for those scripts have passed.

- A Sunday before the congregation sings: organ, piano, instrument, soloist, or choir features the new hymn.<sup>5</sup> If the choir learns a new choral arrangement, consider whether the text might fit on more than one Sunday just before the congregation first sings the hymn. That arrangement can be sung in the regular anthem spot, as a call to worship, during the offering, or during communion distribution.
- The first Sunday the congregation sings: in addition to using a soloist or choir, take three minutes just before the service starts (maybe at 7:58 if time constraints are important, and so that most people are seated already) to practice the first stanza that everyone will sing: first the soloist sings it, then everyone repeats it.
- Use a similar approach with new liturgy songs. For example, a new Gloria could be played as the final preservice selection—after the pastor announces it and invites people to turn to the appropriate page in the new hymnal and follow along. A solo wind or string instrument may double the melody. Or, on a modern digital organ, use the "solo" feature that automatically doubles the melody to make it prominent.

Use soloists, choirs, and instruments *often* in this way. This is helpful not only to make new tunes more familiar but also to make old tunes more interesting and to give the congregation a break in singing a longer hymn. With longer hymns, it's nice for people to have a breather while the soloist or choir sings a special arrangement—or even the standard setting. This is good not only for people who don't like to sing that much but also for everyone as their minds focus on meaning in a different way when they can listen instead of sing.

<sup>1</sup> [welscongregationalservices.net/the-foundation](http://welscongregationalservices.net/the-foundation)

<sup>2</sup> The file "CW21-HymnComparisonCrossReference" was posted on *The Foundation* website on October 28. This provides pages from *Christian Worship: Planning Guide* which might not be available in print until January. Click on a link below the video preview, Download Worship Planning Materials, to access the hymn cross reference and the Year C Planner.

<sup>3</sup> [wels.net/serving-you/devotions/family-devotions](http://wels.net/serving-you/devotions/family-devotions)

<sup>4</sup> Yes, of course this is possible without *The Foundation*. It's just that planning and implementing are so much easier.

<sup>5</sup> Search NPH's website for the following to find keyboard and choral music based on new tunes: cw21keyboard, cw21choral.

## Latest hymnal project updates

NPH provides the latest information on shipping dates for various volumes here: [online.nph.net/cwshipping](http://online.nph.net/cwshipping).

A series of blog articles on *Service Builder* began October 21 here: [christianworship.com/resources](http://christianworship.com/resources).

Search on "Some perspectives on tune-only hymns" in the Q&A at [christianworship.com/resources](http://christianworship.com/resources) for more details about the decision to include 102 such hymns.

Scripts for introducing the hymnal and a dedication rite were posted in late October at [welscongregationalservices.net/hymnal-introduction-resources](http://welscongregationalservices.net/hymnal-introduction-resources).