

Summary of panel discussion

August 20, 2010

Luther Seminary

Sponsored by the Center for Missional Leadership

## ***What does it mean to sing in a Lutheran key?***

### ***What is a Lutheran song?***

#### **1) A Lutheran song is not restricted to Lutherans alone.**

What we are defining in a Lutheran song is not exclusively Lutheran, but what is characteristically Lutheran. Many of the features we identify in Lutheran songs are also common to other traditions and expressions of singing. Avoiding a vague blurring of Lutheran identity to reach some truncated bottom common denominator, we instead claim that a clear embracing of Lutheran identity is the best way to practice the hospitality of Christ in a pluralistic world.

#### **2) A Lutheran song confesses the faith.**

A Lutheran song announces the Gospel, through paraphrasing of scripture, interpretation of scripture, a sung sermon, a midrash, or a life story.

#### **3) A Lutheran song is singable.**

A Lutheran song can be sung not just by the extremely talented, but by the many. Whether the focus in a song is on the strong beat or the offbeat, whether the song moves with a Gregorian or Salsa beat, the goal is to fully engage the singers.

#### **4) A Lutheran song springs from a Lutheran way of speaking the faith.**

Lutherans don't claim to have some truth which others do not have. Lutherans point to the truth, Lutherans relate with the truth, with Christ. A Lutheran way of speaking/singing the faith acknowledges our lack of answers, our weakness and doubts, and includes laments and a cry for justice (i.e. – the theology of the cross). A Lutheran way of speaking/singing the faith finds joy and new life in trust, not certitude; in faith, not sight; in the truth living among us, but not the possessing of that truth.

#### **5) A Lutheran song comes through many cultures but is not contained solely by any of them.**

A Lutheran song can come to form through many music cultures – through the styles of classical, country, jazz, blues, hip-hop, pop, folk, ska, Gospel, Taizé, rock, spirituals, etc. A Lutheran song can come to form through many ethnic cultures - Latin, African, Norwegian, Detroit Motown, etc.

#### **6) A Lutheran song is a living event, guided by the Holy Spirit.**

(This last point came from informal discussions after the panel ended.)

A Lutheran song is a living event, best led by a strong song leader. The best written song can be rendered lifeless and without spirit if it is simply played and people are not invited and led. A strong song leader, vocal or instrumental or simply with personality, welcomes people into the song and into the presence of the living Spirit.