

## **Advanced Study Grant – A Report from Dennis Hendricksen**

Worship is central to the life of the church. Thus, it is a worthwhile subject to explore at a deeper level. Being able to deepen my understanding of worship through the Doctor of Worship Studies program at the Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies has enriched my ministry in a variety of ways.

Given the ecumenical nature of this school I have learned the value of my Lutheran heritage when examining our worship practices in contrast with other denominational traditions. In the first year of study exploring the biblical and historical roots of Christian worship gave me a deeper appreciation for the worship structure and words found in our Lutheran hymnals. In the second year of study exploring the use of the arts in worship led to the development of a dramatic scripture presentation team at my church.

While the pandemic has limited how much this group has done recently, what this group has been able to add to our worship services has been much appreciated by the congregation. In this most recent year of studies, I am immersed in the subjects of the Liturgical Year and Intercessory Prayer.

One surprising thing I learned recently was that Lutherans (and to some extent Anglicans) are the only denominations that observe the time after Epiphany as a distinctive season of the liturgical year. I will be continuing to explore this uniqueness as well as developing resources for the Season of Epiphany as I complete the work associated with this current class.

Through this program I have been introduced to many worship resources that I would not have encountered otherwise. Not only is the school ecumenical, but it is also international, so I have been exposed to ideas and materials from a wide range of contexts. An example of a resource I would not have encountered had I not been at student at IWS is a sung setting of the Lord's Prayer which has become a highly valued part of our worship services at Christ Lutheran.

Through this program I have been energized to be more thoughtful and intentional in my worship planning. The congregation has been the beneficiary of this heightened attentiveness – through the worship services themselves, and through the teaching about worship done in various educational contexts (studies, presentations, and newsletter articles).

My current enthusiasm for worship moves in two streams: first, a renewed appreciation for the liturgical heritage we have inherited which traces its roots back to the first centuries of the Christian church. Second, a renewed desire to explore and develop contemporary resources for worship including dramatic scripture presentations,

liturgical musical components, and litanies/prayers that are reflective of current events and scriptural foundation.

I would not say that I neglected worship in the past, nevertheless I believe that my participation in the Doctor of Worship Studies program has revitalized my worship planning and leadership in a significant and noteworthy manner. Through my studies at the Institute for Worship Studies, I have been inspired to craft and lead worship services to the best of my ability, striving to make the worship services of my church a meaningful and transforming time for those who gather, whether in-person or virtually.