

HOUGHTON COLLEGE
GREATBATCH SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION
FOR CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The nature of this paper was to provide theological and musical support for the planning and preparation of a hymn festival that was performed on April 14th, 2016. The capstone paper and hymn festival was in partial completion of the Master of Arts in music, from the Greatbatch School of Music, at Houghton College. Research methods utilized were historical, experimental, and observational. The content of this paper includes theological and liturgical significance of Christ's ascension, and an outline of and reflection on the hymn festival.

INTRODUCTION

There is a great need in the churches of North America to recover a deeper focus on the story of God. As churches and churchgoers become more and more passive in the way that spiritual life and everyday activity intersect, a clarion call back to the gospel message is paramount.¹ Gerrit Dawson asserts, “Recovering a proper and robust doctrine of the ascension can reconnect us to a sense of our true citizenship in heaven and the implications of that identity for life in the world.”² Churches spend much of their attention on Easter, some will observe Pentecost, but fewer will observe a service that celebrates the Ascension.³ The awareness of theology of the ascension is not easily accessible by the average lay-person in a congregation, and preachers will tend to not preach on this subject to avoid difficult sermons.

There are several reasons why the theology of the Ascension is difficult to teach. It is a supernatural event that defies rational explanation; in the post-enlightenment world we live in, we tend not to dwell on things that we cannot explain. Or, we will create versions of the truth that fit our particular logical thoughts. Dawson points out that there have been many heresies taught about the Ascension throughout church history.⁴ Worship leaders and pastors alike would rather not teach anything about the Ascension, rather than further a false truth. This fact still leaves congregations starving for the rest of the story after the resurrection. Leaving the ascension out of the Easter narrative leaves Jesus’

¹ Gerrit Scott Dawson. *Jesus Ascended: The Meaning of Christ's Continuing Incarnation*. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publication, 2004), 19.

² Dawson, 25.

³ Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 158.

⁴ Dawson, 32.

redemptive work incomplete. Without Jesus bodily ascension, we have no high priest who intercedes for us, no hope of final resurrection of the dead, and no promise of his glorious return. Christians need the entire Easter narrative, so that the story of Jesus' redemption is not only to keep us out of hell, it is also so that we can live now with the assurance that Jesus is coming again as He left, and is interceding for us, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

To rediscover an accurate theology of the ascension, I carefully studied Biblical text, scholarly commentaries, and historical accounts. The goal of this study was to synthesize several different sources and condense them into a succinct rendering of ascension theology, one that is teachable and easily grasped.

An example of a service that remembers, celebrates, and teaches the Ascension is detailed in the final section of this paper, and was presented in the Houghton Wesleyan Church, April 14th, 2016. This service was formed as a hymn festival, a worship service in which most of the liturgy is music.⁵ A topical hymn festival is an excellent way to teach communities about theological truths.⁶ This service included examples of Scripture, songs, hymns, prayers, poetry, and other artistic expressions to show one way that Ascension theology might be presented in a gathered worship setting. In preparation for

⁵ Sue Mitchell Wallace, *"Reformed Worship - Resources for Planning and Leading Worship."* *How to Plan a Hymn Festival*. Accessed April 2, 2016. <http://www.reformedworship.org/article/december-1988/how-plan-hymn-festival>.

⁶ Harry Eskew, and Hugh T. McElrath, *Sing with Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Hymnology*. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 239.

the festival, hymn concordances were used to cross reference Scripture texts and hymn texts.⁷

The service was built on scriptural text and prayer. Embedded throughout is a dialogical formula between God and the worshiper.⁸ The use of Taizé song, contemporary text set to old hymn tunes, and contemporary hymns were intended to stretch the worshipper to new expressions of worship through song.⁹

The objectives of the hymn festival were three: The first was to provide the participants with vibrant reminders of this important biblical event. The second was to enable each participant to gain deeper insight into the theological and practical meanings in the Ascension. The third objective was to create a space where all who attended the hymn festival were given opportunity to praise the Triune God.

⁷ Donald A. Spencer, *Hymn and Scripture Selection Guide: A Cross-reference of Scripture and Hymns with over 12,000 References for 380 Hymns and Gospel Songs*. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1977).

⁸ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 8.

⁹ Iris V. Cully, *Christian Worship and Church Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 92.

A BREIF ASCENSION THEOLOGY

The Gospels of Mark and Luke and the book of Acts record the event of the Ascension.¹⁰ These accounts, although varied in specific terms, articulate the same message. Jesus ascended into heaven in his bodily form, and the event was witnessed by multiple disciples.¹¹ The Ascension is not merely a myth or good story, it is biblical truth. The Ascension of Christ enthroned him as head of the Church, and King of Creation.¹² Jesus currently holds three distinct offices: Prophet, High Priest, and King.¹³

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

The ascension of Christ took place some time after his resurrection. The exact timing is not known, but Scripture records that Jesus appeared over a period of forty days following the resurrection. Scholars disagree about precisely when Jesus ascended. Some articulate that Jesus ascended on Easter morning, then came back and ascended in order for the disciples to witness it.¹⁴ The other thought is that Jesus ascended only once, with the disciples watching. We know for certain that Jesus ascended, and in the will of the Father and power of the Holy Spirit he was empowered to do miraculous things on earth.¹⁵ The liturgical calendar places the event forty days after Easter.¹⁶

The account by Luke is as follows:

¹⁰ Peter Toon, *The Ascension of Our Lord*. (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1984), 5.

¹¹ Toon, 3.

¹² Dawson, 61.

¹³ Toon, 18.

¹⁴ Dawson, 37.

¹⁵ Ibid., 39.

¹⁶ Adolf Adam, *The Liturgical Year: Its History & Its Meaning after the Reform of the Liturgy* (New York: Pueblo Publication, 1981), 88.

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.¹⁷

This account succinctly summarizes the event of the Ascension. It shows the disciples' reaction to the ascension of Jesus, to go and worship and praise God in the temple.¹⁸ This is also our response to the news that Jesus is co-reigning with God the Father.

JESUS AS PROPHET

The Ascension of Christ marks a transition for Jesus' prophetic role. Jesus took on several characteristics that an Old Testament prophet had.¹⁹ Jesus was compared to a prophet by his disciples, and even by the Pharisees. Even Jesus called himself a prophet twice.²⁰ In Mark 6:4, Jesus said: "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house." This statement places Jesus in the line of the Old Testament prophets, who were often mistreated and not welcome in their hometowns. The other example of Jesus comparing himself to a prophet was in response to a death threat by King Herod. In Luke 13:33, Jesus said to some Pharisees: "I must journey tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem." The Pharisees recognized that comment as Jesus identifying with the lineage of prophets who were persecuted and killed in Jerusalem for bringing God's word to the people.²¹ Biblical scholar Peter Toon records, "the prophetic ministry

¹⁷ Luke 24:50-53.

¹⁸ Toon, 5.

¹⁹ Ibid., 74.

²⁰ Ibid., 75.

²¹ Ibid., 75.

of Jesus did not cease at his crucifixion but continues from heaven as he speaks his word in and through the Holy Spirit.”²²

Jesus’ prophetic role is clearly seen in the last promise that he gave his disciples.

This promise is that he is sending a comforter, and that he is coming again.²³

All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.”²⁴

Jesus’ prophetic post was completed with the Ascension. The significance of the Ascension in relation to Jesus’ position as a prophet is that Jesus now will come back to the world to fulfill his own promise. He will come again, but he will come as he left, the risen conquering king.

JESUS AS HIGH PRIEST

The Ascension marks the beginning of Jesus’ role as our High Priest. Jesus the Son of Man is ever interceding on our behalf before God the Father.²⁵ With Jesus’ death and atoning work on the cross, and resurrection, he completed his earthly ministry and established a new covenant in his blood. Jesus is the High Priest of this new covenant.²⁶

²² Toon, 76.

²³ Dawson, 8.

²⁴ John 14:25-31.

²⁵ Dawson, 8.

²⁶ Ibid., 54.

Jesus was both the sacrificial lamb and the high priest, fulfilling the sacrifice commanded to be given on the Jewish Day of Atonement. As an Old Testament high priest in the Aaronic tradition would carry the names of the Israelites into the Holy of Holies, Jesus bore our names on his heart as He went to the cross. Jesus was the Word of God made flesh, he was the perfect high priest. For priests to enter into the holy of holies in the temple, they needed to go through a purification process. Jesus did not need the purification process because He was sinless. Jesus bore our names and our sins to the cross where he offered himself as a perfect sacrifice.²⁷ After sacrificing himself, Jesus entered the presence of the Father and has not yet returned from that most sacred place. But Jesus did leave a blessing, the Holy Spirit.²⁸ “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace,” is the blessing that priests in the order of Aaron would give after completing the sacrifice of Atonement. Jesus gave the embodiment of this blessing when he gave the Holy Spirit to us.²⁹

An essential part of Jesus’ current position as High Priest is his intercession for us. The writer of Hebrews said this on the subject: “Therefore he [Jesus] is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”³⁰ This interceding of Jesus is not one of a lesser entity begging a greater entity to change its mind. Peter Toon wrote, “his posture in heaven must be remembered—he does

²⁷ James Torrance, *Worship, Community & the Triune God of Grace*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 48.

²⁸ Dawson, 123.

²⁹ Toon, 67.

³⁰ Hebrews 7:25.

not pray on bended knee but as the seated Priest-King.”³¹ The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans wrote: “Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”³² This statement encapsulates the continuing work of Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father.

The prayers of believers are pivotal in Jesus’ intercessions. While Jesus is our High Priest interceding for us in heaven, the church is the high priest for humanity. The apostle Peter wrote: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”³³ This is the model that Jesus Christ established when he was on earth, and continues to support through his intercession at God’s right hand.³⁴

JESUS AS KING OF KINGS

A third role that Jesus filled after the ascension was that of King of Kings. Jesus returned to heaven victorious over sin and death. And with his return to heaven, Jesus opened the gates of heaven to those who are reconciled to him. Jesus did not return as a conqueror with slaves in his wake, but as one who welcomes those who accept his gift of salvation.³⁵ Dawson states,

The ascension in the flesh assures us that he[Jesus] eternally condescends to the bone of our bone, knitted to us in the most intimate union. His conquest does not deprive us but enriches us: does not humiliate us, but ennoble us. The humility of the ascension’s triumph is foolishness to a

³¹ Ibid., 63.

³² Romans 8:34.

³³ 1 Peter 2:9.

³⁴ Torrance, *Worship, Community & the Triune God of Grace*, 65.

³⁵ Dawson, 66.

world in rebellion, but life and health and peace to those who follow in his train.³⁶

The imminence of Jesus is clearly stated in Paul's letter to the Philippians 2:5-11.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This passage identifies Jesus as being the ruler of creation, by the power of the Father.

Jesus is the obedient son, who sacrificed himself on the cross. Because of Jesus' obedience, God elevated him to the highest place, so that all creation acknowledges Jesus as Lord. This acknowledgement brings ultimate glory to God the Father.³⁷

The book of Psalms alludes to the Ascension in four different places, in Psalms 24, 47, 68, and 110.³⁸ Psalm 110 is the most-quoted Psalm in the New Testament, found in the gospels, in Acts, and numerous places in Paul's letters. The Psalmist evoked images of a coronation to express the themes of the Ascension:

Clap your hands, all you nations;
shout to God with cries of joy.
For the Lord Most High is awesome,
the great King over all the earth.
He subdued nations under us,
peoples under our feet.
He chose our inheritance for us,
the pride of Jacob, whom he loved.

³⁶ Ibid., 63.

³⁷ Earle L. Wilson, Alex R. G. Deasley, and Barry L. Callen, *Galatians, Philippians, Colossians: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publication House) 2007.

³⁸ Dawson, 61.

God has ascended amid shouts of joy,
 the Lord amid the sounding of trumpets.
 Sing praises to God, sing praises;
 sing praises to our King, sing praises.
 For God is the King of all the earth;
 sing to him a psalm of praise.
 God reigns over the nations;
 God is seated on his holy throne.
 The nobles of the nations assemble
 as the people of the God of Abraham,
 for the kings of the earth belong to God;
 he is greatly exalted.

This Psalm celebrates the ubiquitous dominion of the Lord.³⁹ This Psalm can be seen as an Old Testament prefiguring of the Ascension and Exaltation of Jesus. The jubilant words are words that the heavenly host might have used to welcome Jesus back into heaven.^{40,41} The Lordship of Jesus is eloquently proclaimed in this Psalm.

³⁹ Toon, 29.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 29.

⁴¹ Dawson, 68.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASCENSION FOR CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

The significance of the Ascension of Jesus for Christian worship can be summarized in this statement by Bob Webber: “the ascension figures prominently in God’s plan of salvation.”⁴² The story of God’s salvation for the world would be only told in part if the Ascension is neglected in the worship of a gathered community.⁴³ The implications of the Ascension for Christian worship are vast and wide reaching. The transforming power of ascension theology in Christian worship addresses a wide reaching issue that many churches in North America are facing. This issue is that Christians look too much like the world.⁴⁴ Three key areas that are significant in combatting this issue are that Jesus is our High Priest, Jesus has promised to return, and Jesus is the King of Kings.

The most frequently overlooked fact about Jesus’ ascension is that He is currently interceding for us at the right hand of God the Father.^{45,46} This fact is significant because on it hinges the comfort and peace that Jesus promised. It also completed Jesus’ plan to fulfill the Law of Moses, and set in place a new priesthood with Himself being the High Priest.

Jesus has ascended to heaven to continue his work as our eternal intercessor.⁴⁷ Jesus is not only interceding for us in our prayers, but also in our worship. As Jesus fulfills his role in the model of a high priest of Israel, he is vicariously perfecting our

⁴² Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 158.

⁴³ Dawson, 25.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁵ Toon, 53.

⁴⁶ Dawson, 117.

⁴⁷ Webber, *Ancient-future Time*, 159.

worship before the father.⁴⁸ Hebrews 8:1, 2 records, “Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.” The high priest that the writer of Hebrews was describing is Jesus. The phrase ‘serves in the sanctuary’ is a present tense phrase.

The Greek word *leitourgós* is used to describe Jesus work. *Leitourgós* means: an official servant (minister) who works for the good of the community. In the NT this root (leitourg-) is especially used for priestly-service given to God, impacting all who witness it.⁴⁹

A proper understanding of the priestly work of Jesus places emphasis appropriately in other areas besides the act of gathered worship. Jesus is interceding on behalf of humanity, and since those who are believers are born into the same priesthood as Jesus, Christians must therefore expand our worship to more than just that of the gathered worship setting.

The second area of significance is that when Jesus ascended, He gave a final prophecy, and that was that He would return again. This prophecy is vitally important to the Christian faith, because it provides a reason for the hope that Christians have in Christ. This hope is the message of the Ascension of Christ. A reason for this loss of hope is because the ascension is not celebrated in gathered worship. In the gospel narrative, faith, hope, and love are all essential parts of the story. The importance of remembering, celebrating, and teaching the ascension are critical to restoring the hope that Jesus intended for His followers.

⁴⁸ Dawson, 136.

⁴⁹ James Strong and Gordon Lindsay, *Strong's Concordance: Bible Dictionary ; Study of the Words of Jesus* (Charlotte, NC: P.T.L. Television Network, 1975).

Jesus did not leave the church without signs of his continuing presence.⁵⁰ Jesus left the church with water, bread, and wine, as symbols of his presence. Jesus has also gifted the church with the Holy Spirit.⁵¹ Jesus' ascension paved the way for the Holy Spirit to come and fill the church.

The third area of significance is that when Jesus ascended he was enthroned as King of Kings, at the right hand of God the Father. This fact has biblical support from Paul's letter to the Ephesians:⁵²

That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

This passage articulates the truth that Jesus has ascended to heaven and is reigning over everything. This has implications for worship today, as Christians worship a God that is all-powerful. In the contemporary church the primary focus is frequently on Jesus as personal Savior, to whom we offer our love. The Ascension brings into focus Jesus as reigning King, to whom we offer reverence and devotion. Dawson summarizes Jesus' Kingship thusly:

The Ascension, then, is the promise of a more complete victory. Our King has gone forth to his throne' he will come again in splendor. In this hope, the church has found its identity in the world, and the more the church has embraced the place of its ascended Lord, the more it has advanced his kingdom.⁵³

⁵⁰ Webber, *Ancient-future Time*, 160.

⁵¹ Ibid., 160.

⁵² Ephesians 1:19b-23.

⁵³ Dawson, 72.

This promise of coming victory is what distinguishes Christianity from other religions, and furthermore, it provides hope for the future in an otherwise dark world. This hope and promise of victory is one that Christians must cling to and proclaim often in gathered worship.

IMPLEMENTATION: A HYMN FESTIVAL ON 4/14/2016

The practical application of this material was programmed as a hymn festival on April 14th, at 8pm. This hymn festival was presented as a capstone project for a Master of Arts in Music, Music in Christian Worship.

The first step in the process of planning the hymn festival was planning the day, and securing the location. After getting expressed permission of the Greatbatch School of Music to have the hymn festival off campus, the Houghton Wesleyan Church was contacted and reserved for April 14th.⁵⁴

After securing a date and place, the next task was to plan the program. This program was patterned in the concept of revelation and response.⁵⁵ Scriptures were chosen first, as that is God's revealed Word to the church. Music and responsive readings, were chosen as responses to scripture. *The Book of Common Prayer, Worship Sourcebook*, hymnary.org, and other sources were consulted during the planning and preparation of the hymn festival.^{56,57,58}

The planning of the hymn festival roughly followed a pattern identified by Christian worship scholar Robert Webber. This format is a four-fold structure of worship. The first fold is the gathering and opening of worship. The second is the Word, where the

⁵⁴ Appendix D, 71.

⁵⁵ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 8.

⁵⁶ *The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, According to the Use of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America* (Church Pension Fund, 1945).

⁵⁷ *The Worship Sourcebook, First Edition* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2004).

⁵⁸ *The Worship Sourcebook, Second Edition*. (Grand Rapids: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2013).

people of God hear the Word of God. The third fold is the response to the Word. And the last fold is the blessing and sending.⁵⁹ The climatic music was planned at the beginning and end of the hymn festival to mirror Jesus' first and second advent. The overarching theme of the hymn festival was the Ascension of Christ, and within that meta-theme, the story of Jesus' Lordship was very prominent.

GATHERING AND OPENING WORSHIP

The design was to begin the program with the proclamation of Jesus' ascension. This was communicated through the prelude, opening hymn, prayer of invocation, congregational song, responsive reading, another hymn, and the collect for Ascension Day.

The prelude was Vaclav Nehlybel's "Concertato on Crown Him with Many Crowns" for organ and brass. The prelude was designed to welcome the congregation into the worship space. The prelude began softly, and slowly built to a loud, fast final movement. The nature of the brass instruments and organ playing together set a very festive and celebratory tone for the hymn festival.

The first congregational hymn was a hymn concertato on "Christ is Alive! Let Christians Sing!" arranged by Zebulon Highben. This arrangement was chosen because of its strong Easter text and summary of Jesus' work on earth.⁶⁰ The arrangement was written for brass, organ, choir, and congregation. This arrangement was chosen so that everyone would be singing and playing together to start off the hymn festival. During the singing of the first verse, the choir processed in, to symbolize the Holy Spirit coming

⁵⁹ Robert E. Webber, *Planning Blended Worship: The Creative Mixture of Old and New* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

⁶⁰ Appendix B, 37.

among the congregants. This hymn was followed immediately by a Prayer of Invocation, *The Worship Sourcebook, 2nd edition*.⁶¹ The golden thread of Jesus' Lordship was articulated here, and it welcomed the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The next hymn was "Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above".⁶² This hymn is a song of praise, and the intent is to proclaim God the Father as all powerful and creator of everything.⁶³ This congregational song summarizes the gospel story.⁶⁴ Johann Schütz, the author of "Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above", outlines a wide range of attributes of God. These images range from a strong masculine figure, to a gentle mothering leader. The goal is that everyone who sings this song will be able to identify with at least some of the words and make them their own praise to God.

A responsive reading of Psalm 47 turned the attention to the ascension of Jesus.⁶⁵ This Psalm articulated the Lordship of Jesus, and placed Him above all creation. The Psalm also commanded the readers to sing praises to God, which we just did in "Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above", and what we will do in the next hymn, penned by Charles Wesley, "Rejoice the Lord is King". "Rejoice the Lord is King" firmly enthrones Jesus at the right hand of God the Father.^{66,67} At this moment in the hymn festival, the congregants have a window into what the Ascension event might have looked like. The

⁶¹ Appendix B, 38.

⁶² Ibid., 39.

⁶³ Robert E. Webber, *Planning Blended Worship: The Creative Mixture of Old and New* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

⁶⁴ Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008).

⁶⁵ Appendix B, 40.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁶⁷ John Lawson, *The Wesley Hymns: As a Guide to Scriptural Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1987), 72.

phrase ‘lift up your hearts’ is an ancient phrase that is used in the beginning of a Eucharist celebration. Evoking this type of language in the beginning of worship further prepares the congregants’ hearts, minds, and souls to worship.

The Collect for Ascension Day was taken from the *Book of Common Prayer*.⁶⁸ This collect summarized the event of the Ascension in words that have been recited for generations. The opening dialogue of the hymn festival was from the congregation to God, and God to the congregation.⁶⁹ There are minimal individual pronouns in the opening section. Since a hymn festival is a worship service of a group of people, it is appropriate to acknowledge God from the standpoint of the congregation first, then turn more personal later in the service.

THE WORD: JESUS AS PROPHET

The next section of the hymn festival is centered around Jesus’ promise to be with us always. The Scripture for this section is from Luke 24:45-53:

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

This Scripture passage was read between congregational hymns. These hymns were “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”, and “Alleluia, Sing to Jesus,” both set to the tune

⁶⁸ Appendix B, 42.

⁶⁹ Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 45.

HYFRYDOL. One of Charles Wesley's most loved hymns, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling", articulated Jesus coming to earth, and leaving the comforter with Christians.^{70,71} "Alleluia, Sing to Jesus!", written by William C. Dix is rich with praise to Jesus as ruler of creation, and praise for Jesus being near the church always.⁷² This was a response to the promise that was read in the Gospel of Luke. The third verse of "Alleluia, Sing to Jesus!" began the transition to the next section of the hymn festival.

RESPONSE: JESUS AS HIGH PRIEST

The third verse described Jesus as High Priest and Intercessor for Christians before the Father. The third section of the hymn festival explored the concept of Jesus as the High Priest. Hebrews 4:14-16 was read to begin this section. This Scripture taught that Jesus is the perfect High Priest to go before the Father on the behalf of humanity, because He has suffered for humanity unlike any other. The contemporary setting of 'Before the Throne of God Above', by Vikki Cook, follows the Scripture reading from Hebrews.⁷³ This hymn was divided into separate verses throughout this section of the hymn festival as a response to prayers.

The majority of the third section was prayer; as the participants acknowledge Christ as their High Priest, the response is prayer and thanksgiving. After the first verse of "Before the Throne of God Above" was sung, a prayer of confession was prayed.⁷⁴ The Taizé song, "O Lord, Hear My Prayer", written by Jacques Berthier, is the moment

⁷⁰ Appendix B, 43.

⁷¹ Lawson, *The Wesley Hymns*, 193.

⁷² Appendix B, 46.

⁷³ Ibid., 48.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 49.

in the service when the pronouns shifted from plural to singular.⁷⁵ The first verse is sung after the prayer of confession. The Assurance of Pardon followed the Taizé song.⁷⁶ The response to the Assurance of Pardon was verse two of “O Lord, Hear My Prayer”, and verse two of “Before the Throne of God Above”. The second verse of “Before the Throne of God Above” summarized Jesus’ death and sacrifice for sins, providing pardon for sin.

The last formal prayer in this section is the Prayers of the People.⁷⁷ This prayer affirmed Jesus as our High Priest, and brought petitions before Him, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The final verse of “Before the Throne of God Above” followed the Prayers of the People, and concluded the third section of the hymn festival by introducing the idea of Jesus as the Risen King.

BLESSING AND SENDING: JESUS AS KING OF KINGS

The final section of the hymn festival celebrates Jesus as King of Kings. The majority of this section is music, as the participants respond to the Biblical truth of Jesus’ Kingship. The first action in this section was the choral anthem “Coronation”, by Craig Courtney, sung by the festival choir. This anthem articulated a myriad of ways that Jesus Christ is King. Directly following this anthem, a passage from Philippians 2 was read. Philippians 2:5-11 is a description of Jesus’ humility, and ultimate exultation.

The participants responded with the hymn “Crown Him with Many Crowns”.⁷⁸ This hymn, written by Matthew Bridges, was the response of both the individual and the group, to the truth of Jesus’ Kingship. The final scripture reading was from Revelation

⁷⁵ Ibid., 50.

⁷⁶ Appendix C, 66.

⁷⁷ Appendix C, 66.

⁷⁸ Appendix B, 58.

19:11-16. This passage gave an account of when Jesus will return as conqueror. The passage is visceral in its depiction of Jesus coming back to earth to reign.⁷⁹

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*. (Italics added)

Isaac Watt’s paraphrase of Psalm 72 in the hymn “Jesus Shall Reign”, was a fitting response to this passage from Revelation.⁸⁰ This hymn elevated Jesus to Lord over everything in the world. The hymn reaffirmed that Jesus is in control of everything in this life; even the prisoners and the weary find freedom and rest in Him.

The text of the choral anthem “The Lord Bless You and Keep You”, by John Rutter, communicated the Scripture from Numbers 6.⁸¹ ““The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”” This was the blessing that Israelite priests in the line of Aaron pronounced over the Israelites on the Day of Atonement, and other special feast days.⁸² This anthem was chosen to reconnect the concept of Jesus as our High Priest to the final section where Jesus is elevated as King.

⁷⁹ Revelation 19:11-16.

⁸⁰ Appendix B, 60.

⁸¹ Appendix B, 61.

⁸² R. E. Clements and Matthew Black, *New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 69.

The last hymn that was sung, written by Charles Wesley, was titled “Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending”.⁸³ This hymn concluded the participatory section of the hymn festival, by singing words that describe Jesus’ second coming.⁸⁴ The bold and triumphant tone of this hymn was accompanied by brass to proclaim that Jesus is coming back, and coming soon. The participants were given a benediction and sent into the world to love and serve the Lord.⁸⁵

The organist concluded the service with a performance of the Prelude in A Minor, BWV 543, by J.S. Bach. This prelude starts in a minor key and has a consistently rising melodic theme after the opening passage. This musical work was selected to mirror the idea of Jesus ascending. The work ends in A major, which concluded the service in a triumphant, major key.

⁸³ Appendix B, 62.

⁸⁴ Lawson, *The Wesley Hymns*, 199.

⁸⁵ Appendix C, 67.

REFLECTION

Based on feedback received, I believe the hymn festival was a success. There were approximately sixty attendees, and they all seemed to participate fully in the singing. This reflection is in four parts. The first section discusses the mechanics of the hymn festival. The second section reports the style of the hymn festival. The third section reports on the structure. The final section reports the deeper meaning and purpose of the hymn festival.⁸⁶

The mechanics of the service operated nearly seamlessly. The prayer of confession was slightly askew because the congregation and the choir had different editions of the prayer. This issue worked itself out quickly, but it still induced a moment of discord in a moment that was meant to be unified. The PowerPoint also had a slight omission, after the Gospel reading, the reader led with the response “The Word of God for the people of God”, and the participants were intended to respond with “Thanks be to God”, but the prompt was not in the handout or the PowerPoint slide. The transitions between musical pieces worked well. The readers remained faithful to the script that was provided.⁸⁷ The readers and musicians all moved at appropriate times, and in a timely fashion. There was very little dead time during the hymn festival. There were few musical issues throughout the hymn festival.

The musical issues were in the prelude, the choir anthems, and some of the hymns. The issues varied from note inaccuracy, to wrong entrances or missed cut offs. The prelude was an example of missed entrances in the brass ensemble, which was likely

⁸⁶ Robert E. Webber, *Worship Is a Verb* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985).

⁸⁷ Appendix C, 64.

because of the spatial distance between the first trumpet and the rest of the ensemble. In the future, the brass ensemble would ideally be seated together, so that entrances could be more easily communicated. In the choir anthems, although rehearsed well, some of the choir members lost concentration during “Coronation” and sang inaccurate rhythms. With more time to drill correct rhythms, this mistake could have been avoided. In some of the hymns, there were phrasing and note inaccuracies, although generally it was not distracting from the rest of the service. Even the choir anthems that had a few missed notes and rhythms were not completely distracting to those who may not have been familiar with the works.

The inverted-bell curve worked for the most part, although it was not as a gentle slope going into the ‘High Priest’ section as I had thought it would be. “Alleluia, Sing to Jesus!”, ended on a very loud and exciting finish, and the next moment was a more contemplative mood. I wanted there to be a more gradual progression into the prayer section. The progression out of the ‘High Priest’ section worked very well, and the concluding motions in the hymn festival were exactly as I had imagined. The hymn festival ended on a very uplifting note.

Careful attention to the length of how long the participants are standing versus sitting should have been taken. There was inconsistency in the direction of when to stand or sit, and for how long they should be standing or sitting. The attention to this detail will enable participants to more fully worship, and not think about the mechanics of when to stand or be seated.

The event was advertised by posters, announced in the Houghton Wesleyan Church’s monthly newsletter, Facebook event, word of mouth, and a press release in two

local papers. This was effective placement for the community at Houghton College, as the turnout was excellent for a Thursday night. If the event was on a weekend day, the turnout would have likely been greater. A recommendation for future events is to have the event announced verbally in church on the Sunday preceding the event.

The style of the hymn festival was mostly traditional hymnody from the western hemisphere. The expression that I was trying to communicate was that of reverence. I felt as though using a more traditional style to convey this expression would be most suitable. The text of the hymns I choose were also more theologically compact than the contemporary options. The only contemporary aspects of the service were the Taizé song, the setting of “Before the Throne of God Above”, and the choral anthems.

In the future, a broader range of musical expressions would enhance the hymn festival. By its title, a hymn festival is predominantly going to be comprised of hymns, but there are creative options that can be explored. One such option is that music from different cultures could be performed by the choir, or a soloist.

Besides the discussion of traditional and contemporary, there could be more songs chosen that add more diversity to the sound that was included in the program that I planned. Most of the music was loud and fast, and taxing to sing as the ranges were higher than some examples. Variety in melodic material in the hymns would add interest to the service. Adding more choir only verses, organ interludes, or solo pieces would enable the participants to rest their voices, while still staying musically engaged.

The deeper meaning and purpose of the hymn festival was communicated well. The purpose of the hymn festival was to remember, celebrate, and teach the congregation about the Ascension. There were several comments after the program where it was

expressed that the hymn festival was an edifying worship expression. There were also comments about how there were new things that were discovered because of the Scripture read, and hymns sung. This was encouraging because it was what I was praying would be the result of the hymn festival.

A recommendation for future hymn festivals is to consider how to include more symbolism into the worship expression. Symbols are powerful tools for teaching truths about the Triune God.⁸⁸ Including thoughtful symbolism can activate the imagination of a worshipper to new depths of understanding. This aspect should be tapped into more in the future, as one of the main goals for a hymn festival is to teach the congregation about new ways of expressing theological truths.

CONCLUSION

The entire experience of creating the hymn festival, researching material about the Ascension of Christ, rehearsing the choirs and brass, and preparing hymns, was an incredibly enriching and fulfilling experience. The musical aspect was very rewarding, and I gained valuable insight as to how to manage several components of planning a hymn festival at once. The performance of the hymn festival elevated my education and deepened my understanding and appreciation of worship planning and music. The research aspect was engaging and enlightening, as I was exposed to new literature that led to a broadened understanding of the ascension, and events during the Easter season.

⁸⁸ Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only* (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1988).

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APPENDIX A: HYMN FESTIVAL HANDOUT

Prelude

‘Crown Him With Many Crowns’

Vaclav Nehlybel

THE ASCENSION***Hymn: Christ is Alive! Let Christians Sing! (see insert)**

Text: Brian Wren

Tune: Truro arr. Zebulon Highben

Verse 1: All

Verse 2: All

Verse 3: Choir

Verse 4: Choir

Verse 5: All

Prayer of Invocation

Reader: God of power and love, you raised Jesus from death to life, resplendent in glory to rule over all creation. Free the world to rejoice in his peace, to glory in his justice, and to live in his love. Creator, send your Holy Spirit to dwell among us during this time of worship. Unite all humankind in Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

All: Amen.

(Please be seated)

Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above (see insert)

Text: Johann J. Schütz, 1675

Tune: Mit Freuden Zart, Bohemian Brethren's *Kirchengesänge*, 1655*Psalms 47*

Reader: Clap your hands, all you nations;

All: shout to God with cries of joy.

Reader: For the Lord Most High is awesome,

All: the great King over all the earth.

Reader: He subdued nations under us,

peoples under our feet.

He chose our inheritance for us,

the pride of Jacob, whom he loved.

God has ascended amid shouts of joy,

All: the Lord amid the sounding of trumpets.

Reader: Sing praises to God, sing praises;

All: sing praises to our King, sing praises.

Reader: For God is the King of all the earth;

All: sing to him a psalm of praise.

***Rejoice, the Lord is King, (see insert)**

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

Tune: Darwall, John Darwall, 1731-1789

All: Almighty God, whose blessed Son our Savior Jesus Christ ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things:

Mercifully give us faith to perceive that, according to his promise, he abides with his Church on earth, even to the end of the ages; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen

PROPHETIC POST

***Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (see insert)**

Text: Charles Wesley

Tune: Hyfrydol, Rowland H. Prichard 1831

Verse 1: All

Verse 2: High voices

**Gospel Reading: Luke 24:45-53*

***Alleluia, Sing to Jesus! (see insert)**

Text: William C. Dix, 1837-1898)

Tune: Hyfrydol, Rowland H. Prichard

(Please be seated)

HIGH PRIEST

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16

Before The Throne of God Above

Before the throne of God above

I have a strong and perfect plea

A great High Priest whose name is Love

Who ever lives and pleads for me

My name is graven on His hands

My name is written on His heart

I know that while in heav'n He stands

No tongue can bid me thence depart
 No tongue can bid me thence depart

Prayer of Confession

Reader: We claim to celebrate the ascension of our Lord, yet the way we live proclaims our lack of faith in his power to deal with the world. Let us confess the incongruity between our faith and practice. Let us pray.

All: We come, O Lord, on this day of glory to confess our lack of trust. While we sing of your lordship over all creation, we have too often acted as though you are powerless in the face of today's events. Forgive our unbelief. Help us to live with confidence in your presence today and in the hope for life with you forever. Amen.

O Lord, Hear My Prayer, (see insert)

Text and Tune: Jacques Berthier

Verse 1: choir only

Verse 1: repeat with all

Assurance of Pardon

O Lord, Hear My Prayer, (see insert)

Verse 2: All

Before The Throne of God Above, (see insert)

Text: Charitie Lee Bancroft, Vikki Cook

Tune: Vikki Cook

When Satan tempts me to despair
 And tells me of the guilt within
 Upward I look and see Him there
 Who made an end to all my sin
 Because the sinless Savior died
 My sinful soul is counted free
 For God the Just is satisfied
 To look on Him and pardon me
 To look on Him and pardon me

Litany Prayer

Before The Throne of God Above

Behold Him there the risen Lamb
 My perfect spotless righteousness

The great unchangeable I Am
 The King of glory and of grace
 One with Himself I cannot die
 My soul is purchased with His blood
 My life is hid with Christ on high
 With Christ my Savior and my God
 With Christ my Savior and my God

KING OF KINGS

Choral Anthem: Coronation
 Craig Courtney

Epistle Reading: Philippians 2:5-11

***Crown Him With Many Crowns (see insert)**

Text: Matthew Bridges (1800-1894)

Tune: Diademata, George J. Elvey (1816-1893)

**Scripture Reading: Revelation 19:11-16*

***Jesus Shall Reign, see insert**

Text: Isaac Watts, 1719

Tune: Duke Street, John Hatton, 1793

Verse 1: All

Verse 2: High voices

Verse 3: Choir

Verse 4: Low voices

Verse 5: All

Choral Anthem: The Lord Bless You And Keep You
 John Rutter

***Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending, (see insert)**

Text: Charles Wesley

Tune: Helmsley, trad. English melody, 18th. from *The English Hymnal*

**Benediction*

Postlude

Prelude in A Minor, BWV 543

J.S. Bach

*Please stand if able

Sing all verses, unless otherwise indicated

APPENDIX B: HYMN FESTIVAL CHOIR PACKET

Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing

Assembly

1 Christ is a - live! Let Chris - tians sing. The
 2 Christ is a - live! No long - er bound to
Choir only: Stanzas 3 and 4
 5 Christ is a - live, and comes to bring good
 cross stands emp - ty to the sky. Let
 dis - tant years in Pal - es - tine, but
 news to this and ev - 'ry age, till
 streets and homes with prais - es ring. Love,
 sav - ing, heal - ing, here and now, and
 earth and sky and o - cean ring with
 drowned in death, shall nev - er die.
 touch - ing ev - 'ry place and time.
 joy, with jus - tice, love, and praise.

Choir

- 3 In ev'ry insult, rift, and war,
 where color, scorn, or wealth divide,
 Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
 and lives, where even hope has died.
- 4 Women and men, in age and youth,
 can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
 and find the way, the life, the truth,
 revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

Text: Brian A. Wren © 1969, rev. 1995 Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved.
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Music: TRURO; T. Williams; *Psalmody Evangelica*, 1789

Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing, arr. Zebulon M. Highben, ISBN 978-1-4514-5158-0
 Published by Augsburg Fortress. Printed in U.S.A.

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Prayer of Invocation:

Reader: God of power and love, you raised Jesus from death to life, resplendent in glory to rule over all creation. Free the world to rejoice in his peace, to glory in his justice, and to live in his love. Creator, send your Holy Spirit to dwell among us during this time of worship. Unite all humankind in Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

ALL: AMEN

Sit

Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above



1. Sing praise to God who reigns a - bove, the God of all cre -
 2. The Lord is ne - ver far a - way, but through all grief dis -
 3. Thus all my toil - some way a - long, I sing a - loud thy
 4. Let all who name Christ's ho - ly name give God all praise and

- a - tion, the God of power, the God of love, the God of
 tres - sing, an e - ver pre - sent help and stay, our peace and
 prai - ses, that earth may hear the grate - ful song my voice un -
 glo - ry; let all who own his power pro-claim a - loud the

our sal - va - tion. With heal - ing balm my soul is filled and
 joy and bles - sing. As with a mo - ther's ten - der hand, God
 wea - ried rai - ses. Be joy - ful in the Lord, my heart, both
 won - drous sto - ry! Cast each false i - dol from its throne, for

ev - ery faith - less mur - mur stilled: To God all praise and glo - ry.
 gent - ly leads the cho - sen band: To God all praise and glo - ry.
 soul and bo - dy bear your part: To God all praise and glo - ry.
 Christ is Lord, and Christ a - lone: To God all praise and glo - ry.

Text: Johann J. Schütz, 1675;
 trans. Frances E. Cox, 1864
 Tune: Bohemian Brethren's *Kirchengesänge*, 1655;
 harm. Maurice F. Bell, 1906



87 87 887
 MIT FREUDEN ZART
www.hymnary.org/text/sing_praise_to_god_who_reigns_above

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Reader: Clap your hands, all you nations;

ALL: shout to God with cries of joy.

Reader: For the Lord Most High is awesome,

ALL: the great King over all the earth.

Reader: He subdued nations under us,

peoples under our feet.

He chose our inheritance for us,

the pride of Jacob, whom he loved.

God has ascended amid shouts of joy,

ALL: the Lord amid the sounding of trumpets.

Reader: Sing praises to God, sing praises;

ALL: sing praises to our King, sing praises.

Reader: For God is the King of all the earth;

ALL: sing to him a psalm of praise.


-Psalm 47

STAND



Rejoice, the Lord Is King




1. Re - joice, the Lord is King: Your Lord and King a - dore!
 2. Je - sus, the Sa - vior, reigns, The God of truth and love;
 3. His king - dom can - not fail, He rules o'er earth and heav'n;
 4. Re - joice in glo - rious hope! Our Lord and judge shall come

Re - joice, give thanks and sing, And tri - umph e - ver - more. Lift
 When He has purged our stains, He took his seat a - bove; Lift
 The keys of death and hell Are to our Je - sus giv'n: Lift
 And take His ser - vants up To their e - ter - nal home: Lift

up your heart, Lift up your voice! Re - joice, a - gain I say, re - joice!
 up your heart, Lift up your voice! Re - joice, a - gain I say, re - joice!
 up your heart, Lift up your voice! Re - joice, a - gain I say, re - joice!
 up your heart, Lift up your voice! Re - joice, a - gain I say, re - joice!



Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788
 Tune: John Darwall, 1731-1789



Irregular
 Darwall
www.hymnary.org/text/rejoice_the_lord_is_king_your_lord_and_

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ALL: Almighty God, whose blessed Son our Savior Jesus Christ ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things: Mercifully give us faith to perceive that, according to his promise, he abides with his Church on earth, even to the end of the ages; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting.

ALL: Amen.

351 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

1 Love di - vine, all loves ex - cel - ling, joy of heaven, to
 2 Breathe, oh, breathe thy lov - ing Spir - it in - to ev - ery
 3 Come, Al - might - y to de - liv - er, let us all thy
 4 Fin - ish, then, thy new cre - a - tion; pure and spot - less

earth come down; fix in us thy hum - ble dwell - ing, all thy
 trou - bled breast; let us all in thee in - her - it; let us
 life re - ceive; sud - den - ly re - turn, and nev - er, nev - er -
 let us be; let us see thy great sal - va - tion per - fect -

faith - ful mer - cies crown. Je - sus, thou art all com - pas - sion,
 find thy prom - ised rest. Take a - way the love of sin - ning;
 more thy tem - ples leave. Thee we would be al - ways bless - ing,
 ly re - stored in thee: changed from glo - ry in - to glo - ry,

Words: Charles Wesley, 1747, P.D.

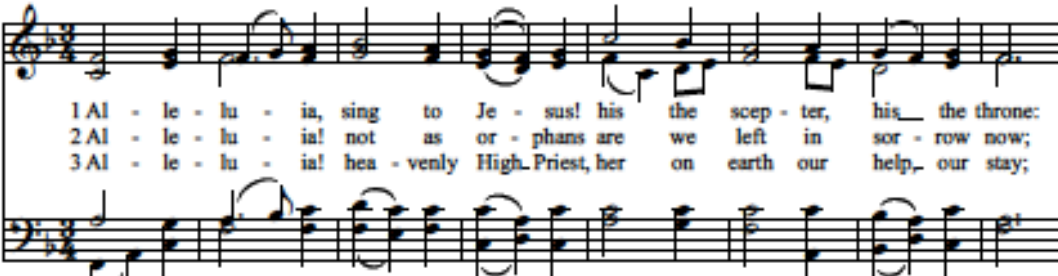
Music (HYFRYDOL 8.7.8.7 D): Rowland H. Prichard, 1831, P.D.

pure, un - bound - ed love thou art; vis - it us with
 Al - pha and O - me - ga be; end of faith, as
 serve thee with thy hosts a - bove, pray and praise thee
 till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our

thy sal - va - tion, en - ter ev - ery trem - bling heart.
 its be - gin - ning, set our hearts at lib - er - ty.
 with - out ceas - ing, glo - ry in thy per - fect love.
 crowns be - fore thee, lost in won - der, love and praise.

Remain Standing for the Gospel reading from Luke 24:45-53.

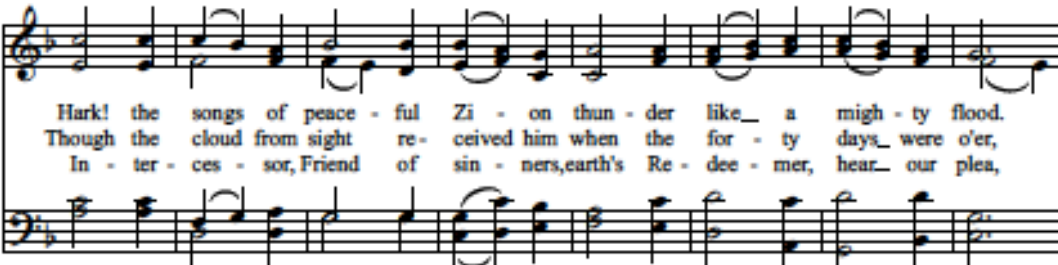
Alleluia, Sing to Jesus!



1 Al - le - lu - ia, sing to Je - sus! his the scep - ter, his the throne:
 2 Al - le - lu - ia! not as or - phans are we left in sor - row now;
 3 Al - le - lu - ia! hea - venly High Priest, her on earth our help, our stay;



Al - le - lu - ia! his the tri - umph, his the vic - to - ry a - lone.
 Al - le - lu - ia! he is near us; faith be - lieves nor ques - tions how.
 Al - le - lu - ia! hear the sin - ful cry to you from day - to day.



Hark! the songs of peace - ful Zi - on thun - der like a migh - ty flood.
 Though the cloud from sight re - ceived him when the for - ty days were o'er,
 In - ter - ces - sor, Friend of sin - ners, earth's Re - dee - mer, hear our plea,



Je - sus, out of e - very na - tion, has re - deemed us by his blood.
 shall our hearts for - get his pro - mise, "I am with you ev - er - more?
 where the songs of all the sin - less sweep a - cross the crys - tal sea.

Text: William C. Dix (1837-1898), alt.
 Tune: Rowland H. Prichard (1811-1887);
 arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)



87 87D
 HYFRYDOL
www.hymnary.org/text/alleluia_sing_to_jesus_his_the_scepter

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Be seated for a Reading from the book of Hebrews 4:13-16

Before The Throne Of God Above

Words by
Charitie Lees Bancroft
and Vikki Cook

Music by
Vikki Cook


J = 76 VERSE

D Em/D D F#m G A




1. Be - fore the throne of God a - bove I have a strong and per - fect plea, a great High Priest whose name is
2. When Sa - tan tempts me to de - spair, and tells me of the guilt with - in, up - ward I look and see Him
3. Be - hold Him there, the ris - en Lamb, my per - fect spot - less right - eous - ness, the great un - change - a - ble "I
4. I bow be - fore the cross of Christ, and mar - vel at this love di - vine, God's per - fect Son was sac - ri -

6 Bm G Em G/A D G D/F# A^{aug} A D G D/F#



love, who ev - er lives and pleads for me. My name is grav - en on His hands, my name is writ - ten on His
there, who made an end to all my sin. Be - cause the sin - less Sav - iour died, my sin - ful soul is counted
Am", the King of glo - ry and of grace. One with Him - self I can - not die, my soul is pur - chased with His
- fied to make me right - eous in God's eyes. This riv - er's depths I can - not know, but I can glo - ry in its

12 Bm G D/F# A Bm Bm/A G Em G/A Bm



heart; I know that while in heav'n He stands, no tongue can bid me thence de - part, no tongue can
free, for God the Just is sat - is - fied to look on Him and par - don me, to look on
blood; My life is hid with Christ on high, with Christ, my Sav - iour and my God, with Christ, my
flood; The Lord Most High has bowed down low, and poured on me His glo - rious love, and poured on


CHORUS

17 G Em G/A D Am C G



bid me thence de - part. Hal - le - lu - jah, my life is found in Je - sus
Him and par - don me.
Sav - iour and my God.
me His glo - rious love.

22 D Am C G D



Christ. Hal - le - lu - jah, for I am His and He is mine.

Prayer of Confession

Reader: We claim to celebrate the ascension of our Lord, yet the way we live proclaims our lack of faith in his power to deal with the world. Let us confess the incongruity between our faith and practice. Let us pray.

ALL: We come, O Lord, on this day of glory to confess our lack of trust. While we sing of your lordship over all creation, we have too often acted as though you are powerless in the face of today's events. Forgive our unbelief as we are prone to lose faith. Help us to live with confidence in your presence today and in the hope for life with you forever. Amen.

OneLicense A-707288

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

642

♩ = 72

Em C⁶ D G C Am⁶ B

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer. When I call an - swer me. O
 The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: All my hope comes from God. The

Em C⁶ D G⁶ Am B Em *fine*

Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer. Come and lis - ten to me. O
 Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: God, the well - spring of life. The

fine

Words and Music: Jacques Berthier
 GIA Publications, Inc.

OneLicense A-707288

Assurance of Pardon

OneLicense A-707288

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

642

$\text{♩} = 72$ Em C⁶ D G C Am⁶ B

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The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: All my hope comes from God. The

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Words and Music: Jacques Berthier
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Before The Throne Of God Above

Words by
Charitie Lees Bancroft
and Vikki Cook

Music by
Vikki Cook


J = 76 VERSE

D Em/D D F#m G A




1. Be - fore the throne of God a - bove I have a strong and per - fect plea, a great High Priest whose name is
2. When Sa - tan tempts me to de - spair, and tells me of the guilt with - in, up - ward I look and see Him
3. Be - hold Him there, the ris - en Lamb, my per - fect spot - less right - eous - ness, the great un - change - a - ble "I
4. I bow be - fore the cross of Christ, and mar - vel at this love di - vine, God's per - fect Son was sac - ri -

6 Bm G Em G/A D G D/F# A^{aug} A D G D/F#



love, who ev - er lives and pleads for me. My name is grav - en on His hands, my name is writ - ten on His
there, who made an end to all my sin. Be - cause the sin - less Sav - iour died, my sin - ful soul is counted
Am", the King of glo - ry and of grace. One with Him - self I can - not die, my soul is pur - chased with His
- fied to make me right - eous in God's eyes. This riv - er's depths I can - not know, but I can glo - ry in its

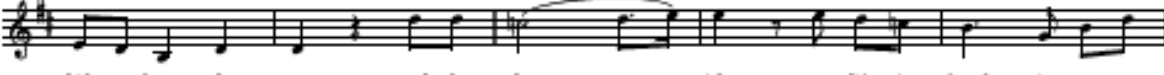
12 Bm G D/F# A Bm Bm/A G Em G/A Bm



heart; I know that while in heav'n He stands, no tongue can bid me thence de - part, no tongue can
free, for God the Just is sat - is - fied to look on Him and par - don me, to look on
blood; My life is hid with Christ on high, with Christ, my Sav - iour and my God, with Christ, my
flood; The Lord Most High has bowed down low, and poured on me His glo - rious love, and poured on


CHORUS

17 G Em G/A D Am C G



bid me thence de - part. Hal - le - lu - jah, my life is found in Je - sus
Him and par - don me.
Sav - iour and my God.
me His glo - rious love.

22 D Am C G D



Christ. Hal - le - lu - jah, for I am His and He is mine.

Litany Prayer


Before The Throne Of God Above

Words by
Charitie Lees Bancroft
and Vikki Cook

Music by
Vikki Cook


J = 76 VERSE

D Em/D D F#m G A




1. Be - fore the throne of God a - bove I have a strong and per - fect plea, a great High Priest whose name is
2. When Sa - tan tempts me to de - spair, and tells me of the guilt with - in, up - ward I look and see Him
3. Be - hold Him there, the ris - en Lamb, my per - fect spot - less right - eous - ness, the great un - change - a - ble "I
4. I bow be - fore the cross of Christ, and mar - vel at this love di - vine, God's per - fect Son was sac - ri -

6 Bm G Em G/A D G D/F# A^{aug} A D G D/F#



love, who ev - er lives and pleads for me. My name is grav - en on His hands, my name is writ - ten on His
there, who made an end to all my sin. Be - cause the sin - less Sav - iour died, my sin - ful soul is counted
Am", the King of glo - ry and of grace. One with Him - self I can - not die, my soul is pur - chased with His
- fied to make me right - eous in God's eyes. This riv - er's depths I can - not know, but I can glo - ry in its

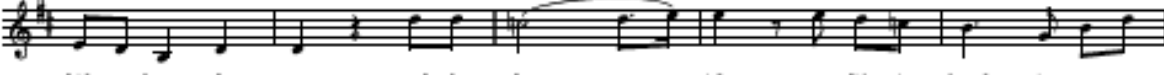
12 Bm G D/F# A Bm Bm/A G Em G/A Bm



heart; I know that while in heav'n He stands, no tongue can bid me thence de - part, no tongue can
free, for God the Just is sat - is - fied to look on Him and par - don me, to look on
blood; My life is hid with Christ on high, with Christ, my Sav - iour and my God, with Christ, my
flood; The Lord Most High has bowed down low, and poured on me His glo - rious love, and poured on


CHORUS

17 G Em G/A D Am C G



bid me thence de - part. Hal - le - lu - jah, my life is found in Je - sus
Him and par - don me.
Sav - iour and my God.
me His glo - rious love.

22 D Am C G D



Christ. Hal - le - lu - jah, for I am His and He is mine.

Craig Courtney, "Coronation"

Crown Him, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Prince of Peace.

Crown Him, the one who died and rose again to live forevermore.

Crown Him, the Bread of Life, High and Holy Priest, Bright and Morning Star.

He holds the keys of death. He holds the keys of hell. He is ruler of the kings of earth.

Crown Him, behold your King..

See Him coming with the clouds. Every eye shall see Him whom they have pierced.

See Him who is the first, and is the last, Alpha and Omega.

He is the Living One. He who is and was, and who is to come.

He has loved us unto death. He has freed us by his blood. He is the mighty Son of God.

Behold Him!

Behold your King, Behold the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings.

Crown Him!

Be Seated for the epistle reading from Philippians 2:5-11.

Crown Him with Many Crowns

1 Crown him with ma - ny crowns, the Lamb up - on his throne.
 2 Crown him the Lord of life, who tri - umphed o'er the grave,
 3 Crown him the Lord of love; be - hold his hands and side,
 4 Crown him the Lord of years, the po - ten - tate of time,

Hark! how the heaven - ly an - them_ drowns all mu - sic but its own.
 and rose vic - to - rious in the_ strife for those he came to save;
 rich wounds, yet vi - si - ble a - bove, in beau - ty glo - ri - fied;
 cre - a - tor of the rol - ling_ spheres, in - ef - fa - bly su - blime.

A - wake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee,
 his glo - ries now we sing who died and rose on high,
 no an - gels in the sky can ful - ly bear that sight,
 All hail, Re - dee - mer, hail! for thou hast died for me;

and hail him as thy match - less king through all e - ter - ni - ty.
 who died e - ter - nal life to bring, and lives that death may die.
 but down - ward bends their bur - ning eye at my - ste - ries so bright.
 thy praise shall ne - ver, ne - ver fail through - out e - ter - ni - ty.

Text: Matthew Bridges (1800-1894) and
 Godfrey Thring (1823-1903)
 Tune: George J. Elvey (1816-1893)

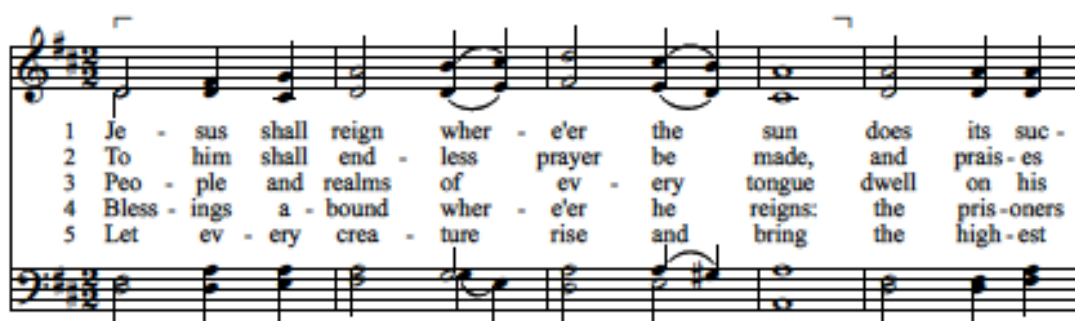


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www.hymnary.org/text/crown_him_with_many_crowns

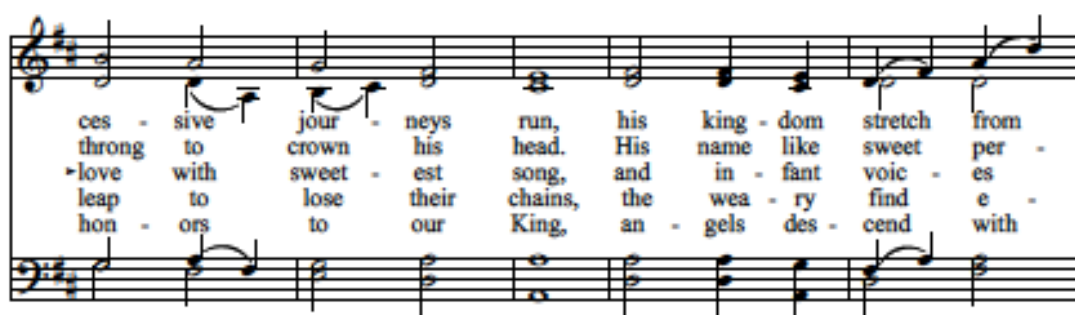
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Remain Standing for the reading from Revelation 19:11-16


Jesus Shall Reign



1 Je - sus shall reign wher - e'er the sun does its suc -
 2 To him shall end - less prayer be made, and prais - es
 3 Peo - ple and realms of ev - ery tongue dwell on his
 4 Bless - ings a - bound wher - e'er he reigns: the pris - oners
 5 Let ev - ery crea - ture rise and bring the high - est



ces - sive jour - neys run, his king - dom stretch from
 throng to crown his head, His name like sweet per -
 - love with sweet - est song, and in - fant voic - es
 leap to lose their chains, the wea - ry find e -
 hon - or to our King, an - gels des - cend with



shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more.
 fume shall rise with ev - ery morn - ing sac - ri - fice.
 - shall pro - claim their ear - ly bless - ings on his name.
 ter - nal rest, and all who suf - fer want are blest.
 songs a - gain, and earth re - peat the loud a - men.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1719, alt.; based on Psalm 72
 Tune: John Hatton, 1793



LM
 DUKE STREET
www.hymnary.org/text/jesus_shall_reign_wherever_the_sun

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John Rutter, “The Lord Bless You and Keep You”

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Amen.

Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending

1. Lo, he comes with clouds des - cen - ding, once for
 2. Ev - ery eye shall now be - hold him, robed in
 3. The dear to - kens of his pas - sion still his
 4. Yea, A - men! Let all a - dore thee, high on

fa - vored sin - ners slain; thou - sand, thou - sand
 dread - ful ma - je - sty; those who set at
 daz - zling bo - dy bears; cause of end - less
 thy e - ter - nal throne; Sa - vior, take the

saints at - ten - ding swell the tri - umph of his
 naught and sold him, pierced and nailed him to the
 ex - ul - ta - tion to his ran - somed wor - shi -
 power and glo - ry, claim the king - dom for thine

train Hal - le - lu - jah! Hal - le - lu - jah!
 tree, dee - ply wail - ing, dee - ply wail - ing,
 pers, with what rap - ture, with what rap - ture,
 own Hal - le - lu - jah! Hal - le - lu - jah!

Text: Charles Wesley, 1758
 Tune: Trad. English melody, 18th c.;
 harm. from *The English Hymnal*, 1906



87 87 47
 HELMSLEY
www.hymnary.org/text/lo_he_comes_with_clouds_descending_once

This hymn is in the public domain. You may freely use this score for personal and congregational worship. If you reproduce the score, please credit Hymnary.org as the source.

Hal - le - lu - jah! God ap - pears on earth to reign.
 dee - ply wail - ing, shall the true Mes - si - ah see.
 with what rap - ture, gaze we on those glo - rious scars!
 Hal - le - lu - jah! E - ver - las - ting God, come down!

**** Remain Standing for the Benediction**

****Be Seated after for the postludes**

APPENDIX C: PREPARED SCRIPT FOR READERS

READER A

****Move at the end of ‘Christ is Alive! Let Christians Sing’****

No pre-words, just start right into the prayer. The audience will know that it is the prayer of invocation because it will be listed.

Pastor K: God of power and love, you raised Jesus from death to life, resplendent in glory to rule over all creation. Free the world to rejoice in his peace, to glory in his justice, and to live in his love. Creator, send your Holy Spirit to dwell among us during this time of worship. Unite all humankind in Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

All: Amen.

****Move During last verse of ‘Rejoice the Lord is King’****

Pastor K: Please join me in reading together the Collect for Ascension Day

**ALL: Almighty God, whos blessed Son our Savior Jesus Christ ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things:
Mercifully give us faith to perceive that, according to his promise, he abides with his Church on earth, even to the end**

of the ages; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting.

ALL: Amen.

****Move during last verse of ‘Alleluia, Sing to Jesus’****

Pastor K: Hear these words from the book of Hebrews, as we come before the Throne of God.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

****Stay at pulpit during ‘Before the Throne of God’**

Confession of Sin

Pastor K: We claim to celebrate the ascension of our Lord, yet the way we live proclaims our lack of faith in his power to deal with the world. Let us confess the incongruity between our faith and practice. Let us pray.

ALL: We come, O Lord, on this day of glory to confess our lack of trust. While we sing of your lordship over all creation, we have too often acted as though you are powerless in the face of today’s events. Forgive our unbelief as we are prone to lose faith. Help us to live with confidence in your presence today and in the hope for life with you forever. Amen.

****Stay at pulpit during ‘O Lord, Hear my Prayer’****

Assurance of Pardon

Pastor K: Hear the good news of the gospel: If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not just ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. In Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

****Stay at pulpit during ‘O Lord, Hear My Prayer’, and ‘Before the Throne’.**

Pastor K: Jesus Christ, mediator and high priest, we thank you for becoming human and for experiencing the joys and sorrows of life, which assures us that you are able to sympathize and rejoice with us. We praise you for the many joys of life:

For the beauty of creation, especially during the change of seasons.

For you work in the world, as you lead your church on in the will of the Father.

For the growth of your kingdom, as we see evidence of your workmanship all around us.

As our mediator, you stand before God, petitioning him on our behalf, so we boldly bring before you our prayers for:

Your creation and its care, (Slight pause)

The nations of the world, (Slight pause)

This community and those in authority, (Slight pause)

The church universal as it works on your behalf, especially those we are being persecuted for your name. (slight pause)

We pray this in your strong name, O Christ, our mediator and High Priest, by the power of the Holy Spirit,

ALL: Amen

****Move to Pulpit at the end of ‘Coronation’****

Pastor K: Hear these words from the letter to the Philippians:

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

****Move to pulpit during last verse of ‘Lo, He come with Clouds descending’****

Brothers and sisters,
the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead
and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand—
this same power is at work in each one of us who believe!
So go from here in confidence and peace,
knowing that God’s presence and power go with you. Amen.

READER B

****Move to pulpit during last verse of ‘Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above’****

Victoria: Please join me in reading this Psalm of Ascension responsively:

Victoria: Clap your hands, all you nations;

ALL: shout to God with cries of joy.

Victoria: For the Lord Most High is awesome,

ALL: the great King over all the earth.

Victoria: He subdued nations under us,
peoples under our feet.

He chose our inheritance for us,
the pride of Jacob, whom he loved.

God has *ascended amid shouts of joy*,

ALL: the Lord amid the sounding of trumpets.

Victoria: Sing praises to God, sing praises;

ALL: sing praises to our King, sing praises.

Victoria: *For God is the King of all the earth;*

ALL: sing to him a psalm of praise.

-Psalm 47

****Move to Pulpit during 2nd verse of ‘Love Divine, All Loves Excelling’****

Victoria: Hear the account from Luke of when Jesus Ascended:

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” **(Pause slightly)**

⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵² Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

Victoria: The word of God for the people of God,

All: Thanks be to God

****Move during last verse of ‘Crown Him with Many Crowns’****

Victoria: A Reading from the book of Revelation.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine

linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.”^[a] He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: *king of kings and lord of lords.*

APPENDIX D: HOUGHTON WESLEYAN CHURCH'S FACILITY USE FORM

HOUGHTON WESLEYAN CHURCH

Application for Use of Church Facilities

Applicant Christian O'lane Phone/E-mail 603-841-0564
 Address 1 Willard Ave. Houghton, NY, 14744
 Desired Date 4-14-16 Time 8pm
 Is this event charging an admission fee? yes ☒ no ("yes" requires Trustee approval)
 Person in charge of clean up Christian O'lane Phone 603-841-0564
 Sound system needed? yes ☒ no Candles? yes ☒ no
 Adult supervisor/advisor Dr. Congdon Phone/E-mail judy.congdon@houghton.d
 Facilities desired-NOTE: The "Fellowship Room" is the upper level of the Community Room; the "Gym" is the lower level of the Community Room (please check all applicable):
☒ Church sanctuary ☐ Gym ☐ Fellowship Room
☐ Fireplace ☐ Kitchen
☐ Nursery (applicant provides two caregivers, one over age 21 and one over age 18)
☐ Other (specify) _____

FEES FOR NON-CHURCH SOCIAL ACTIVITIES:

I. Members and affiliates (regular attendees)

Sanctuary	Donation to church suggested
Fellowship Room	Donation to church suggested
Gym	Donation to church suggested
Kitchen	\$50 (deposit)

***There will be an additional \$50 fee for the technician if sound equipment needed.

***Kitchen use deposit will be returned if all is in good order. Please follow posted signs. Church custodian will assess the kitchen following event and make decision about the return of deposit. Even if event is catered, a deposit is required.

Note: Custodian is responsible for floor clean-up only.

***All requests for sanctuary use must be presented to pastoral staff for prior approval.

II. Non-members and non-affiliates

Sanctuary	\$150
Fellowship Room	\$ 50
Gym	\$ 50
Kitchen	\$100 (\$50 of the \$100 is a deposit)

***There will be an additional \$50 fee for the technician if sound equipment needed.

***Kitchen use deposit will be returned if all is in good order. Please follow posted signs. Church custodian will assess the kitchen following event and make decision about the return of deposit. Even if event is catered, a deposit is required.

Note: Custodian is responsible for floor clean-up only.

***All requests for sanctuary use must be presented to pastoral staff for prior approval.

Please make checks payable to HOUGHTON WESLEYAN CHURCH

I understand the policies governing the use of the building and will take full responsibility for the care of the facilities.

Signed Christian O'lane

Return by scanned document attached to email to:

office@hwchurch.org

or

Return by mail to:

Houghton Wesleyan Church / P.O. Box 127 / Houghton NY 14744