

The Role of THE CANTOR

The leader of the people's song.



Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd



The Role of the Cantor

A statement from the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians.

When Christ's people, the baptized, gather for worship, they receive God's love in Word and sacrament. Their response is innately musical. It carries God's love anew as the people, through the gift of music, pray, praise, proclaim, and recount the story of God's grace in song. This song is inherently vocal, but also takes the form of instrumental sound. The cantor and cantorial assistants are responsible for the entire musical expression: solo instrumentalists, among whom organists have been especially important for Lutherans, small and large instrumental groups, solo singers, large and small choral groups and the entire assembly. Whatever resources are available, the cantor uses them in the manner most appropriate to the talents and needs of the people who are served.

The cantor's work is a worthy service to God and God's people and the world. It is a high and holy calling. The cantor leads the earthly assembly in a foretaste of John's vision in which all creatures give praise and honor and glory and power to the Lamb (Revelation 5:13).

Cantor, Historical Background



Jewish hazzan: Talmudic duties included: summoning to prayer, teaching children to read, serves as custodian and official of order, leading service and musically interpreting the Torah.

Early church: Some early Christian cantors were trained as hazzanim; cantors directed the schola cantori which existed at least as early as the fourth century.

After Charlemagne: Cathedral schools with cantors developed alongside monastic scholae.

Medieval and Renaissance: Musicus thinks and speculates about music; a cantor sings and practices music; a compositor composes.

Luther: Music is God's creation; it is a gift, proclamation, praise, the liturgical song of the people (all believers are priests), and a sign of continuity with the whole church, and therefore music, musicians, and teachers of music are indispensable.

During and after the Reformation: A number of monastic and cathedral schools were taken over by city councils; the cantor, appointed by the ecclesiastical authorities with city council approval, instructed the

schools with his subordinates and ranked next to the rector; cantors generally went to Latin School, then studied philosophy, dialectic, rhetoric, and theory with the university's arts and theological faculties; universities trained cantors and supplied musicians for churches; the German system of education, established and organized by Melancthon, included music; authors and publishers produced theoretical and practical materials; cantors taught music (including the liturgy, its music, and hymns) to children from age 8 on, composed, set high musical standards, directed the Schulkantorie, the Stadtkantorie, and provided music for church and state; for church services this included figural music after the Gospel and polyphonic masses (Ordinary and Propers); sometimes cantors (like Buxtehude) had management responsibilities; they were paid a salary of 50 to 75% of the rector's salary, also received goods instead of money and special monetary gifts; sometimes they published and lectured, and almost always, they gave lessons.

17th and 18th centuries: The academic load of cantor lessened as musical demands, especially composing, increased; they eventually lost the faculty position, but remained second to the rector in church; the cantor was a servant of the people and master of the music of the common people, being concerned for them, and making them active participants; this period saw the flowering of Lutheran liturgical—musical stance in J. S. Bach, but the simultaneous dismantling of liturgy, music and the cantor's role with Pietism and Rationalism.

19 century: In the United States, Lutheran liturgy, its music, and its musicians tended to imitate the general Protestant, often revivalist; context; there was also a recovery of the Lutheran heritage, especially in the Common Service of 1888.

20th century: There was a continued recovery of the heritage, shorn of its more Romantic features; music related more to the people after the 60s with concerns for equality, peace, justice, and language; musicians were seen again as integral and necessary to this, but with culture as the control there was little notion left of their role.



Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Lancaster, PA was founded in 1971 as a merger of Advent and St. Mark Churches. Throughout her history, the congregation has emphasized the centrality of Word and Sacrament in parish life. Music and the arts have historically played important roles in supporting proclamation through Word and

Sacrament and continue to do so today. In 1989, the congregation made the important move to create a full-time music position with a major desire for regular musical opportunities for children. It was decided to give the newly-created position the title “Cantor,” following the lead of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians in an attempt to further the historic Lutheran understanding of that term.

Responsibilities of the Cantor include: directing a choral program for children, youth and adults, serving as organist, directing handbells choirs, overseeing a



Fine Arts Series, relating to the Worship and Fine Arts Committee, assisting in parish education programs, and working with Pastors in liturgy planning, implementation and education.

CANTERE – TO SING

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of the **Good Shepherd**

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