

I have a few hymnals in my office passed down from my grandparents and other pastor libraries that will hopefully make my Lutheran ancestors proud. There's this black hymnal that has faded to more of a brown since its good 'ole days inception in the 19-teen's, then our original red hymnal from the good 'ole days of the 1950's, before our green hymnal came along in the good 'ole days of the 1970's, and finally our current cranberry or red or whatever you want to call it ELW hymnal in our pews today. Now, one of the few songs that has managed to appear in all of them for over the past century has been "The Church's One Foundation," one that was voted as one of our favorites here at Divinity, and we will sing here shortly. The hymn has been sung by congregations and choirs, as well as played in moving arrangements by organists and bell choirs and other instrumentalists ever since its inception nearly 160 years ago, not to mention during one of the most pivotal moments in our Lutheran history on this side of the Atlantic.

It was the spring of 1987, just over a hundred miles south of us on I-71, at a convention center in Columbus. At the time, there were three rather major chunks of us Lutherans: there was the ALC, the LCA, and the AELC, just to make things as confusing as humanly possible for any church-shoppers only a few decades ago. And then, these Lutherans realized something had to be done

for our future, something had to be done to ensure the greatest impact not just on our congregations, but the communities and the world in which we were called to serve from the God of us all. The problem is they were all Lutherans: descendants of rather stubborn and sometimes egotistical Germans and Swedes and Norwegians. To get them to change things up to this scale would be a miracle to rival that of the Resurrection itself. Because they were not just being asked to change up their identifying letters to the ones we know today. These Lutherans would have to dive into the most fascinating reading of not just congregation, but entire denomination constitutions and the most minute details of by-laws and continuing resolutions. Not to mention these Lutherans would have to figure out how to share their hard-earned money with those other Lutherans in creating a budget virtually from scratch. And then, you had to figure out power structures with bishops and individual synods amidst the larger brand new denomination. The 1000 or so Lutherans who gathered in Columbus faced no pressure at all: try to make your ancestors proud in preserving a precious tradition of proclaiming grace by faith as a gift from God, while also trying to reach an ever-changing world with each person having their own idea of when the good 'ole days actually were in their lifetime. Try to work with other stubborn Lutherans, who were notorious of

refusing to change with the times at all, and create something new to further proclaim the Gospel and serve the world that God still so loved.

And, somehow, someway, on a miracle-level to rival that of the Resurrection itself, those 1000 or so Lutherans managed to pull it off. And as any good gathering of Lutherans should, they made sure to include multiple opportunities for worship during those few days they were together, but then came the final worship. All these pastors from the previous three different expressions of the Lutheran church in this country started to process into the convention hall, all bowing down before one cross, as if we were all worshipping the same Jesus Christ all along, but the hymn that was sung to the rafters, as if those 1000 or so Lutherans were caught up in the holy moment that they were indeed all part of, as the song so goes, “one Lord, one faith, one birth” for them all; the hymn was none other than “The Church’s One Foundation.” Perhaps there was no more fitting song in one of the most pivotal moments in our history than the one that insists amidst the toil and tribulation and tumult of church bureaucracy and culture shifts and the good ‘ole days that evidently are different for everyone; the one foundation for us Lutherans and all children of God has been and always will be Jesus Christ,

our Lord: the foundation that will never ever break from beneath and within us.

Perhaps amidst all the differences that were and still are obsessed over, perhaps the music has a way of still inspiring us to proclaim the over-riding Gospel, to empower us in bringing a further glimpse of God's world-saving love to life. Perhaps that is why "The Church's One Foundation" has been a favorite of the good 'ole days in the 19-teen's, the 1950's, the 70's and still today, to remind us of the foundation that has withstood not only the test of time, but has withstood us: in all the toil and tumult and tribulation that we too have played a part in; but God still insists not only is there a place for all of us, but that God insists that we are still called to lead in this world with a love that pulled off the greatest miracle of them all: not just to ensure a heavenly entrance with trumpet blasts, but a Resurrection to set us free to be the church to help bring even more good days to life: to ensure that no night of weeping, as the hymn so goes, will be able to silence the morning of the new song of Jesus Christ, our Lord. So, for the music of our ancestors and the music still to come, thanks be to God, indeed! Amen!