



HYMNAL Highlight

Hail Thee, Festival Day

Note to Worship Planners:

This year, May 28 is the Festival of Pentecost. A wonderful hymn for this day is available only in *Service Builder*: #962 – “Hail Thee, Festival Day.” Those congregations with the digital edition of CW93 can also access this at #179 in our previous hymnal.

Versions of this hymn are also available for Easter (CW21 #463) and Ascension (CW21 #961, *Service Builder* only). Now, granted, this is not an easy hymn. Or, more accurately, the verses are not easy. **But the refrain is quite easy!** So this is an obvious hymn (times three) when it’s best to use a cantor or choir until the hymn becomes somewhat familiar.

Yes, it will take some effort. But, as with a new setting of the Gloria, the effort is worth it. The difference is that one can repeat the new Gloria for several weeks until it becomes comfortable. That won’t work with a hymn designed for festivals. But it certainly would work to sing 463 multiple times during the Easter season.

If not observed on a Thursday, Ascension may displace the Proper for Easter 7. This allows close repetition of the hymn on “Ascension” and Pentecost. So, here’s a long-range idea for next year (after first using the hymn this year): schedule the hymn three times or more during next Easter season, plus Ascension and Pentecost. For all of these, it’s best to maintain the division between choir/cantor and congregation for at least one year. (If you don’t have *Service Builder*, you can use CW21 #463 for Easter and CW93 #179 for Pentecost.)

One more idea for gradual introduction of the entire hymn: for the average person, the even verses are a bit easier to sing than the odd verses. So, once the refrain has become comfortable, don’t give the entire hymn to the congregation.

Rather, add only the even verses for all to sing with a cantor or choir still singing the odd verses.

Does your congregation have instrumentalists who can boost the festival character of this festival hymn? The [Musician's Resource](#) (MR) provides two easy options. Searching NPH on the hymn title also yields some service music settings. MR also provides options for the Hymn of the Day: "Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord." A setting for modern liturgical ensemble was first prepared for the 2017 national worship conference by Jeremy S. Bakken. A recording is available at the Music Downloads link here: worship.welsrc.net/national-worship-conference/.