

Heritage Hymn of the Month

JUNE

“Built on the Rock”

ELH 211

On June 25, 1530, the Lutheran people confessed their faith before the emperor in the words of the Augsburg Confession, under threat of the loss of life, family, property, church buildings, and freedom. They “built on the Rock,” Jesus Christ. The Rock is Christ (1 Cor. 10:4), and the Rock is the confession of faith revealed to us by the Father that Jesus is the Christ (Matthew 16:16-18). This is a hymn written to lift up hearts that are afraid for how God’s church on earth is faring.

The people who founded our synod 100 years ago had to give up churches and schools in order to confess the truth. They dealt with the sinking feeling that “steeple are falling,” they were ready to be “but two His name to tell,” and they prepared to “gather with our King/E’en in the lowliest dwelling.” This hymn applies to such times of trial the comfort in God’s promises, especially in baptism: “He through baptismal grace us owns ... He draws near/ And little children embraces.”

This hymn echoes with the words which God speaks to us and the words of faith which we speak in His presence. First, God speaks to us: “Spirit and life are all His words, His truth doth hallow the temple. ... Beautiful things in them [the churches] are said ... Here sounds the word that doth proclaim Christ ... [Here] He His message is bringing.” Then we speak the faith given by Him: “Praises to Him we there may bring, His wondrous mercy forth-telling ... We our earthly temples rear, that we may herald His praises.”

Secondary Hymn for the Month

“When Sinners See Their Lost Condition”

ELH 111

In this hymn by Magnus B. Landstad, the emphasis is on the Christian home: “God’s kingdom comes with pow’r and glory, To young and old, to man and wife.”

Built on the Rock

1. Built on the Rock the Church doth
Even when steeples are falling; [stand
Crumbled have spires in ev’ry land,
Bells still are chiming and calling,
Calling the young and old to rest,
But above all the soul distressed,
Longing for rest everlasting.

2. Surely in temples made with hands
God, the Most High, is not dwelling,
High above earth His temple stands,
All earthly temples excelling.
Yet He whom heav’ns cannot contain
Chose to abide on earth with men—
Built in our bodies His temple.

3. We are God’s house of living stones,
Buildd for His habitation;
He through baptismal grace us owns
Heirs of His wondrous salvation;
Were we but two His name to tell,
Yet He would deign with us to dwell
With all His grace and His favor.

4. Now we may gather with our King
E’en in the lowliest dwelling;
Praises to Him we there may bring,
His wondrous mercy forthtelling;
Jesus His grace to us accords,
Spirit and life are all His words,
His truth doth hallow the temple.

5. Still we our earthly temples rear
That we may herald His praises;
They are the homes where He draws
And little children embraces; [near
Beautiful things in them are said,
God there with us His cov’nant made,
Making us heirs of His kingdom.

6. Here stands the font before our eyes,
Telling how God did receive us;
Th’altar recalls Christ’s sacrifice
And what His table doth give us;
Here sounds the Word that doth pro-
Christ yesterday, today, the same, [claim
Yea, and for aye our Redeemer.

7. Grant then, O God, where’er men roam,
That, when the church bells are ringing,
Many in Jesus’ faith may come
Where He His message is bringing:
“I know Mine own, Mine own know Me,
Ye, not the world, My face shall see:
My peace I leave with you, Amen.”