

Worship Prep Using a Spreadsheet of Trinity Hymnal Hymns

Written by Tim Black

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For my own quick reference while planning worship services, I combined the table of hymn numbers, titles, authors, composers, tunes, meters, and scripture references publicly available on the OPC website with [this page](#)'s list of which hymns have guitar chords in the Trinity Hymnal into a Google spreadsheet and thought I'd share it with you in case you would find it useful. So here it is: [Trinity Hymnal Hymn Data Spreadsheet](#)

I use that spreadsheet to track whether a hymn is familiar to my congregation, and when we last sang it, and expect other pastors could benefit from using the spreadsheet that way too. I also think the spreadsheet could help people in the future to find guitar chords for the Psalms in the Trinity Psalter, if I could find an appropriate way to add the Psalm numbers into the spreadsheet.

I should point out that my spreadsheet's list of which hymns have guitar chords is LONGER than the list compiled at <http://www.pontificationadnauseam.com/?p=65>, because I have written guitar chords into my hymnal for some hymns which were not originally printed in the Trinity Hymnal with guitar chords, and have updated my spreadsheet to match my hymnal. So if you or someone else wants to use this spreadsheet, I recommend you copy-and-paste it into a new Google spreadsheet of your own, then (sort by the guitar chords column and) delete the marks indicating chords are printed for those hymns which are not listed on <http://www.pontificationadnauseam.com/?p=65>

You might want to know several other ways I use this spreadsheet. Basically, I use the spreadsheet's ability to sort all the data by a particular column to serve the same purpose as the multiple indexes in the back of the Trinity Hymnal.

1. We are using our choir to teach our congregation new songs from the hymnal. So to find musically beautiful hymns for our choir to sing, I sorted by composer, looked for classical composers since their harmonies are (arguably) likely to be more beautiful, then picked out several that are unfamiliar to our congregation.
2. For the same purpose with the choir, to find songs with unfamiliar words but familiar tunes, I sorted by tune name and then looked at the "Familiar" column.
3. When I'm in a hurry to find hymns I can play on the guitar and whose words are appropriate for a particular worship service, I sort by the "Guitar" column to get a short list of hymns with chords.
4. Though I normally use the printed hymnal for this purpose (and though I think maybe this

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spreadsheet's list of scripture references contains some errors), you could sort by scripture reference and see immediately what the titles of the corresponding hymns are--the printed hymnal lists only the hymns' numbers, not their titles, so using the spreadsheet could save time.

5. If you find that a hymn's words would be appropriate for a particular worship service, but the tune is unfamiliar or otherwise undesirable, you can sort by the "Meter" column, find the hymn whose words you like, and find the music for a different tune which might work with those words.

6. If you want to teach about a particular author's life as a background behind a particular hymn, it can be useful to sort by "Author" to easily find which hymns he wrote.

7. As I mentioned, I keep a running record of which hymns are familiar to my congregation, and when we last sang each hymn. This helps me avoid having us sing too many unfamiliar hymns in one service, which can be discouraging to members, and it helps me avoid having us sing the same hymn too frequently. To use the spreadsheet this way, typically I find a hymn in the hymnal which I think would be appropriate for a service, then hit CTRL-F to bring up a search dialog, then I search for the hymn number in question to see how recently we sang it and whether it is familiar.

8. Though normally I have no need to do so, if I want to find a hymn by its title, I can sort or search by title.

9. Of course, after sorting the hymns into a strange order, you can sort by hymn number to put them back in their original order as found in the Trinity Hymnal.

The only way to gain ALL of this functionality is for a person to copy the data into their own spreadsheet file, so they can have their own personal records of whether a hymn is familiar and when it was last sung. If you don't need that record, the other sorting functionality is already provided here <http://opc.org/books/THrev/> (that page is linked to by the Wikipedia page on the Trinity Hymnal).

One last note: My reason for playing the guitar is not primarily to add another instrument, variety, or a popular style to the service, though I'm not necessarily opposed to those things, and am in favor of members using their musical gifts to help accompany congregational singing. Rather, I play the guitar in our service to help fill in for when our (two) pianists are unavailable; because one of them is in her 80's I feel obligated to be able to help with the accompaniment. This means sometimes I provide ALL the accompaniment, or we may sing a capella (which isn't necessarily bad.) But in the process I've discovered the Trinity Hymnal has no chords for several songs which are commonly used in every service--the doxology, Gloria Patri, etc. So I've found and made up chords for those songs. If there is ever a new edition to the Trinity Hymnal, I recommend including guitar chords for songs which are commonly used in our churches' services, not to lower the quality of our services' accompaniment, but to enable some of our services--and perhaps even churches--to have accompaniment. To ameliorate this

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problem for myself and guitarists who cannot read music, I've begun posting the chords that are missing from the Trinity Hymnal, and video demos of how to play each hymn on the guitar, for others to use at [Trinity Hymnal - Guitar chords & demo videos](#) .