

Looking at Liturgy

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7: Books in Worship

Books in Anglican worship: help or hindrance? bane or blessing? I suggest they are both. I can't think of any other faith tradition where people spend so much of their worship time reading books! Anglican services are focused on written texts; indeed, we are a people of the Book – and here I don't mean the Bible.

Our liturgical history stems from the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) in 16th century England. At the time it was a great, indeed revolutionary, innovation, because it replaced the Latin of the Mass and other rites with the vernacular. It took Rome another four centuries and Vatican II to do the same. And by happy coincidence, the first prayer book was drafted by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer at the Renaissance peak of the English language and has become a literary treasure.

However, Anglicans have paid a price for this: a fixation on books in worship. I remember in BCP services how people would follow the book word for word, even though they knew most of it by heart. Some wags said it was to verify that the priest was not deviating one iota from the approved text! The same is happening now with the Book of Alternative Services (BAS).

But worship is intended for the whole person, for *all* the senses: colour, light, sound, touch, taste, movement, gesture, even smell (incense on occasion). Ours is a *visual* age, especially for young people. Yet how often do I see Anglicans ignoring the liturgical drama at the altar while they scrutinize the eucharistic prayer line by line in their books; or tuning out the readers or intercessors while they follow the written texts instead. How often do I hear the presiding celebrant intone “now turn to page such-and-such” (admittedly a helpful gesture for newcomers and visitors). We are so caught up in flipping from one book or paper to another that we often miss the big picture of the liturgy.

The problem is, we *do* require some texts, particularly those of the hymns, psalms, canticles and those prayers which we say (or sing) together. We need the words of the Gloria, Creeds and Confession (although I think we should really learn them!) and of the varying responses in the BAS for the six eucharistic prayers and the Breaking of the Bread. How do we resolve this conundrum? How do we encourage our worshippers to look and listen as well as read?

One solution is to project the necessary texts on overhead screens – but that means people may gaze at the screens instead of their books. Another is to provide some or all of the texts in the

service bulletin, although the latter may simply end up being a substitute for the book. If I had my druthers, apart from hymns/psalms/canticles I'd provide only the essential texts in the bulletin, such as the common prayers and responses – NOT the eucharistic prayers, not the readings (our Cathedral does, but I wish we didn't!), and certainly not the intercessions. Let's *listen* to those who are speaking (or singing), *watch* liturgical actions and movements, and *participate* in the drama of the liturgy.

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Liturgy involves colour, movement, gestures, the spoken word and even incense, as well as written texts: the Solemn Eucharist of Easter Day in 2015 at St. Paul's Cathedral, Regina. From left to right, thurifer Gillian Engen, boat-girl Saleena Jackson, Dean Mike Sinclair, Deacon Michael Jackson, Bishop Robert Hardwick and Sub-Deacon Tannis Patterson.

8: Children in Worship

How should children participate in Sunday worship? Indeed, should they even be there? The answer to the second question seems obvious. Of course children should be part of our services – every baptized Christian is a full member of the Church. Right from the time they are babies they should be welcome, just as Jesus always welcomed the little ones into his presence. There are some parishes where children are shunted off to Sunday School for the duration of the service. Thankfully, these are now the exception.

How may children participate in worship? At St. Paul’s Cathedral, they join the other worshippers until just before the sermon. The preacher may give a brief talk to the children (opinions diverge on this practice: some see it as a natural complement to the homily, others argue that it “cutesy” and aimed mainly at amusing the adults!). Then they go to their Sunday School class, where the teachers relate lessons and crafts to the theme or readings of the day. The children and teachers rejoin the other worshippers for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

One of the best liturgical decisions of the Anglican Church in the past generation was to admit young children to communion. In my experience, they do so reverently and with a sense that they are an integral part of the worshipping community. In the 2010 book, *Worship-Shaped Life: Liturgical Formation and the People of God*, Ruth A. Meyers noted that “infants may be transfixed by light streaming through stained-glass windows, or they may respond to music or babble as they hear others speaking [...] Giving an infant communion is yet another aspect of participation in the liturgical assembly. [...] ...children intuitively recognize the reality of God and are attracted to God. Their responses to God are characterized by joy and peace.”

Older children and adolescents can be encouraged to participate actively in the liturgy. In our Cathedral, we have a long-standing practice of children and young people being servers, in some cases as early as age 6 or 7. As they gain experience and take on more responsibility, they mature and develop in the faith. Our older servers take turns as readers and communion ministers, where they perform their duties admirably. Ruth Meyers says, “I have seen youth as young as 11-12 assist in distributing communion quite ably, with every bit of reverence and sense of presence I would expect of an adult.” I see the same thing in our parish.

Children and young people are not the only ones to benefit from their presence and participation in worship – everyone does. In fact, the assembly is not complete without them. And if I don’t see – or hear – them at a service, I am disappointed. Let me give the last word to Ruth Meyers: “by attending to the experience of children, teens, and young adults, congregations might learn from them something about the meaning of liturgy, and all in the liturgical assembly might come to receive the reign of God like little children.” Amen!

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Dean Mike Sinclair presents Fiona Messner to the congregation of St. Paul's Cathedral following her baptism in September 2015. Fiona is now a full member of the Body of Christ.



Teenagers and young children can be active in worship as servers, as shown in this photo taken at St. Paul's Cathedral on its patronal festival in January 2015.

9: The Liturgical Team

When the late Bishop Duncan Wallace was Dean of Qu'Appelle and Rector of St. Paul's Cathedral, Regina, he enjoyed the liturgy most when he sat in a corner of the chancel and did nothing (at least, that's what we said!). This, of course, was a caricature – but not by much. Duncan saw worship as the work of the community, not of the presider. He preferred to observe his liturgical team in action: deacon, sub-deacon, greeters, readers, communion ministers, intercessors, servers, musicians, often other presiders and preachers. He would readily sit back, while keeping a weather eye that all was in good order.

Not many churches in our diocese or province have the honorary assistant priests and the deacons that St. Paul's Cathedral did then and still does. Smaller parishes consider themselves fortunate if they have an ordained minister, full- or part-time. But the principle of the liturgical team is still valid. The days of the one-man (or woman)-band in worship are, or should be, long gone (I remember a time when the priest did virtually everything except take up the collection!).

Contemporary liturgies assume the active participation of the assembly in prayer and music and reading, in posture and gesture and movement – they are not passive recipients of what the clergy give them. In previous columns, we have emphasized the involvement of lay people as, for example, readers, intercessors, communion ministers, and servers, noting that children and young people have their part to play. The role of the presiding minister has been compared to that of an orchestra conductor: bringing together the various and varied liturgical players and ensuring the harmonious functioning of the whole group in worship.

This image is consonant with I *Corinthians* 12, where Paul refers to the varieties of gifts, services and activities of the individuals in the community, “activated by the same Spirit,” and compares that community to one body with many members. This is of course applicable to the Church as a whole; but it is very much the case for its worship. Pointing out that the Greek word *leitourgia* means “the work of the people,” Jesuit liturgist Keith Pecklers observes that “when such participation is shared by the different members of the congregation, then the Church as the Body of Christ is seen in its full stature.”

Lay members have all kinds of talents to offer, including occasional preaching. Not all of us can have choirs, but individual musicians can be found anywhere. Some people are blessed with good reading voices. Others have a gift for intercessory prayer. Children and young people often need only to be asked and encouraged to help in a variety of ways. It is matter of identifying individual skills, providing guidance and training where required, and then making good use of the opportunity. Liturgy is indeed the work of the people – not the preserve of the clergy or a favoured few!

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The presiding celebrant does not need to be a solo player! At Sunday eucharistic celebrations at St. Paul's Cathedral, the priest is assisted by a deacon and a sub-deacon. Here we see Deacon Michael Jackson, Dean Mike Sinclair and Sub-Deacon Tannis Patterson.



Lay members regularly read the Scriptures and lead intercessions. Jan Besse is shown here at St. Paul's Cathedral.

10: The Deacon's Role

There are not many deacons, Anglican or Roman Catholic, in Saskatchewan. But this is changing in both Churches as the “vocational” or “permanent” diaconate increases in numbers, alongside the “transitional” diaconate of those to be ordained to the priesthood. The liturgical function of the deacon dates back to the early Church. In the following list, the roles in **bold** are the ones which the deacon should *always* fulfil at the Eucharist. The others are recommended, but optional according to local custom. The deacon...

- **Proclaims the Gospel.**
- Often leads the Prayers of the People.
- Gives the invitation to confession.
- At the Peace, invites those present to exchange a sign of peace.
- **Prepares the table at the offertory.**
- Raises the cup at the doxology.
- Raises the cup at the invitation to communion.
- Assists in the administration of communion, usually with the chalice.
- Supervises ablutions.
- **Gives the Dismissal.**

The deacon plays an *assisting* or *collaborative* role in the Eucharist. Benedictine Father Michael Kwatera has written of “the flying duo in the liturgy” and the “complementary ministries of the priest and deacon.” “As deacons minister within the liturgy,” he says, “they are a clear sign that the liturgy does not belong to the presiding priest alone.”

Deacons may also officiate at Morning and Evening Prayer or at Communion with the Reserved Sacrament. They assist the bishop in episcopal liturgies such as ordination and confirmation. Reflecting their involvement in “the world,” they participate in pastoral liturgies: baptisms, marriages and funerals. The liturgies of Holy Week and Easter specify that the deacon reads the Gospel of the Liturgy of the Palms on Palm Sunday; leads the Solemn Intercession on Good Friday; and carries the paschal candle and sings the Exsultet at the Easter Vigil.

The diaconate is historically a ministry of service. Episcopal deacon Ormonde Plater said that “a deacon, as a major performer in the assembly, plays a vital role in the complete action of the assembly by *acting out messages of diaconal ministry*. This performance does not take place in isolation, for the deacon works *as part of a team of actors*.”

As a deacon in Saskatchewan for forty years, during most of which we were few in number, I hope soon to be joined by many more. Then the deacon in the liturgy may become the norm, not the exception!

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The deacon plays an active role in the liturgical team. Here, Deacon Michael Jackson officiates at the Service of Light in Lent 2015 at St. Paul's Cathedral. Dean Mike Sinclair is behind the altar. On the left is Valerie Hall, director of Schola choir. On the right are sub-deacon Madeleine Bowen and server Zachariah Chase.

11: Liturgical Space

A witty observer of parish politics once remarked that Anglicans are obsessed with church furnishings: woe betide the hapless incumbent who unilaterally moves a chair or a bench or an ornament or shifts the position of the altar! The 19th century neo-gothic architectural heritage weighs heavily on us: a narrow chancel crowded with seats (originally meant for monastic choirs) and an altar at its east end, blocked by a communion rail; massive prayer desks, lectern and pulpit; font located near the entrance (hardly a suitable focus for the baptismal rite); row upon row of rigidly-placed (and uncomfortable) pews for the congregation. This pattern is replicated even in small rural churches.

The 20th century liturgical movement and a growing ecumenical consensus on worship, stimulated in part by the Second Vatican Council, have transformed church design. In contemporary liturgical practice, the members of the Christian assembly are seen as active participants in worship rather than passive recipients. Steps have been taken to implement this vision in the “liturgical space” in many newer church buildings. There may be chairs rather than pews; the font is moveable for baptisms; the choir (if there is one) is located in a gallery at the back of the church or in a space to the side, not between the congregation and the altar; the Holy Table is close to the congregation rather than pressed against the east wall and in some cases is partially or entirely surrounded by the assembly.

Is it possible to “retrofit” liturgical space in older church buildings without damaging their heritage character? This certainly presents challenges, but with imagination and determination it can be done. St. Paul’s Cathedral in Regina offers a case study. Over a thirty-year period of evolution, a typical crowded, century-old Anglican chancel was cleared of its prayer desks, choir pews, organ console and fixed eastward altar, leaving flexible furnishings and open space which can be adapted to the needs of each liturgy.

The altar is moveable and normally placed at the west end of the chancel near the nave. The communion rails can readily be removed from the sanctuary. The bishop’s chair is usually located at the east end, behind the altar and facing the assembly – rather like the apse in early Christian churches. Indeed, for major occasions like episcopal installations, we seat a number of people in the “apse.” However, we can easily move the altar (still free-standing) back to the sanctuary and reinstall the communion rails in the traditional arrangement. Current practice is to do so in the Lenten season.

We commend the experience to parishes contemplating renovations to enhance their liturgical space!

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The configuration for the chancel in Epiphany season 2017: the altar is placed close to the assembly. The Bishop's chair behind the altar faces the congregation.



For the Lenten season, the altar and communion rails are reinstalled in the sanctuary.

12: Ecumenical Dimensions

In the previous column, I noted that the 20th century liturgical movement and a growing ecumenical consensus on worship, stimulated in part by the Second Vatican Council, transformed interior church design. In this twelfth and final column of the “Looking at Liturgy” series, I’ll comment on some other ecumenical influences.

Cross-fertilization between different worship traditions is nothing new. The Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* has had a major impact on other churches over the centuries. The 19th century catholic revival in the Anglican Communion borrowed heavily from the Roman Catholic rite. All of us have benefited from the great Lutheran hymns. Today in many Christian traditions we find a similar “shape of the liturgy,” to quote Anglican liturgical scholar Dom Gregory Dix. Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Lutherans, for example, will readily recognize the basic pattern of the Eucharist in each other’s rites.

In the Reformed tradition, too, ecumenical influences are apparent. In his recent book *Countercultural Worship*, Mark McKim, senior pastor at First Baptist Church in Regina, describes a structure of common worship for evangelical Christians which Anglicans can relate to. More unexpectedly, he encourages evangelicals to use the church calendar, with its seasons such as Advent, Lent and Ordinary Time; liturgical colours; and the common lectionary – practices which are second nature to Anglicans but were infrequent in the Reformed churches.

This applies even to liturgical vestments. The cassock-alb and stole are now worn by clergy and ministers of many denominations – Anglican, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist and the United Church. Moving the altar forward and celebrating the Eucharist facing the people, now commonplace for Anglicans, are direct results of the reforms started by Vatican II.

My liturgical “wish-list” for Anglicans would include replacing the lectern and pulpit by a single ambo; Episcopal liturgist Marian Hatchett pointed out that “use of a lectern apart from the pulpit is a 19th century innovation” and “diminishes the symbolism of the unity of God’s Word.” We should follow the direction of the late Roman Catholic Archbishop of Regina, Daniel Bohan, that the altar is a Holy Table for the Eucharist, not a repository for books, papers and various paraphernalia! I’d like us to have periods of silence after the readings, homily and communion.

Ecumenical sharing in worship patterns does not mean uniformity or loss of identity. We can keep the best of our own customs while benefiting from the riches of others. In so doing, we show that we follow the same Lord as we share in the one baptism.

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