

“But we had hoped ...”:

The Road We’ve Traveled; the Road that Lies Ahead

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It is a privilege to be here with you at this annual gathering to explore matters of consequence affecting our churches at the beginning of this new millennium. I feel honored to be invited into the ongoing conversation of the Institute of Liturgical Studies. I’ve had opportunities to cross paths with many in this Lutheran family through associations at the Liturgical Conference, the North American Academy of Liturgy, and Notre Dame, and all have been positive and enriching experiences. My contacts have served to deepen my appreciation of the strong commitment of the Lutheran churches to promoting life-giving worship within congregations. I am inspired by the desire for unity that runs deep in the Lutheran soul.

I come here to the 2002 institute as one whose primary ministry over the past thirty years has focused on the worship life of the church. Serving in local parishes in southern Louisiana and for the past eighteen years at the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy has provided a wealth of real-life experience concerning the renewal about which we’ve studied, read, and written and concerning the services we’ve planned and revised, presided at and participated in. Over the years, I have come to the firm conviction that although as individuals we may be involved in a wide variety of distinct and specific endeavors, one fundamental question concerns us all—academic theologians, research historians, and pastoral ministers. The question is this: How are our diverse efforts enabling believers to express in a vital way worship of God “in spirit and in truth,” worship that is faithful to the tradition handed on to us and responsive to the needs of our own times?

In the Roman Catholic tradition for the past thirty years, we’ve been asking ourselves: How do these new vernacular worship texts “read”? How do these new English hymns “sing”? How do the rites enable “the work of the people”? Or, how do they foster “full, conscious, and active participation”? In other words, are our revised liturgies making our shared faith come alive for twentieth- and twenty-first-century believers? This is of critical importance, because if our efforts as scholars, as teachers, and as pastoral ministers are not drawing people of all generations into the life-giving worship (their baptismal birthright), and if life-giving worship isn’t

conforming them to the Christ “for the life of the world,” then why this expenditure of so much time, energy, and resources? Liturgy does not exist for its own sake, to stand as a magnificent creation inspiring awe and wonder for a gathering of spectators. Liturgy exists so that we who celebrate may, in the doing of the liturgy, in praising God, become church, become the body of Christ in service to the world.

We come together today, on this beautiful April day, with visions of Easter liturgies still dancing in our heads. We pause in this holiest of seasons to reflect on our worship practice, the “inner life” of faith communities. As I understand it, my task is threefold: 1) to assess how the liturgical reforms have progressed; 2) to reflect on what we have learned—that is, what our experience has taught us; and 3) to ask where we need to go as we move into the future.

But because we are meeting in April 2002, and not April 2001, I believe we will be asking and answering the questions differently. No longer can we afford to think about worship independently of the larger human context; we must consider worship in its relationship to all of life, to God’s design for the world, this ever-so-fragile planet that the Creator called “good”! We can no longer afford to remain isolated and insulated from “the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the [people] of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way.” For these are “the joy and hope, the grief and anguish, of the followers of Christ as well.”¹ Living worship—just as scripture—is properly understood within its own historical-social-cultural setting.

In his insightful presentation, Max Johnson distinguishes between two visions of Christian unity: 1) “the *true* and *spiritual* union already given to all Christians by the sufficiency of the gospel and the sacraments; and 2) the ecumenical quest for *visible* unity or communion based on this prior unitive reality.”² I hope to explore one dimension of this second point: the quest for visible unity as *manifested in the liturgical convergence of the churches*.

¹*Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, Preface 1, in *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, new rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992).

² See also J.-M.-R. Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992).

Of the many possible starting points, I choose to begin with the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The years 1962–1965 were revolutionary for Roman Catholics; and soon enough that revolution began to reverberate throughout the Christian family. It began with the invitation of Pope John XXIII to religious leaders around the world: Come to the council as observers, members of our extended family. And so they came, no doubt curious to see for themselves this grandfatherly, peasant-pope whose wide-open arms embraced the whole world. What did he have in mind? It didn't take long for them to feel the new wind was blowing across the Tiber, and it was welcome, indeed.³

Providentially and prophetically, the first topic on the council's agenda was the schema on the sacred liturgy, with inestimable import for the remaining work of the council. However history judges the achievements of Vatican II, assessment will require taking into account the underlying *ecclesiology* that subsequently influenced the total reform of its worship practice. As one *peritus* observed, "the creaking of an open door had been heard in the two-thousand-year-old Church"⁴ The Second Vatican Council, then, became an event that would have enormous repercussions for men and women of faith around the globe.

You recognize, of course, that what seemed in the 1960s to be revolutionary church practices for Catholics were, in fact, directions that had been thought about, discussed, decided upon, and implemented centuries earlier by the Reformers. The vernacular liturgy, emphasis on scripture, active participation—these new directions for Roman Catholic worship emanating from Vatican II were a response to issues raised centuries before, but, unfortunately, were left unanswered. The decisions of Vatican II in 1963 were an acknowledgment of the value of directions taken by other Christian churches beginning in the sixteenth century. So we can say that the ecumenical convergence begins here, and later gets articulated in the new sacramentary, the revised lectionary, service books,

³See James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 33–35.

⁴H. Schmidt, *La Costituzione sulla sacra liturgia: Testo–Genesi–Commento–Documentazione* (Rome, 1966), 140; quoted in Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948–1975*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 32.

and the calendar that soon became available to worshipping congregations from the 1970s on.

Listen to the stark but stunning statement made November 22, 1962 by the secretary general of the council, Archbishop Pericle Felici, after the vote was taken on *Sacrosanctum Concilium, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*: “Holy Father, the Constitution on the Liturgy is acceptable to two thousand one hundred forty-seven Fathers, with four against.” And then, sustained, prolonged applause reverberated in the vast spaces of St. Peter’s Basilica.⁵ With that vote, Catholic bishops from around the world overwhelmingly endorsed the directions set out in the *Constitution*, and the rest, we know, is history. But what did this remarkable ‘turnaround’ mean for Roman Catholics?

Roman Catholics, who for all their lives were accustomed to *attending* Mass or *hearing* Mass, and presbyters who were ordained to *say* Mass, according to the 1570 *Missal of Pius V*, were now invited to “celebrate the Eucharist,” to pray as one body of believers, to be in dialogue, presider and faithful, the latter not to be silent spectators, but to sing and to enter into the ritual action. Laity were encouraged to share ministries at the liturgy: to proclaim the word, to distribute communion, to lead the assembly in song, to serve at the altar. Private devotions at Mass were “out”; hymn-singing was “in.” There was more scripture reading and biblical preaching in direct response to the words of *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*;⁶ we started voicing aloud the needs of the church and the world; new instruments began to nudge the organ aside in some services; folk music substituted for Gregorian chant. More and more English; less and less Latin, until the Latin just about disappeared—and it all seemed so Protestant!

But new experiences at worship were not limited to Roman Catholics. Mainline Protestant churches were also in the process of re-examining their worship practice, influenced not only by Vatican II, but also by the twentieth-century liturgical movement begun in Europe and carried to the United States by the Benedictine monk Virgil Michel. New understandings of the liturgy leading to a review of current practices soon led to decisions about how worship could be improved in local congregations. Indeed, “the

⁵Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, 37.

⁶“The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God’s word,” states *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, II.51, in *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, 17.

Spirit was ‘a-moving, all over, all over this land.’ Among the changes in Protestant congregations: recitation of the simple institution narrative expanded to a longer prayer of thanksgiving, and Sunday services more frequently included communion.⁷

A revised lectionary with a three-year cycle of readings made its appearance. A liturgical calendar with seasons of Lent and Advent was introduced, as well as commemorations of saints. Through the International Consultation on English Texts, new translations of prayer texts held in common were shared among the churches: the Lord’s Prayer, Apostles’ Creed, Nicene Creed, Gloria, Sanctus and eventually, the Benedictus, Nunc Dimittis, Magnificat, Sursum corda, Agnus Dei and Te Deum. In *Roman Catholic Worship* Jim White comments:

Many of the post-Vatican II reforms were frankly borrowed by various Protestant churches. This is especially true of items revolving around the liturgical year and the lectionary. Whereas for nearly four centuries after the death of Luther (1546), Roman Catholic and Protestant worship operated in almost airtight isolation from each other, suddenly the compartments were dismantled. Today, eucharistic celebrations in most Lutheran and Episcopal churches and some Methodist and Presbyterian churches would be hard to distinguish from those in Roman Catholic parishes. Only issues of power and control (clergy) remain distinct.... Liturgy, once a dividing force, has now often become unitive.⁸

In describing the renewal of worship in the Roman Catholic church and in the Protestant churches, White points to a major difference in the processes of “revision” or change. He speaks of Roman *control* as the *modus operandi* governing renewal. New rituals, translations, composition of new texts were and are referred for approval to the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and Sacraments. He observes that such a process effectively discourages and stifles inculturation and has caused unreasonable delay in the ready access of the faithful to prayer in the vernacular.⁹ The problem has become more acute in recent years with serious consequences, not only for the continuing renewal in the Roman

⁷On the *necessity* to celebrate Eucharist, see Massey H. Shepherd, *The Worship of the Church* (Greenwich, CT: Seabury Press, 1952), 3ff.

⁸James F. White, *Roman Catholic Worship: Trent to Today* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 116.

⁹White, *Protestant Worship*, 210.

Catholic Church, but also for ecumenical cooperation and collaboration, especially in translations of scripture and liturgical texts.¹⁰

In general, that's been the journey over the past four decades. We've come this far together, led by the Spirit. Sound scholarship, a growing climate of trust, visionary leaders with the boldness to dream and to trust the *sensus fidelium*, to be sensitive to the Spirit moving in the hearts of believers, the desire in church-goers for "something more"—all this has produced a remarkable convergence. Let me conclude this section with an excerpt from the respected Lutheran liturgist and theologian, Gordon Lathrop. More than 15 years ago, in *Living Worship*, he identified eight principles which summarize this liturgical convergence or consensus:

1. that the Christian gathering for worship involves both clear *words* and gracious *signs*;
2. that *Sunday* is the preeminent Christian feastday;
3. that the gathering is an *assembly* event, the action of a community;
4. that, regardless of its cultural or esthetic character, this gathering follows *an ancient shape*;
5. that, in our times, this assembly may best be marked by a kind of *simplicity*;
6. that ritual *focus* and *flow* belong to this gathering at its best;
7. that the actions of this assembly are intended to speak the meaning of *Jesus Christ* in the midst of the present time; and
8. that the recovery of the integrity of this assembly matters *for the life of the world*.¹¹

Now, specifically, let's take a look at the major service books themselves, those from the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian churches. What evidence do we find here regarding a growing liturgical consensus or convergence?

¹⁰See *Liturgiam Authenticam: Fifth Instruction on Vernacular Translations of the Roman Liturgy* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2001). For a Protestant critique of *Liturgiam Authenticam*, see Horace T. Allen Jr., "Ecumenist calls Rome's Translation Norms Unrealistic, Authoritarian," *National Catholic Reporter*, 29 June 2001, 22-23; online at http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2001b/062901/062901r.htm (accessed 1 November 2005).

¹¹Gordon Lathrop, "What Are We Hoping For?" *Accent on Worship* 3/4 (1985): 1.

Roman Catholic

The earliest books to be published following Vatican II were the Roman service books. First were the Missal of Paul VI, dated 1969 (or 1970 in English) and the lectionary. On the first Sunday of Advent in 1969, Roman Catholics came to their churches and for the first time, heard scripture readings at Mass in their own language—not reread for them after the Latin proclamation. Thrilling, indeed!

Roughly, in the next decade, a “library of prayer books” appeared, the revised rituals for the celebration of all the sacraments. Within this collection, after the renewed rite for celebrating the Eucharist, no single rite has impacted Roman Catholics as has the renewed Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), promulgated in 1973. Its influence on parish life across the country and around the globe cannot be overstated. The revised rite returned to early church practice, situating the initiation of new members within the life of the believing community. In the memorable words of the late German liturgist and theologian, Balthasar Fischer, “Shepherds don’t make sheep; sheep make sheep.”

This radical shift in ecclesiology brought a new depth of self-awareness and ownership to believing communities. They saw themselves as active subjects with responsibility for the growth and nurture of the community’s faith. Eventually, it began to dawn on us Roman Catholics: the RCIA was not only about the incorporation of new members into the community; it was about the revitalization of the community itself!

All of the revised rites were marked by a concern for that “noble simplicity” called for in the *Constitution*; all sought to engage the “full, conscious and active participation” of the faithful through the fullness of symbol, singing in the vernacular, contemporary settings of the psalm. All incorporated readings from scripture *with* preaching. The old scholastic *ex opere operato* gave way to an understanding that I like to describe as “incarnational.” Ritual words and ritual actions are not separate from but bound up with the art of human communication. The renewed rites have great potential for “saying” what they mean in spoken and unspoken language. The sacred was, in fact, clothed in the ordinary. Spirit becomes audible, sensible, visible. The liturgical reform concentrated not only on *what* these sacred words and actions mean, but *how* they mean. And that has made all the difference.

Lutheran

In 1978, the long-awaited *Lutheran Book of Worship* was published. I can do no better than to cite from the fine statement made in the Introduction:

The services of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* embody the tradition of worship which received its characteristic shape during the early centuries of the Church's existence and was reaffirmed during the Reformation era. As such, they are an emblem of continuity with the whole Church and of particular unity with Lutherans throughout the world. At the same time, the services are always adaptable to various circumstances and situations. Freedom and flexibility in worship is a Lutheran inheritance, and there is room for ample variety in ceremony, music and liturgical form.¹²

It was the Inter-Lutheran Worship Commission established in 1966 at a meeting in Chicago that was charged to produce common worship materials for the participating Lutheran church bodies. They eventually prepared ten study booklets (*Contemporary Worship*) for trial use and subsequent review. In the end, theologian Eugene Brand, project director from 1976–78, brought the process to its conclusion.¹³ I quote from Philip Pfatteicher's *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship*:

The work of the Inter-Lutheran Commission of Worship was not an effort by an elitist few but was the result of a clear consensus of the cooperating churches and their representatives, tested and refined by theological discussion and by trial use in representative parishes. Moreover, the passage of a decade gave the churches a longer view of the work and enabled more informed discussions about what would endure and what was temporary and passing.¹⁴

Witnessing to ecumenical values and priorities, Lutherans participated in the Consultation on Common Texts, the Consultation on Ecumenical Hymnody, and the International Consultation on English Texts. Among their great contributions to Christian worship is the rich collection of hymns in the vernacular.

What Lutherans did in *Lutheran Book of Worship* was to place in one volume all that participants needed to participate “fully, consciously and

¹²Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship, *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House; Philadelphia: Board of Publications, Lutheran Church in America, 1978), 8.

¹³Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 8.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 8–9.

actively.” The “official book” for Lutheran worship included not only the rites with propers for the celebrations of the sacraments and daily prayer, but also a musical selection of 569 canticles and hymns, much of the psalter, and lectionary citations for the Sundays and feasts of the year and the liturgical calendar.

Pfatteicher reflects that the study of Lutheran liturgy in this transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century begins with a Roman Catholic bishop of Rome. He goes on to say,

That fact in itself reminds Christians that no longer is any one church or denomination self-sufficient, able to carry on without the support of the rest of Christ’s church, and it reminds Lutherans in particular of their origins (reemphasized in recent times) as a confessional movement within the Catholic Church of the west. The meeting of the millennia is a time of remarkable convergence and cooperation.¹⁵

He continues:

Moreover, the churches of the Reformation, and Lutherans especially, saw in the working and the documents of the council an acceptance of basic principles of the sixteenth-century Reformation: the primacy of grace, the centrality of Scripture, the understanding of the church as the people of God, the use of the vernacular. It was as if the Lutheran Reformation had made its point at long last. Indeed, some Lutherans observed that the place in the modern world where the principles of the Reformers were most clearly at work was the Roman Church. This thrilling discovery challenged deep-seated prejudices and stereotypes and evoked an atmosphere of heady optimism.¹⁶

Episcopal

In the following year, 1979, the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* was introduced to worshipping communities, a revision of their 1928 prayer book.¹⁷ Through its Standing Liturgical Commission (set up in 1928, by the way, as an acknowledgment that the work of liturgical revision is ongoing) the Episcopal Church produced a series of *Prayer Book Studies* on key liturgical topics. These were followed in 1971 by *Services for Trial Use, Authorized Services* in 1973, and in 1976, the *Proposed Book of Common Prayer*. A process for the revision of the 1979 edition more

¹⁵Ibid., 1.

¹⁶Ibid., 1–2.

¹⁷*The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

than twenty years later is now underway, once again acknowledging the need for ongoing work.

Leonel Mitchell writes cogently about the reasons for continuing revision. Though the gospel doesn't change, he says, the world in which we live does: "We change and the world changes, and we approach God with new problems and new questions. The language of theology must be able to hear and respond to these new experiences without changing its age-old witness to the Eternal and Unchanging God."¹⁸ The church's self-understanding also changes; its worship grows and unfolds. Changes in thinking have occurred, for example, due to the developed theologies of baptism and of ministry, and due to the new awareness of the place of women in the church and acknowledgment of the patriarchal bias in so much of church thinking and practice. Change for the better (revision) is possible because of the work of so many others in the field of worship: other Anglican bodies as well as Lutheran and Roman Catholic developments.

Mitchell's observations are instructive. They reflect the wisdom born of efforts to reform service books, efforts that hold in tension the centuries-old Christian tradition of prayer and the urgency of finding language and style for a new generation. Who better than the Anglicans to show the difficulty of both "honoring the Queen's English" and also speaking the language of the people? All of us who at times clumsily stumble our way through the English language bow before the unparalleled prose in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Where else does one find collects that flow so smoothly, phrases that fall easy on the ear? This, I believe, is the greatest gift of *The Book of Common Prayer*; now, we expect that language standard to move us forward, with contemporary accents, into the twenty-first century.

To the Episcopal Church goes the credit for the initiative of preparing a common Thanksgiving Prayer. That prayer appears as Prayer D in *The Book of Common Prayer*, and also in resources for the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Lutheran churches. It is drawn from the Anaphora of Basil and from Eucharistic Prayer IV in the Roman Catholic Sacramentary. What a remarkable achievement!¹⁹

¹⁸Leonel L. Mitchell, *Praying Shapes Believing: A Theological Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 3.

¹⁹Editor's note: This prayer is part of the current Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Methodist worship books: see *The Book of Common Prayer*, 373–374; *Theology and Worship Ministry Unit [Presbyterian]*, *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), Great Thanksgiving F, 147–149; and *The*

Methodist

In 1965 Methodists published the *Book of Worship* and in 1966, its hymnal, just as the post-Vatican II era of reform was getting under way.²⁰ They were not long to enjoy the fruits of their ten-year process. By 1970, the engines were firing up again as they embarked on another revision. Four goals directed the work: 1) using contemporary English; 2) giving classical and ecumenical shape to the rites; 3) expressing contemporary theology; and 4) providing maximum pastoral flexibility.²¹

“The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper” was the first new rite published and was well received. Through a series of *Supplemental Worship Resources* (eventually totaling 117 volumes!), Methodists revised their five basic services: Word, table, baptism, marriage, and funeral. With second and third generation revisions, the new hymnal rolled off the presses in 1989, and three years later, *The United Methodist Book of Worship*.²² Speaking for his own tradition, James White observes that most of the new rites reflect a family resemblance between the Roman Catholic rites and other Protestant churches. Distinctively, however, the book includes a larger number of eucharistic prayers with reference to specific liturgical days. Texts reflect a concern to make worship fully inclusive through language, and the hymnal incorporates a wide ethnic and cultural pluralism.

As with the Lutheran and Episcopal reforms, so also the Methodist. The worship committee incorporated processes for listening to people and studying a variety of resources. The book, indeed, is a “library” for Methodist services, covering the broad spectrum of a congregation’s life

United Methodist Hymnal (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 9–10. Although the anaphora of St. Basil appeared in a resource produced by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (see *The Great Thanksgiving* [New York: Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship, 1975], Trial Prayer VII), this resource did not make it into any LBW publications. For details about the reception of these trial eucharistic prayers, see Gail Ramshaw-Schmidt, “Toward Lutheran Eucharistic Prayers,” in *New Eucharistic Prayers: An Ecumenical Study of Their Development and Structure*, ed. Frank C. Senn (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 74–79.

²⁰*The Book of Worship for Church and Home: With Orders of Worship, Services for the Administration of the Sacraments and Other Aids to Worship according to the Usages of the Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: Methodist Publishing House, 1965); *The Methodist Hymnal: Official Hymnal of the Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: Methodist Publishing House, 1966).

²¹White, *Protestant Worship*, 168.

²²*The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992).

of faith in this world. With the acceptance of the calendar and the lectionary, Methodism reclaimed some of the more ancient practices of the Christian tradition.

Presbyterian

The last of the major prayer book revisions appeared in 1993 with *Book of Common Worship* for the Presbyterian Church.²³ Their fifth service book in this century, it is shaped by the Reformed approach to worship: freedom within order, offering a variety of options. While the shape remains the same, style varies. Presbyterians work first from a *Directory*, theological in nature, which provides norms for the ordering of worship. Then follows a service book with the individual orders and texts for worship.

In earlier Presbyterian practice, a certain opposition to worship books carried over from the Puritan experience. But by the mid-nineteenth century, a movement began to restore a liturgical tradition. In 1941, a committee was established to monitor worship needs and periodically to propose revisions. This resulted in a two-year lectionary, more congregational participation, liturgical year emphasis, and prayers from other churches. *The Worshipbook* of 1972 broke new ground using contemporary English, highlighting the Lord's Day, and including word and sacrament with a modified Roman Lectionary.²⁴

But by 1980 there were new calls for revision. Volumes were prepared for trial use, and by 1989 the *Directory* was completed. (In fact, both the *Directory* and the service book were being worked on simultaneously.) When *Book of Common Worship* was introduced in 1993, it received high praise, not only from within its congregations, but from a wide radius of English-praying Christians, especially those with recent experience of revising prayer manuals. Without going into great detail, I point out just a few elements which, in my judgment, deserve "high marks."

The Preface to the book, providing the theology and history of Christian worship, makes particular reference to the Presbyterian perspective on worship, "reformed and catholic," and specific aspects of the book are explained to enhance its usefulness in worshiping congregations.

²³Theology and Worship Ministry Unit [Presbyterian], *Book of Common Worship*.

²⁴Joint Committee on Worship [Presbyterian], *The Worshipbook: Services and Hymns* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972).

In an age dominated by individualism and secularism, it is particularly important to embrace forms of worship that are firmly rooted in the faith and foster a strong communal sense of being united with God, with the community of faith in every time and place, and with a broken world in need of God's healing touch. In other words, the reform of worship is, above everything else, a concern for the renewal of the church.

... this edition of the *Book of Worship* was prepared with the intention of seeking a liturgical expression that is faithful to the tradition of the church, catholic, truly reformed, rooted in scripture, and related to life.²⁵

The Preface also includes acknowledgment of the ecumenical convergence and a straightforward theology of each of the major services in the language of the people; i.e., a clear presentation to the congregation of what they are celebrating. *Book of Common Worship* presents an inclusive language Psalter and the daily offices in a user-friendly format keyed to the liturgical year. And, of course, what stands out is the superb quality of the prayer texts. In fact, *Book of Common Worship* is a valuable resource for all the Christian churches. It represents the highest achievements of the modern-day reform. The Theology and Ministry Unit of the Presbyterian Church, its many contributors and editors, have made a major contribution to worship renewal. For this, they can be justly proud, and we genuinely grateful.

So how far have we come? In briefly surveying the landscape of the revised service books, we recognize that, indeed, in the last half century, we've come a long, long way. We share a common order of worship, for the most part a common lectionary, and observe the same calendar, with some modification. We pray many of the same prayer texts; we even sing some of the same hymns. We all now worship in the vernacular, and seek to promote full, conscious, and active participation within our congregations. The centrality of baptism has been reaffirmed, and even the extended rites for the Christian initiation process are becoming more common in Christian communions. This moves us to the second question.

What Has This Journey Taught Us?

First of all, despite difficulties, even setbacks that are a part of this present time, the renewal we are experiencing in Christian congregations is unparalleled. We have learned important lessons about the meaning of church and the power of living worship within the living church. Through

²⁵*Book of Common Worship*, 1.

renewed liturgy, believers have come to a renewed ecclesiology. We have, in a very real sense “acted ourselves” into a new way of being church; the process is experiential, not cerebral. There is a deepening consciousness of members of our congregations that they are the people of God, they are body of Christ, they are active “agents” and not passive spectators.

Second, we have returned to the scriptures as the life-giving Word, foundation of our faith. In the Revised Common Lectionary and in the Roman Lectionary, so closely parallel, Christians for the most part are hearing the same scripture passages each week, preachers are using the same texts, and commentaries like *Homily Service* are providing an ecumenical resource on the scriptures.

Third, when we examine the revised service books, we recognize a common order of worship; variations reflect the individual traditions, but there are for the most part the same patterns of worship, the same services. Though I haven’t mentioned it, the landmark Lima document, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*—in 1999, in its 33rd printing!—stands as solid testimony of this ecumenical convergence.²⁶

Fourth, living for the most part by the same calendar means that in the ministry of Christian formation from cradle to grave, pastors and catechists, families and church-schools, those charged with teaching, preaching, and handing on the faith stand on common ground. Observing the yearly round of feasts and seasons, we discover foundational unity; we are not working at cross-purposes but in concert.

Finally and most importantly, we have grown to trust and to respect each other, to put to flight the demons of criticism, suspicion, and harsh judgments that debilitated and paralyzed Christians for so long. When you listen to what ordinary believers are saying, the “pew people,” then you begin to hear the Spirit uttering a common language of understanding and acceptance, and an appreciation of diversity within the greater unity. So that the convergence we see in the liturgy is an outward expression of a perceptible growing-together among the members of our churches.

I’m reminded of the powerful witness of Presbyterian Ruth Patterson, the first woman to be ordained in Ireland. I met her in Belfast, where she directs Reconciliation Ministries, an organization seeking the healing and renewal of those involved in caring and serving a divided and hurt society in Northern Ireland. When Ruth speaks, her words come from a well deep within, a well whose source is the unifying Spirit of God. In touch with

²⁶*Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper 111 (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1982).

unspeakable suffering, she radiates a profound peace and a contagious joy. My own faith experience as a Roman Catholic Christian has been so vastly enriched by persons like her and so many others with whom I've shared experiences and struggles in our shared journey of discipleship.

What Road Lies Ahead?

What I offer is one person's perspective, a reflection on what needs to happen for the continuing renewal of the liturgy in our churches, and in hope, for the reunion of the body of Christ. My growing conviction for some years now is that to its detriment, the renewal of the liturgy has often proceeded in isolation from the other components of the church's life. Liturgy is one thing; religious education and theology are another; Christian witness and social outreach belong in a different category; and prayer and spirituality somehow stand on their own. Without an integrating vision, the life of the church is compartmentalized and suffers.

A case in point: in preparing for this presentation, I contacted friends who participate as theologians in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic and the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogues. The question I asked them was this: Is the emerging liturgical consensus in our communions influencing your conversation? Do systematic theologians judge this growing convergence in the liturgical prayer of Christians an expression of, an impetus toward the unity of our churches? And the disappointing answer from both was "No." The dialogues, they explained, concentrate on doctrine. Theologians are the ones to engage in this exchange; the liturgical discipline is about history, not about doctrine or theology. Sad, isn't it? The anecdote confirms my conviction about the real, but unfortunate separation (and isolation) of liturgy from the rest of the church's life.

I suggest that in the renewal of the liturgy, there are three challenges common to all of us, though these may take a slightly different expression in the different communions. I see these three challenges in relational terms: the relationship of liturgy to our times, the relationship of liturgy to the individual believer, and the relationship of liturgy to the larger community, to human society.

First, we are all affected by the tension between the faith tradition we have received and the claims and demands of contemporary culture. There is on the one hand the two thousand-year-old tradition of Christian worship (reflected in the prayer books we just reviewed), and on the other hand the style, desires, and interests of our twenty-first century society. One way that this tension is manifest is in the growing phenomenon of worship as

entertainment. Think about the success of this enterprise: it's big business, profitable not only in the media, but also in the real-life mega-churches now mushrooming all across the country. We learn regularly of former members of our own congregations, now actively involved in these new ventures, swelling membership to hundreds, even thousands. The upbeat, glitzy style of these contemporary services is magnetic, a strong competitor for the allegiance of the MTV generation.

How can we be faithful to what we have received and at the same time respond to the needs of a new age? How can we speak through our Sunday rituals to the lives of the multigenerational congregations in a language they can understand and resonate with? How can we offer food that nourishes and sustains, in a culture where "fast food" is the food of choice, the quick-fix that for many has become satisfying? How are we inclusive in our outreach to diverse ethnic groups, some from non-Christian backgrounds? How do we honestly discern the movement of the Spirit in the young, the boomers, Generation "X," and in the more seasoned segments of the population? Those are the kinds of questions inseparable from the ongoing renewal of our worship and our church. They are questions that must remain on the front burner as the renewal continues. They are the questions that Lutherans and Episcopalians will be considering as they prepare the next generation of worship books.

Second, the tension between the values of the tradition and the attraction of the contemporary is not unrelated to the next area of concern: the relation of liturgy to the individual spirituality. The history of liturgy and the history of spirituality have proceeded along separate and mostly distinct paths. In the early Christian era, Christian spirituality was liturgical spirituality. Christians were "made, not born," and they were "made" in the experience of celebrating the sacred mysteries of their faith in the midst of a believing community. They came to know who they were, and *whose* they were through the rituals of baptism. They came to know Jesus and his body in the "breaking of the bread." They met Jesus, the Divine Healer in the sacraments of the sick; their faith in the resurrection was deepened as they buried their dead. They learned the Great Commandment from their brothers and sisters in the faith as together they ministered to those in need: "See how these Christians love one another."

But in ensuing centuries, as the liturgy became more and more distanced from the members of the assembly, people of faith had to find other roads to the Holy. Over the course of time, a variety of devotions and spiritualities developed, and "liturgical spirituality" became a relic of an early, unsophisticated period of church history. Liturgy and spirituality

proceeded on different tracks. Visit Borders or Barnes and Noble—any reputable bookstore. Go to the section marked “Inspiration” or “Christianity.” The many shelves of titles and the far-ranging perspectives on the topic are revealing. Men and women in this twenty-first century clearly possess a real thirst for meaning in life, a great desire to make sense of this human adventure, heightened by the events of September 11. One could, I believe, even make the argument that this desire is stronger in these years than in previous generations. At any rate, the signs are all around us: A deep thirst exists for a relationship with God, a relationship that gets beyond the harried, hurried, frantic, frenzied life we live. The desire for meaning within oneself, beyond oneself has not been suffocated by the scientific, technological, consumer-oriented culture of this age. We whose ministry it is to serve the church’s prayer—do we hear the voices of those seeking God? Seeking answers? Seeking meaning? And how is our liturgical ministry relating to their deepest desires?

If, as we believe, this is a fertile period for the “new liturgy,” are we capitalizing on this time? Freed from the encumbrances, even from the bad theology of the past, we are convinced that the liturgy holds great promise. What is our response? One of the greatest failures in the Roman Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council was the failure to “hand on,” to instruct, to catechise. We didn’t use those valuable years immediately following Vatican II to help Catholics “see,” to share with them the vision of a renewed church, and to introduce and invite them to enter into the liturgy as *their* prayer. Now we are reaping the fruits of our failures as reactionary groups and resistance movements, even at high levels, attempt to roll back the renewal. And only God knows what the end result will be.

Our challenge today is to help believers *hear* the Lord who is speaking to them in the scriptures, to meet the Risen One in the breaking of the bread. How does the language of the liturgy speak—the language that is both spoken and unspoken? Why are we not using the liturgy as the subject of our preaching? Isn’t that what the great mystagogues did? Didn’t they draw back the veil so that the faithful could recognize Christ himself in the actions of the sacred liturgy? How will believers—young, not-so young and all in between—find this treasure unless we show them?

Yes, now that the books are done—the rites reshaped, new music prepared—we focus on inner renewal, on interiorizing the liturgy and showing the faithful how the longings of their hearts can be filled when they come together to remember the God who loves us, who has acted on our behalf, and who continues to act in our midst. The time of the liturgy

is the time for breaking open the mysteries, the signs that “reveal” Christ’s giving of life, his healing and feeding us, his presence as food, as drink, as light and refreshment. There is no inherent disconnect between God’s longing for the human heart, expressed in the Christian liturgy, and the human heart’s longing for God. The challenge to us is to prepare the space where the divine and the human may embrace.

The final area needing our attention is the relationship between liturgy and the larger community. This takes us back to the beginnings of the liturgical movement in this country. It is about the relationship between liturgy and justice. Let me begin with a story. This story comes from my experience in Ireland. While on sabbatical, I participated in a renewal program that included a field trip to Belfast. There we met men and women who have ministered to bring reconciliation to a polarized community. One evening, we visited an Evangelical Church in the city, where a young man named Derek held us spellbound for more than an hour speaking about ECONI, the Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland. His own involvement in this coalition for making peace began when the news reported the brutal murder of a young Catholic boy by three of his friends. Shaken to his roots, he asked himself: How is it that these men—my classmates, with whom I shared baptism, Christian education classes, Sunday worship year after year after year—how is it that with all of this religious “formation” they could be moved to such a hateful act as to kill a fellow human being?

Questions like that, the disconnect between religious faith and religious witness led to a radical conversion for Derek. He became involved in ECONI and now shares responsibility for a major program of “re-evangelization.” Building on the unique character of evangelicalism, its foundation on the Bible as God’s eternal, unalterable word, the project publishes an ongoing series of study for church members. They describe their mission like this: “Our primary aim is to address our fellow Evangelicals in order to encourage a continuing process of relating the Bible to our confused situation.”²⁷ In other words, their commitment for peace-making comes out of the heart of their creed, God’s biblical word. They used the strength of their fundamental faith commitment as the motivation, as the “tool” for conversion to a new way of seeing—and being.

²⁷*For God and His Glory Alone: A Contribution Relating Some Biblical Principles to the Situation in Northern Ireland*, 2d. ed. (Belfast: ECONI, 1998), Introducing Pathways, 1.

I have thought often of Derek's compelling witness to us that night, his candor and depth of conviction, and the hard question he asked himself on learning of the failure of his friends—how is it possible that the religious influence and formation of all those years didn't counter this culture of hatred and violence? That same question dogs us Christians as well. The question is focused very sharply for us every time we gather as a community of disciples at the table of the word and the table of the Eucharist. How can we proclaim the Kingdom, God's dream, and not feel bound to engage in Kingdom-building? How can we sing in our liturgies "For his great love is without end" and fail to work so that that love is extended to every member of the human family? How *do* we hear Paul's words "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" while we continue to exclude by reason of race or sex or nationality? How can we ponder the words of Jesus in the scripture: "I am among you as one who *serves*" and still lord it over individuals and communities with an oppressive and autocratic style of leadership?

If there is any grace to come from these current scandals in my own church and from the unspeakable pain of the victims, may it be that facing our own sinfulness, we become a humbler church, not self-righteous, but profoundly aware of our continuing need for God's mercy. And may that self-awareness lead to genuine, far-reaching compassion.

The liturgy demands justice, inside and outside the church—you fill in the blanks according to the challenges within your own bodies. The liturgy cries out for inclusion—isn't that God's way of loving? It requires a preferential option for the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized.

In the final document from Vatican II, the great *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, (and the only one to be initiated on the council floor), we have something of a last word. First, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, a declaration on the church's inner symbolic life, and at the end, *The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, Christian public life in the world, lived in the spirit of the liturgy that embodies God's dream for the human family.

We've spent the last thirty years attending to the words and the deeds of our communal prayer. What if Christian bodies together spent the next thirty years firmly committed to being the servant church in this world, coming together in unity of heart and will, pooling our "time, talent and treasure" to redress the wrongs, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to house the homeless, to lift the chains of oppression, and to hear the cries of the poor? What kind of witness would that give to the world? Is that the direction we need to go?

In the concluding chapter of Archbishop Bugnini's monumental work *The Reform of the Liturgy*, he shares excerpts from a "farewell" letter written to his fellow workers and friends, members of the various commissions, with whom he was associated in the post-conciliar years. He writes:

At a great moment in history, we tried to serve the Church and not to make the Church serve us. We were caught up in a work that reaches to the boundaries of the supernatural. As Pope Paul VI said to the Consilium on October 29, 1964, "It is a magnificent task to offer to the praying Church a voice and, so to speak, an instrument with which to celebrate the praises of God and to offer him the petitions of his children. A task of this kind ... is a work at once human and divine...."

Let us thank the Lord for having called us to this undertaking, which is destined to feed the fountains of grace and gladden the city of God.

There remains the most difficult task; to *see to it that the celebration of the "work of salvation," which we humbly served, fully inspires the life of the faithful and of the Church*, which is so many-sided because of the number of peoples making it up and so varied in its expressions.²⁸

To inspire the life of the faithful and of the church: Our task now as ecumenical partners is nothing more, nothing less than that.

²⁸Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, 934, emphasis added.