

Special Supplement to the *AR&LW Newsletter*  
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**WEEKLY COMMUNION?**

From Four to Twelve Times a Year to at Least Weekly  
Fred R. Anderson

What pastor in the Reformed tradition does not know that John Calvin desperately desired weekly communion, believing such regular participation in the Lord's Supper was essential for living the Christian life? He had argued for it in the *Institutes*, and had experienced the reality first hand while in exile in Strasbourg. It was a bargaining point for Calvin's return from there to Geneva; though once in Geneva, the city fathers reneged on their promise. Instead, they struck a compromise—four times a year.<sup>1</sup> The city fathers were concerned that the move from communion once a year under threat of excommunication—which had become the norm among laity—to weekly observance, would simply be too drastic a change for the people. Even at the heart of the reformation, too much change in worship was seen as one change too many! The Geneva compromise, struck for the sake of the worshippers, became the norm for Geneva, and by succession for all of the churches who trace their theological heritage back to Geneva.<sup>2</sup> There is not space here to rehearse the various movements and events within the reformed family that have taken place since the latter point of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that prepared the Presbyterian Church (USA) to approve a new Directory for Worship in 1989, which states, "The Lord's Supper is to be observed on each Lord's Day, in the regular place of worship, and in a manner suitable to the particular occasion and local congregation. It is appropriate to celebrate the Lord's Supper as often as each Lord's Day. It is to be celebrated regularly and frequently enough to be recognized as integral to the Service for the Lord's Day."<sup>3</sup> It is sufficient to say that without those visionary leaders, groups, movements, General Assembly committees, task forces, and their various reports, directories for worship and books of liturgical resources, the new directory would not have been able to make such a statement.

It was in the midst of serving on the task force to develop that new directory that I made

one of the most important pastoral decisions of my life: I would attempt to lead the Pine Street Presbyterian Church in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to celebrate communion weekly at each of its Lord's Day services. The process would take longer than the writing of the directory itself; the majority of the transitional work took place concurrently within that same time frame of 1983 to 1989.

When, in March of 1992, I became Pastor of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City, the challenge presented itself a second time, but took even longer. As I write this, the Pine Street Church continues to celebrate communion weekly and, during two subsequent mission studies and pastoral transitions, has reaffirmed its commitment to weekly Eucharist. At Madison Avenue, we are in the third year of weekly celebration and few but those most entrenched traditionalists would ever go back to the so called "preaching service." What follows is a description of how I went about leading these two congregations into and through the transition to weekly communion, and what I have learned along the way. I am grateful for this opportunity to tell the story. I am especially grateful to Harold Daniels and Arlo Duba who regularly encouraged me to write it. But the press of pastoral ministry in Harrisburg, moving to a new congregation in New York City, as well as participation in the editorial tasks for the *Book of Common Worship*, and two major building campaigns—one a complete renovation of the sanctuary—kept me from doing it. Then there were new pastoral challenges and the never ending press of Sunday mornings—which come with all too disturbing regularity! Yet their urgings never ceased. When Reford Nash asked that I write something for this newsletter, I decided the time had come, at least to begin. After all, more than twenty years have passed since the process first began. This will be but an overview of what took place and what I learned, an outline of sorts, the deeper discussions and

scholarly apparatuses set aside until such time as the weekly press of pastoral responsibility is no longer upon me. In order to tell the story in this format, we have agreed to break it up in sections. Here, I begin with the encumbrances I encountered that have kept communion at arm's length for so long within the Reformed tradition, in spite of our official sacramental theology. This includes not only the theological problems, but also the practical questions that emerge when one begins to take seriously the possibility of such change.

In subsequent articles I will describe the process used in Harrisburg which led to the change, and what we learned as that process unfolded, as well as comments from some of the elders who were such active participants in that decision now that it has been in place almost twenty years. Then I will address the challenges I encountered in New York and what we learned there. For, as liturgically sophisticated as that congregation was, the process of change there was actually more challenging, slower but, in the end, more comprehensive. Finally, I will talk about what I am continuing to learn about the importance of Word and Sacrament together on the Lord's Day. I offer all of this in the hope that it might give other pastors and elders vision, direction and hope for improving the liturgical lives of their congregations; that they too might experience the richness and blessings that come from being gathered at table to encounter our Risen Lord each Lord's

***Obstacles and Encumbrances  
to Weekly Communion –  
Last Supper or Lord's Supper?***

The single largest obstacle we face is theological: is this meal the Lord's Supper or the Last Supper? In most cases, congregants (and not an insignificant number of pastors!) would be hard pressed to distinguish between the two. For the way in which the Supper has been observed, at least in the American Protestant church, has had more to do with the Last Supper than the Lord's Supper. I first became aware of this problem when leading a continuing education class on issues in liturgical renewal early in the 80's. As I introduced the topic of weekly Eucharist,<sup>4</sup> one of the pastors asked, "Why in the world would any congregation want to observe a funeral on a weekly basis?" He was, of course, revealing not simply his own sacramental theol-

ogy, but that which has dominated most if not all of our congregations into the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In such congregations, there is no sense that communion is other than a re-enactment of the Maundy Thursday evening Upper Room meal prior to Jesus' arrest, passion and crucifixion. There is little if any sense of communion with the Risen Christ, the Emmaus Road encounter, the Easter Night meal with Christ in the Upper Room, or the post-Easter breakfast by the sea with the Risen Lord in Galilee. Everything has been locked into a maudlin remembrance of Christ's passion. Nothing reflects this so much as the hymns that are played during distribution; if, in fact, there are hymns in the communion liturgy!<sup>5</sup> Calvin's "I Greet Thee Who My Sure Redeemer Art," clearly a communion hymn, rarely is heard and doesn't even make it into many of the communion indexes in hymnals, not even *The Presbyterian Hymnal* of 1990! Rather, it is listed as a morning or opening hymn.

All of this reinforces a piety that sees the Supper as an occasion to "remember" what we have done to bring about Jesus' crucifixion. Have not we also abandoned him? How many a worshipper solemnly "munches" the bread thinking of Jesus' body "broken for them?" But then, that is how the Authorized Version rendered the words of institution. It was not until the appearance of the Revised Standard Version that the word "broken" disappeared. Nonetheless, liturgical resources continued to preserve its use.<sup>6</sup>

It was Oscar Cullmann who observed that the gospels include two upper room meals—the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday and the Lord's Supper on Easter night—both take place in an upper room.<sup>7</sup> Yet Protestantism, dominated by a substitutionary atonement theology, has allowed communion to become "Holy," not because it is communion with the Risen Lord, but because it is a sacred time to remember—think about what happened to Jesus when he left that table, and remember that he did it for us. And so, even today in too many places when "do this in remembrance of me" is spoken, what is too often being "remembered" is Jesus' death rather than his risen presence. What is being experienced is his absence rather than his real presence, the service having been reduced to a memory exercise.<sup>8</sup> There is not room here to rehearse the scholarly discussion over the mean-

ing of “remembrance” or whether the upper room meal recorded in the synoptics was a Seder or a Chaboroth—let alone the Eucharistic dimensions so evident in John’s gospel. But, even if those discussions could be used to bring us to some irrefutable conclusions and consensus on the question of weekly communion, it would not change the fact that until people in the pew understand that what is taking place in the Lord’s Supper is an encounter with the Risen Lord to feed, strengthen, comfort, equip, mature and sustain them in their lives of faith and discipleship, there will be nothing but resistance to the notion of communing weekly. Rather than yearn for the sacrament of Christ’s presence, there will be a desire to keep it a ritual that one is rather relieved to have to administer only four times a year, if that. The first task for any pastor wanting to lead a congregation into increased communion frequency is to correct the theological distortions that popular piety has brought to the Supper. In doing so, pastors will discover themselves encountering a host of other encumbrances that have been allowed to accrue to the meal. Our task is to do what we can to enable our people to come to the table expecting to meet the Risen Lord who promises to give himself to all who come in faith expecting to commune with and be fed by and on him.

#### ***Threats to Other Portions of the Service – Preaching***

“All of this emphasis upon worship is threatening to destroy preaching.” So said one of the most well known Presbyterian preachers of the 80’s when he and I were both featured speakers at a well-known Bible Conference in the East. He will remain nameless because he remains a friend. I countered that if preaching were under any kind of threat, it was from preachers themselves who had abandoned textual preaching guided by a lectionary in exchange for expository preaching guided by the preacher’s own whims, more often than not masked behind the rubric of what theological issues the congregation most needs to hear at the moment.<sup>9</sup> He and I continue to have those discussion over lunch from time to time and they are as heated now as they were then. But, the point here is, the person most important for the process of liturgical change within a congregation is also the person responsible for the service of the Word and, therefore, the one who just

may feel the most threatened by making space for the service of the Table. It is true that one cannot preach for twenty to twenty-five minutes and also celebrate communion within the sacrosanct sixty minutes the average American Christian has come to expect to devote to worship on Sundays—an encumbrance all of its own! The sermon will have to be no longer than sixteen to eighteen minutes. Consequently, the move to more regular communion frequently has been resisted by none other than preachers, especially those with national reputations, who, like my nameless friend, see this as just one more thing encroaching on their turf. After all, they already have to deal with “Minutes for Mission” (that are more often than not seven to ten minutes long), “Children’s Sermons” (that, if not delivered by the preacher for the day frequently proclaim something quite different than the sermon that day),<sup>10</sup> “Joys and Concerns” and other programmatic announcements that people believe are more important if “spoken from the pulpit,” not to mention too many hymns or anthems. I will say more about these in due time. Sticking to the Geneva compromise means that on occasions when communion is observed preaching is all too frequently reduced to a brief “meditation”—a compromise of a different sort. Those whose identity is centered in their pulpit skills will be loath to giving up much more than four Sundays to such meditations. Fortunately, contemporary communications theory has taught us what most folks in the pews have known for a long time: the mind can absorb only what the seat can endure. In an age when television programs break story line every seven to ten minutes for commercials, keeping a congregation’s attention for twenty to twenty-five minutes usually means resorting to things that are often more akin to stand-up comedy or the op-ed page of the local newspaper rather than preaching in which the Risen Lord is heard speaking to us, calling, comforting, chiding, commanding, instilling within us the divine presence to transform us more and more into his own image. But it remains true: it is not possible to have a service of Word and Sacrament together in any less than an hour and a half if approached the way both portions of the liturgy had developed by the 1960’s, where the *Book of Common Worship* (1946) was the liturgy most frequently used for the communion service.

**Comment [RBN1]:** Sp of “loathe” is second preference; “loath” is the more common adjectival form.

*The Worshipbook-Services*, 1970, published as a collection of liturgies before those services appeared within the hymnal of the same name, seemed to recognize this. In that Lord's Day service liturgy, the communion prayer is so drastically curtailed that some would not recognize it as a Eucharistic prayer in the classic sense. Fortunately, the supplemental liturgical resources project came along some ten years later to give the church some viable options as models for Eucharistic prayer. Nonetheless, as short-lived as *The Worshipbook* was destined to be, one of its great virtues was the role it played in leading the way to the increase in communion frequency—it presented Word and Sacrament together as the norm for Lord's Day worship.<sup>11</sup> In order to be faithful to the historic norms for Christian worship both the sermon and the communion liturgy need to be shortened. The good news about all of this is that they can. And, holding the two together in their proper liturgical context has a mutual, positive influence on each, offering what the other presents—one an intellectual and the other an affective encounter with the Risen Christ. As I continue to argue with my unnamed friend, regular preaching within the context of sacramental observance has a strong corrective influence on the sermon. It can actually restore the sermon to its authentic role in worship as the *viva vox Christi* in which it is both possible and appropriate for the preacher to conclude: "The Word of the Lord;" with the congregation responding, "Thanks be to God!"<sup>12</sup>

#### ***What Preachers and Musicians Have in Common***

Preachers are not the only leadership source of resistance to regular and frequent communion. Church musicians can also be significant obstacles to this liturgical change. For like preachers, they too may find the time taken for communion encroaching upon their role and chief contributions to the service. Having been a church musician before I was a preacher, I well understood what this might mean, especially in those churches known for their excellent music programs. There is another dynamic at work here beyond protection of turf, and it must be understood and addressed if change is to be successful and long-lasting. As much as many preachers would like to ignore this truth, more often than not, music has been the vehicle through which

worshippers have encountered God's presence affectively and emotionally, if not intellectually.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, musicians will not be the only ones objecting to time constraints upon the musical portions of the service. Worshippers will feel deprived of what is for them often a great source of nurture as well as participation.

#### ***Other Encumbrances to Weekly Communion – Ceremonials***

I use the word "encumbrance" here most intentionally. The word means not only what impedes or hampers but, also "to block up or fill with what is obstructive or superfluous."<sup>14</sup> In fact, much that has stood in the way of weekly communion has little if anything to do with theological or pastoral concerns and is superfluous, and in the end, obstructive. Consider the ceremonials associated with the way communion is still served in most congregations tracing their heritage to Geneva. The communion table is set and draped with a white tablecloth, looking very much like a pall covered casket, and surrounded by chairs where elders uncomfortably sit throughout the first part of the service.<sup>15</sup> During a communion hymn, the cloth is ceremoniously removed, much like the American flag being taken off a coffin before interment. Even in those places where the white cloth is no longer used, the table is still jammed with trays which take on a life of their own as the liturgy unfolds. Until the appearance of the SLR #1, *Service for the Lord's Day*, ministers would begin the Eucharistic prayer, more often than not without any congregation responses, intoning the words of institution twice—once as warrant for the Supper and the second time in the *anamnesis*. Then the minister would distribute the trays of bread to the elders who would stand at holy attention until each elder had a tray in hand, at which time, on appropriate signal from the Clerk, they would move to their serving points and begin distribution in the pews, gathering at the rear of the nave when all had been served. Then they would solemnly march back to the chancel, return the trays of bread to the minister who would ceremoniously place them back on the table as the elders took their seats. Thereupon, the minister would serve each of the elders and then return to the center seat. Once the minister was seated an elder would serve the minister the bread—heaven forbid the minister should serve him or herself. That would be im-

polite!<sup>16</sup> Now that everyone had a piece of bread (or small crumb of matzo) in hand, the pastor would rise, hold the bread up so all could see (who said we don't elevate the host!) and say "Take eat, do this in remembrance of me," the *third* time that had been said! Thereupon, everyone would pop the bread cube into their mouths and bow their heads in prayer while the minister sat down and did likewise. After a suitable time of silence, the entire process began all over again, this time with the trays of wine. Only this time, people drank the cup as it was served so as not to risk spilling it during the long wait! No matter the size of the congregation, the entire process could take at least twenty or, more often, thirty minutes.

### *I Thought We Did Away with Allegory*

Even more serious an encumbrance has to do with the way many of the ceremonials have been cloaked in theological rationale which frankly verge on allegory (*Pace*, Calvin!). I first encountered this just a few weeks into my first church out of seminary. I was told that the custom was for everyone to hold the bread until the minister was served so that we could all eat together as a sign of our communion with one another, and that we drank the cup immediately as a sign of our communion with Jesus—the practical concern for spillage had taken on a theological life of its own.<sup>17</sup>

In Harrisburg, the entire distribution took place in silence unless communion fell on a Sunday when the service was broadcast by a local radio station. On those occasions, during the distribution of elements, my predecessor had remained seated behind the table, reading psalms into a microphone in a muffled voice so as not to disturb those present in their private devotions. It seems those worshipping via the air-waves did not need the time for private devotion but would, in the time of extended silence, become distracted or reach for the radio dial and change programs.

Fourteen years later, with all of that behind me, imagine my shock presiding at my first communion service at Madison Avenue in New York City. Again, it was all done in complete silence—not so much as a note of organ music, hymn or anthem, much less a recited psalm—for again, I was told this was people's "private time" with Jesus. Clearly, Paul's admonition about discerning the body had been as com-

pletely lost on these congregations as it had been in the medieval church.<sup>18</sup> But now, it had been turned into a private devotional exercise, a strange perversion not all that much different from the Roman Catholic practice of adoring the consecrated host. There was one other problem with this silence: it was anything but silent! The roar of the Madison Avenue busses, the honking of taxi cabs and the occasional ambulance or fire truck punctuated whatever quiet might have been in the room.

My point is this: each of these practices has been given a theological meaning of its own having little if nothing to do with the sacrament, while the service, for the most part, has become a memory exercise of private devotion draped in allegorical interpretations of the meal that have little if anything to do with its true meaning.

### *Preparation and Cleanup*

Who will prepare all of this weekly, much less serve it? It is one thing for a group of people to gather quarterly or even monthly on a Saturday or early Sunday morning to prepare or serve communion. In fact these events often become something of a ritual in and of themselves, and often include luncheons or afternoon teas. These have turned into formidable small groups of nurture, not to mention power! They can be counted on to resist preparation on a weekly basis and be a formidable opponent of the idea.<sup>19</sup> As to who will serve if frequency is increased, when both the congregation in Harrisburg and New York moved from quarterly communion to every other month, the sessions each added an additional six elders to their ranks, simply so there would be enough people available to serve. Though at that time the Directory for Worship permitted the Session to invite deacons to serve, few elders were prepared to share this privilege of office.<sup>20</sup> Other interesting customs have accrued to the preparation process. I remember being called the Saturday evening before my first communion service in Harrisburg and being told that I was expected to be available early the next day to cut the bread into cubes, as only the pastor could do that. When I said I was scheduled to be teaching a Sunday school class during that time, I was asked if my wife were available to cut the bread—please don't ask me to explain the logic behind that sacramental theology! But, who, after all, would do the preparation weekly?

And, who would clean up? All those glasses had to be picked up, emptied, washed, put back in their trays and then covered in plastic so they would be clean the next time they were used. Clearly, the way we had been taught to observe the sacrament precluded it being done with any regularity.

***The Major Encumbrance:  
The Problem of Misplaced Piety***

The greatest challenge in this panoply of problems is the depth of piety that has been nurtured in such services. As theologically distorted or superfluous as much within the communion liturgy may have become, worshippers hold passionate commitments to them. Some will even speak of loving the affective dimension of the ceremonials—the vision of white in the sanctuary on Sunday, the smell of grape juice permeating the room, the elders processing in solemn assembly, the medley of “old favorites” played during distribution, and the other affective portions of the “special” rite. Others, I have found, are grateful this only happens four times a year. In the days before prayers of confession were a regular part of the Sunday liturgy, many found this time of penitential worship especially meaningful. But as sessions began to talk about increasing the frequency of communion, there were those who admitted that they were glad it happened only quarterly! Not unlike the pastor who wondered why any congregation would want more than four funeral services a year, these people felt four penitential services a year were quite enough.

The single most uniform complaint I encountered in both congregations, and frankly the largest apprehension among some very faithful people, was a fear that weekly communion would make the sacrament common and rote. Some went so far as to say, “Like saying the Lord’s Prayer.” Most members had been able to make the move to bi-monthly and even monthly communion, and were sure this is what was meant by “regular and frequent” in the Directory for Worship. They simply valued communion too much to be able to envision receiving it weekly. It would cease to be “special.” One very faithful member of a worship committee went so far as to ask, “What would happen if every Sunday were Easter Sunday?” My answer that every Sunday was supposed to be a little Easter did not persuade her. Another objection to

change came from those who viewed quarterly communion as one of the hallmarks that distinguished Protestants from Roman Catholics who clearly had a “magical” view of communion—“We don’t want to become like them!” Weekly communion was too Catholic. For these people, communion was a valued ritual that was merely symbolic.<sup>21</sup> Nothing happened in the meal except what they brought to it emotionally. These feared they would lose the sense of communion’s “special-ness” if it became too common or rote. What made communion special for them was its infrequency.

Finally, there was that retired man in Harrisburg who was disarmingly honest in his objections: communion was more holiness than he was prepared to encounter on a weekly basis. When I suggest to him that what he was calling “holiness” was really intimacy with the Risen Lord and that regular communion was analogous to the frequency of lovemaking between a husband and wife, he quipped, “But Fred, you must realize, that at my age, four times a year is enough!” Flabbergasted, I found myself uncommonly speechless. But as I continued to reflect upon it, I realized that, humor aside, he was speaking for a number of people who were simply uncomfortable with the intimacy and power of the sacrament and was not sure what that would mean for them on a weekly basis. This was especially true for those whose roots had not been in Scotland or who had been lifelong American Presbyterians. They remembered the seasons of preparation that had preceded quarterly communion, the catechism examinations, and the visits by elders, and worried that they could not be adequately prepared for such an encounter on a weekly basis.

***What to Do?***

In all of this, several things were clear. First, there was enormous theological work that needed to be done across the full spectrum of the church. Ironically, people’s misunderstandings of communion had instilled within them a very high view of the sacrament that was surrounded with deep and often unspoken feelings and commitments. These were so high and deep that they feared regular participation would dilute or destroy both. There was concern about what it would do to the sermon. Presbyterians have always valued their pulpits and understood the right preaching of the Word to be their hallmark

in the church. Accustomed to meditations on communion Sundays, they could not imagine substantive preaching taking place in fifteen to seventeen minutes. We didn't have a clue about how to serve communion on a weekly basis, even if the two previous objections were suitably resolved. All of our experience with serving communion was within services that had truncated every other aspect of worship in order to accommodate the elaborate procedures we thought necessary to the "solemn joy" of the occasions. There were other logistical questions involved, too, not simply with preparation and cleanup, but also with how this might affect other programmatic aspects of the church's life. In addition, many were still wrestling with the recent decision to welcome children to the table. This seemed just one more change that would further dilute worship for them. Calvin's norm of Word rightly preached and Sacraments rightly administered on the Lord's Day seemed as far away now as it must have seemed to him in Geneva. Sermons were highly prized and music was deeply loved and the piety associated with the quarterly solemn ceremony was held with deep conviction. Their devotion to all this was keeping them from a weekly experience of the Risen Christ present among them, speaking to them in the reading of scripture and preaching of the sermon, and feeding them with the gift of himself through the elements of bread and wine in order that they could be strengthened in their faith and life. How could we begin to change that? That is the subject matter of the next article.



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<sup>1</sup> One can better understand Calvin's willingness to accept the compromise when we learn that thereupon, he structured the four times per year schedule for individual churches across Geneva in such a way that the sacrament was being served in a particular church somewhere within Geneva on each Lord's Day.

<sup>2</sup> This is but another demonstration of how minimal standards have a way of becoming the norm; something regularly wrestled with by the Task Force to write the new Directory for Worship for the PCUSA.

<sup>3</sup> Directory for Worship, *Book of Order, Part II*, (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (USA)), W-2.4009.

<sup>4</sup> Even the term "Eucharist" seemed a foreign language to most pastors in that group, save the Episcopalians, most of whom were still observing Morning Prayer as their primary Sunday morning service. In this article I will regularly alternate the various names used for the Sacrament, and later talk about how the use of those terms became part of the educational task in the entire process.

<sup>5</sup> Horatius Bonar's *Here, O My Lord, I See You Face to Face* is the one most obvious exception to this. However, sung to Frederick Cook Atkinson's *Morecambe*, the mood is still more of a funeral than of a joyous reunion.

<sup>6</sup> A quick look at recent translations of the words of institution reveals that no where does Jesus say, "This is my body *broken* for you." That translation comes from the theological bias of the Authorized Version. Returning to modern translations, the earliest of the texts is Paul's recitation of the tradition that has been handed on to him: "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." (1 Cor 11:24). Mark, ever the shortest, simply says, "Take, this is my body." (Mk. 14:22). Matthew adds "Take, eat; this is my body." (Matt.26:26). Luke, staying the closest to Paul's tradition adds "*given for you*, do this in remembrance of me." (Lk. 22:19).

<sup>7</sup> I am grateful to Arlo Duba for this reminder, not to mention the untold other things he has taught me about liturgical theology.

<sup>8</sup> As the liturgical renewal movement began to have an impact on Presbyterian churches in the early seventies, it was not unusual to hear conversation among pastors about whether they were Zwinglian or Calvinistic in their eucharistic theology. Thirty years later, we know that a closer look at Zwingli's eucharistic theology, within the context of the conversation in his day, reveals that, alas, Zwingli was not Zwinglian! Further, it is important to remember that among the sacramental churches of the Reformation – whether Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican or Reformed – there has never been any question about Christ being present in the eucharist. The argument has been over *how* Christ is present.

<sup>9</sup> It probably goes without saying that he is also an adamant opponent of the lectionary, (I was aiming at two birds with one stone!).

<sup>10</sup> Children's sermons are a subject all of their own and, too often, preach a message of works righteousness rather than God's mystery, love and grace. When will homiletic departments begin to teach students how to proclaim the gospel among children, much less, how to talk to them? Unfortunately, too many children's sermons are either preached to the adults with the children simply listening in or turn

into a version of Art Linkletter's "Kids Say the Darndest Things," mercilessly exploiting the children for the preacher's sake.

<sup>11</sup> *The Worshipbook*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972). The reasons offered for this hymnal's demise are many. But, chief among them was the fact that it was published just as the women's movement was rightly raising sensitivity to gender specific language. Unfortunate for the *Worshipbook*, its hymnody as well as its liturgical prose, used "man" and masculine pronouns as though they were inclusive. In addition, in an attempt to leave other Tudor language behind, the liturgical prose fell victim to the sterility of the technocratic sixties in which it had been compiled and landed in a parched church thirsty for a return to language which resonated with the transcendent. Clearly, a new hymnal was needed, which resulted in *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990).

<sup>12</sup> As we wrote the section on preaching in the new Directory for Worship (1989), I began using "The Word of the Lord; thanks be to God!" as an ascription at the end of my sermons. As I made that known in various workshops I was teaching, I receive objections and criticism from preachers who suggested I was claiming too much for myself. In response, I directed them to the Second Helvetic Confession's, "The Preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God," (5.004), and then asked what would have to change about the way they were preaching in order for them to be able to use that ascription? If we are uneasy about using that ascription at the end of the sermon, perhaps we need to rethink our sermons and the homiletic theology behind them. I continue to use the ascription to this day, and find it a stringent cross-check for what I write in preparation for preaching. Interestingly enough, the only place I have ever encountered objection from congregants was at Madison Avenue. But, that is another story, which I will tell in the third installment of this article.

<sup>13</sup> Don't most of us learn our initial theology from the hymns we sing?

<sup>14</sup> *The American College Dictionary*, C.L. Barnhart, Ed. In Chief, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1963), 396.

<sup>15</sup> Interestingly enough, this means of "administering" the sacrament traces its roots not to Geneva, where Calvin brought congregations forward to receive around the table, but to Scotland.

<sup>16</sup> It is interesting how much rules of common courtesy have crept into our rites and how, in this case, it emerges from a fundamental misunderstanding of what takes place at the table. It is true that the rules of hospitality in the West dictate that the host or hostess serve themselves only after their guests have been served—the notion governing the order in which the minister is finally served. However, this misses the larger point—none of us are the host!

Christ is the host; we are his guests. The minister is the one serving in his name and therefore is, as Calvin points out, the first to be served.

<sup>17</sup> It was this same concern that took the cup out of the hands of the laity in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century, and, in addition, brought the communing of infants to an end in the Western Church.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:29.

<sup>19</sup> Any Episcopal priest can tell you that messing with the altar guild can be as dangerous as crossing swords with the church organist. One needs a significant strategy here; one that is pro-active rather than reactive.

<sup>20</sup> It was this experience that lay behind the decision to include within the new directory the provision for the Session to be able to invite any active member of the congregation to assist in serving communion (W-3.3616d). If the "regular and frequent" directive was to be followed, it was clear that servers would be required beyond elders and deacons.

<sup>21</sup> I still wince as people say "only a symbol" when talking about things sacramental, by which, of course, they mean "not the real thing but simply something that causes us to think about the real thing." Unfortunately, introducing them to Tillich's sacramental typology of "sign" and "symbol" does not often help resolve things, at least among those who like keeping "the real thing" at arms distance.