

Newsletter

Association for Reformed



& Liturgical Worship

April in the Year of our Lord 2009

Volume V, Issue No. 1

FROM OUR PRESIDING MEMBER

Dear Friend of AR&LW,

In a world filled with both fear and expectation, the Association for Reformed & Liturgical Worship (AR&LW) enters the second year of our focus on the formation of a new generation of worship leaders.

Barack Obama's election as President has raised expectations. It came as no surprise that *Time* in the last issue of 2008 chose the President-elect as Person of the Year and his remarkable story graced its pages.

Yet also there is fear. In the early days of a new year we are again witnessing Palestinians and Israelis killing each other over "holy" land, and the world's fiscal crisis growing worse by the day. Unemployment rates, bankruptcies, and home foreclosures have transported us back to the Great Depression. Suddenly, we have a far clearer feel for the souls and habits of our parents and grandparents, who were always suspicious of easy money and easier credit.

In the issue of *Time* that named Obama Person of the Year, the columnist Nancy Gibbs authored a commentary with the forgettable title: "Listen to the Kids." But its subtitle caught my attention and caused me to read her words: "*In tough times like these, there is a profound comfort in the rituals that remind us what matters.*" Buried in the middle of the article was this poetic observation: "...the sense of tradition seems innate, as if we are born knowing that sacraments tie us together to make us whole."

As the world's very foundations have been shaken, what really matters is this very relevant concern. There is no question that sacraments can bring comfort to those who wonder if we are all alone and eternally broken in the universe. As water bathes our children, we hear the echo of a river voice exclaim, "You are my beloved." And as cup quenches our deepest thirst, and bread our most profound hungers, an upper room voice, or perhaps it is a lonely beach voice, echoes back "In whom I am well pleased."

Our rituals do not give us comfort — only the God who holds us and feeds us can do that. It is my hope and prayer that AR&LW shares in offering this hope and comfort to our fragile world. Far too much worship these days, both among the evangelical right and the liberal left, finds its focus in the needs of those who worship rather than in the eternal presence of the God who speaks along river banks, in upper rooms, and on lonely beaches. AR&LW calls us back to sacramental, ecumenical, incarnational, and Trinitarian worship, which — by holding us securely — renders us eager to join God's mission in the world.

I pray that you will find a place at the AR&LW table as we talk and eat together. Cluster groups across the country have made that table more accessible to many. Our patrons have renewed their

gifts for the coming year, making it possible for seminary and congregational representatives once again to travel to metro-Atlanta next July to reflect upon how persons might be formed to lead congregational worship.

Your voice and heart are needed in this very important conversation. We are eager for you to carve out the time to share with us when we gather at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia on July 29-31.

Until then, may God hold us close in these days of trial.

Gregg A. Mast

AR&LW Presiding Member

President, New Brunswick Theological Seminary

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2009

AR&LW ANNUAL MEETING

*At Columbia Theological Seminary
Decatur, Georgia (metro Atlanta)*

- Pre-Meeting: Monday — Wednesday, July 27—29
Columbia Seminary's "Summer Scholars 2009"
"Renewing Congregational Song," led by
Patrick Evans—Yale Institute of Sacred Music
Yale Divinity School

• **Wednesday – Friday, July 29 – July 31**

Year Two of a Three-Year Engagement

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: JANE VANN, ED.D.

Rowe Professor of Christian Education
Union Theological Seminary—Richmond

Register & Make Your Travel Plans Now!

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE 2010 ANNUAL MEETING OF AR&LW

July 28-30, 2010

Keynote Speaker: John Witvliet, Ph.D.

Director, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship,
Professor of Music and Worship,
Calvin College & Calvin Seminary
Prince Conference Center—Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

*to be held in conjunction with an event sponsored by the
Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.*

CLUSTER GROUPS: A PROGRESS REPORT



Can you believe it? We are three-fourths of the way through the Worship Renewal Grant* year. Readers will recall that AR&LW was awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to support a conversation exploring the formation of worship leaders. The conversation began last July during our annual meeting in Decatur, GA and continued across the country in various cluster groups. Since last fall, cluster groups have convened in Texas (two of them!), Philadelphia, PA; Decatur, GA; and Princeton, NJ. Even now, in February, at least one more cluster group is promising to form in the Northwest. (For detailed information about the project, visit <http://arlw.worshiprenewal.googlepages.com/>)

The good people at the Calvin Institute expect regular reporting on our activity and a mid-grant-year report was submitted in December 2008. A few highlights of that report follow:

What have you accomplished so far?

Kicked off the grant project at the annual meeting of AR&LW at Columbia Theological Seminary, August 2008; several cluster groups have been identified, gathered members and either have or will have met at least once by January 2009; and created a web resource page with downloadable information for cluster group participants.

What have you learned so far?

Directing a nation-wide project isn't as easy as it sounds. Many of the participants have impossible schedules – asking them to coordinate their time with each other is a significant request. As a result, our project may be more ambitious than we envisioned. Since we kicked off the project at the beginning of August, we anticipated that this was time enough for groups to assemble and gather at least once by the first of December. This has turned out not to be the case, so we have revised our goals and are encouraging groups to meet three times by the end of the project year – this seems to be a more permissive policy.

What would you have done differently?

We would have tried to harness the energy from our annual meeting more efficiently. The high level of enthusiasm for this project that was generated at the outset began to fade as time and distance grew. Also, we were a bit surprised by the energy and weren't prepared adequately for it. Processes that describe the "how, what, where, when, why" have been developed reactively rather than proactively. We're learning.

List the items you need yet to accomplish.

Encourage more groups to assemble and meet; disburse grant money; develop more varied and frequent communication between the director and groups' conveners, between groups themselves, and from these to the AR&LW writer and membership.

There remains still more to do. Cluster groups are continuing to meet and will do so through the balance of the grant year. Representatives of each group will be invited to share what they have learned during our next annual meeting this summer. The conversation will continue beyond then, too, as AR&LW enters into Year 2 of our Three Year Plan.

**This program is made possible through a Worship Renewal Grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Grand Rapids, Michigan, with funds provided by Lilly Endowment, Inc.*

Kerry Westerwick

Director, Worship Renewal Grant

kkwesterwick@gmail.com



FROM THE SECRETARY/TREASURER

The membership of AR&LW, as of February, is sixty, including our most recent new members – Jacob Gordon, director of music and organist at Poke Run Presbyterian Church in Apollo, PA; the Rev. Donald Stake, a retired Presbyterian minister living in Schenectady, NY; the Rev. Britton Johnston, Temporary Supply at Occidental Presbyterian Church, Los Angeles, CA; and the Rev. Charles Webster, Interim Pastor at First Presbyterian Church, New Canaan, CT.



Barbara Hedges-Goettl has been appointed as our membership secretary to recruit new members and handle membership acknowledgments, although I will continue to maintain the official membership list, which needs to remain in my files for corporate organizational purposes.

The Steering Committee has acted to change our "membership year" from the calendar year to the period between annual meetings. For that reason, our current membership period will run for nineteen months, from January 1, 2008 until the annual meeting at Columbia Seminary in Decatur, GA, on July 29-31, 2009. This has a number of implications:

- We already have received a few **membership renewals for 2009** (thank you), and these will be credited to the new membership year that will begin on August 1 and conclude with the 2010 annual meeting at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- **Dues received from new members during the first seven months of 2009** will be credited to the membership period that concludes with the 2009 meeting. During this transitional "year", two **issues of *Liturgy* magazine, a benefit of membership**, will be published: the February 2008 issue, containing the report of our 2007 annual meeting along with articles on worship and disability, and the February 2009 issue, containing the report of our 2008 annual meeting along with articles, edited by AR&LW, on sacramental life in Reformed congregations. Funds for the second issue of *Liturgy* within the extended membership year will be replaced by monies granted to AR&LW by the Meyers Foundation.

I have continued to pursue IRS recognition of our tax-exempt status, which required amending our Articles of Incorporation. In December forty-four of our (then) fifty-eight members responded to a mailing, which proposed the addition of the required language to Article 4 ("Purpose"). Of these all but one (an oversight, I think) voted to waive our meeting notice requirements, while all voted to amend. On February 4, the proposal having been approved by a majority of our members and expecting no further responses, I delivered the amendment to the office of the Secretary of State in Carson City, Nevada, and will be sending for consideration a stamped copy, along with other requested materials, to the IRS office in Sacramento prior to the March 4 deadline. That will mark about a year since first submitting the required form. I hope to be able to report a successful outcome to you before our 2009 annual meeting.

On December 2, 2008, I filed our annual report of officers and directors with the Nevada Secretary of State.

We have received with regret the resignation of Kerry Westerwick from the Steering Committee, though she will continue to administer the Calvin Grant and the cluster group ac-

tivity. We thank Kerry for her service.

The AR&LW checking account balance on February 7, 2009 was \$30,724.68, of which

- \$7,760.26 is the remaining balance from the Calvin Institute contract that funds the writer for our three-year “Forming Worship Leaders” focus and ecumenical guests at our annual meeting;
- \$15,000 is from the Calvin Institute grant that funds our cluster group program until May, 2009;
- \$4,566.01 remains from the original Myers Foundation grant of \$10,000 to provide reimbursement (up to \$500 each) for seminary representatives to our annual meeting; and
- \$500 is from a grant for use as a scholarship for younger seminarians to attend the annual meeting.



Thus, the amount of unrestricted funds available for the Association’s operating expenses is currently \$2,898.21.

All expenses of the 2008 annual meeting have been paid, as well as the cost of the February 2008 issue of *Liturgy* mailed to our 2008 members. The only known current accrued expense (still unbilled) is for a Steering Committee conference call in January.

Thank you for your financial support of the Association for Reformed & Liturgical Worship.

As always, please remember that personal “testimony” is the best “evangelism.” I encourage all of our members to make the work of AR&LW known to others who have a desire to see a renewal of worship in the Church, adding not only to our numbers, but also to our voice and depth of wisdom, and providing a greater network of support for clergy and laity who are engaged in this important effort in their own congregations and at seminary and judicatory levels.

*Bruce L. Taylor, Secretary/Treasurer
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A WORD FROM THE WEB....

Current additions to the website (www.arlw.org) include the brochure and registration forms for the 2009 Annual meeting and three articles about the Formula of Agreement by Harold Daniels, Gabriel Fackre, and Aurelia Takacs Fule. These most recently posted articles join a rich collection on Baptism, the Catechumenate, the Lord’s Supper, the Liturgical Year, Daily Prayer, and Worship and Justice. AR&LW benefits from the work of Harold Daniels who continues to process articles for posting for the enrichment of the membership and archiving.



EASTER VIGIL AT THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH

The author was Coordinator of Worship at The Riverside Church, New York City, 1995-2003. Contributing to this article is Emily M. D. Scott, who currently serves as Director of Worship at Riverside.



The Riverside Church was founded in 1931 to be an intentionally interdenominational, inter-racial and international congregation. Affiliated today with the American Baptist Fellowship and the United Church of Christ, its members are drawn together into community by Riverside’s liturgical traditions of Gospel challenge in preaching and excellence in all forms of music, and its mission commitments to social justice. To join Riverside, one affirms simply that “Jesus is Lord”—then finds one’s place in the ecumenical assembly.

The liturgical backgrounds of “Riversiders” run the gamut of traditions from Orthodox to Pentecostal. Worship planning at Riverside often requires simultaneous translation across liturgical traditions, confessional lines and cultural expectations. At its best, worship planning at Riverside engages members in a process that creates services that both grow out of Riverside’s unique congregational character and feel indigenous to it.

In the mid 1990s a small group of Riverside lay members introduced an Easter Vigil. They employed the service found in the United Church of Christ *Book of Worship* (New York: UCC Office of Church Life and Leadership, 1986), an adaptation of the traditional Vigil. They planned the service with the assistance of Riverside clergy, its musicians, and coordinator of worship, and held it in Christ Chapel, adjacent to the nave.

They followed the rubrics faithfully—lighting the Easter fire to begin, reading the appointed texts, remembering their baptism, and concluding with holy communion. For all their hard and faithful work, however, the planners found that this first Vigil did not spark much interest in the congregation. Convinced that the Vigil tradition had much to offer Riverside, the planners reconvened the next year to develop an Easter Vigil that would be indigenous to Riverside.

Their first step was to work with the Children and Family Ministry and New Members’ Ministry, inviting candidates who anticipated baptism later in the spring to consider being baptized at the Vigil. Their hope was to fulfill this service’s intention to be the moment for Christian initiation. Two candidates came forward: A family with a baby and an adult who desired immersion. The ministers involved worked with the candidates and their families to provide instruction and preparation for this sacrament in the context of the Easter drama.

The planners next considered the symbol of sacred space at Riverside. In the mid 1990s, Riverside’s formal liturgical life was centered almost exclusively in its nave. There are, however, many other spaces where the congregation lives out its life: gathering areas, meeting rooms, as well as smaller chapels. Typically on Sunday a Riverside member hurries between many different spaces, engaging in fellowship and mission opportunities as well as church business. What if the Vigil asked people to slow down and move intentionally from space to space, encountering the sacred that surrounds them in each and every space?

They then looked at two symbols which Riverside holds

dear: the labyrinth and the Christ Candle. The architecture of Riverside Church was inspired by the medieval cathedral of Chartres, which has embedded in its nave a large labyrinth. Riverside's builders installed a small replica of this labyrinth in the chancel floor. In the last few years Riversiders have created a portable canvas labyrinth which is opened regularly for walking meditation, laid out in different locations.

The symbol of the Christ candle is used at two beloved services: the Candlelight Carol service in Advent, and the Tenebrae service on Maundy Thursday. In this latter service, at the conclusion of the passion narrative (Mt. 26:14-27:66 and parallels), the Christ candle is removed from the nave in silence and darkness. The flame is transferred to a devotional light in a small chapel and kept "entombed" throughout Good Friday.

The planners worked with clergy to select excerpts from traditional scripture readings of God's faithfulness and to adapt traditional prayers. They worked with the musicians to choose a wide selection of music that could be sung *a cappella* and in procession.

At dusk on the evening of the second Easter Vigil at Riverside, three spaces are set and waiting in darkness.

The congregation, much larger this time, gathers in a fellowship hall around the labyrinth, which has been open all afternoon for walking. The pastor, accompanied by the candidates for baptism, emerges with the already lit Christ candle, and walks slowly and silently toward the center of the labyrinth as the stories of God are told. Reaching the center of the labyrinth, the pastor chants a version of the Exsultet, and the candidates for baptism with their families begin to spread the light of Christ through the congregation, by lighting devotional candles. An Easter story of the empty tomb (Matt 28:1-10 and parallels), is read and the congregation "sent" on to the next station of the Vigil, carrying the Christ candle.

Led by a quartet of singers, they process into Christ Chapel, lighting candles standing along the way. As the lights of the chapel come up, other stories of God are told, and Jesus' teaching in John's Gospel about being born again is proclaimed (John 3:1-10). The water of pool and font are blessed and the candidates are baptized. As the congregation waits for the candidate who has been immersed to return, they remember their own baptism with sprinkled water and joyful song.

The newly baptized Christians, carrying the Christ candle, lead the congregation into the next space, lighting candles all along the way, to the narthex outside the great nave, where they find a table set for holy communion. The story of meeting the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread is read (Luke 24:28-35), and a simple service of communion begins. The evening ends with an *a cappella* version of "Christ is Alive!" The congregation have been pilgrims together from tomb to font to table; they have experienced their beloved story in a new way, and participated in its re-telling.

Over the years, the Easter Vigil at Riverside has evolved to express Riverside's own unique congregational spirituality more and more. The spontaneity experienced in a new mid-week service of prayer and testimony has found its way into the Vigil. The simple communion service is evolving into a festive *agape* meal, mirroring Riverside's ministries of justice and hospitality.

For many Riversiders, Holy Week would be incomplete without participation in this relatively new service, which offers a meaningful Easter Vigil by drawing on the traditions of the wider church and Riverside's own beloved symbols.

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A HYMNAL FOR TWO DENOMINATIONS

One More Joint Venture

It is a daunting task, it is a pastoral task, it is a task fraught with potential hurt and unimaginable blessings: to produce a new hymnal for the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRC). The time is now! Why?



- The RCA and CRC are sister denominations with the same roots.
- In recent years both synods (national governing bodies) have encouraged cooperative efforts at all levels.
- And the publishing house for the CRC has also become the resource provider for the RCA.

It seemed then to make most sense for us to go forward *together* on developing a hymnal, so that in yet one more way the denominations might work off the same page—or, should I say, worship off the same page.

The Editorial Committee

After appropriate research had been done into the viability of a hymnal and some initial groundwork laid, a group of ten men and women were called to be a part of the editorial committee. Five of them were from the RCA, the other five represent the CRC. The ten were chosen to reflect the diversity of the two denominations in age, geography, gender, ethnicity, and worship practice, while still providing the various types of expertise needed for such a task. They are:

Reformed Church in America

Carol Bechtel, C.J. Kingdom Grier, Martin Tel, Tim TenClay, Paul Thé

Christian Reformed Church

Claudia Cortes, Brenda Kuyper, Joel Navarro, Gordon Pols, Annetta Vanderlugt.

Three more representatives meet with the committee:

Calvin Institute of Christian Worship—John Witvliet;

Faith Alive Christian Resources—Len VanderZee, publisher, and Joyce Borger, worship and music editor, serving also as the editor of the hymnal.

This editorial committee has now met three times, with the next meeting to occur in June. Despite our many differences, we quickly found ourselves unified in our love for the Lord, our passion for the church, and a desire to support the worship of our congregations through song. Members were quick to listen, slow to judge, and, when necessary, ready to argue amicably—with many opportunities along the way for worshiping together and reminding each other that, without the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit, our work would be in vain.

At our first meeting we articulated the purpose and goal of the hymnal:

The aim of the hymnal is to provide a resource for congregational song in the CRC and RCA which can give a common voice to our worship in the twenty-first century. This collection seeks to be broad enough to include music ranging from the traditional hymn repertoire to contemporary worship music and from Western music to the music of the global church. Our desire is also that this collection be deep enough to give voice to our praises and laments, be both sung prayer and proclamation, and play a significant role in the faith formation of Reformed Christians old and young alike.

The editorial committee also discussed and developed a draft document outlining musical and textual criteria for evaluating songs.

The Advisory Committee

In addition to the Editorial Committee, we quickly established an 80 person Advisory Committee to provide us with additional feedback and support. The Advisory Committee gathered in Grand Rapids last June for an introductory meeting. Our goals for that meeting were

- for people from various geographical areas and diverse worship practices to sit at the same table so that they too could have a picture of the breadth of our two denominations, and
- for this larger group to catch the vision and spirit, that when being involved with hymnals, it is not about what song “I” want to sing but what song will help all of us give voice to our faith, prayer, laments, and praises.

Currently this group is working on providing us with a list of their congregations’ “heart songs” – songs that their particular congregations have memorized and turn to again and again. We are particularly interested in learning what psalms churches are singing. While we cannot afford for the large group to continue to meet together, we will be holding meetings regionally and keep everyone connected electronically.

Tools and Tasks

Our website, www.crcna.org/pages/a/hymnal, is one of the key ways for us to communicate to and solicit feedback from the Advisory Council, congregations and other interested persons. On this site you will find FAQs about the hymnal and its process, submission guidelines for those interested in submitting texts and/or music, and song surveys.

The first of the song surveys is based on songs found in the collection, *Contemporary Songs for Worship*, a songbook recently released from Faith Alive Christian Resources. This songbook is the first of four that are planned to serve both as stand-alone products and as test samplers for the larger hymnal. Two other collections are in process, *Global Songs for Worship* and *Hymns for Worship*, with a third, *Mosaic Songs for Worship*, still in the initial planning stage.

One of the questions that arises repeatedly is what if anything we will do for those churches that use projection media. We continue to investigate this question and are trying to tackle what copyright process and permissions would be needed to provide some sort of subscription-based downloadable resource. Currently we are in discussion with the people behind www.hymnary.org. We are encouraged by the work they are doing as well as the potential of getting buy-in from a variety of groups that will only serve to strengthen the site even further.

Much work remains to be done. At our meeting held this winter, Editorial Committee members took on the additional task of leading or being a part of focus groups, each of which will spend time wrestling with one particular area of the hymnal. Down the road we also will need to solicit feedback from a variety of additional groups within and outside our particular denominations. But a good foundation has been laid.

An Invitation

You are invited to participate in this hymnal process by checking the website periodically for updates, providing feedback from a broader ecumenical perspective, and praying for the work of this and all other hymnal committees. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

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NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

Contemporary Worship in a Mainline Church
(The second in a three part series)

The Shape of the Series

In the first part of this series I described the context in which First Presbyterian Church of Harrison, Arkansas, lives and practices its faith as well as the potential this context has for deep sacramental connections beyond the walls of its sanctuary. In this second part of the series I will set the stage for the way in which we developed the liturgical practice of our “contemporary” service (hereafter, “early service”), which led to subsequent changes in the “traditional” service (hereafter, “11:00 AM service”). In the third part of this series I will describe liturgical/sacramental practices we assumed and the effect this had on our worshipping community. Some of the changes, like weekly communion, resulted from practices that began in the early service. Other changes, such as the pattern of Lord’s Day worship, were common to both services. As we addressed our current situation and began deepening our liturgical practices, we were afforded many educational opportunities as well as surprising teachable moments, in formal as well as informal settings.

Hopes and Concerns

The early service was begun amidst pressures common to many mainline churches. These concerns included, but were not limited to, declining membership and the perception that the congregation was “getting old.” Some church members thought that if they began a service, called it contemporary, used different music, and gathered in an informal atmosphere, the church could emulate the success of others employing these tactics. They wanted to attract new members, especially younger people, and use this service as an “outreach.” Not surprisingly, they called it their “contemporary service” and decided it would begin at 8:30 AM.

The decision to begin another service, especially a “contemporary” service, was not without dissent. Many members were concerned that it would create “another congregation.” Some began to articulate a deep sense of loss, as if half the congregation were moving to another town. There was fear that most of the children of the church would never be seen again in the 11:00 AM service. And, as expected in such ecclesial endeavors, a loudly expressed objection was heard to the style of music, not to mention the volume of the band.

The Results—Surprising and Expected

While many younger families did begin to attend the early service, the demographics of this gathering surprised the church. Some family members, as well as longtime friends, began to come to worship at different services for the first time in living memory! For some the style of the music and informal atmosphere were not nearly as important as the time at which the service was held! There were people who came to this early service in order to have more free time during the day on Sunday. However, to the surprise of many, there were some people, outside the expected demographic range (much older than expected), who did come because of the informal atmosphere and the music.

The fear of creating a “second congregation” was not totally unfounded. While the early service had modest success in attracting new members, it did however divide the existing congregation into people who gathered at different times for worship. There were no regularly scheduled fellowship events at which people who attended different services could get together.

In the beginning there was an intentional effort to have people come together for coffee in the time between the early service and Sunday school. However, since the early service met in the

fellowship hall, this created an obstacle to healthy interaction during what used to be “coffee time.” Several people who came early for fellowship felt as if they had to wait “outside” the fellowship hall until the service ended. Some did not wait outside, but came into the kitchen area at the back of the fellowship hall during the early service. Many in the early service perceived them as intentional distracters or protesters. These “distracters” would talk loudly, bang cups, and disrupt the service, especially during the closing prayer. To keep the peace, the interim pastor moved the coffee gathering to the parlor, which only served to further divide the fellowship of the congregation. Emotions became raw and the worship schedule was seen as divisive.

There was an attempt to have regular “combined services” on every fifth Sunday. However, in order to honor the integrity of each service, they decided to rotate between the early morning and 11:00 AM worship times. Habit trumped fellowship: When the fifth Sunday combined service met at the early time many of the 11:00 AM folk did not show up and vice versa. This arrangement, which made the division in the congregation all the more obvious, went on for about five years before I arrived.

Something Has To Be Done!

The nominating committee that called me described the situation well and desired the new pastor to “do something about this.” There were several different opinions about what was needed. Some hoped that we would cancel the early service. Those who shared this opinion were divided as to what a single service would look like. Would we just keep the 11:00 AM service as is, or integrate the morning band and technology? There were many others who thought that we should incorporate other fellowship opportunities to unite the congregation. And there were some who were entrenched in their respective services and offered no compromise.

In addition to the divisions mentioned above, the two—quite different—services at First Presbyterian fostered theological differences as well. Since the rule of prayer in these liturgies was vastly different, the rule of belief they constructed had the potential to be equally as diverse. We needed to bridge the gap.

- One way to bridge the gap in this most visible manifestation of the Church (its liturgy) was to begin to explore the basic pattern of the liturgical life handed down to us by our ancestors. At its core this basic pattern for Lord’s Day worship, common to the majority of Christians around the world, is the same: Gathering, The Word, Eucharist, and Sending.
- We also initiated daily prayer each morning, faithfully attended by members who frequented both services, a pattern that continues to this day.
- On Tuesday nights we began studying the liturgy and were intentional about having people from both services attend, especially leadership. Our liturgical studies started with Justin Martyr’s “The First Apology,” and took us to the Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship*, set next to our current situation. The hope was to begin uniting the congregation as the larger Body of Christ is united—in its basic patterns of worship and witness.

The Way Forward

As we observed our current situation, we discovered something very interesting: Both services were centered around music and preaching. In the early service, it was the band and preaching, though music and the sermon were not connected—unless by divine intervention. Similarly, the 11:00 AM service was centered around the choir and preaching. However, while hymns in the 11:00 AM service were connected to the liturgical season and text, many in the congregation did not sing. Both services did not ask much of those who gathered, save the musicians and preacher.

Basic changes began with these two primary elements: Music and preaching.

- At the 11:00 AM service we encouraged those who did not sing to “pray the hymn” by at least reading from the hymnal as others sang.
- In the early service we became intentional about learning the liturgical year, studying the text for the day, and selecting appropriate music.
- Another huge step for the early service was a movement to regard the band as a group that supported congregational singing instead of a performing ensemble.
- Our next step would be to shape both liturgies by the ecumenical fourfold pattern. This would mean being intentional about liturgical texts and sacramental practice as well as hymnody and service music.

With daily prayer, intentional reflection, and education, we have now begun to draw bold lines from our liturgy and sacramental practice to everyday life. Just this year we began regular Wednesday night meals that bring the congregation together each week. However, the success and willingness of the congregation to begin these fellowship meals are, I believe, deeply connected to the sacramental practices begun in both the early and 11:00 AM liturgies.

Shared liturgical practice has helped to heal the divisions in the church in remarkable ways. In my opinion, the healing and spiritual vitality, which emerged from the worship life of the congregation, would have proved impossible through the programmatic efforts we employ. In the final installment of this series I will explore how we moved to a deeply sacramental liturgy, which is common to both services, though enacted in different ways, and the effect this has had on our worshipping community.

(to be continued)

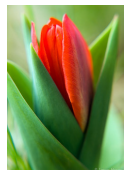
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BEGINNING ANEW: LITURGICAL RENEWAL IN RETROSPECT



On October 1, 2008 I passed the thirty year milestone of ordination as a minister of Word and Sacrament. What I did not foresee was how far three decades would take me from my theological origins. Over the years, I have made it a habit to record the books I read in each given year. This record has given me a window through which to view the concerns that occupied my attention at the time. It is revealing to see how often authors such as Lyle Schaller (a church consultant who applies sociological analysis to church strategy) showed up during the first several years of my ministry. Equally revealing is how these writers fell off my lists when my interest shifted to worship and its origins.

Beginning with J. G. Davies, *The Architectural Setting of Baptism*, the books that intrigued me were those that explored why we do what we do in the Sunday liturgy. Delving into liturgical history and theology opened a new world of understanding that sparked my imagination. Over time, I learned how to ask questions about the way meaning is brought to ritual expression in the saying and doing of a people gathered in common praise to God.

Learning how to frame questions led, in turn, to sustained and habitual reflection on liturgical practice. And this reflection moved my pen to write. So it became a common discipline to keep a journal each year on all matters pertaining to the liturgical life of the churches I served. These scribbles included the pastoral choices I made for liturgies, the theological rationale, and the committee discussions leading to them. By keeping this journal I learned to pay more careful attention to liturgy as ritual enactment. This meant a deepening awareness of such matters as the use of space, movement, gesture, placement of and use of symbols, lines of sight, sound, temperature, lighting and how these related to the assembly's "full, active and conscious" participation.

Always, I included people's reactions. I would write what I saw in their faces, comments they made to me or to others, and especially critical remarks of concern. Frequently, I discovered that I needed to provide more teaching, show more patience, and make adjustments to pastoral dynamics that had become more clearly apparent. But something else happened that I regard as essential to my work in liturgical renewal. I learned to treat these reactions as opportunities for deeper conversation about liturgical practice rather than simply noting what people "liked" or "disliked." Determined not to take negative reaction personally helped me discipline my defensive impulses. I became able to see that resistance to change can be a pastoral opportunity for healing and wholeness.

Opposition to worship renewal is often the expression of emotion which is still smoldering from something that happened (or did not happen) years, even decades, ago. When change is introduced in the liturgy, people experience feelings, which they sometimes act out, but which can appear irrational to observers. This is why responding with more explanation about the "why" of something can be unsuccessful.

Like most pastors, I found myself puzzled by emotions that seemed disproportionate to the change. It became important to know "why" people felt the way they did. So I began asking people, in confidential conversations that I initiated, if they could identify the source of their discomfort to some new change. Adopting this line of questioning has usually opened up a lost connection between a person's immediate feeling of "dislike" and something in their past that first stirred the emotion.

Helping people recover the relationship between present dislike and past originating event demystifies emotions and begins to provide some critical distance. Gaining critical distance is essential if people are going to be able to open up to renewal; for a new assessment of the link between a past event and present unrest can now begin. I ask, "Might this thing, that happened years ago, be baggage not worth carrying any longer?"

A question like this offers a possibility many people have never thought available to them—freedom. I am always amazed with the sense of liberation people gain as they acquire a new understanding of themselves. Freed to reconsider old attitudes, people usually decide that the past is not something they want to carry the rest of their lives. I say to them, "If we believe that every service of worship is an invitation to greater wholeness, is it possible that the thing you have been resisting could be an opportunity for the healing of old brokenness?" Cast in the mode of invitation, I have never had anyone become angry with me. Instead, such conversation has helped them rethink our worship in light of God's ongoing work of salvation and wholeness, two words used interchangeably in the gospels.

I believe that this pastorally sensitive mode of conversation makes possible a discussion of the liturgy from its sacramental

center. The paschal meaning of baptism and eucharist reveals that we are always being called to die to self and be raised with Christ to newness of life. The movement of Christian life from sin and brokenness to freedom and wholeness now becomes a truth we learn to look for in everything we do in the liturgy.

I have found that our most enticing conversations about worship are the ones where we imagine Christ among us bringing transformation, rather than those heavy with justifications for new liturgical practice. Do not misunderstand; explanation remains important to catechesis, but people need help to imagine how new liturgical experience can be received as Divine gift. If we are able to practice a hospitality that accepts discomfort and affirms questioning, I believe people will be willing to explore new ritual experience with us. Such exploration must include the reflection on experience we call "mystagogy;" for in such reflection the seeds of personal transformation are brought first to recognition and, then, to speech.

William Sloane Coffin Jr. wrote in his little gem of a book, *Letters to a Young Doubter* (WJKP, 2005, 27) "Never have an experience and miss the meaning." I believe we must work to make this normative in the life of the church. If we do so, people will be formed over time in an attitude of "expectation" when they come to the liturgy. They will come with an openness for encountering the always risky but life-changing presence of the God-who-is-with-us. For such an attitude as this, we who are pastors can hardly ask for more.

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ORDER OF CORPUS CHRISTI

Origin, Principles, and Life



The Order of Corpus Christi grew out of the shared visions and concerns of a group of United Church of Christ clergy who were part of a study group focusing on biblical, theological and liturgical topics and issues. Formed in 1987, it was founded on the principles of Mercersburg Theology and as such is Christocentric, celebrating the incarnation of God and the glorification of humankind in the person of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Its stated purpose is to seek the unity and renewal of the Church of Jesus Christ. Currently, its members come from both the Lutheran and Reformed communities of the Church.

Through the ongoing life of the Order, members are expected to uphold the following commitments:

- To adhere to the Apostolic faith as expressed by the ecumenical creeds: The Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian.
- To celebrate Word and Sacrament as normative for Sunday worship and festival days of the Church.
- To witness to a Church that is moving ecumenically toward the center – the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
- To uphold and preserve the tradition that is evangelical, catholic, reformed, and apostolic.

Daily prayer and common discipline also inform the life of the Order. At the heart of Corpus Christi we encounter the living Christ in Word and Sacrament in the assembly of the Church that nurtures us in the life of faith and in mission and witness. The Order calls its brothers and sisters to that life of common prayer and contemplation that produces specific action in the life of the Church and the world.

The sisters and brothers of Corpus Christi endeavor to live out this discipline within their Reformed and Lutheran communities, as a part of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. In doing so, it prays that it may be “leaven within the loaf.” The Order of Corpus Christi is, therefore, evangelical catholic in its witness and mission, affirming the truths of the Reformation along with those of the pre-Reformation church.

Liturgical Commitments and Contributions

One of the primary concerns of Corpus Christi is authentic liturgy, which is founded on the understanding that the worship of God is the primary and central mission and witness of the Church. It affirms that Holy Eucharist is central to the worship of the church, that the body and blood of our Lord are essential for the life, mission, and witness of the church, which radiate out of the act of worship, and as a foretaste of God’s kingdom which is to come. This liturgy has its foundation in the historic traditions of the church in which regular weekly celebrations of Word and Sacrament are the normative actions for the church at worship.

Much of the worship of the church today is self-centered and self-indulgent, in the form of popular entertainment to make people feel good about themselves. The Order is sometimes characterized as seeking to preserve a dead history manifested in dead liturgy, which has no relevance to the present day and is a shield against engagement with the harsh realities of the world. We understand that criticism, but refuse to engage in the culture wars that produce such thinking. Rather the Order responds by providing worship which is founded on the historical traditions of the church.

To that end, Corpus Christi is in the process of creating liturgical materials that will reflect the evangelical catholic tradition. These materials are part of an ongoing project, *Ad Usus Ordo Corpus Christi*. This project was begun two years ago as a revision of the various rites and rituals of the Order, but has grown into a much larger and more comprehensive project.

The goal of this project is to create liturgies of Word and Sacrament for each Sunday of the church year, based on the three-year cycle of the Revised Common Lectionary. There will also be liturgies for festivals days and the feast days of major saints. Ultimately, liturgies will be created for the Sacrament of Baptism and rites related to baptism, Christian Marriage, and the Celebration of the Resurrection for funerals.

The resources for this project are being adapted from the various Reformed and Lutheran traditions, from which the members of the Order of Corpus Christi come, along with original material written by several liturgical scholars of the Order. At present, some materials already written are being “tested” by members of the Order. The plan is to make these liturgies and rites and rituals available at a nominal cost through the Order’s website beginning with the three-year cycle of the lectionary that starts in 2011.

The Order is confident that, despite the liturgical uncertainty and theological confusion that is part of the life of the present day church, the Holy Spirit continues to move in our midst, calling us to witness to the Church as leaven within the loaf. Our task, therefore, is that of all Christians: to prayerfully and faithfully seek what the Spirit is saying to the churches in this troubled and turbulent time. God grant that we may do so.

The Right Rev. Richard H. Price
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SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

For Younger Seminarians

Through the generosity of a member of AR&LW, a single scholarship is being offered again in 2009 for the registration costs of both the meeting of the Association and the Summer Scholars program at Columbia Theological Seminary. (See boxes on p. 1 for dates.) The scholarship does not include room and board or transportation.

The applicant should have completed his or her first year of seminary by July 1, 2009, and be 32 years of age or younger. Preference will be given to members of one of the historic Reformed denominations who intend to enter parish ministry upon graduation. The scholarship will be awarded only to an applicant who expects to be present for the entire week and participate fully in both gatherings.

To apply please send

- a letter providing name, address, telephone number and e-mail contact, seminary and anticipated graduation date
- a letter from the seminary registrar stating that the applicant is currently enrolled and in good standing, and
- a supporting essay not to exceed 1000 words that 1) sets forth the applicant’s interest in the theology and practice of the liturgy and 2) its importance to the Church.

Application materials should be postmarked by May 15, 2009 and mailed to:

Bruce L. Taylor, AR&LW Secretary
P.O. Box 51176
Sparks, NV 89436

For information regarding AR&LW, please consult the website at www.arlw.org. For information regarding the Summer Scholars Program, please consult the Columbia Theological Seminary website at

www.ctsnet.edu/news/monthly_calendar/index.asp and look for the July 27 date.

PLEASE SEE SPECIAL ATTACHMENTS

In the e-version of this Newsletter, you will find them as separate electronic attachments e-mailed along with the Newsletter.

- ✓ Reflections on the Spring Issue of *Liturgy* by L. Edward Phillips and Ron Rienstra
- ✓ Paul Westermeyer—Guidance for the New Presbyterian Hymnal Committee
- ✓ 2009 Annual Meeting Brochure

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