



Praxis News of Worship

Supporting and resourcing the liturgical life of the Church of England

What is Praxis?

Praxis was formed in 1990, sponsored by the Liturgical Commission, the Group for the Renewal of Worship (GROW) and the Alcuin Club. It exists to provide and support liturgical education in the Church of England.

Affiliation

The sponsoring organisations do not fund *Praxis* financially. The work that *Praxis* does is supported mainly by affiliation. If you are not an affiliate, why not consider becoming one? Just get in touch with the office—details on the back page.

Website

Have you visited the *Praxis* website? View us online at

www.praxisworship.org.uk

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What is the Christmas story?

While studying at St John's College, Nottingham, Rachel Phillips began to explore the theology people learned from what they sang at Christmas – and found churchgoers didn't seem to be thinking much about the content of carols. Now ordained, she describes here the current direction of her research.

A 2007 survey by public theology think tank *Theos* found – perhaps unsurprisingly – that Christian churchgoers knew the Christmas story better than atheists and non-churchgoers. *Theos* interviewed 1015 adults by phone, asking four questions about the Christmas Story; their findings are reported online (<http://campaigndirector.moodia.com/Client/Theos/Files/Christmas.pdf>).

The *Theos* survey gives an indication of the knowledge of *all* British adults, whether or not they ever attend church. But what about people who actually attend a *carol service* at Christmas? Would it be fair to assume that those in the congregation who are Christians and regular churchgoers know the Christmas story better than those who attend only at Christmas?

A questionnaire was offered to members of the congregation at York Minster's Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve 2007. There were two substantive questions:

- ◆ Please tell the Christmas story in about 100 words, or list its main features.
- ◆ Please say what you think the Christmas story means, in about 20 words.

Of a congregation of about 3,500, 475 people completed the questionnaire, with accounts of the Christmas story ranging from brief lists to full-blown stories with illustrations and cartoons.

The vast majority told the story as recounted by Luke and Matthew, often adding 'traditional' features, such as donkeys and sheep, which do not appear in the Gospels but feature prominently in nativity plays – though nobody mentioned Father Christmas, reindeer, Christmas trees or snow. A small minority gave, as their telling of 'the Christmas story', the *meaning* of the story, or the whole story of salvation; one person simply wrote out the beginning of John chapter 1.

Question 1 allowed complete freedom as to which features of the Christmas story to mention. Stories were 'scored' according to which features they actually mentioned: for example, 73% mentioned

Bethlehem (interestingly, the same percentage as answered Bethlehem in the *Theos* survey, in response to a direct question asking where Jesus was born), 60% referred to a census and 25% used the exact phrase 'no room at the inn'; fewer than half mentioned angels, whereas 74% mentioned shepherds, and a whopping 82% mentioned wise men, kings or magi. Of features not mentioned in the Gospels, the most popular was that Jesus was born in a stable (65%).

But what do all these versions of the Christmas story indicate about their authors? Most strikingly, that there was no correlation between 'accuracy' and Christian affiliation or churchgoing regularity; nor were there any significant patterns between men and women or between different age groups. Each feature of the story (e.g. Bethlehem, stable) was mentioned by men, women, people of different ages, Christians, non-Christians, regular churchgoers and Christmas-only attenders in proportion to those groups amongst all the respondents. This applied both to features mentioned by many people and to those mentioned by only a few: popular and less popular features were mentioned by people across the board, not just by particular groups. There were just two significant departures from this overall pattern: the Annunciation was mentioned disproportionately by women, and Mary's virginity was mentioned disproportionately by regular churchgoing Christians, and slightly more by men than by women.

A tentative conclusion might be that it would be quite wrong to assume that Christians and regular churchgoers have the best knowledge or understanding of the Christmas story. The Christmas story is a major influence in the spirituality of our culture; by exploring what people understand 'the Christmas story' to be, we may get a glimpse into their understanding of God – something on which to build as people gather to sing carols at Christmas time.

The Reverend Rachel Phillips is Assistant Curate at St Lawrence, Eastcote, in the diocese of London, undertaking research into the Christmas story: christmasresearch@tiscali.co.uk

Conference Reports



Evangelical Worship Consultation - *worshipping the God of the Gospel*

On Monday 15 September 2008, the Liturgical Commission hosted the Evangelical Worship Consultation at Ridley Hall, Cambridge. The event brought together worship leaders, songwriters, Fresh Expressions reps, evangelical Anglican clergy, diocesan music advisers, RSCM reps, lecturers, Church House Staff and members of the Liturgical Commission in order to discuss the shape and content of Evangelical Worship.

This exciting project (part of the *Transforming Worship* initiative) provided the opportunity to affirm the many positive aspects of contemporary worship and to explore areas in need of improvement. The day was led and facilitated by Tim Lomax, who introduced the work of the Liturgical Commission and three key issues:

- ◆ The need for a developing vision for evangelical worship – what can and ought it become into the future?
- ◆ The role that songs play – the need for them to provide breadth (exploring more themes), depth (providing rich and trustworthy biblical content), and height (lifting us beyond ourselves to fill our vision with the attributes and actions of God).
- ◆ The overall shape of our worship – exploring healthy frameworks for our

freedom – looking again at our liturgical heritage and looking for ways of creatively using traditional ideas within contemporary contexts.

Worship during the day was led by Graham Kendrick ('Psalm-surfing', improvised singing of the Psalms) and by Pete James, Becca Staniforth and Helen Bent (St Thomas' Crookes / Diocese of Sheffield).

There were two keynote addresses:

- ◆ 'Worshipping the God of the Gospel: A dream for evangelical worship' given by the Bishop of Coventry – which provided the theme for the event.
- ◆ 'Contemporary song-writing: resounding truth?' given by the Revd Prof Jeremy Begbie.

There was a presentation on 'Framework within a Freedom', exploring the shape of worship, healthy frameworks for freedom in worship, and the creative formats provided in *Common Worship* that facilitate journeys of transformation for the church (given by myself).

Peter Moger (National Worship Development Officer) chaired a final session in which strands from the consultation were gathered with suggestions about what might follow from this event.

A number of creative suggestions were made as to how things might be taken forward. These can effectively be grouped under the following three headings:

Action by songwriters

There is a genuine desire to set key liturgical texts in an authentic musical style. The possibility of the Commission meeting with the Songwriters' Consultation (about 70, though not all are Anglicans) was also mooted.

Training needs

Theological training needed for songwriters and (musician) worship leaders in local churches.

Future meetings / communications

There was a suggestion that another meeting be called for 2010, to focus on creative thinking around evangelical worship - the possibility of involving a range of artists (poets, storytellers, actors, film makers, photographers and musicians), as well as representatives from the 'emerging church' movement.

Tim Lomax

Assistant Curate in the parish of Penn Fields, Wolverhampton, and a member of the Liturgical Commission

The texts of Chris Cocksworth's presentation can be found on the Fulcrum website (www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk).

'Deep calls to deep'

London School of Theology's recent Worship Symposium (11-13 September) was an event of significance, acknowledging at its outset an intention to raise timely questions rather than supply easy answers.

The three-day conference began with a survey of the current contemporary worship scene by four well-known contributors. Graham Kendrick's opening remarks upon what has become an event-driven praise and worship 'industry' set the tone for a stimulating panel discussion. Mark Earey noted that a consumerist belief in the right to seek out worship that fulfils only a taste for 'experience' is to avoid the pain of being shaped by it; a pain that Joel Edwards suggested is actually an inevitable and essential part of the regularly worshipping community's journey together. Jonny Baker urged delegates to 'grow worship out of the

soil of your own culture' and thus appeal to a self-publishing society that increasingly values participation.

John Bell's plenary session at the start of day two picked up on many similar themes as he declared that the style wars were over and that the new issue was content. The music had to be for everybody, not just celebrity performers.

A wide range of workshops followed which addressed numerous pressing issues and LST is to be commended for airing many current concerns.

Jonathan Robinson
Director of Music, All Saints, Lindfield

There are mp3 files of a good number of the talks on the Symposium website (www.lst.ac.uk/symposium/).

Book offer for *Praxis* members



Using Common Worship: Times and Seasons (2): Lent to Embertide by David Kennedy with Jeremy Haselock has been released by Church House Publishing.

The book features practical tips, illuminating case studies, background information for each part of the season and clear explanations for all the liturgical material in *Times and Seasons*. In the introduction, Roger Greenacre explores the meaning of Passover and its implications for Christian understandings of Lent and Easter.

There is an exclusive offer for *Praxis* members: this book costs £10.99 but *Praxis* members can buy it for £9.99 plus free P&P until 31/12/08. To claim this offer, please order through Norwich Books and Music on 01603 612914, quoting 'PRAXISUCW'.

Liturgical launchings for mission partnerships

All over the diocese of Leicester a variety of 'mission partnerships' are being liturgically launched. Like many other dioceses, Leicester has been re-thinking its pastoral future, and in 2005 agreed proposals which challenged all benefices to identify partners with whom they would commit to working together for the purposes of mission. The partners didn't have to be Anglican, and could include schools or colleges, etc. With agreement reached at 'archdeaconry mission committee' level, every partnership was encouraged to launch itself with an event, which should include some prayers.

That challenge didn't require a full liturgical experience, but did involve an archdeacon, representatives from the partnership churches and some words of commissioning. The suggested core text for the commissioning was based on the Commission dialogue within the *Common Worship* Initiation Services:

Do you as the people of God in this place renew your commitment to him and promise to proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?

Will you faithfully work together in this new Mission Partnership, wholeheartedly sharing gifts, resources and ministries in the service of God's mission?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all people, loving your neighbour as yourself?

Will you acknowledge Christ's authority over human society, by prayer for the world and its leaders, by defending the weak, and by seeking peace and justice?

I commission you, in the name of Christ, to be shaped by God as his people, and to join in shaping the communities of this world according to his purposes. May the love and power of God, Father, Son and Spirit, go before you, be revealed within you, and flow out from you into the world he created and calls back to himself, now and always.

The launch events reflected the make-up and personalities of the different partnerships but all focussed on mission. Some were deliberately informal. Representatives from one partnership gathered in a Noodle Bar. After the meal, there was an address and the simple liturgy above, which had been printed on placemats specially made for the occasion.

Another partnership's event was hosted by their 'fresh expressions' partner at one of

the new city schools. They began with stalls and presentations from the churches and workshops for sharing thoughts and hopes on opportunities for working together in mission, and concluded with some short informal worship - popular hymns/songs and the commissioning dialogue.

A third informal launching was done within the context of the launch of an evangelism course. The inauguration reflected the partnership's priorities of 'equipping for ministry rather than doing the mission together.' They did session one of the course together and ended the evening with some words and closing prayers from the Archdeacon.

Other partnership launches included a longer liturgical act of worship. Some took place in a parish church, but two were held at school and college venues. One partnership had booked a joint residential conference at Swanwick, and launched their mission partnership there.

The language of symbols was widely embraced. Three partnerships were launched at Pentecost. Two of these included the presentation of symbols of ministry (inspired by the celebration of ministry within Leicester diocese's Induction Service for new ministers). In one, readings focussing on God's people being sent out for God's purposes led into the presentation of symbols of ministry: Bible, water, bread and wine, oil and a prayer book. In the other, symbols that celebrated their Christian witness (in education, the care of the disadvantaged, the world of work) were also incorporated. The commissioning of the congregations followed, with the anointing of the convenor and the ministry team and the dismissal to mission. A third Pentecost partnership launch had quite a different feel. There was music from an Apostolic gospel choir (I'll fly away; His eye is on the sparrow; O happy day) and from Anglican choristers (Ave Maria; Howard Goodall's Psalm 23.) Two imaginative liturgical dialogues (frustratingly unattributed!) surrounded the commissioning, the first celebrating symbols of the Spirit and the second reflecting on doors to the Kingdom of God.

Another partnership was launched at Candlemas and took the form of 'a service of light' (*Promise of his Glory*) with the symbolism of light permeating the whole service. Representatives from each of the 'local mission areas' (benefices) were given a light as a symbol of their commissioning. The 'sending out' included a dismissal gospel, the blessing of oil, and the anointing for mission of everyone

present. This event ended with a firework display from the church roof! The partnership launch service in my own area was not at a festival time. We took up the imagery of God's hand and our hands together in mission. People were given colourful hand cut-outs which were offered during a hymn and made into a bright, Spirit-inspired collage which became the focus for our prayers.

Music played an important part in most services; some areas formed special partnership choirs; different styles of music were employed to reflect the different emphases of the churches involved; one service included a dance of offering and commitment. Audio-visual aids were used by two partnerships. Backdrop pictures of the partnership churches and parish areas were projected through the service.

Most partnerships still speak enthusiastically of their launch, but all are now focussed on their future. And who knows, there may yet be even more exciting liturgical possibilities ahead!

Anne Horton
Rector of Woodhouse, Woodhouse Eaves
and Swithland, Leicestershire

Liturgical Commission's day for DLC reps

The annual day for Diocesan Liturgical Committees was held this October at St Peter's Church, Eaton Square. The day comprised an update on *Transforming Worship*, an excellent keynote address from Bishop Michael Perham on *Inspiring Worship*, news from partner organisations, and a set of afternoon workshops covering symbols in worship, children and the eucharist, and the practical use of screens in worship.

Round-up of the Liturgical Commission news (not elsewhere in this issue):

- ◆ *Transforming Worship* roadshows on 'All-age worship' are just beginning. Future roadshows: 'Shaping buildings for worship' and 'Worship in Schools'.
- ◆ Supporting materials for *Worship Changes Lives* are on the *Transforming Worship* website.
- ◆ The 'pillar' lectionary is currently being trialled.
- ◆ Contributions to or discussions with:
 - ◆ Greenbelt worship
 - ◆ *Fresh Expressions*
 - ◆ Hospital Chaplains' Training
 - ◆ IME 1-7.

Editor



Musical News



A regular feature of articles and the latest news of music and worship

edited by Anne Harrison

'Beer n hymns' at Greenbelt

A number of comments have appeared – in the church press, in a contribution from hymn-writer Christopher Idle to a recent Hymn Society mailing, and in the blogosphere – noting the remarkable popularity of this unusual event. It took place in the organic beer tent at the Greenbelt Festival, held annually during the August Bank Holiday weekend. Friends who took part in 'Beer n hymns' this year (as opposed to those who tried unsuccessfully to get into the overcrowded tent) spoke of the wonderful atmosphere, but also of the bizarre experience of pushing one's way to the bar through a

crowd of people singing hymns, and then being served by people behind the bar who were singing along too.

A photo of some of the participants was posted on the *Church Times* website (find it via the Archive Search on www.churchtimes.co.uk), and on 24 August 2008 Paul Roberts wrote in his blog (<http://alternativeworship.org/paulsblog>) that although he was very happy to be in California that day, he would have loved to be sipping Absolution Ale and singing 'Guide me, O thou great Jehovah' at Greenbelt. Two years ago he wrote

eloquently on the volume and quality of the singing in the tent, and on the impact of hearing men's voices prominently in a way seldom experienced in church. He felt it was a rare and precious event, dependent on 'the bonds of a shared faith, and the fragile persistence of hymns in British churches'. The observations he makes on the contrast between hymn texts and the style and content of some contemporary songs are well worth reading, especially at a time when concerns about current trends in songwriting and publishing are being aired quite widely.

Precentor's mission lecture

On 16 October Lucy Winkett (Precentor of St Paul's Cathedral, London) opened a series of lectures on 'Mission & the Arts' (organised by CMS at their Crowther Centre for Mission Education in Oxford) with an address entitled 'from iPod to Evensong'.

Her eloquent delivery was more than an adequate vehicle for a startling display of engagement with music, contemporary culture and mission. Far from being an irrelevant museum-piece, we learnt about the missional engagement of the music department of St Paul's with diverse groups, and about the power of music to engage and transcend perceived cultural divisions. Lucy urged the diverse attendees to be 'culturally curious', to explore the diverse soundscapes that shape the life of our nation, and in so doing to avoid the common ecclesial problem of confusing 'taste' with 'standard'.

Her forthcoming Lent book in 2010, from which much of this material was derived, promises to be a 'must read' for all musicians who yearn to engage in mission through their art.

*Peter Gunstone
St Andrew's Church, Oxford*

MWF in 2009

The diary of events being run by the Music and Worship Foundation over the next few months includes workshops for instrumentalists ('Worship Orchestra') and sessions with Sam and Sara Hargreaves ('How would Jesus lead worship?'). Sam and Sara helped to lead the worship at the London School of Theology's symposium 'Deep calls to deep' in September 2008. They are based at St James' Church, Hemingford Grey, in the Diocese of Ely, and run a new MWF project called 'Engage', which has its own website (www.engageworship.org). *How would Jesus lead worship?* is the title of a book they have written, due to be published by the Bible Reading Fellowship in 2009.

John Leach (Executive Director of MWF) and Geraldine Latty are among those leading afternoon workshops exploring 'Ancient-Future Worship', followed by an evening celebration, on Saturday 21 March in Berkhamsted. To find out more about any of these events, contact the central office (MWF, 15 Wessex Close, Faringdon, Oxfordshire, SN7 7YZ, tel 0845 396 5224, e-mail admin@mwf.org.uk) or visit the website (www.mwf.org.uk).

CompassionArt

The lead singer of Christian band Delirious? was interviewed in the November 2008 issue of *Christianity* magazine – Martin Smith and the other band members have decided that they will finish working together at the end of 2009. Songs by Martin Smith which have found their way into the worship of many congregations include 'Thank you for saving me', 'Lord, you have my heart' and 'Over the mountains and the sea (I could sing of your love for ever)'.

One of the projects to which Martin Smith plans to devote more time is CompassionArt, a charity aiming to raise funds for the relief of suffering around the world through music. The 'vision statement' on the charity's website (www.compassionart.co.uk) explains the project's beginnings – despite a sense that music 'really ought to be able to sit well with justice', in a world of album sales and royalty cheques it was sometimes hard to see the two linked together.

A first album, including the song 'So great', has been recorded by a group of well-known Christian musicians, among them Matt Redman, Darlene Zschech and Graham Kendrick. In addition to the songwriters, the publishers, managers, copyright institutes and agents involved have all waived their right to receive income from the project.

More seasonal hymns...

A series of books published by Canterbury Press, each including thirty hymns by Timothy Dudley-Smith with music selected by William Llewellyn, continues to expand. The most recent volume to appear is *The Voice of Faith* which opens with hymns for saints' days and also provides a number of hymns based on liturgical texts, including the Gloria and the Te Deum. *A Calendar of Praise* (2006) and *High Days and Holy Days* (2007) offered hymns for seasons and festivals of the liturgical year, and the series began with the Christmas collection, *Beneath a Travelling Star* (2001).

... and choral music

John Barnard and David Iliff have followed up their very successful Advent/Christmas/Epiphany collection (*The Carol Book*, Royal School of Church Music 2005) with a resource for other times in the church year, *Season by Season*. Each publication comes as a loose-leaf folder, with permission for holders of a CCLI Music Reproduction Licence to photocopy the music as required. Some items are congregational, but most are intended for vocal groups of various sizes and levels of ability.

Further details and samples of the music can be seen on the RSCM website (www.rscm.com). A number of RSCM Area Committees have invited the compilers to lead events introducing the material and demonstrating the CD-Rom which is included in the purchase price (£80, with the usual discount for RSCM affiliates).

N T Wright on worship

Alpha International runs a school of worship, Worship Central, whose website (www.worshipcentral.org) offers the facility of listening to some of the lectures given at training events. These include one from the Bishop of Durham, Tom Wright, who was invited to speak on the theme of 'Encounter' in Westminster Central Hall earlier this year. The podcast refers to other teaching on worship which he has given and which is available online, including an address on 'Worship and the Spirit in the New Testament', part of the Yale Conference on Worship and the Spirit (February 2008). The text of this can be accessed, along with many other lectures and sermons, on Tom Wright's own website (www.ntwrightpage.com).

Reflections on a 'life in music'

The importance to church musicians each Christmas of OUP's *Carols for Choirs* series is hard to overestimate. The books even merited a feature in Radio 4's *Front Row* arts programme in 2002. One of the people heavily involved right from the start – Volume 1 appeared in 1961 – was David Willcocks, now Sir David, for many years Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge. His descants to 'O come, all ye faithful' and other favourites are an essential part of Christmas singing for many.

Oxford University Press has recently published a book of interviews with this distinguished choral director and arranger, along with reflections from friends and colleagues. *A Life in Music: Conversations with Sir David Willcocks and Friends* (edited by William Owen) is described as 'a portrait of a highly gifted musician whose leadership, decency, and humanity have inspired countless singers to follow his example and live a life rich in music'. A CD of music recorded under his direction accompanies the book.

'Ten golden rules'

Many readers will be familiar with the work of the Wild Goose Resource Group, based in Glasgow, who recently launched a new website with an online shop (www.wgrg.co.uk). There are a number of free downloads, including the 'Ten Golden Rules for enabling the least confident of people to teach new songs to the most cynical of congregations'. These have appeared in print before (e.g. at the back of the songbook *Heaven Shall Not Wait* - Wild Goose Publications 1987), but it is good to see them made available this way.

Details are provided of Wild Goose Publications, such as a new collection of 'shorter songs for worship', *We Walk His Way*. As with *Come All You People* (1994) and *There Is One Among Us* (1998), a CD of some of the songs is available too. Another helpful feature of the website is an alphabetical list of the now very large repertoire of Iona Community songs, with sources. And anyone concerned with how the Bible is read in worship might like to download two useful PDF files entitled 'Letting the Bible breathe' and 'Proclaiming the Word'.

'Stations of Grace'

St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Glasgow, was the venue for an ecumenical act of worship on Saturday 1 November 2008, in conjunction with an art exhibition entitled 'Stations of Grace'. Artists, both professional and amateur, had been invited to reflect on the theme of grace and to contribute a work in response, to be displayed in the Cathedral for three days. The result was twenty-five exhibits: paintings, drawings (including one depicting the face of Desmond Tutu), a video installation, a 'Bethlehem chair', at least one sculpture, and works using textiles (among them three panels inspired by Charles Wesley's hymn 'And can it be'). The video by Graham Lynch had been created originally for a Good Friday labyrinth at the church of St Silas, Glasgow. One of the most striking paintings was 'The Cross' by Graham Burns, which could be seen quite clearly by many in the congregation during the act of worship.

John Bell, of the Iona Community, and Roman Catholic composer James

MacMillan, with the music director of St Mary's (Frikki Walker), led Saturday evening's reflection, incorporating prayer, choral music, congregational song and instrumental music in a 'Celebration of Three Loves' – love for God, for God's people, and for language. James MacMillan taught and led a simple responsorial setting of Psalm 145 which he had composed for his local church, while one of the most unusual and moving elements of the evening was the performance of his Good Friday piece, 'Kiss on wood', for violin and piano. Other music included an anthem by Howard Goodall ('Love divine') and songs from South Africa.

Some of those involved in 'Stations of Grace' are also part of the team responsible for the monthly 'Holy City' events in Glasgow; for further details, see www.holycity-glasgow.co.uk or ring 0141 3326343. Some will also be involved in 'Voices from the Edge', a week led by the Wild Goose Resource Group on Iona, 15-21 August 2009.

Have you seen...?

Book reviews



The Baptismal Liturgy of Jerusalem: Fourth- and Fifth-Century Evidence from Palestine, Syria, and Egypt

Juliette Day
Ashgate, 2007
£50 hardback, 157 pp

This is a brilliant little book, though I am not sure how many, even with my enthusiastic recommendation, will be spending £50 on 157 pages. It is an excellent example of how to set out research findings in a readable way (it comes from Juliette's PhD dissertation - London, 2003), and begins with a good description of her structural approach to methodology, following the lines well set out by Robert Taft.

The structuralist approach lies at the heart of much that was done in *Common Worship*: you can learn a lot from looking at

the order of items in a service, possibly more than from an examination of language or style. Juliette employs it here in a masterly fourth century detective story, examining the chicken and egg question as to whether Jerusalem initiated liturgical change or copied the changes made in the neighbouring provinces of Egypt and Syria, the answer to which is crucial for our understanding of early liturgical history. She enters aggressively into the fray over the dating (and therefore the authorship) of the Mystagogical Catarches attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, accusing Alexis Duval, whose major work in 2001 concluded that

Cyril was undoubtedly the author, of a hagiographical approach to Cyril which ignores the evidence. This she painstakingly sets out, in a cumulative argument which examines the relationships and possible mutual influences of the initiation rites of the three provinces.

Ashgate has again put us in its debt by introducing historical liturgical debate to a wider audience – and in such a well-presented format.

The Venerable Trevor Lloyd,
retired Archdeacon of Barnstaple

Letter to the editor



From the Bishop of Huntingdon

Dear Gilly,

In *Praxis News of Worship* 19, Colin Buchanan noted that the Archbishop placed a ring on the finger of two of his friends newly consecrated bishop, and queried the introduction of this ceremonial. I write as the 'other' consecrand at the service in Southwark to offer a complementary comment.

I suspect that many bishops would agree that 'kit' of all kinds looms a little too large in our ministry, and the acquiring of it can be another disquieting factor in the days before the consecration. But that's how it goes in this embodied life, from weddings to starting out in the workplace – and there's a bit of both in a consecration – and I've already discovered the practical importance of turning up at a school, for instance, 'looking like a bishop', even if that means feeling like a Christmas tree.

So, weighed down by my kitbag, I nevertheless experienced the ceremony at Southwark as one touched by both the human and the divine. Receiving Communion with my family, *and then just sitting down for a bit*, was heartily humane; and the presence of God shone with

assurance through the breaking of both the Word and the Bread and Wine, not to mention the consecratory prayer itself – all sacramental moments in that sense.

So the business of the rings did not for me arise from any sense of attempt to re-create pontifical pomp or introduce Catholic curlicues. It fitted quite naturally into the process of taking a very human candidate and the clobber of human life and praying that God would break into all that and be encountered as present too. No great difference there – perhaps none at all – from ordination to the priesthood or even baptism at bottom, but a bishop is *de facto* propelled into a public ministry well beyond the bounds of those who know him or her personally, and so the symbols marking out that ministry are perhaps particularly important. Which takes us back to the ring.

I have never been a bejewelled sort of person. Even my wedding ring decided to disagree with the finger it was meant for. Learning from that, Jean helped me choose and have made a simple one that would work better, with a Celtic Cross on it – no more. I've found that I keep it on at all sensible times, and that for me it is a simple and enduring public statement that I am wherever I am for and with Christ, in and offering his love. Compared with the radiant

vestment, the beautifully bound Bible, or even the lovely Cumbrian crook my sending diocese gave me, its ubiquity, its simplicity, and its donor all mark it out as particularly special. So I'm rather pleased that it had its own moment of ceremonial glory too.

Now all of this is very 'bottom up' and experiential, a proper liturgist's nightmare. And liturgy needs a few lions prowling round it to watch out for unnecessary excesses and theological thoughtlessness. So I'm grateful to Colin for his comments and can assure him that no offence has been taken at all. But I do long for a liturgy where we do not have to walk too carefully between the leonine commentators on either side of us, and can be free to make the most of those moments when the church and worship in all its quirkiness becomes a touching place for both the divine and the daily. This was one of them.

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Correspondence to the editor is very welcome. Please include your postal address, if sending messages by email.

Stations of Prayer in the Church Porch - Ash Wednesday to Pentecost *a report from this year to inspire readers for 2009*

From the cross on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we had a weekly display in our Church Porch, to symbolise our journey with our Lord through the trials and deprivation of Lent, into the solemnity of Holy Week and the joy of Easter, culminating in being filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. (The inspiration for the display came from some of the ideas in *Together for a Season: Lent, Holy Week and Easter*).

This was a new venture for us - the idea being to keep our minds focussed on our Lord's journeying and to try to follow him ourselves. As a permanent background, we used our 2007 Christmas tree, with all its branches cut off and the top third used as a crossbar which we lashed to form a rugged cross. We also had a prayer stool, the idea being that even if the church itself was locked, anyone could use the porch for prayer. Each week we decorated the station with different symbols, starting with a dish of ash from our Ash Wednesday Service, together with water and a towel. Each week's changing display related to

the Sunday Gospel reading, as did the accompanying prayer card. Beside the cross and its changing symbols, we created a desert scene with sand, jagged stones and windblown trees which we kept until the children in our congregation created our Easter Garden.

We are not entirely sure how many people were inspired to stop and pray by the weekly display. People are so used to walking straight through the porch into the church, arguably thinking of the porch more as a place for the church notice board, the literature table, as well as somewhere to hang umbrellas and (more recently) park the occasional zimmer frame! The PCC worship committee do, however, now want to pursue making this corner of the porch a permanent 'prayer corner', and so are recommending to the PCC some minor re-ordering within the porch, including special lighting of the prayer station area, to encourage visitors to pause, reflect and pray as they pass by.

Pam Cutler, St Leonard's Church, Swithland, Leicestershire

Teaching liturgy *- a personal view*

For me, liturgy teaching cannot be separated from liturgical life, or to put it another way, the academy and the assembly are fundamentally linked. This interface is exactly where the teaching of liturgy to ordinands is located. The question is not at first, however, 'How do I do?' or 'What do I do...?' The primary question is 'What does it mean to be a worshipping person?' While this may seem dangerously individualistic in relation to what is essentially a corporate activity, one cannot preside at liturgy without a growing sense of how the call to worship impinges on personhood in both individual and corporate dimensions.

It would be easy - much easier, in fact - to reduce liturgy teaching to the acquisition of historical knowledge and the imparting of skills. These are, of course, part of the process, but for the ordinand there also needs to be a significant emphasis on the ways in which liturgy is critically linked to mission and pastoral practice, a vision that must never slip. For this reason I believe the goal should be a deep familiarity with the texts with which they will be required to work, and with the sets of principles which underlie their evolution and the factors

which inform and affect their pastoral use. To be realistic, this goal is not likely to be fully realised until some time into subsequent ordained ministry, precisely because it is in the end achieved partly through worship itself.

This is not to fall into the trap identified by Aidan Kavanagh, that the western church has been big on 'textuality', with a consequent excessive 'deritualisation': the point of understanding a text and knowing how to 'read' it is to notice its performative character along with its historical and theological characteristics. The late Eric Mascall tells a story in his autobiography about a noted scholar and teacher of the 1930s, who was 'a delightful little man, who combined a European reputation as a liturgical scholar with, apparently, an almost complete ignorance of the fact that the subject in which he was an acknowledged expert had any relevance to what went on in church.' The critical link must not be lost if the study of liturgy is to serve the church in its worshipping life. This is not at all to undervalue liturgical scholarship, without which there would be no raw material on which to build authentic contemporary praxis: it is rather to celebrate and

Worship Wednesdays

Following the Transforming Worship agenda of the Liturgical Commission, the Leicester Diocese Liturgical Committee is working on a series of liturgical sessions on Wednesdays each month in the first half of 2009. Worship Wednesdays seemed a good title, and each session will be held at different venues around the diocese between 7.30pm and 9.30pm. Precise dates and times are yet to be fixed but when they are they will be posted on the diocesan website (www.leicester.anglican.org).

We had lots of suggested areas. Our first sessions (not necessarily in this order) will be:

- ◆ Music for churches who don't have music
- ◆ All-age worship
- ◆ Multi-media for the terrified
- ◆ Leading from the front
- ◆ Proclaiming the Word
- ◆ Weddings as Worship

There are lots more ideas for 2010 too.

Richard Curtis, DLC Secretary

encourage it. The deep familiarity I have spoken of is rooted in liturgical tradition and the history of its interpretation. From this, and the repeated use of the texts and actions which have arisen out of it, can be gained a liturgical 'instinct'. In practice this finds its outworking in the choice of appropriate textual material, the ordering of liturgical space, and the eventual lessening of dependence on 'the book', for example at those points where the president may use 'other suitable words' - in other words knowing what *is* suitable. For the ordinand, this entails the building up of confidence - sometimes those students most at ease with public speaking and social interaction find the prospect of presiding at the eucharist, for example, very intimidating (as also preaching). So the teacher of liturgy must above all encourage those who have been called to lead the worship of the people; doing this and seeing the fruits of it are ample reward.

Ben Gordon Taylor
College of the Resurrection, Mirfield



Colin's Column

Not the first word, but the last -
Colin Buchanan writes...

It is now ten years since *Common Worship* baptism came into use and it is, in my experience, precisely the infant baptism service which, of all the *Common Worship* range, has attracted most complaints. These usually take the form, 'the service is far too long'. I have some emotional involvement with the rite, as, quite apart from playing a hand in the ancestral Series 2, Series 3 and ASB texts, I was a member of the long-running Revision Committee which worked over the *Common Worship* material in 1996 and 1997. So I have ruminated upon this complaint, and offer some reflections.

First, there lurks in the Church of England the notion that the length of a service is a directly predictable function of the number of pages of print (and number of words on a page) in any particular service. It is, no doubt, that lurking notion which leads people to use the (wholly legal, but surely less desirable) shorter form of both the Decision and the Profession of Faith – taking them back to uses very like those in the ASB, and saving perhaps 40-50 words (or nearly half a minute) in all. But the notion is nonsense – the variations in length of a baptism service stem from the length of any address, the presence or not (and amount) of hymnody, the distance of processing from the front of the congregation to the font and back again (or not), the number of babies (and the behaviour of their siblings), the existence or not of a greeting of Peace, and the tendency of the clergy to 'busk' their way through the rite with additions, explanations, jokes and personal references. These factors far outweigh the time difference made by using or omitting options - and yet do not seem to have come 'onto the radar'.

Second, there is undoubtedly an embarrassment around about the mismatch between the meaning of baptism and the expectations of many families. Clergy are not wanting to be rigorist or unwelcoming; so they reasonably assume a request for baptism must mean *something*. After all, we must not quench slightly smoking flax. And yet, it becomes clear that in many families there is not the slightest comprehension about Jesus Christ (let alone about discipleship and joining his church), and the covert embarrassment at taking families through a rite which is simply not 'where they are' stokes the impression that the service is over-long. I should add that I have no solution to this – but above all we must *not* diminish the Christian content of the rite in order to meet people 'where they are'. Making the service skimpier in length or content is (with the exception noted below) wrong in principle and counter-productive in practice.

Third, however, I concede there is one point at which a shortening is desirable – and, when I meet the complaints about the service, I find in conversation that it often boils down to this one item. It is simply the 'Prayer over the Water' (or, in Arthur Couratin's language, the *Benedictio fontis*). Seasonal and responsive forms exist – but they are equally wordy. Their length runs beyond the likely attention span even for many robust believers, and that does provide a reason for a shorter prayer. The system should have provided it – the complaint, if focussed here, is legitimate.

But perhaps the complainers could be induced to articulate that specific point, rather than the sweeping indictment of the service as overall 'too long'.

The Rt Revd Colin Buchanan is the former Bishop of Woolwich, and former editor of *News of Liturgy*.

Notice board



New website address for *Praxis Midlands*

Please note the new website address:
www.praxismidlands.org.uk
The old address is no longer in use.

Scripture and Liturgy The Michael Vasey Conference St John's College, Durham 24th - 26th March 2009

This international conference will explore the relationship between Scripture and Liturgy through keynote addresses, short papers and workshops. A unique meeting place for scholars, musicians, leaders of worship, preachers and church leaders.

Speakers include Angela Tilby, Ron Anderson, Tom Wright, John Bell, Richard Giles, Anne Harrison, David Kennedy, Pete Phillips and Ian Stackhouse.

To book a place at the Conference, contact:

Mrs Sue Hobson, St John's College, 3 South Bailey, Durham DH1 3RJ.

Tel: 0191 334 3877
email: s.l.hobson@durham.ac.uk

New *Common Worship* Eucharistic Prayers

Two draft Eucharistic Prayers, for use when a significant number of children is present, have been prepared by the Liturgical Commission and are going before the December meeting of the House of Bishops. If the House of Bishops gives approval, they will be trialled by designated parishes between January and March 2009. All diocesan bishops have been invited to nominate up to 20 experimental parishes by 12 December 2008, for authorization for experimental use under Canon B 5A.

The prayers have been written in such a way that they can be used across the traditions of the Church of England. They follow the familiar classical shape and structure but they are noticeably fresh and different, using language and imagery that is direct, visual and vivid, and appropriate for children.

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