



NORWEGIAN  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

# Variety is the Spice of Life? Forandring fryder?

The Church of Norway 2011 liturgical reform:  
A study of the concept of contextuality in Nord-Gudbrandsdal

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## Preface

As I set the final period for my master's thesis, I think back with gratitude on those who have helped me understand the great joy and absolute importance of liturgy. My thankfulness goes to...

...my mentor, example and supervisor, Dr. Paul Westermeyer, who gave me a liturgical foundation more than 20 years ago and whose insight and clear-sightedness always guides and challenges.

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...my musical, wise and always encouraging mother and father who taught me to love liturgy. I will remember our deep conversations on liturgy and life on the porch in Hämnäs, Värmland.

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# 1 CURRENT PRAXIS

## 1.1 Introduction

“Stedegengjøring” is one of the core values for the 2011 liturgical reform of the Church of Norway. The word means “contextual” in an endemic sense of the word, and was intended to be a methodical core expression, emphasizing the local context and culture where worship takes place.<sup>1</sup>

With background both as a theologian and pastor of Lesja, and also with musical knowledge from a previous masters degree in church music, I have taken a special interest in the implementation process of the new liturgy. I have advocated the new material with eagerness to my own congregation and others, not least the point of “stedegengjøring” (contextuality). However, after experiencing the great changes in our liturgical tradition and hearing loud objections from both professional and laypersons in the church, I am having second thoughts as to the legitimacy of contextuality as a grounds for the order of service.

I have been involved in the implementation process of the Norwegian liturgy reform leading to “Gudstjenesteboken 2011” (English: Book of worship 2011) in several ways.

First, I was asked by my synod, Hamar, to partake in the continuing educational program, “Kurslederkurs i Gudstjenestereformen,” aimed to equip pastors and church musicians to teach church staffs and boards the principles and contents of the new liturgy. The course was taught conjointly between the Norwegian theological seminars (Menighetsfakultetet, Teologisk fakultet/ Praktisk teologisk seminar and Misjonshøgskolen) and the Norwegian Academy of Music (Norges musikkhøgskole), and gave insight both to the new order as such, called the ordo, and an introduction to the new musical settings of the Ordinary.

As part of the program, pastors and church-musicians were teamed up to design and teach introductory courses on the reformed material. In a team with the organist of Lesja, Paul Gunnar Lien, I was assigned the congregations of Nord-Gudbrandsdal, Sør-Gudbrandsdal and

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<sup>1</sup> Gudstjeneste for den norske kirke. Eide Forlag AS. Stavanger. 2011, p. 7.6

Nord-Østerdal. We passed on what we had learned about contextuality, encouraging pastors, musicians and worship board members to “be wise, each in his or her own place”.

Finally, I have first-hand experience making the implementation take place in my own congregations in Lesja and Lesjaskog. The worship committee has worked with the organist and myself to present the new material to our congregations. Our local order of worship was passed by Hamar bishop in the fall of 2012 and taken into use on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent.

## 1.2 Objective and method

This paper raises questions about the implementation of new liturgies in the Church of Norway. Under the heading “stedegengjøring,” hereafter referred to as “contextuality,” the new Norwegian liturgy has been subject to a democratic process in each congregation. The intent has been to make the liturgy an embrace and expression of each local church, particular to every geographic community, rural or urban. This approach has not only been applied to the form and content of the liturgical elements. Also the order of the service itself has been made a matter of local remodeling. Looking at the material, it seems that the Church of Norway has moved away from having one liturgy, practiced and known by all, to a situation where no congregations are doing the same thing.

It is the task of practical theology to investigate if what appears to be going on really is what is going on. The following questions call for an answer: What was initially intended by making the liturgy contextual? Are the choices that have been made by each congregation really contextual? What is at stake, as we move away from our common liturgy, known to all, by heart? Finally, but not least important, by what capacity and judgment is the average congregation able to make sound liturgical decisions?

I have studied the local service orders of a specific region in Norway, Nord-Gudbrandsdal prosti (deanery). Focusing on this area, with a glance to the national results, I have made the attempt to uncover the process and the end result in each congregation. What do the different liturgies in the deanery look like, and how were the decisions made? Which assumptions and processes have played a role in the contextual shaping of the liturgies?

My quantitative study of the Nord-Gudbrandsdal liturgies is presented as a chart-like analysis of a selection of elements. The chart gives a general impression of what each parish decided to do for high mass on Sunday mornings. I have chosen to focus on this liturgy only, as the large amount of additional material makes the comparison too complex. The liturgical outline of other services, for example, like the Service of the word and Service with and for children, are not included in the study, nor is the ritual of baptism. Note also that I have not taken into account the possible changes that the congregations have made in the liturgies after being passed by the Bishop. The updated service bulletins show some discrepancy between intent and praxis, indicating that some of the liturgical decisions have not been followed through. The interview answers from the pastors suggest that this has happened because the premises have changed or because some choices have proven difficult carry out. Nevertheless, I believe that the chart points out the challenges that the churches face in making liturgical order subject to democratic process.

My qualitative approach includes interviews with pastors and organists involved in the local decision-making. I have tried to understand how the pastors and musicians have understood the *concept* of contextuality, and to what extent contextuality has played a role in the *placing* and *form* of the liturgical elements.

The epistemological basis of the interviews – how to go about reaching the desired knowledge – has most certainly a great reflexive element; I am myself part of the question and group I wish to explore. It is evident, therefore, that objectivity is an impossible goal for this investigation. Instead, the research requires different viewpoints and interpretations of reality to emerge, including my own.<sup>2</sup>

In this sense, my research has been participatory, my own experience being parallel to that of the pastors, and to some extent the musicians, in the research group. It is also prejudicial in a Gadamer sense of the word, as my own, ongoing experience with the liturgy reform is grounds for the questions asked.<sup>3</sup> Fundamentally, it is hermeneutical in its attempt to interpret and make sense of what has taken place, incorporating experience and emerging answers into new questions and understanding.

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<sup>2</sup> Swinton, John and Mowat, Harriet. Practical Theology and Qualitative Research. SCM Press. 2013, p. 34

<sup>3</sup> Swinton, John and Mowat, Harriet. Practical Theology and Qualitative Research. SCM Press. 2013, p. 112

### 1.3 Pre-publishing process

UKM - Ungdommens kirkemøte (Youth Church Convention) had the order of the service on its agenda in 2003. Referring to previous dialogue with the National Council, they asked the church to start working towards a worship reform, arguing the need for more flexibility in the Sunday Holy mass. Wanting to move away from the liturgical rule by which all congregations had to conduct their services, UKM requested a service still built around the old, well-known ground structure, but characterized by local expressions, making use of the competence and preferences of each congregation.

After discussing the subject matter at Kirkemøtet (General Council) in 2003, NFG – Nemd for Gudstjenesteliv (National Worship Committee) was commissioned to work on reforming the worship service. Five sub-committees were given responsibility for:

- 1 Gathering, Prayer of the people, Sending
- 2 The Word; lectionary and sermon
- 3 Baptism
- 4 Communion
- 5 Hymns

The new material was submitted to hearing in 2008, and the answers collected the year after, from the Bishops Council, educational and other institutions, and the one hundred congregations which had tried out the new liturgies, lectionary and hymnal. In April 2011, the reform was passed by the General Council and taken into use from the first Sunday of Advent the same year.

### 1.4 Nord-Gudbrandsdal prosti

Nord-Gudbrandsdal prosti (deanery) consists of the seven municipalities, Lesja, Dovre, Sel, Lom, Skjåk and Nord-Fron, corresponding with the old geographic and administrative parish boundaries of the church. All seven parishes, with the exception of Vågå, are divided into two or more congregations, depending on geographical distances and population density. A new, administrative organization of the deaneries in 2004 removed the old parish boundaries, leaving no pastoral-administrative level between the congregations and the deaneries.

However, in the rural district of Nord-Gudbrandsdal, this serves merely as a formal change; in practice the old boundaries remain as natural borders and geographic units. That is, the clergy, now employed in the deanery, still live in and serve a specific parish. The parishes in Nord-



Gudbrandsdal are also the units for the democratically elected board of trustees. For practical reasons, therefore, I use the parish names for this paper.

Since January 2011, when the new liturgies were finished and distributed to all congregations, staff and worship boards have worked their way through the material and made decisions as to the outline of their worship services. A thorough look at the liturgies approved by the Bishop of Hamar for the area Nord-Gudbrandsdal leaves the impression that, even though the congregations within each parish for the most part have agreed on one, common order, no two parishes are doing the same thing. The differences are comprehensive and are summarized in the outline below.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.5 Liturgy chart

I GATHERING	LESJA	DOVRE	SEL	VÅGÅ	LOM	SKJÅK	NORD-FRON
1 PREPARATION							
Information about today's service	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES Ends with GATHERING PRAYER	YES	YES
2 ENTRANCE HYMN							
Congregation stands	WHEN PROCESSION	WHEN PROCESSION	YES	YES	YES	WHEN PROCESSION	YES
3 ENTRANCE WORDS							
Responsive "Amen"	NO	NO	NO	YES Sung	NO	NO	NO
4 GATHERING PRAYER							
Which form Refers to one of ten from "Gudstjeneste for Den norske kirke"	Local variant	4	4	4 / Local variant	3,4,9 As part of PREPARATION	1,2,5	2,3,5
5 CONFESSION							
As part of the gathering	YES (For High Mass)	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES (For High Mass)	NO
Which form Refers to one of seven from "Gudstjeneste for Den norske kirke"	6	2	3	4,6	2,3,5,6, local variant	3,5, local variant	1,3
Words of forgiveness	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
6 KYRIE							
New music	YES Johan Varen Ugland	NO	NO	NO	YES NoS 938 and more	YES Trond Kverno "Missa ex ore infantium"	NO
7 GLORIA							
New music	YES Johan Varen Ugland	NO	NO	NO	SOMETIMES NoS943 or other song of praise	NO	NO
8 PRAYER OF THE DAY	YES Instead of Gathering prayer for High Mass	YES	YES Before the sermon	NO	YES Before the sermon	NO (Only instead of Gathering prayer on festival Sundays)	NO (May be used in connection with sermon)

<sup>4</sup> Included in the schema are the questions from part B-E, G and H from "Sammen for Guds ansikt". Eide Forlag, 2012, p. 27-34.

II WORD	LESJA	DOVRE	SEL	VÅGÅ	LOM	SKJÅK	NORD-FRON
9 FIRST READING							
Congregational response "Gud være lovet"	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
10 PSALM/HYMN							
11 SECOND READING							
Congregational response "Praise be to God"	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
12 GOSPEL READING							
Halleluja verse	NO	YES "Gud være lovet. Halleluja. Halleluja. Halleluja."	NO Short hymn/Congregation stands	YES "Missa Sanctæ Agnetis" (Trond Kvemo)	YES "Gud være lova. Halleluja. Halleluja. Halleluja."	YES	YES S97-192 (Salmer 1997. Verbum.)
Gospel procession	YES On festival days	OCCASIONALLY	YES	YES	OCCASIONALLY	NO	YES When possible
13 SERMON							
14 CREED							
Which form	APOSTOLICUM Spoken or Credo by Åshild Watne	APOSTOLICUM Sung		APOSTOLICUM or "Måne og sol"	APOSTOLICUM AND NICENUM Spoken	APOSTOLICUM AND NICENUM Spoken	APOSTOLICUM AND NICENUM Spoken
15 HYMN							

III PRAYER	LESJA	DOVRE	SEL	VÅGÅ	LOM	SKJÅK	NORD-FRON
16 ANNOUNCEMENTS	NO After postlude	YES	NO After postlude	NO After 3X3	NO After 3X3	NO After 3X3	NO Only on certain occasions
REMEMBERING THE DEAD	NO	NO	YES	YES As part of announcements after 3X3	NO	YES	YES
CONFESSION (See 5)							
17 PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION							
Which form I=local II=models III=fixed form	I	III - 2,3,4	III - 3,4	I III - 4	I II - 4	I	III Bønnevandring
Congregational response	"Herre, hør vår bønn"/ NoS 725 Norsk Salmebok. Verbum. 2002.	"Herre, hør vår bøn"	"Herre, hør vår bønn"	"Å Gud, hør vår bøn"	"Herre, hør vår bøn"	From the new material	"Herre, hør vår bønn" or "Du omgir meg" S97-49 (Salmer 1997. Verbum.)
18 OFFERING							
Congregational prayer ending "Receive us and our gifts..."	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
Collection in the pews or procession around the altar	ALTAR (primarily)	ALTAR (primarily)	ALTAR	PEWS	PEWS/ALTAR	PEWS	ALTAR (primarily)

IV MEAL	LESJA	DOVRE	SEL	VÅGÅ	LOM	SKJÅK	NORD-FRON
19 PREPARATION OF THE MEAL							
Offering as part of the offertory	NO	Secondary	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES
Bear forward bread and wine	NO	When offering is collected during 19 PREPARATION OF THE MEAL	YES	NO	OCCASIONALLY	YES During prelude	YES When possible
20 THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER							
Which form of the Lord's prayer/ sung or spoken	OLD Sung	OLD Spoken	NEW	OLD	NEW Sung	NEW	NEW Sung (Henrik Ødegård)
Sanctus – New music	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES Magnus Beite	NO
"Stort er troens..."	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
21 MEAL							
Extended sharing of the peace	NO	NO	NO	YES	UNCERTAIN	NO	YES
Fraction	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO (But are planning to)
Agnus Dei – New music	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES Magnus Beite	NO
Congregational prayer ending "He strengthen us..."	NO	NO	NO	NO	UNCERTAIN	NO	YES
Wine and bread	Red, non alcoholic/ Gluten free Oblater*	Red, non alcoholic/ Gluten free Oblater	Red, non alcoholic/ Avletter**	Alcoholic wine/ Oblater or Avletter	Non alcoholic wine/ Avletter	Non alcoholic wine/ Avletter	Non alcoholic wine/ Oblater (Avletter in the future)
Form of distribution	INTINCTION By the altar on festivals and certain other services	INTINCTION By the altar on festivals and certain other services	INTINCTION By the altar on festival days and certain other services	INTINCTION By the altar on certain other services	INTINCTION/ ALTAR	INTINCTION/ By altar Maundy Thursday	INTINCTION By the altar on certain other services
22 CLOSING OF THE MEAL							
Congregational prayer ending	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES

\*\*"Oblat" (from Latin: oblatum) is the Norwegian term for Communion wafer.

\*\*\*"Avletter" are Norwegian traditional, festive bread baked in an iron, a specialty in Nord-Gudbrandsdal. The term derives from "oblat".

V SENDING	LESJA	DOVRE	SEL	VÅGÅ	LOM	SKJÅK	NORD-FRON
23 HYMN							
Congregation stands	WHEN PROCESSION	YES	YES	YES	YES	WHEN PROCESSION	YES
24 BLESSING							
Which form	AARONIC	AARONIC	AARONIC	AARONIC	AARONIC	AARONIC	AARONIC
25 DISMISSAL							
Which form	"Gå i fred. Tjen Herren med glede."	"Gå i fred. Ten Herren og kvarandre med glede."	"Gå i fred. Tjen Herren med glede."	"Gå i fred. Ten Herren med glede."	Local	Varies	"Gå i fred. Tjen Herren med glede."
26 POSTLUDE							

## 1.6 Chart summary

The background papers from each congregational board show that all seven parishes were able to establish worship committees, as the Bishop required them to do. Six of seven parishes have completed the new liturgies without integrating the general body of worshippers in the

decision process. The only opportunity for these congregations to respond directly to the changes was at the open meeting/ hearing when the liturgy was voted on and passed.

The strategy of Dovre differs from that of the six other parishes in regards to motivation for change. The parish decided early in the process to make its selections as close as possible to the previous liturgy. The only major change is the introduction of the Gathering prayer, which is also one of the few parts that, according to the instructions, cannot be left out. Dovre also included the option of collecting the offering during the offertory hymn and bearing the gifts forward together with bread and wine. In addition, it is interesting to note that the one structural change that Dovre made several years ago, when dividing the baptismal hymn into two, singing half of the verses before the ceremony and the rest after, was initially not approved by the bishop as a legitimate change. Nor was keeping the Creed in the old place, after the second reading. After a second round, however, the parish was allowed the changes.

### **1.6.1 What did the parishes agree on?**

- ELEMENT. All but Dovre decided on the new Preparation (1), with a member of the congregation welcoming the congregation and giving information about today's service. The interviews explain that this particular part has been very positively received because it involves people from the community, using local dialect.
- All parishes have decided on intinction (21) as the main form of communion distribution.

### **1.6.2 What did the parishes disagree on?**

- MOVEMENT. Three of seven parishes choose to let the congregation stand during the first hymn (2), only if there is a procession (normally when there is a baptism or a special celebration including choirs or other additional participants).
- PLACING OF ELEMENTS. In four parishes, the Confession (5) remains in the opening part of the service, preceding the Kyrie. The other three have moved the Confession to part III of the ordo, PRAYER.
- ELEMENT. In five parishes, the Words of forgiveness (5) are included after the Confession, among them the three that moved the Confession to the prayer part.

- ELEMENT. The selections made for the Prayer of the day (8) illustrate the many possibilities: Lesja uses the prayer in place of the Gathering prayer; Dovre has kept the old placing after the Gloria. In Sel and Lom, the Prayer of the day introduces the Sermon, while Vågå and Nord-Fron voted to exclude the prayer all together. Skjåk exchanges the Prayer of the day with the Gathering prayer on festival Sundays only. Even when taking into account all good reasons why this liturgical element needs to be flexible, this total inconsistency between parishes cries for grounds of justification.
- Two parishes have decided to include congregational participation in prayers such as the Thanksgiving prayer for the offering of the gifts (18) (the liturgist says the first half of the prayer; the congregation joins in for the last part).

To conclude, the chart leaves a clear impression that the congregations in Nord-Gudbrandsdal have not been focused on coming to the same conclusions as their neighboring parishes.

Every parish therefore, has a different outline of the Sunday Holy mass.

## 2 NEW QUESTIONS

### 2.1 Liturgy and order

Liturgy is a discipline within the field of practical theology. Hence, liturgy may be seen as theology in application, formed and reformed through the history of the church.

Before going into further inquiries of the new liturgies in Nord-Gudbrandsdal, some presuppositions must be clarified, as to the understanding of what liturgy is, principally and historically.

The liturgy needs ballast; it cannot consist of “items tossed into the air and then forced together as scattered and unrelated pieces,” says Dr. Paul Westermeyer in his pointed theses on worship.<sup>5</sup> Ballast is what has been sung and prayed and said and responded in worship from its beginning; it is the collective, Christian voice throughout the history of the church.

The introductory chapter to the new Norwegian liturgy names worship as being “together before God’s face”.<sup>6</sup> Worship is being *together* with other people, it is being gathered *before* someone outside ourselves, it is the gathering before *God*, the Lord, whose *face* shines upon us, as the Aronite blessing tells us (Numbers 6:24-26) at the end of the service. In this sense, one might argue that there is only one Christian service, one history, one voice, as people gather in churches or other places to worship. In another sense, of course, Christian Sunday service is very many things. It is the gathering of very many or very few. It is led by one or many. It is conducted in a church or a gymnasium, hidden in a cellar or celebrated on the top of a mountain. It is in the language of Latin or English or Norwegian or Chinese. It is sung in Gregorian chant or American gospel or a folksong tradition. It is formal or informal, strictly liturgical or sidetracked by personal remarks, presiders in vestments or jeans.

There are some essentials, however, that make all the differences come together in unison. Gordon Lathrop calls it “the ecumenical core”: The essentials of Christian worship are “a participating community together with its ministers gathered on the Lord’s Day in song and prayer around the scriptures, read and preached; around the baptismal washing, enacted or

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<sup>5</sup> Westermeyer, Paul. Some Theses about Worship. Thesis 7 & 8.

<sup>6</sup> Gudstjeneste for den norske kirke. Eide Forlag AS. Stavanger. 2011, p. 1.1

remembered; and around the holy supper.”<sup>7</sup> “Though there have been and still are various “uses” with immense variety in them, the church in the East and the West has employed common patterns and texts in its worship,” adds Westermeyer. These common patterns can be summed up in the four parts GATHERING, WORD, MEAL, and SENDING. (The new Norwegian ordo has the PRAYERS separated from the WORD, to emphasize the value of the congregation’s prayer for the church and the world.<sup>8</sup>) The basis for these four parts is found first in the New Testament accounts of gathering around scripture and meal, as described for instance in Luke 24:27, 30-31a: “Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures...When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.”

Second, there is good reason to say that the liturgy of the Christian church is a continuation of the structure of the service that Justin Martyr accounts for around 150 A.D.:

- I. Readings from the Apostles or the prophets
- II. Preaching by the Ruler of the Brethren
- III. Prayers (congregation stands)
- IV. Eucharist
  - a) We greet one another with a kiss
  - b) Bread and wine and water are brought to the Ruler of the Brethren
  - c) Prayer of praise and thanksgiving
  - d) People present say: Amen
  - e) Distribution to all the people who attend, carried out to all those who are absent

Third, Lutheran worship finds its basis in the Lutheran confessions, such as Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, which names the prerequisites for the true unity of the church. Fourth, ecumenical documents, like the *Constitution of the Liturgy* by the Second Vatican Council (1963) are part of the Lutheran liturgical foundation.<sup>9</sup>

The liturgical elements of the Christian worship service have in great part remained the same throughout the history of the church. The Eucharistic prayer attributed to Hippolytus was added to the worship practice in Rome around 200 AD and contains the following parts:

- a) *Salutatio* (The Lord be with you – and also with you)

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<sup>7</sup> Lathrop, Gordon. *Open Questions in Worship*. Volume 1. “What are the Essentials to Christian workshop?” Augsburg Fortress Publishers. 1994, p. 7

<sup>8</sup> Kirkerådets høringsbrev, August 2008. <http://www.kirken.no/?event=doLink&famID=55496>

<sup>9</sup> *With One Voice*. A Lutheran Resource for Worship. Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis. 1995, p. 6-9.

- b) Sursum Corda (Lift up your hearts – we lift them to the Lord)
- c) Preface
- d) Verba (words of consecration)
- e) Anamnesis and Oblation (remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection, and pronouncing the bread and wine offerings to God)
- f) Epiclesis (calling upon the Holy Spirit over the elements)
- g) Prayers of intercession
- h) Doxology

As the Ordinary of the Mass took shape (the Kyrie and Sanctus by the fourth century, the Gloria by the sixth century, and the Agnus Dei by 700) and continued thereafter, a strong sense of the essentials of song, prayer, readings, and responses has been given. There have, of course, been many changes and variations, eliminations and additions through the centuries, in the Norwegian and every church. Theological differences between and within denominations have led to strong disagreements and consequently, reformation of both church and liturgy. Luther's discarding of what he saw as sacrificial elements in the Eucharistic prayer is an example of such a reform. Still, the elements listed above remain the songs and sounds of the church in its characteristically unison voice.

## 2.2 Liturgy and history – a Norwegian sketch

Christian worship had its feeble beginning in Norway in the 900's, as the gospel reached our shores through missionaries from the west and south. In 1024, king Olav Haraldsson and bishop Grimkjell gathered a congress at Moster to sanction the Christian rule of Norway. From then on, the Roman Catholic influence was evident. The Middle Ages showed no fear of liturgical variety; each synod had its own practice, both with regards to the calendar of festivals and holidays, to hymns and lectionaries used on particular days, and to the parts of the *ordo misse*, which stayed the same from Sunday to Sunday. There was an understanding, however, that each province should follow the same liturgy as the bishop's cathedral.<sup>10</sup>

A specific Norwegian tradition is manifested in three Ordinaries of the Mass from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Missale Nidrosiense from 1519 is usually referred to as the first printed book of Norway. Although actually printed in Denmark, it was revised and ordered by archbishop Erik Valkendorf. With this complete missal, and also a separate brevarium, all churches were to put away the books and liturgies they had been using, from foreign synods

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<sup>10</sup> Fæhn, Helge. Fire norske messeordninger. Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo. II. Historisk-filosofisk klasse. 1952. bd. 2. no. 5. ss. 14-15



and provinces. The new book contained a calendar with instructions, prayers and texts for all Sunday and holiday celebrations, along with the Order of the holy mass, musical notes hand painted in red. One might suppose that not all of the twelve hundred churches in Norway were able to purchase this new, expensive book, but it is likely to have been printed in several hundred copies.

Missale Nidrosiense did not last long, at least not in an official sense. With the Reformation came *Ordinatio Ecclesiastica Regnorum Daniae et Norwegiae*, ordered by the Danish king and published in Latin in 1537. The Danish translation, *Den danske Kirkeordinans*, was printed two years later. The *Kirkeordinans* gave instructions and directions as to the conduct of the Lutheran divine service, baptism, funeral and wedding, as well as descriptions of the priestly duties. While outlining the order of the Mass, it did not contain any of the necessary texts, prayers, ordinaries, or melodies. The need for further liturgical material led to the publishing of the Danish bishop Palladius' *Altar Book* in 1556, and its revision came in 1574. Up until then, the old missals had still been in extensive use.<sup>11</sup> Jespersens *Gradual* from 1573 contains music for the sung parts of the service, many of the ordinaries in Latin.

The rites of the *Ordinatio* were built on Martin Luther's liturgical principles for "Formula missae" and "Deutsche messe". The option was given between a Latin Mass with prosaic texts and Gregorian melodies, or a mass of hymns in Danish with several of the ordinaries exchanged with poetic hymn texts and traditional melodies.<sup>12</sup>

When Norway finally got its own church ordinance in 1607, the only real difference from the Danish book was the exchange of the word "dansk" (Danish) with "norsk" (Norwegian).<sup>13</sup>

Fæhn describes the liturgical situation in the following years as a battle between the Latin mass and Danish mass of hymns. The Danish mass was to win. Why? To mention one main reason: Because the sermon became the dominant part, everything else – like prayers, texts, and hymns – were starting to point to the gospel and the preaching. In 1685, the Latin was lost, and what remained was a Mass in Danish. *Danmarks og Norigs Kirke-Ritual*, the Church Ritual of 1685, calls in one place the High Mass "High Sermon", and the communion ritual is

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<sup>11</sup> Fæhn, Helge. *Gudstjenestelivet i Den norske kirke*. Universitetsforlaget. Oslo. 1994, p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Fæhn, Helge. *Gudstjenestelivet i Den norske kirke*. Universitetsforlaget. Oslo. 1994, p. 35.

<sup>13</sup> Fæhn, Helge. *Gudstjenestelivet i Den norske kirke*. Universitetsforlaget. Oslo. 1994, p. 50.

placed in the back of the book as an appendix. This book did not contain any music, but in 1699 came Thomas Kingo's Hymnal and Gradual. (Kingo calls the latin mass "latin-mumble and monk-noise".) Kingo's hymnal was highly liturgical, with the hymns arranged according to the order of the Mass and particular days in the church year. But of course, not as prosaic texts, but as hymns.

The introduction of Gustav Jensen's Prosaic Mass of 1887 represented an abrupt break away from the hymn mass, and many objected to its implementation.<sup>14</sup> It was nevertheless implemented on the first Sunday in Advent of 1887, or more rightly, allowed to be taken into use. Despite the resistance, after only one year, 121 parishes had started using the new liturgy, Hamar Synod in the lead with 46 parishes. Within 10 years, Gustav Jensen's Norwegian prosaic mass gained ground in many parts of the country. With the revision of the Altar Book in 1920, all churches in Norway had parted with the Mass of Hymns.

The liturgy of 1920 and later, in 1977 and 1992, can all be considered revisions of the Gustav Jensen liturgy, even with some clear theological changes and revisions of the texts, along with new melodies.

### 2.3 Liturgy and theology

"Western Christianity has tended to regard theology as being determinative for worship, writes Senn, "to see worship as receiving its form and content from doctrine. As a result, worship has been regarded as an enactment of creedal statements *en tableaux*." There is reason to argue that Gustav Jensen's liturgy to some extent was constructed as such a *tableaux*, or more precisely, a *sketch* of Christian life as it should be shaped and lived, starting with penitence (Confession), moving through faith (Word) to love (Prayer and Communion). The Jensen liturgy is built around historic traditional principles and attempts simultaneously to move the individual through a psychological life journey in miniature. Even so, the discussion preceding the changes in 1914 indicate the continuous need to communicate doctrinal statements; an example is the demand from one side to keep the word "sanne" (meaning "true") as part of the Words of distribution: This is Jesus' *true* blood.<sup>15</sup> The structure and order, from which one could not deviate, also underlines the need to secure the theological message of the liturgy.

<sup>14</sup> Fæhn, Helge. Høymessen i går og i dag. Universitetsforlaget. Oslo. 1968, p. 80

<sup>15</sup> Fæhn, Helge. Høymessen i går og i dag. Universitetsforlaget. Oslo. 1968, p. 88

When the 2011 liturgy lets go of these principles, and not only permits, but also encourages and even requires every congregation to drastically form their own worship service, one cannot but contend that things are turned upside down. It seems as if the task of the liturgy is now not so much to communicate or secure a certain theology; rather the liturgy is to swamp up and express the theology of each folk and place. It is tempting to go into a theological discussion on the legitimacy of such a change. I will however, refrain from doing so, as the question lies outside this paper's objective. The questions to the point are much more the *if* and the *what*: We must ask *if* the newly formed liturgical structures do indeed express a local theology? Further, *if* we determine that they do, *what* do the liturgical differences between seemingly comparable parishes imply? The interviews with the pastors and church musicians in Nord-Gudbrandsdal reveal that some discussion has taken place in the Worship committees, concerning liturgical structure and theology. The answers also reveal that very few outside of the committee, that is, the general church body, have had an opportunity to speak their mind on the matter. As one pastor puts it, "the process was random and totally dependent on the minister". The discernable supposition is that the theologically motivated choices are not necessarily contextually grounded, but rest on the opinion of staff professionals, and to some extent the members of the worship committee.

## 2.4 Liturgy and culture

"Liturgy is the vehicle for the people's expression of devotion or piety. It can also serve as a vehicle for community formation," says Senn in the introduction to his book on Christian worship and culture.<sup>16</sup> Looking back at the long history of the Church of Norway, liturgy has undoubtedly played a great part in community formation, though perhaps in a different sense than Senn implies. Worship and liturgy in the Church of Norway has not so much been an occasion for a new group to gather or a community to form. Much more, worship and liturgy have been companions of the people, so to speak, present in every society through the priests sent by the king and appointed by the bishop and the church buildings the people were obligated to build and keep. The principle of "the king providing priests and the farmers building churches" from Moster in 1024 is standing to this day, even if the changes in the Constitution have loosened the ties between the state and the church. The church is still state-

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<sup>16</sup> Senn, Frank C. *Christian Worship and its Cultural Setting*. Fortress Press. Philadelphia. 1983, p. x

funded by transfers to the synods and thereby the salaries for the clergy, and to the local parishes via the municipalities. The demography, on the other hand, has changed tremendously, and with it, the church landscape. From a population of 400 000 in the Middle Ages, down to under 200 000 after the Black Death in 1349-50, the population of Norway has now passed 5,1 million. Fundamentally rural up until the 1900's, Norway today is culturally diverse and complex with an immigrant population of more than 760 000.<sup>17</sup> While more than 3,8 million are members of the Church of Norway, 549 000 belong to other denominations or religions. Of these, 57% are Christian, 22% Muslim, and 15% Humanist.<sup>18</sup> On a national level that also leaves a great number without church or religious affiliation. Looking at the differences between districts, rural areas like Nord-Gudbrandsdal generally have a greater percentage of Church of Norway membership than the cities.

Considering the diversity of modern Norway, to what extent, and in what way should the liturgy of the church reflect our time, and each community and its people? First of all, it is necessary to reflect on the definition of *place*. Within a nation, a place can be a small site, a municipality, a town or a city. In a greater perspective, Norway can be said to be a *place*, a relatively small country with a correspondingly small folk-church. Is it possible that the Church of Norway as a whole is the *place*, the unit, to which contextuality should be applied? This certainly seems to have been the liturgical strategy when the church has taken the lead in gathering the Norwegian people in crisis situations, as well as for great celebrations. Examples are the 2012 memorial service held in the Oslo cathedral a year after the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July terrors in 2011, and the public outdoor service held in connection with the Crown Princess's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013. In the two examples, much of the old structure of the Ordinary has been chosen, along with much of the music for the Ordinary from the 1977 liturgy. Without attempting to unveil or interpret the arguments behind these choices, the mere observation of the fact indicates that on special occasions the church chooses that which unites instead of that which is specific to the local congregation. Aidan Kavanagh makes this point exactly in his introduction to "Elements of Rite – a Handbook of Liturgical Style":

“Grasping the ecclesial context of liturgy is crucial for liturgical style because it puts a premium on pastoral responsibility to the church

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<sup>17</sup> SSB (Statistics Norway) numbers for 2013

<sup>18</sup> SSB (Statistics Norway) numbers for 2013

which worships. This pastoral responsibility rests upon two bodies of knowledge, the first being knowledge about the liturgy itself and the second being knowledge about the state of the assembly which worships. Since it is knowledge that arises from within the object known, it risks losing its objectivity and grasp on the larger context in which the assembly's liturgical style is practiced throughout the rest of the Church. It is here that the demanding discipline of knowing with a clear-eyed and dispassionate objectivity *how the Church has worshipped in the past, and how it must worship now, becomes a crucial quality for liturgical ministers lest local particularity degenerate into idiosyncrasy.*"<sup>19</sup>

The problem with liturgical idiosyncrasy, in the meaning "characteristic peculiarity of structure," is that the liturgy is made exclusively *for* a specific location, group or situation. Even if certain situations might call for extraordinary moves, "such liturgies are abnormal because the liturgy is not for anyone but the entire Church locally assembled."<sup>20</sup> When the order of the liturgy is made specific to a group or a local congregation, is the church making a sectarian move? This point will be discussed later in the paper.

## 2.5 Contextuality as incarnation

In order to understand what was initially intended by making the liturgy contextual, we must take a look at some of the documents following the process. First, NFG envisioned the core value of contextuality to be achieved in the following way:

- Ved å være oss bevisst inkarnasjonen i Kristus, at Gud kommer oss i møte som menneske i en gitt historisk kontekst.
- Ved at vi får møte det hellige gjennom oss selv, i vår kontekst/kultur. Vi gir tilbake våre uttrykk for kristen tro og liv gjennom språk, sosialt liv, billedspråk, symboler etc.
- Ved at vi står i en (mellommenneskelig) interaksjon, mellom tradisjon og fornying, der vår kultur/kontekst er innholdet i en endringsprosess.
- Ved at kunnskap om forskjeller, og om hvordan de trer fram, utvikles i den verdensvide kirken.
- Ved at kunnskap om samiske forhold utvikles i kirken. Stedegengjøring innbyr oss til både å verdsette vår kulturelle arv og samtidig lytte oppmerksomt når samtidens kultur og

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<sup>19</sup> Kavanagh, Aidan. *Elements of Rite. A Handbook of Liturgical Style.* Pueblo Publishing Company. New York. 1966, p. 9 (My cursive)

<sup>20</sup> Kavanagh, Aidan. *Elements of Rite. A Handbook of Liturgical Style.* Pueblo Publishing Company. New York. 1966, p. 14

kunst krever oppbrudd fra fortiden som eneste farbare vei til fremtiden.

- Stedegengjøring er å ta på alvor inkarnasjonen i Kristus, at Gud ble menneske i en gitt historisk kontekst. Stedegengjøring er når vi får møte det hellige i oss selv, og vår kultur får være uttrykk for liv og deltakelse og der endringer forankres. (Annemarie Kjeldsø)<sup>21</sup>

While offering some clarity to the principle reasons for contextuality, the description gives less clarity as to the “hows” and “whys” of the local shaping of liturgical elements. What practical consequences can be drawn from “being conscious of the incarnation of Christ,” “allowing us to meet the holy in ourselves and our culture,” and “allowing knowledge about differences to unfold”? The most specific cue seems to be the point of “allowing knowledge of the Sami culture to unfold,” suggesting that the language or culture or craftsmanship or music of a particular people should somehow be reflected in the worship service. What part of the culture is to be applied to which part of the service is not addressed. Little more is made clear in the chapter, “Hellig handling, hellig tid” (Holy act, holy time), in the book of worship itself:

”Evangeliet om Jesus Kristus er og blir det samme til evig tid (Hebr 13,8). Men det slår alltid rot i et bestemt jordsmonn og tar farge av dette jordsmonnet: Det stedegengjøres, både ved å bli preget av og selv prege kulturen på ulike steder og til ulike tider. Gjennom stedegengjøring kan spenningen mellom kirkens universelle og lokale karakter ikke bare bevares, men også fornyes. En gudstjeneste som er blitt stedegengjort, kan være livsnær, gi gjenkjennelse og åpne for involvering på et dypere plan.”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Kjeldsø, Anne Marie. Kjerneverdier for gudstjenesten. <http://www.kirken.no/?event=doLink&famID=9326>

- “By being conscious of the incarnation in Christ, that God comes to us in a given, historic context.
- By allowing us to meet the holy in and by ourselves, in our own context/culture. We give back our own expressions for Christian life and faith through language, social life, images, symbols, etc.
- By allowing knowledge about differences, and how they stand out, to unfold in the church worldwide.
- By allowing knowledge about the Sami situation to unfold in the church. Contextuality invites us to appreciate our cultural heritage and, at the same time, listen attentively when the culture and artistic expressions of our time demand breaking away from the past as the only navigable road into the future. Contextuality is to take seriously the incarnation in Christ, that God became human in a given, historic context. Contextuality is meeting the holy in ourselves; and our culture can be expressions of life and participation, and where changes are rooted.” (My translation)

<sup>22</sup> Gudstjeneste for Den norske kirke. Eide Forlag AS. Stavanger. 2011, p. 6.7

“The gospel of Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). But it always strikes roots in a particular soil and is colored by this soil; it is *contextualized* both by being influenced by, and itself influencing, the culture in different times and places. Through contextualization, the tension between the universal and local character of the church can not only be conserved, but also renewed. Worship made contextual may be close to life, give recognition, and open up for involvement on a deeper level.” (My translation)

Although this text gives some insight as to why a contextual expression of the liturgy is important and desired, the principles of application are left in the blue.

It is also worth noting that NFG speaks of the core value contextuality in a different sense than the UKM youth did in their 2003 request: “We wish to move away from a rule-governed order to an order ruled by goals and competence. This means letting the worship service be governed by the goals one sets and the competence present. The goals must be governed by a set of core values,”<sup>23</sup> wrote UKM, indicating that contextuality was a concept for the local congregation in their navigation towards a set goal. NFG on the other hand, speaks of core values and contextuality as a methodical principle and liturgical theological premise for the church. While UKM imagined a fixed and well-known order with room for variety and a changing profile from Sunday to Sunday, it seems as if NFG decided that contextuality was not a Sunday-to-Sunday flexibility tool, but a principle for the local congregation in their process of shaping the order itself. One might ask if the new liturgy is in fact even less flexible than the old; once ruled on, the congregation is bound by its decision down to the finest structural detail.

## 2.6 Contextuality as body and soul

The book “Sammen for Guds ansikt” (Together, before God’s face) is one of the sources for more specific advice and instructions. Meant to be an aid for worship committees and parish counsels, it explains in short terms the core values for the reform and takes one through all the questions that need to be answered in the “building process” of a new order of worship. It makes clear in the introduction that *contextuality*, *involvement*, and *flexibility* are greatly interrelated, and it challenges the local church to “let the local context and culture, expressed through language and social forms of gathering, music, figurative and other art expressions, influence, and be influenced by the Christian message.” Contextuality is involving the people in the community, of different ages and cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds. It is indulging “the whole congregation with body and soul in the worship celebration through the singing of hymns and congregational responses. It is receiving the gifts of God by listening to the texts and the sermon. It is being together in silence and participating in prayers and

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<sup>23</sup> UKM (Youth Church Convention). Sak 05/03: ”Hva slags gudstjeneste vil vi ha”. <https://www.kirken.no/?event=downloadFile&FileID=40434>

communion.”<sup>24</sup> A consequence of contextuality and involvement, flexibility is needed in the form of choices in texts, acts and other expressions. The importance of balance between the three is mentioned, so that the church *not only* appears contextual, but also as the “holy catholic church”. The common basic pattern of the liturgy with the church worldwide ensures recognition on a national level and ecumenical unity we can read.

It is clear that both the structure and the separate elements of the service have taken an ecumenical turn. The ORDO itself speaks most clearly of this, having adapted to the ecumenical four-part pattern *gathering, word, meal and sending* (separating *prayers* to make a particular Norwegian variant). The question is, however, if the service is recognizable in the sense that people can *participate* with their “body and souls,” when the structure is indeed different from church to church? Further, if contextuality happens when body and soul is moved by text, song, silence and prayer, why are such a large amount of the questions leading to a new, local liturgy related to the mere particularities and ordering of the elements?

It is worth noting too that most questions not only call for a simple answer; they also ask if the element is to be included on a regular basis or only occasionally. This applies for example to the question of the fraction of the bread: “Decide if this element is to be a regular part of the service, or if the liturgist should decide if it is to be included *from time to time*.”<sup>25</sup> The opening for irregularity *within each congregation* strengthens an impression of uncertainty and lack of solidity.

## 2.7 Changing the elements

The parishes have chosen to include certain new elements into their order and leave other options out. An interesting question is whether one might see a connection between the selections that have been made? Looking for instance at the possible congregational responses throughout the service, do the parishes that have chosen one variable have several selections in common? In the example of Vågå, the parish has chosen many of the new options: “Amen” as congregational response after the words of entrance, omitting the Prayer of the day, including a Halleluja verse before the gospel procession, moving the announcements to the

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<sup>24</sup> Sammen for Guds ansikt. Eide Forlag. 2012, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Sammen for Guds ansikt. Eide Forlag. 2012, p. 28



end of the service, and adding the Fraction rite, to mention some. They have not, however, chosen to move the Confession of sins to the Prayer part of the Ordo, like four of the other parishes. One would perhaps expect to see similarities between the parishes that have been more positive to the change, and also between the ones less eager to move away from the well-known. It seems, however, that the pattern of the choices is quite random, as if there is no common ground or starting point from which all draw their conclusions. Considering the very similar sociological and religious milieu of the seven parishes creates significant questions: On what basis have the decisions been made? What kind of process has led to the decisions, and who has been a part of it? Some answers were found as I interviewed the pastors and church musicians in each parish.

## 2.8 Interviews

To get a sense of the decision process leading to the new orders, I have interviewed church musicians and pastors from the parishes in Nord-Gudbrandsdal, all of them involved in the implementation of the new liturgies.<sup>26</sup> As many as seven of the ten pastors who were serving the congregations in the deanery during the process, are currently on leave or serving a new parish. In contrast, only one organist has relocated. As pastor of Lesja since 2002, I have a professional relationship with all the interviewees, from meetings and gatherings, and working together in a worship setting. I also know some of the pastors and church musicians on a personal level. Since many of the pastors no longer live in the area, most of the interviews were done over the phone, as part of an informal conversation. A factor of presupposition is likely to have played a part in the interpreting of the answers, as most of the work that has been done in Nord-Gudbrandsdal is already known to me, personal preferences and conflicting views included. Since many of the interviewees already were familiar with my agenda, some answers might have shifted in the direction of my inclination. I have also asked myself the interview questions and thereby made myself part of the answers.

Asking which factors could have played a role in the application of the term “contextuality” identified the interview questions. I was interested therefore in who had been leading and participating in the worship committee. To get a sense on how much the general church body had been able to follow and influence the work of the committee, I included an open question

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<sup>26</sup> The interviewees consist of one pastor from each of the seven parishes and the church musicians from six parishes.

on how the local process had gone by. This question was followed up by asking specifically who had taken the lead in the committee and if the congregation had been involved before the final decision. Questions were asked directly about the understanding and use of the term “contextuality”. Finally, the interviewees were asked to reconstruct the committee’s work with the specific elements of the liturgy. The elements of question four were limited to those that most strikingly show that the parishes have concluded differently.

### 2.8.1 The questions

1. Who was the leader of the worship committee?
2. Describe in short terms the local process towards a new liturgy.
3. What have you understood by the term “contextual”?
4. How did you decide what to do with the
  - a) Gathering prayer
  - b) Confession
  - c) placing of the Offering
  - d) new music for the Ordinary
  - e) congregational “prayer add-ons” (like “Receive us and our gifts...” as a congregational ending of the Prayer for the Offering of the gifts)<sup>27</sup>

### 2.8.2 The answers

The chart shows in a key-word-manner how the church musicians and pastors remember the work with the new liturgical material. There is little disagreement between organists and pastors on question one, except for one instance with a change in leadership. On question two, organists and pastors describe the process slightly differently. While the two groups seem to agree on the practical arguments, for instance if things will work in their congregation or not, the pastors are generally more focused on the theological reasons for or against change. The musicians, on the other hand, tend to make more reference to musical-esthetical arguments. There is remarkable agreement however, between organists and pastors on question three, in their understanding of the term “contextuality”. What is most striking is the mismatch between the choices the congregations were supposed to make, and what the church leadership actually considers to be contextual matters. Not one of the pastors or musicians

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<sup>27</sup> Question 4, a – e, is in correspondence with ”Sammen for Guds ansikt”. Eide Forlag. 2012

replied: “moving the Confession” when asked about local expressions in the liturgy. Nor did they mention the wording or the order of the elements. The answers convey that contextuality is considered having to do with all the things *surrounding* the Ordinary, like the type of the service, the people participating, the music, and the prayers and petitions. Also, the keeping of the old tradition is held up high as a contextuality matter; *not making changes* or *changing back* to something older is seen as a local characteristic.

### 2.8.3 Interview chart

LEADER OF WORSHIP COMMITTEE	PASTORS' ANSWERS	ORGANISTS' ANSWERS
Pastor alone	4	4
Pastor and organist	2	
Organist alone	0	1
Lay member	1	1

LOCAL PROCESS	PASTORS' ANSWERS	ORGANISTS' ANSWERS
The pastor made the proposals	2	1
The organist made the proposals	0	1
The organist and pastor made proposals to the Worship committee	2	2
The Worship committee worked together on all or most questions	3	2
The congregation had opportunity to influence	1	1

UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM "CONTEXTUALITY"	PASTORS' ANSWERS	ORGANISTS' ANSWERS
Music	6	4
Participation/involvement	7	2
Type of service (ex. "sætermesse" (summer farm mass))	4	
Locally written prayers	3	3
Locally baked communion bread	2	
Keeping the tradition - resistance to change	2	1
Locally formed order of service		1

#### WHO TOOK THE LEAD IN THE DECISION OF:

GATHERING PRAYER	PASTORS' ANSWERS	ORGANISTS' ANSWERS
Pastor	3	1
Organist	0	
Pastor and organist		1
Worship committee	4	4
CONFESSION		
Pastor	3	2
Organist	1	1
Worship committee	3	3
OFFERING AS PART OF OFFERTORY		
Pastor	2	1
Organist	1	
Pastor and organist		1
Worship committee	4	3
NEW MUSIC		
Pastor		1
Pastor and organist	2	1
Organist	1	3
Worship committee	4	1
PAYER "ADD-ONS"		
Pastor		1
Organist	1	2
Worship committee	6	3

Conclusions from the answers given by the organists and pastors, and the previously presented chart of the liturgies, suggest that many of the choices that have been made are not at all contextual in the sense that they express something particular to the place and local people. Rather, many choices, especially those clearly theologically founded, express the theology of the particular pastor serving at a particular time. When pastors and musicians were encouraged to be “wise, each in his or her own place,” that is what the staff has tried to be. In some parishes, admittedly, there has been a semi-democratic process where the whole worship committee has been heard on every issue. In only one parish, however, there has been an attempt to listen to a wider portion of the church members over some time.

## 2.9 Changing the order

As the liturgy chart shows, the parishes have chosen to place some of the liturgical parts in different positions. These might seem like minor differences, but they nevertheless reinforce the experience that the liturgies are unlike. One need not look further than to part I of the service, the Greeting, to see that it is put together in quite various ways. Four parishes have decided to move the Confession to part III, Prayer; the rest are leaving it before the Kyrie. Again, the questions arise as to who has made that choice and on what grounds? Is it a matter of contextuality? There has been some dialogue concerning the theological implications of the placing of the Confession. On one hand, the argument has been made that there is no need for a confession or cleansing rite to partake in the worship service.<sup>28</sup> Some have noted that it carries a resemblance to the heathen custom of a cleansing ritual before being worthy to stand before the god. Also, should not the service start with gladness and expectation that one is gathered before God? To be gathered before God with gladness, the other side argues, one needs to begin with confession and forgiveness. Not only a tradition since the Roman church invited the congregation to join the priests in praying the Confiteor,<sup>29</sup> the Confession of sins at the beginning of the service is indeed an ecumenical practice.

The interviews of the Nord-Gudbrandsdal pastors show that such a discussion has taken place also locally. Based on the assumption that the parishes in this area are sociologically and

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<sup>28</sup> Hansen, Geir. Synsbekjennesle og liturgisk forberedelseskultur. p 3. <http://www.kirken.no/?event=doLink&famID=321>

<sup>29</sup> Hansen, Geir. Synsbekjennesle og liturgisk forberedelseskultur. p. 2

theologically very comparable, why do the parishes choose differently? Again, the answers from several of the pastors indicate that the issue of moving the Confession has been raised by the pastor or sent back from the worship committee to the pastor, for his or her advice and decision. The relatively obvious conclusion is that this change of order in the liturgy does not necessarily express a certain theology in the local culture, but the theological position of the pastor in the particular parish.

## 2.10 Changing the music

The over seven hundred page binder “Liturgisk musikk for Den norske kirke” with nineteen new settings of the Ordinary, together with the 1977 settings and several contributions from the ecumenical church, has proven very overwhelming to the professional church staffs of the rural parishes. The one-day-course that was con-jointly taught by a pastor and a church musician attempted to present musical examples that could be manageable for smaller congregations with limited resources. Not all organists in Nord-Gudbrandsdal have a music degree, and some need much time and encouragement to dig into new material. Therefore, it seemed necessary that someone made a first assortment before presenting the new liturgical music for the church. In the case of Hamar synod, all the pastors and musicians responsible for the course work had agreed on a selection that seemed varied, yet accessible. The qualifications of the musicians in this group are unquestionable; they all have extensive academic backgrounds as well as many years of working in the church within this district. The professional considerations and judgment in the course group as to the musical quality of the different settings was done in a thorough manner. Even so, the process itself has a touch of arbitrariness; no “tools” or common guidelines were given to ensure similar processes between the synods. The question of contextuality arises again:

First, there was little focus on contextuality in this beginning selection process. More, the focus was on manageability, on which music could be suitable for the congregations, pastors and musicians, technically speaking. One could argue of course, that manageability connects to contextuality in certain ways; a resourceful congregation with choirs and instrumentalists can certainly assert that advanced music in liturgy is within its capability and style. What is problematic, however, is suggesting that choosing simpler music is a local, cultural expression. (It is much more an expression of lacking resources!)

Second, there is a question of the objective of contextuality in the material itself. The liturgical music presented in the binder does present a spectrum of musical genres and traditions. The setting by Arne Rodvelt Olsen is folk-tune based, and the setting by Tore W. Aas uses contemporary music with elements from both popular music and the American gospel tradition, weaved into a more traditional church music style. A Gregorian style setting is also available, arranged by Henrik Ødegaard. However, there seems to have been no expectations from the church that parishes with a great folk music tradition would or should go for the Rodvelt Olsen liturgy. Further, when many congregations nationally have chosen the Tore W. Aas setting, can it possibly be a representative expression for the musical tradition of the parish? The interesting point is, of course, if the process leading to the decision on new music can give some answers: Who suggested the music? Who had a say along the way? Does it express the musical taste and/ or practice of the musician or a portion of the parishioners, or is the music in fact grounded in a true preference for that church or area? Asking these questions is not meant as an attack against the quality or validity of any particular music; because of its simple and easy melodies many congregations have found, for example, the Aas setting to be their liturgical music of preference. But what were the premises for the choice? Was contextuality an issue? It could very well have been the case, but there is also the possibility that someone has made a claim on the term, as a defense for his or her own preferences. This is always a danger, that people with specific agendas revise the liturgy to fit exactly their agenda. What can seem as a contextually-sound argument to one group can seem very excluding to another group. In light of this, it is interesting to see what the pastors and organists in Nord-Gudbrandsdal have said about the decision process, in terms of who has taken the lead of proposals and suggestions.

Only three parishes ended up making changes to the music for the Ordinary in this round: Lesja, Lom and Skjåk. In Lesja, the worship committee decided on trying out three different settings, after the organist and the pastor (myself) had presented the earlier mentioned “selection”. Following a trial period for each setting of approximately six months, the worship committee was gathered again to evaluate. There was also an opportunity each Sunday for the congregation members to express their viewpoints, at an informal coffee-and-chocolate-halt in the church hallway following every service. The feedback helped the committee “shift out” some premises for the new music: It had to be short and concise, possible for people to sing

without extensive rehearsal, and independent of a singing pastor. The choice fell eventually on Johan Varen Ugland's Kyrie and Gloria.

Lom has not used resources from the Worship music binder, but tried several folk-tone based melodies for their Kyrie. The process there has involved the general congregation to a lesser extent, the organist and the pastor taking a lead on which melodies seemed interesting in a very strong and competent folk-music community.

In Skjåk, there has been a good process in the worship committee; the earlier mentioned "course selection" was presented along with music proposed by the organist. Skjåk initially decided to change all the music for the Ordinary, but has since gone back to the 1977 music.

When the four other worship committees have advised their congregations not to make musical changes to the Ordinary, or the people have objected to such changes, the reasoning is generally that this will make the new liturgy seem even more unfamiliar. Nevertheless, almost all organists and pastors report in the interview that music is indeed a possible and wanted contextual expression.

## 2.11 Changing the words

Considering the deep roots Norwegian liturgy has in church history and tradition, why are some of the core elements made a choice of preference in the new material? The "Amen" after the Words of entrance is a new "option" that one might choose to do. The argument could perhaps be made that congregational responses are not customary or natural for a certain group of people in a certain area of the country. Cannot leaving the "amen" out be an expression of the timid congregation and, as such, a contextual expression?

In fact, the interviews reveal that this argument has been made; most parishes have left the new congregational responsive prayers and sayings out because it is difficult to make the people say them. Some have tried certain elements, such as the option of having the congregation join in for the second part of the Prayer succeeding the offering. Interestingly, all pastors in congregations who made this choice report that it does not work; the people will not say their part, or at the most one can hear a mumble prayer. The question is if this lack of response truly is contextually-conditioned? And if it is, does this mean that congregations



with less outspoken churchgoers should also omit the Lord's prayer and the Confession, since they also refrain from speaking or mumble these words? The comparison may seem far-fetched, but points out nevertheless, that the candidness of the people, or lack thereof, cannot be made a basis for selecting liturgical elements.

## 3 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

### 3.1 Liturgy as essence

I have previously explained liturgy as practice and order, developed through time and history. Another possible perspective has a theological foundation, as described by Francis H. Williamson. With a basis in H. Richard Niebuhr's five categories of the relationship between Christ and culture,<sup>30</sup> Williamson attempts to place and understand the musical and liturgical diversity of the Christian church. His approach is essentialist rather than cultural, where each category or position defines the culture or history, rather than the other way around.

### 3.2 Niebuhr's 5 categories of Christ and Culture

God is permanent, absolute and above history; people are not, starts H. Richard Niebuhr in "Christ and Culture." Church therefore, is relative to time and place as faith takes on different expressions. He offers five possible positions between the cultural context and the Christian church.



#### 3.2.1 Christ *against* culture

The position of the "Christ *against* culture" is built around biblical references such as 1 John 4:11-12: "Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us."<sup>31</sup>

A Christian is he or she who loves the Christ who died for our sins and obeys God's command to love one another, all in the light of God's prior love for us. This seemingly positive position turns against culture, says Niebuhr: "The counterpart of loyalty to Christ and the brothers is the rejection of cultural society; a clear line of separation is drawn between the

<sup>30</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. Harper and Row Publishers Inc. New York. 1951.

<sup>31</sup> NRSV

brotherhood of the children of God and the world.”<sup>32</sup> This too, in accordance with the first letter of John: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; ...”<sup>33</sup> The world needs the representation of the sincere Christian, says Niebuhr, who puts action behind words and remains obedient even in times of trial and suffering. However, the problem of the Christ *against* culture notion is that it rejects the world as God’s creation and the presence of God’s Spirit in every time and space. On an opposite side, therefore, one finds the Christ *of* culture.

### 3.2.2 Christ *of* culture

Christians who see Jesus as the Messiah of their own society advocate a Christ *of* culture. “They feel no great tension between church and world, the social laws and the Gospel, the workings of divine grace and human effort, the ethics of salvation and the ethics of social conservation in process.”<sup>34</sup> Represented for instance by the Gnostics of the Hellenistic world, this view attempts to unite the Christ event with the scientific and philosophic tendencies of time, to the extent that Christianity becomes a “religious and philosophic system.” In the western world, the view can be found in all denominational corners, Lutheran and Calvinist as well as sectarian and Roman Catholic. Schleiermacher gave in many ways voice to this view, as he sought to live out the double task of being both a “Christo-centric theologian and a modern man, participating fully in the work of culture, in the development of science, the maintenance of the state, the cultivation of art, the ennoblement of family life, the advancement of philosophy. And he carried out this double task without a sense of tension, without the feeling that he served two masters.”<sup>35</sup> Giving preference to sophisticated, academic and philosophical circles and language, using terms like “Reason”, “Wisdom”, “Emancipator”, and “Avatar” as Christ-metaphors,<sup>36</sup> it is the attempt to *harmonize* Christ and culture, says Niebuhr.

Having described the two extreme positions of the Christ – culture relation, Niebuhr offers three middle positions, which he refers to as “the Church of the center.” The middle positions all agree that there must be a both- and; as God’s creation, the world ought be lived in, not

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<sup>32</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. Harper and Row Publishers Inc. New York. 1951, p 46.

<sup>33</sup> NRSV. 1. John 2:15

<sup>34</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. Harper and Row Publishers Inc. New York. 1951. p. 85.

<sup>35</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. Harper and Row Publishers Inc. New York. 1951. p. 94.

<sup>36</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. Harper and Row Publishers Inc. New York. 1951. p. 104.

rejected. On the other hand, considering the sin and evil of the world, the Christ event must do more than affirm culture.

### **3.2.3 Christ *above* culture**

The position “Christ *above* culture” attempts to bring together both Christ and culture. Niebuhr calls this perspective “synthesis” and refers to Thomas Aquinas “who in his system of thought combined without confusing philosophy and theology, state and church, civic and Christian virtues, natural and divine laws, Christ and culture.”<sup>37</sup> He sees a clear both – and, yet, Christ is always far above culture.

### **3.2.4 Christ and culture in *paradox***

These are the dualists, explains Niebuhr, also with a both – and perspective, trying to hold together loyalty to Christ and life and responsibility in the world. With a far less positive view on culture than the Christ *above* culture defendants, the dualist sees the world as in conflict with God: “Human culture is corrupt; and it includes all human work, not simply the achievements of men outside the church, but also those in it.”<sup>38</sup> The Christian is always in and of this corrupted world. At the same time, man is made righteous in Christ. Corresponding with Martin Luther’s understanding, the paradox lies in the perpetual tension between law and grace, wrath and mercy, sin and righteousness, faith and doubt. Niebuhr also argues that the dualistic view typically is culturally conservative as it interprets both sinfulness and faith as statics; if there is no way humanity can escape its own sinfulness or that of the world, with faith resting only on God’s persistent grace, there is no incentive to change culture or one self.

### **3.2.5 Christ the *transformer* of culture**

It seems like Niebuhr thinks most highly of this position, which combines the “better” of the former two. The conversionists are within the “great central tradition of the church,” he states, and even if they see culture as infected by sin, they are more hopeful and positive towards culture’s redemption. To God all things are possible; hence culture can be transformed and made new.<sup>39</sup> This renewal happens when people respond to God’s mighty deeds.

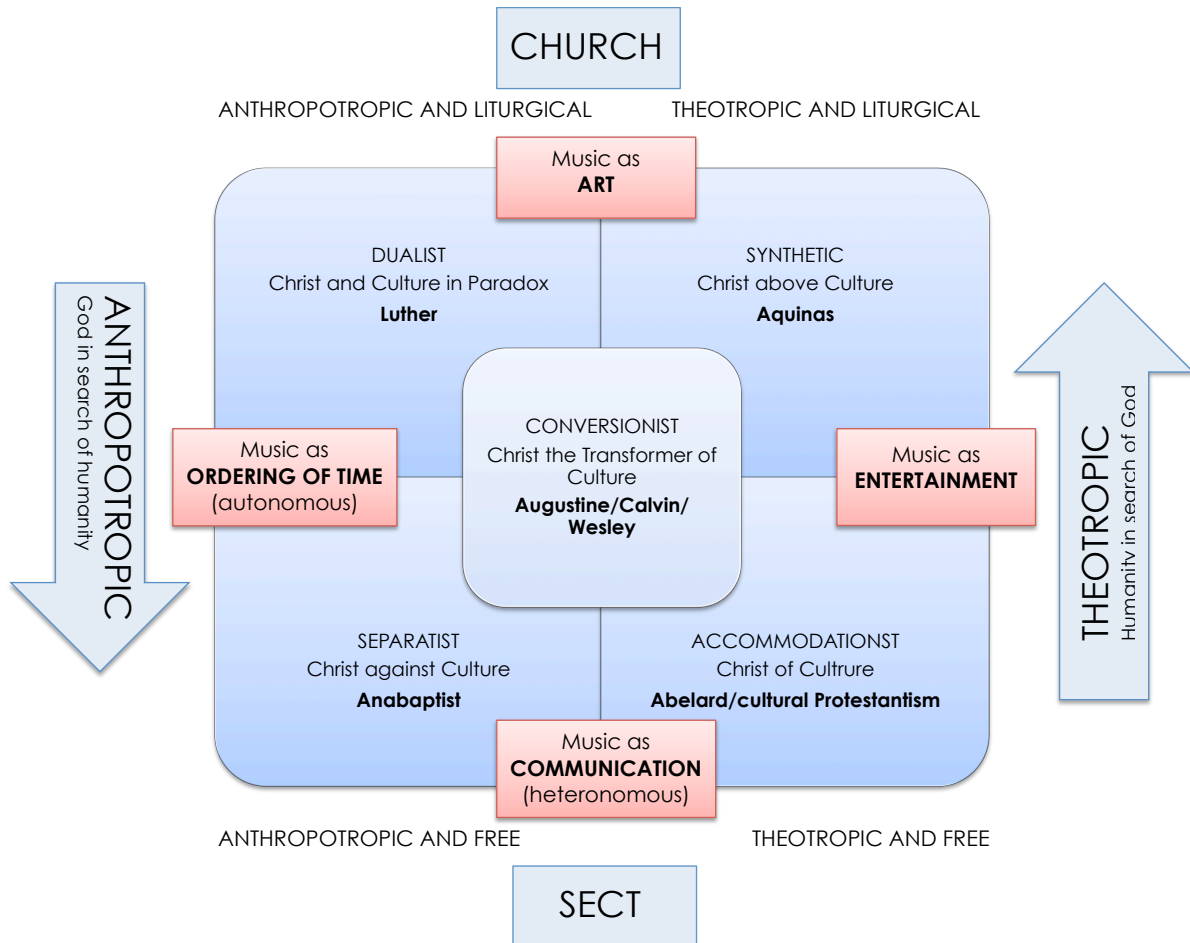
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<sup>37</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. Harper and Row Publishers Inc. New York. 1951, p. 130

<sup>38</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. Harper and Row Publishers Inc. New York. 1951, p. 153

<sup>39</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. Harper and Row Publishers Inc. New York. 1951, p. 194

### 3.3 Williamson's chart



First, Williamson organizes Niebuhr's five categories in a schema with both a horizontal and a vertical axis, to better illustrate the correlation between them. Second, he matches a different liturgical tradition to each category, arguing that each tradition correlates with a specific worship style or model.<sup>40</sup>

The horizontal axis shows the categories anthropotropic and theotropic, explained as "God in search of humanity" and "humanity in search of God," respectively, pointing out the theological and ritual direction of the church and its rite. The theotropic church is the cult, where the basic expression is human *emotions* like "aspiration, devotion and the soul's

<sup>40</sup> Williamson, Francis H. *Ears to Hear, Tongues to Sing. Church Music as Pastoral Theology*. Unpublished, p. 13

longing for God.”<sup>41</sup> The ritual presider is the “prophet,” speaking “for God to the people.” The expressional basis of the anthropotropic church on the other hand, is *history*, the “priest” presiding and speaking “for people before God.”

Vertically, the categories are liturgical (above) and free (below), dividing the Christian assemblies into the types of “church” and “sect.” Whereas the church makes use of liturgical books and written rites, spontaneous and inspirational prayers typically govern the free assembly. Williamson also makes a point of the differences in organization, the historically state-financed churches with an appointed hierarchical government, versus the free churches, which find their leadership within or elected by the congregation. The chart can be summarized as follows:

- 1) **SYNTHETIC:** The Roman Catholics, and also the Anglicans, are highly liturgical and find their musical roots in Gregorian chant and composers like Palestrina. Their song is that of a unison choir – a natural and common song shared by all, completed by God.
- 2) **DUALIST:** The Lutheran church builds on the Roman Catholic tradition and adds the German and Scandinavian Chorale. The songs and the voices of the dualists are always under God’s judgment, as both the singer and the composition fall short of God’s glory. Paradoxically, because of God’s grace and forgiveness, the dualists keep singing.
- 3) **CONVERSIONIST:** The music of the Calvinist and Methodist traditions distinctively differ from that of the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran churches, but also reaches out and draws on all the other four positions. The “transformer of culture” assemblies do not throw out the Prayer Book altogether, but make use of it in a limited way and are mostly concerned with the basic structure of a ritual. The songs and content of the ritual are generally a matter of democratic decision, rather than monarchial rule, as has been the case with many state affiliated churches.
- 4) **SEPARATIST:** Examples like the Anabaptists and other separatist churches show a tradition detached from the churches in the center (dualist, synthetic and conversionist.) This is also evident in their song, the ideal of which is to be different from the songs of the world. Not so much a separate musical style, the “against

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<sup>41</sup> Williamson, Francis H. *Ears to Hear, Tongues to Sing. Church Music as Pastoral Theology.* Unpublished, p. 8

culture” song consists of words that are shared and give meaning to the specific exile community.

- 5) ACCOMMODATIONIST: American community churches are examples of the Christ of Culture perspective; “feeling no strong bonds to any liturgical practice, accommodationist churches pick and choose from history but are primarily shaped by the aesthetic attitudes of contemporary culture.”<sup>42</sup> Their song is “of culture” and resembles secular song, as the ideal of spiritual music corresponds with that of popular music.

### 3.4 Contextuality in paradox

If we base our cultural and liturgical belonging on Niebuhr’s and Williamson’s schema, the church of Norway is right at home in the Lutheran quadrant where it brings its gifts to the church and the world. In the dualistic understanding of existence the paradoxes of evil exist next to good, grace next to sin, doubt next to faith, God next to human. This does not mean that culture is “good enough” to stand next to God; on the contrary, the Word always judges the culture. Culture is broken and corrupt – not only the world but also the church which means all people, Christian or not, all thoughts, religious or secular. It is only through Christ that the brokenness can remain standing, not in the sense that the culture heals up and recovers; it has forever fallen and broken into pieces. But this is the paradox, that we can speak human words and utilize the culture of the world to say something about God. At the same time as Christ makes all things new, all things remain the same. Thomas Aquinas and the synthesists would have it another way, placing Christ at the top, as if overlooking the world and all in it from his perspective at the highest point of a gothic arch, culture down below, not entirely corrupted but with its sins and flaws. From the perspective of the synthesists, the paradox is left behind, as they strive to climb up after Christ, culturally elevated, to reside in a realm not-so-cracked.

Nor can the paradox find its place within the church of the accommodationists, where culture is Christianized and Christ cultivated to the point where there is no tension between the two. Even further away seem the separatists, who deny the good of creation and culture all

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<sup>42</sup> Williamson, Francis H. *Ears to Hear, Tongues to Sing. Church Music as Pastoral Theology.* Unpublished, p. 7

together, and see worship more as a hideout in a sanctuary, away from that which makes hands dirty.

Of course, these are typologies that never can be found in pure form, neither between nor within churches and denominations. Many theologians have modified the Lutheran position of Christ and culture in paradox, Grundtvig to name one. Rejecting the total brokenness of culture, Grundtvig argues that Christian life instead has its basis in human culture, expressed for instance in his well-known phrase “Human first – Christian next”. He says:

”...saa nødes vi til at betragte Folke-Livet paa hvert givet Sted som det ny christelige Livs Forudsætning og Betingelse, da de kun er i de adskillige Folks Liv, at Menneske-Livet er virkelig tilstede...”<sup>43</sup>

One might argue that the Church of Norway in its Grundtvigian expressions in some ways is closer to the Christ *above* culture perspective. Yet other parties within the church seem inclined to agree with a more separatist worldview. Even so, the Lutheran perspective is the quadrant, traditionally, theologically, and dogmatically, from which the church’s direction is staked out, even by those who move in other directions.

As dualists therefore, the paradox is a sensible, and perhaps necessary starting point for revising liturgies. In the words of Niebuhr, “the dualist cannot speak otherwise than in what sound like paradoxes; for he is standing on the side of man in the encounter with God, yet seeks to interpret the Word of God which he has heard coming *from the other side*.”<sup>44</sup>

### 3.5 Contextuality in “words from the other side”

Is “*from the other side*” a possible key to contextuality? Lutheran liturgy needs to reflect Lutheran duality and let contextual expressions exist and flourish next to the expressions of Christian proclamation. However, when culture and Christ paradoxically exist next to each other, does this mean that any expression, be it from “world or Christ,” is just as liturgically legitimate? According to Johannes Sløk, in order to deal with this question, one must consider the function of what he calls *devotional language*. Devotional language “doesn’t speak about

<sup>43</sup> Grundtvig, N.F.S.: Værker i udvalg VI. Nordisk Forlag. København. (1944) s. 108

...”so we are urged to view people’s lives in every place as the pre-requisite and condition for new, Christian life, as true human life is only really present in life amidst different people...” (My translation)

<sup>44</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard. Christ and Culture. Harper and Row Publishers Inc. New York. 1951, p. 156



something... it expresses something, and – by doing so – it makes it real. This is, all in all, the function of devotional language.” Contrary, rational language is in its pure form only a piece of information; it speaks of an object outside oneself. Information can of course have a message implied, as when someone says: “The ashtray is on the table.” This is information about where a particular object is to be found and also a message to the smoking woman in the room. But even if rational language may *promote* an action, for instance making the smoking woman tap the ashes off her cigarette, or *speak of* an action, as when someone says: “I love you,” it does not in itself act. Even when tied to an action, as in a curse or a promise, it is only legitimate as a statement in one particular and rational situation. The act of the rational statement depends on everyone involved grasping, in a rational, intelligible manner, what is meant and implied.

Devotional language, in contrast, is essentially an act. When the priest says: “I baptize you,” it is not at all a piece of information about what he or she is doing, as when the doctor says: “I’m giving you an injection.” It is an action; the very statement is the baptism.<sup>45</sup> The words of the ritual do not belong to the person who utters them; the priest is merely the person who puts voice to the words.

Devotional language is an act, says Sløk. It is not the act of the congregation, even though the parishioners speak the words, nor is it the act of the liturgists, even though they do the performance. It is not even an act on behalf of God, as it would imply that the liturgist or whoever utters the words is involved in the acting. When the words of the liturgy are spoken, it is God’s act, in God’s Word, coming *from the other side*. That is, the only way we can say anything about God is through the words that come to us from God’s self. “God is known only where He Himself makes His Name known. Apart from this self-manifestation He is unknowable,” writes Emil Brunner, and continues: “The pagan – or what comes to the same thing in the end – philosophical language of God does not create communion with God, because it is not knowledge of the God who – since He makes Himself known – creates communion with Himself.”<sup>46</sup> In this sense, God is on both sides of the table, creating in us the possibility for responding, always with God’s own answer, in “words from the other side.” It is problematic to put into play language that leads away from this dialectic. This is not to say

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<sup>45</sup> Sløk, Johannes. *Devotional Language*. W. de Gruyter. Berlin; New York. 1996, p. 143

<sup>46</sup> Brunner, Emil. *The Christian Doctrine of God. Dogmatics: Vol. 1*. The Westminster Press. Philadelphia. 1946, p. 120.

that devotional language necessarily is something contrary to contextual expressions. What is problematic, however, is to exchange traditional liturgical elements with local variants. There seems to be a tendency to “bless” all local factors and words as religiously valid. The argument is perhaps that of the accommodationists, that there is no tension between world and Christ; they are in fundamental agreement with each other. There is also the wish or need of reassuring the local congregation that their traditions, be it music, bread or characteristic words of the dialect, are “good enough” for the church. A somewhat far out example of local accommodation is making use of a cowbell, in place of church bells, for the bells call to worship. This is not an uncommon custom when it comes to the tradition of celebrating Sunday service in the mountains, in proximity to all the summer farms. In a self-experienced incidence, someone was doing the duty of ringing the cowbell as I walked through the crowd and entered the altar area. A snickering voice whispered as I passed: “Here comes the cow!” Being allowable as a one-time lack of a bell solution and great material for an anecdote, it does not work as a permanent, contextual variant of church bells. The reason, of course, is that it creates all kinds of associations, the call to worship possibly the least.

### 3.6 Changing the order: A sectarian move

Geir Hellemo points out that the NFG has been very afraid of forcing congregations to make changes in the liturgy against their will.<sup>47</sup> The committee has given much ear to those who did not want a reform at all. This became evident in the “under construction” period of the liturgies, as the committee first suggested a fixed order of the liturgical parts, with some in new positions. In the final edition of the liturgies the choices are offered to a) go for the new placing, or b) leave the part where it used to be. This applies to the Words of entrance, the Confession, the Collect, the Baptism, some of the Hymns, the Announcements, the Offering, and even the Lords Prayer, if one considers all the other options in connection with the Eucharistic Prayer. Furthermore, there is no requirement to be consistent in choosing the old placing or the new. Otherwise, one might have gotten a sense of two main structures, one old and one new. However, a congregation may choose to keep the old order for the Words of entrance, but move the Confession. This moving around of the liturgical parts is one of the most problematic sides to the reform, as it creates a fundamental insecurity for the congregation as to what comes next. It cannot be justified by the argument that the

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<sup>47</sup> Hellemo, Geir. Liturgisk kompetanse før, under og etter reformen, p. 8  
<http://www.prest.no/files/2011/08/Geir-Hellemo-Liturgisk-kompetanse.pdf>

congregation will learn after a while; even if they should get the hang of it after a year or two, they are again strangers when they step into another church. When the principle of one, common order of the mass is given up, Hellemo says, “we are moving into a formless landscape that is threatening to identity. To me, it is important that the worship service in Gamle Aker in Oslo, and the services in Sandnes and Bryne are similar enough that I, without effort, can recognize it in all places; that the worship service is predictable in the sense that I can experience it as mine, despite the differences. This experience of predictability and recognition rests most and foremost on structural synchrony. I appreciate different Eucharistic Prayers, but I want to know that the Lord’s Prayer always comes at the end.”

The same point seems to be made in the introductory part of the newest book of worship for the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America), “Evangelical Lutheran Worship” (ELW). Having moved from three settings in the “Lutheran Book of Worship” (LBW) of 1978<sup>48</sup>, there are ten settings of the liturgy in the new. In contrast to the new Norwegian liturgies, however, the settings only offer different *music* for the Ordinary; the order of the service is exactly the same in all settings. Nevertheless, it claims to attend to the consideration for local form and influence: “The basic pattern for this service – gathering, word, meal, sending – is a structure that allows for freedom and flexibility in the ways worship may be shaped locally, while focusing on what the church holds in common.”<sup>49</sup>

Has “what the church holds in common” waived right of way to local shaping in the path that the Norwegian church has taken with its liturgies? Considering the Lutheran roots of the Norwegian Church, is this a legitimate approach to change, or is the church making a sectarian move? An example of a move toward liturgical sectarianism is John Calvin’s liturgy Lord’s Day of 1540. Representing a regulative principle of worship, which allows only in the liturgy that which is instituted by command or example, or called for by Scripture, Calvin kept much of the *shape* of the liturgy, but abandoned the words and music of the Western rite. Highly liturgical in form, it paid more attention to the spiritual quality of the service than to the tradition of the *words*. Calvin’s service was as such a step away from that which was commonly known. Luther, on the other hand, was very concerned with the tradition, both the shape and the words, the Latin and the Gregorian chant. The reformation and Luther’s

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<sup>48</sup> Lutheran Book of Worship. Augsburg Fortress. Minneapolis, 1978

<sup>49</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Worship. Pew edition. Augsburg Fortress. Minneapolis, 2006, p. 91

Deutsche Messe did not empty out the tradition of the mass; rather, Luther's intention was to build on the liturgies of the late middle ages and stabilize the liturgical elements.<sup>50</sup>

Another parallel might be drawn to Pope Benedict XVI and his 2006 initiative to rework the common English translations of the Ordinary of the Mass. On the first Sunday of Advent in 2011, the Roman Catholic Church changed the congregational answer to the priests, "The Lord be with you," from "And also with you" to "And with your Spirit." Setting aside the collective, liturgical memory of the people, many of the core liturgical elements were rewritten, like the Gloria and the Nicene Creed. In a letter to the Pope, Dr. Paul Westermeyer expresses his grief that forty years of ecumenical collaboration is also set aside. He calls the new translations a "sectarian Protestant assault on your own people"; not only do the new translations steal away what the people know by heart, but they also separate people and families of different church heritages.<sup>51</sup>

One might argue that these examples of sectarianism are a great distance away from the changes the Church of Norway has made in its new liturgies. The words that we are to choose from are drawn from a common source and all printed in "Gudstjeneste for den Norske kirke." However, there is a move away from what is common and shared, when even very basic words are made into a variable. The reflex-like "Amen" response is a good example:

Since the beginning of worship, Justin Martyr points out, "Amen" is the assent of the congregation to the prayer or proclamation: "When he (the Ruler of the Brethren) has concluded the prayers and thanksgiving, all the people present assent by saying Amen. Amen in the Hebrew language signifies "so be it."<sup>52</sup> This is the natural as well as original response of the congregation; after the prayer, the people want to say "Amen!" The Amen should come from the bone marrow of the people, in the same way as the congregation over the centuries has learned to respond in the Sursum Corda, "The Lord be with you – And also with you. Lift up your hearts – We lift them up to the Lord."

What then, is the great consequence of a congregation selecting or leaving out a simple "Amen"? It seems like a minor point. What we are doing, however, is discharging the ballast,

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<sup>50</sup> Fæhn, Helge. *Høymessen i går og i dag*. Universitetsforlaget. Oslo. 1968, p. 31.

<sup>51</sup> Westermeyer, Paul. <http://www.praytelligblog.com/index.php/2010/01/13/an-open-letter-to-benedict-xvi/>

<sup>52</sup> Martyr, Justin. 1 Apology, 65.

our unison song and our common reflex response. Imagine an eager churchgoer from Vågå attending his niece's confirmation service in Lesja. (Vågå initially decided to do the "Amen" after the Words of entrance; Lesja did not.) "The peace of the Lord..." starts the minister. "Amen!" responds the man from Vågå. The embarrassment will very likely choke his next "Amen". The church needs its answers to be unison; if not, the congregation will become an insecure choir with its nose in a printed bulletin, and in the end, it will lose its voice. As Kavanagh puts it, high variability in answers and responses leads to a situation where one must "swamp the assembly with printed orders of service, printed collections of music all must sing, printed rubrical changes, practice sessions which distract and weary, and constant commentaries for the confused of how the event is going. All this confounds people, reduces many to passivity, and drives them away."<sup>53</sup>

Another issue concerning the "Amen reflex," as well as other congregational responses, is the necessity of them being exactly that, namely *congregational* responses. It is not rare to hear a pastor "helping the congregation out" in answering "- and also with you". Westermeyer says: "The congregation's parts (like "Amen" or "And also with you") belong to the congregation and should not be taken by the one who is leading. If the congregation chooses not to sing or say them, a leader cannot supply the absence and by trying to do so only makes a talk-to-onself confusion of their responsive nature."<sup>54</sup> The problem of a non-responding assembly needs to be dealt with in a different way, by addressing the issue properly outside the worship setting.

### 3.7 Contextuality and motive

The evident main motive for the congregations in Nord-Gudbrandsdal to work on the new liturgies was the General Council order to do so. Many churches, however, had already started to make some changes in the 1977-liturgy, a clear expression of a growing discontentment with some of the elements and phrases. The UKM request was an expression of the same: a wish for flexibility in the worship service, allowing more diversity and different expressions. In this sense, the reform came at a time when the church was beginning to ask for more flexibility and local influence, and the motive and motivation was at a high.

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<sup>53</sup> Kavanagh, Aidan. *Elements of Rite. A handbook of Liturgical Style.* Pueblo Publishing Company. New York. 1982. p 60.

<sup>54</sup> Westermeyer, Paul. *Some Theses about Worship.* Thesis 10.

Still, the interviews with the Nord-Gudbrandsdal pastors reflect that certain other motives have also played a role in the local liturgical work. First, there seems to have been an element of *competition*. In a smaller district like Nord-Gudbrandsdal, where the municipalities are used to cooperating politically, but also competing and fighting for their share of public positions and funding, this is both a positive and a negative factor. It is positive on the football field and in the attempt to collect more money than the neighbor municipality in the annual charity fund-raising campaign, but negative when a community loses the ambulance station or a key public function to another town. Three pastors mention in the interview that looking at the liturgical “achievements” in neighboring congregations was a stress factor in the process, and that being successful compared to others, both congregations and other pastors or musicians, was a recognizable motive.

A second ulterior motive mentioned was the explicit aspiration to choose differently from the other congregations in the area. A competitive element is likely to be part of this ambition, but it is also likely that the high-held ideal of being contextual made each parish strive to find a form different and separate from the church down the road. This is especially reflected in the parts of the liturgy that are open for new formulations, for instance the Gathering prayer and the Confession. Four of the seven parishes have had a local poet compose texts specific to the particular congregation.

## 4 NEW PRAXIS – A REQUEST

### 4.1 Keep the baby

There have been many inspiring moments since I became involved in the implementation process of the new Norwegian liturgies in 2010. For one, Church musicians and pastors were given a unique opportunity in working together on liturgical material through the “Kurslederkurs i Gudstjenestereformen” program. The methodical side of the reform has in many ways been very successful; I would say that the work I did with the Lesja organist during this coursework has made a fundamental change to how we plan and think about worship. The common knowledge and references we share make us leadership companions, aware in a new way of our respect for and dependence on each other.

Second, there have been very many good conversations about liturgy in the local community, in the worship committee and congregational council of course, but also during after-service church coffee, and even in the supermarket, as when someone approached me between the milk and the eggs in the following way: “I heard that you rapped the Creed last Sunday!”

Third, many new songs and prayers and other liturgical expressions have surfaced during this reform, through the work of many professionals and lay people in the local congregations. Praying with the words of a local person is a very strong expression. It is almost as if the author’s voice speaks the words and we can picture him or her in our minds. This is the great thing about contextuality; it *involves people*. But it is also what makes contextuality a fragile and vulnerable project; what if the congregation does not like the prayer and exchanges it for another? How does it make the poet feel? Or what if someone in the pews holds a grudge against the writer? This is always a very finely-calibrated act of equilibrium; when the contextual and involving elements become too local, or even private, they may very well serve to exclude rather than include the parishioners from the worship experience. Kavanagh says something of the same sort in his *Elements of Rite*:

“Liturgy is not adapted to culture, but culture to the liturgy... It is difficult to see how a Christian liturgy could remain faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ while allowing itself to become perfectly adapted to a culture hostile to that Gospel. In such a case, the liturgy would be supine before that which the assembly of faith is obliged to

undercut, overturn, and reverse. The culturalization process in the liturgy must therefore be different from this."<sup>55</sup>

This does not mean that liturgical language is some sort of artificial, religious construction free of pagan influence; cultural symbols and expressions have always been absorbed by and made their mark on the liturgy. Local culture however, should not *control* the liturgy in the sense that the liturgy is made to be primarily a local expression. Frank C. Senn cautions against a *particularization* that threatens the universal relevance of the gospel to all cultures: "This was precisely the reason Martin Luther was reluctant to give up the use of the Latin rite in favor of an exclusively vernacular one. Particularization can result in a narrow religious provincialism in which the essence of the church's catholicity is lost."<sup>56</sup>

In the light of this, the "Amen" in the worship service is an example of a universal expression, which by its meaning and history of use, never can be made into a contextual matter. On the other hand, there are certainly parts of the service that can and must be of local character: "As a human act, liturgy ought to be humane; that is to say, people should be able to be themselves in worship. This means that the forms and styles of celebration should be expressive of the indigenous culture," says Senn.<sup>57</sup>

The interviews with the church musicians and pastors of Nord-Gudbrandsdal give a good indication of what the local churches consider to be important contextual expressions. The music is highlighted, and different worship backdrops like the "hunting service" before the reindeer hunting season or the "summer service" in the outdoors by the summer farms or in the mountain chapels. Perhaps the most important change is the participation of different people, both in the preparation and celebration of the worship service. This has made the church representative in a new way, through the service of young and old, professionals and lay, frequent churchgoers and "guest performers." Many of the great changes that have happened through the reform are changes for the future, changes for seriously needed "involvement, contextuality and flexibility."

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<sup>55</sup> Kavanagh, Aidan. *Elements of Rite. A Handbook of Liturgical Style.* Pueblo Publishing Company. New York. 1966, p. 56

<sup>56</sup> Senn, Frank C. *Christian Worship and its Cultural Setting.* Fortress Press. Philadelphia. 1983, p. vii

<sup>57</sup> Senn, Frank C. *Christian Worship and its Cultural Setting.* Fortress Press. Philadelphia. 1983, p. 13



## 4.2 Pour the water out

When the bishop approved the worship orders in the fall of 2011, the congregations were advised to keep the new liturgies for two to three years before revising or making further changes. As Church of Norway strives to find a right path for its liturgical future, some of the rinsing water that has made certain things shine must be poured out. What might have felt like a refreshing drink of new words and ways of putting things together in the beginning process has become a pool of changing elements, sounds, movement and order. The new needs anchor, and the anchor is *one, common setting of the Ordinary*.

There was an initiative by the dean of Nord-Gudbrandsdal in the spring of 2014 to join forces within the deanery to find one musical setting that could be learned and used by all. Considering the shared cultural traditions in this area, this seems to be a move in the right direction. It is pressing, however, that the church finds a way back to a structure that can sustain the weight of all the new! When the musical and theological professionals find the definite place for the Confession and the Kyrie, the congregations will be set free to sing their new melodies, involve new people, and give worship new backdrops, *together, before God's face*.

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## Attachments

Westermeyer, Paul. Some Theses about Worship.

**Some Theses about Worship**  
compiled in response to comments  
from various quarters about  
incompetent presiding and  
worship construed as chaos

Paul Westermeyer

1. Christian worship belongs to the whole company of the baptized, not to its leaders – ordained or lay.
2. Christian communities instinctively know worship to be their birthright and not the property of any single person or group wherever the Word is faithfully preached; sacraments are faithfully administered; intercessions for the world are faithfully prayed; congregations and choirs sing around Word, font, and table; and deliberation and action on behalf of the world are faithfully carried out.
3. Sunday is the festival of the Resurrection, the Lord's Day, the day for Word and Table – for strong preaching and strong celebration of Holy Communion.
4. The other days of the week call for Daily Prayer, especially in the morning and evening – brief for most of the church, lengthier for communities that share a common life together.
5. That worship belongs to the Christian community means belonging to the whole body of the baptized around the world at the present moment and before the current generation, from the New Testament church onward. That is why Christians respect what their sisters and brothers have done at worship and learn from their mistakes.
6. Though the liturgy can be misused and deformed by leaders who hijack it for their own ends, it represents a prophetic witness against all such attempts. Its continuing presence across generations points to its embrace by the whole body of believers, not to control by bishops, pastors, musicians, or other leaders who are ultimately powerless to enforce or destroy it; rhetoric to the contrary is a ploy for individual power against the community of faith.
7. Christian worship has logical and communal shape and flow; it is not a grab basket of items tossed into the air and then forced together as scattered and unrelated pieces.
8. Though there have been and still are various “uses” with immense variety in them, the church in the East and the West has employed common patterns and texts in its worship.
9. Christian worship lives in the memory of the Christian community; service books and hymnals function as cue cards.

10. The congregation's parts (like "Amen" or "And also with you") belong to the congregation and should not be taken by the one who is leading. If the congregation chooses not to sing or say them, a leader cannot supply the absence and by trying to do so only makes a talk-to-oneself confusion of their responsive nature.
11. Wherever the responsive nature of Christian worship is absent, the disease needs to be addressed by the church.
12. All talk from leaders that is idle prattle, gives unintelligible and meaningless instructions, or tells people to sit and stand when that is perfectly obvious reflects the leader's insecurities, not the community's needs.
13. Leading at worship is not about emoting, which points to the leader; it is about communal flow and content, which point to God.
14. A central responsibility of leaders at worship is to remain silent except when the liturgy requires them to sing or speak.
15. When leaders insert their own private opinions or idiosyncratic constructions, they call attention to themselves and make it impossible for congregations to respond.
16. Friendliness and hospitality to all who come are endemic to Christian worshiping assemblies; when they are absent, the disease needs to be addressed.
17. Friendliness and hospitality are not the same as smothering assault.
18. Leaders' attempts to "connect" with people at worship by personal characteristics of piety, skills, or anything else, no matter how well-intentioned, are works' righteousness and a denial of God's grace.
19. Proclamation is not about selling something or convincing anybody of anything, which turns Christianity into one more of the culture's irrelevant religious commodities to be sold; it is about announcing what God has done in Christ.
20. We become relevant to the gospel; attempts to make it relevant to us deny it.
21. Humor is not absent from worship, but it is contextualized by worship's gravity, not by trivia.
22. Worship is not entertainment in the sense of an amusement; its communal character, where everybody has a role under the umbrella of God's grace, makes it qualitatively distinct from the culture's entertaining venues.
23. The role of lay assistants ought not to be taken by the ordained clergy.

24. The preaching, sacramental presiding, and absolving roles of the ordained clergy ought not to be taken by lay people.
25. Ordination is not coronation. It is the way the church keeps leaders of Word and sacraments in their rightful place. Either to mock it or to turn it into stardom is to degrade the whole body of the baptized.
26. Ordination is not certification to speak one's own idiosyncratic and monologic agendas; it is a summons from God through the church to tell what God has done and does in Christ and to preside at font and table – as servant.
27. Cantors (church musicians) are not authorized to use the power of music for their own self-gratification or control of others, but are called to steward it in community around Word, font, and table for the good of all – as servants.
28. Servanthood does not deny but affirms the authority, responsibility, and accountability which are endemic to all the vocations of the baptized.
29. Clergy who denigrate their ordained office with self-hatred in the name of the priesthood of all believers tragically misunderstand their office, its authority, and the priesthood of all believers; they wreak havoc on the people they serve by defining them through their own sinful persons and personal traits.
30. Readers, from both laity and clergy, need to be able to read in public so as to be understood meaningfully and with clarity. That does not suggest histrionics or memorizing, which highlight the reader's capacities rather than the Word of God.
31. "The historic liturgy is not based on the Bible as if there were a prescribed order of worship in the New Testament. But the Bible is the liturgy's primary text" (Frank Senn, *Liturgy* 19:3 [2004]: 5).
32. The central readings at Christian worship are from the Bible, which make sense in the context of the community through whom God gave it birth and whose words about the Word are proclaimed in the hope that we will hear the new life which is offered and know our adoption as God's daughters and sons.
33. Silence has a place in worship.
34. So does pacing. Caring pastors and musicians realize its importance and respond to its dynamics with the congregations they serve.
35. The church's historic liturgical practice protects the people from their leaders and protects leaders from the rest of the people.
36. The liturgy and ecumenical lectionary across the Church Year recall the fullness of God's mercy and the faith it engenders.
37. For a part of the church to re-write the liturgy or to omit portions of it (not the same thing as employing the liturgy's own remarkably flexible options which

include subtractions and additions on specific occasions), no matter how well-intentioned, is to assume a few persons in one small time and place know more than the whole church and can avoid its checks and balances. Parts of the Christian faith are invariably left out or detrimentally modified when this happens.

38. To re-write the ecumenical creeds is to force people to confess what the church does not believe. Ironically, it subverts the very justice it often presumes to embody and turns the church into ideological factions of “conservative” or “liberal” agendas.
39. “That the proclamation and prayer of the church regularly bursts into beauty, indeed seems to insist on music and choreography and setting, is not an adventitious hankering to decorate” (Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, I [1997], p. 235).
40. Though the liturgy bursts into beauty, dress, and gesture, it is not synonymous with any single form of ceremonial.
41. The liturgy treats people with hospitality; those who dismiss its wisdom and go it alone, no matter how well-intentioned and attractive, do the opposite.
42. The liturgy makes it possible for communities of all sizes to worship God, not only large or wealthy ones who are able to attract and pay especially gifted leaders.
43. The people pray to God as a community through Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit, not with a leader’s private devotions. That is why invitations to pray are straightforward bids like “Let us pray,” not formulations like “Please pray with me,” which call attention to the leaders and highlight their individual pieties.
44. So also greetings like “Good morning,” even when well-intentioned, call attention to leaders and to those who assemble, not to the God who calls them to assemble. To scatter such greetings throughout a service is to make it more and more curved in on itself so that the presence of God is avoided.
45. Intercessions need to be made for the whole world, not only for local needs.
46. Prayers are not announcements addressed by the leader to the assembly; they are petitions from the assembly, usually voiced by one person on the assembly’s behalf, addressed to God.
47. Vestments dress leaders down, not up. Albs keep leaders from showing off their own clothing and bodies, stoles signify the pastoral office, and chasubles tie the church to its roots.
48. The Orthodox practice, where only one service of Holy Communion is held on any given day, has much to commend it, because it invites the whole community to gather rather than separate parts of it.

49. Such a practice also allows worship to be as short or as long as it needs to be – without the extrinsic constraint of one service on the heels of another one, the cultural predisposition that God's attention span matches ours, or the temptation of leaders for the second and successive services to be entertainers who are less and less organically related to the assemblies they serve.
50. Christian worship is for all sorts and conditions of humanity, not for artificial divisions of people into groups determined by age, sex, sexual orientation, generation, socio-economic status, ethnicity, likes, dislikes, needs, or anything else.
51. Infants and children are welcome at worship and should only be dismissed with the whole assembly; the whole community helps parents care for children and aids in carrying them in and out as may be necessary.
52. The disabled are welcome at worship; the whole community hospitably helps to care for their needs as may be required.
53. Music for the congregation has to be accessible to people who are not musicians and do not practice for worship.
54. Music for congregations has to be able to bear repetition across generations and centuries.
55. Music for choirs can be more complex because choirs practice for worship, but, like congregational music, it also has to have the quality of fittingness.
56. Instrumental music at worship, though delightful and helpful, is secondary.
57. Constant change of music at worship impedes memory, induces communal amnesia, and makes congregational participation difficult or impossible.
58. Though discreet use of microphones can be helpful for readings and preaching, for dialogical portions of the service it impedes or destroys congregational participation. Amplification of leaders during the congregation's singing is especially destructive.
59. Never introducing new music is as bad as only using old music or one style of music, which makes a single community into an idol.
60. Music that is ideal and authentic to a particular community of believers is the live music that a community makes, not what is pre-recorded – which denies a community's being by substituting an artificial and external product.
61. While the liturgy generates the deepest emotion by virtue of its intrinsic relation to life lived with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, it is not about feelings or emotions. It is about truth, whether or not we know it, feel it, or believe it.



62. Christian worship, like everything else the church does, is for the sake of the world for whom Christ died. It is at once conservative and radical. This is most obviously symbolized in the church's characteristic song at Evening Prayer, Mary's Magnificat recorded in Luke's gospel.
63. Benedictions and charges to the congregation are not the same thing.
64. The culmination of worship each Lord's Day is the imperative to go into the world as Christ's servants.
65. Worship is about the ordinary of life – normal words, water, bread, and wine under the discipline of habit and the grace of God – transformed into the extraordinary of new life. It is not about the spectacular or what human beings can do to create the spectacular any more than God in Christ is about that.
66. Worship is about the highest worth of human life. It deserves the finest of human crafting contextualized by the capacities of individual communities, not the worst or the slovenly or the superficial or the immediately appealing or the manipulative. We are to treat one another well, the way God in Christ treats us – at worship and in the world where worship leads.