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AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF LITURGY

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Editorial



This new volume of the Australian Journal of Liturgy begins with at least one new name on the masthead—my own, as I take up the role of editor. I am grateful to AJL’s outgoing editor, Angela McCarthy, and to Sharon Boyd, who continues as Associate Editor, for helping to facilitate a smooth transition. I am also grateful to the editorial panel for their guidance as we consider the journal’s future—more on that below.

While I am writing from the U.S.A., I am grateful for this opportunity to contribute to the Australian liturgical academy that has nurtured me through my own doctoral studies. My research focuses primarily on the assembly gathered for liturgy as the primary symbol of liturgical prayer. I have focused particularly on how the interactions of embodied human difference contribute to the liturgical theology generated in liturgical prayer. I contend, for example, that the baptism of a child unveils different dimensions of that foundational liturgy than that of an adult. The marriage of a same-gender couple proposes new theological contour to “marriage” as it has been practiced in most assemblies. Bodies with impairment propose images of God that trouble what is judged (unjustly) to be ‘normal’. I am grateful to our colleague Charles Sherlock for reviewing my thesis, *This Assembly of Believers: The Gifts of Difference in the Church at Prayer* (SCM Press, 2020) in the last issue of AJL.

Enough about the editor, now to this issue: Much of what you will read here emerged from the Academy’s 2022 online conference. Amelia Koh-Butler’s keynote signals the seismic shifts in common prayer occasioned by COVID-19—changes that surely have yet to fully unfold. Monica Barlow’s research with Roman Catholic families presenting children for first eucharist and confirmation reflects an already challenging reality before the pandemic. The declines in participation she documents will surely be accelerated by widespread suspension of Sunday worship in many contexts. Adam

Couchman's reflections on the power of corporate confession in Anglican liturgy signal hope; well-worn liturgical patterns can still yield fresh grace and insight. My own short reflections on the use of Open Space Technology during the Academy's 2022 conference close the coverage of our gathering.

Two further contributions add variety to the issue: Charles Sherlock recounts the work of Diana Hopton and Gilbert Sinden in the preparation, approval, and publication of *A Prayer Book for Australia* through the lens of a letter Sinden wrote at the time of APBA's approval. Jennifer Wakeling offers an introduction to her research on the way non-textual music produces meaning in liturgical prayer. Four book reviews round out this issue.

With the completion of one issue comes preparation for the next. Past Editor Angela McCarthy proposed an issue reflecting on 'inclusive liturgy' in her report to the conference. The AJL editorial panel is taking her idea and running with it. She proposes offerings on liturgies that address abuse, ageing, mental health, same-gender relationships, infertility and pregnancy loss, among others, all of which address realities that need prayer and ritual to help create space to encounter grace. The editorial panel welcomes submissions on these topics, as well as reviews of books that address them. This 'theme' is not meant to be exclusive, of course, but we do hope it provides a direction for contributions.

The need for contributions on any topic related to worship, liturgy, and common prayer brings us to the fundamental question facing AJL and the Academy: What does the future hold? Many among our number have lamented the few teaching positions devoted to liturgy and worship, which means fewer students are engaging these topics in scholarship. To survive—whether in its current form or in some digital or hybrid publication—AJL needs contributions, from peer-reviewed research, to essays reflecting on practice, to book reviews that help keep readers up to date. Please submit your own work, and encourage others to do so as well. In such ways we can learn from each other and maintain a flourishing Academy.

Bryan Cones
Editor

2022 Conference Keynote: Contextual Liturgy

Amelia Koh-Butler



Amelia Koh-Butler is a Chinese-Scottish-Aussie, adopted by the Adnyamathanha of the Ikara-Flinders, through Rev Dr Denise Champion. She is a missional integrator of worship, service, education, storytelling and hospitality (find out more on her blog, 'Hyphenated Faith'¹). She is the World Methodist Council's Global Worship and Liturgy Convenor, and teaches in North and Central America, Italy, France and Spain, Korea, Thailand and Singapore. Amelia is currently Ministry Team Leader, Eastwood Multilingual Uniting Church, along with her work as a Multifaith Chaplain with Western Sydney University and Distinguished Faculty of Wesleyan Formation with Northwind Seminary, FL, USA.

ABSTRACT

As crisis becomes the new normal, can the church, whose life has long been grounded in ritual, model a compelling liturgical lifestyle that moves us on from candlelit anger and despair into meaningful pathways of spiritual, social, and environmental revival?

At a previous Australian Academy of Liturgy Conference people were evacuated because of the threatening bushfires. Like so much of Australia at the time, I was aware of dislocation and crisis. It was not unusual for us to experience summer smoke haze, but the hell-fires burning in every direction took things to new levels.

People were being cut off from one another. People were isolated and afraid.

As liturgists we know that presence matters. Trauma-informed readings of scripture are playing catchup, for liturgists have long known that the traumas of life-changing-events should all be marked by rites and rituals². We are, after all, the specialists of hatches, matches and dispatches. During crises, we provide the non-anxious presence and well-worn prayers when people wait for news or resolutions.

¹ 'Hyphenated Faith', accessed 11 April 2022, <https://ameliakoh-butler.blogspot.com/>.

² See *The Bible Through the Lens of Trauma* (Semina Studies 86), ed. Elizabeth Boase and Christopher Frechette (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2016).

From before recorded time,
the First Peoples (Nations) cared for this Land.
We praise the Creator for the beauty of this Land
and honour those who have offered themselves
in tending it.

We acknowledge the Elders and communities
who have told the sacred stories
and nurtured faithfulness to the Creator.

We ask God's blessing on those who continue to work
for the healing and restoration of this Land
and Her Communities.³

In these strange times, I find myself teaching for two seminaries based in the USA: Northwind Seminary (the new Methodist online seminary)⁴ and Neighborhood Seminary⁵ (the local missions organization headed up by my dear friend, Elaine Heath). In the late-night and early morning Zoom conversations when I can meet with students and colleagues, we have discussed ethnographic research we have been undertaking about emerging spiritual and liturgical practices.

Our reflections through 2020 and 2021 were shaped by fires, floods, Black Lives Matter, an American election and so on. By themselves, these would have been worthy of study. We might ask: How do contexts of crises, with their associated griefs, angers, frustrations and despairs, impact on us? What rhythms and rituals hold us in a state of spiritual awareness and nourishment?

As we talked through crisis upon crisis and let our creative imaginations inspire one another, I began to realise: My companions on the road are in different time zones, on different continents and speak different languages. Yet, we light a candle, we hold our hand up to bless one another, or to wave when we are muted. We make contact in ways we could not have imagined when we were children. Some of my material today was developed in conversations with them and is echoed on our blog pages.

³ Amelia Koh-Butler, 'Wide and Deep' (Mile End, SA: MediaCom, 2016), XX.

⁴ Northwind Seminary, accessed 3 April 2022, <https://www.northwindseminary.org>.

⁵ Neighborhood Seminary, accessed 3 April 2022, <https://www.neighborhoodseminary.org>.

This is my body, given for you ...⁶

On a scorching and smoking summer day in Sydney in December 2019, my friend, Rev Mary Pearson, broke bread and passed it to the half-dozen of us standing around my husband's bed. His body was beyond receiving bread at that point, so we used a dropper to moisten his lips from the cup of life. Did it comfort him? I don't know.

As the spirit leaves the body, there is mystery and wonder and sadness and gratitude. They weave together in a story that is ending and beginning at the same time. At such a time, body-mind-spirit hold a strange little farewell dance. In final days or hours, when the spirit seems ready to depart, the body can have a last brief blossoming. Time pauses, making room for a different kind of moment. Some people call it *kairos*.⁷

For many of us, deathbed ministry is a time we know as sacred. We might do a session about it in a pastoral practice unit at college, but nothing really prepares us for the reality and the mystery. We talk about the cycles and rhythms of life, but we do not plan the phone-call that always comes at the most inconvenient of moments: Please come. If we have been well-mentored, we might have an accessible kit close-to-hand—a hand-cross, some oil for anointing, a large-print card with some prayers and responses, a Bible with sticky tabs at particular Psalms and passages of comfort, maybe even a hymnal.

These days, I have playlist of favourite hymns on my phone. I have playlists in English, Chinese, Korean and Fijian. I just need to cue them up before entering the room. When it is hard to talk, listening to sacred music together can be a physical and spiritual comfort.

I am a body donor. I carry a little card in my wallet stating that upon my death, the university medical school where I was a chaplain should be contacted so that my body parts can be used to help health professionals learn their craft of keeping other bodies going. When they have finished, my remains will be cremated, and the ashes will be boxed up for my kids to take to be scattered by elders on Adnyamathanha country. Ikara (Wilpena Pound) is a sacred remote wilderness land in Northern South Australia.⁸ My Adnyamathanha sisters and brothers are descendants of the oldest known civilization on the earth—60,000 years! The spot we have chosen for the ashes is near the grasstrees, also known as medicine trees. They will nourish the earth. It is the logical endgame for recycling. After all, our bodies are made from the earth and to the earth our bodies will return.

⁶ Luke 22:19 (New Living Translation): 'He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."'

⁷ Greek, meaning 'God's timeliness' (author's translation).

⁸ Ikara (Wilpena Pound), accessed 3 April 2022, <https://www.wilpenapound.com.au>.

The year 2019 feels like such a long time ago now. Bushfires create thunderstorms. The storms bring lightening, igniting more fires. The fire-storm cycles are noisy and terrifying. Air feels constantly thick and heavy. Our normal humid Sydney summer had been dry beyond imagining. To go outside was to battle at breathing and risk dehydration. I remember, after months of bushfires and instructions not to go outside, emerging into the great outdoors of scorched earth. I can remember it in my body.⁹

Touching the Body

During the earliest weeks of my widowhood, I did not want to be physically present to others. Physical absence was too fresh and dominating, so I turned to chaplaincy online for faculty and students. I became the 'home contact person' for a complementary medicine exchange group who had gone to our sister university in China. Even though I am half-Chinese, I am ashamed to say I did not even know where they were—some place called Wuhan, now remembered as the place where the COVID-19 pandemic began.

The group stayed an extra week to assist their colleagues before being recalled by our government to spend 40 days in offshore quarantine. By the time they returned home in February 2020, those of us who had been supporting them were preparing for potential SARS outbreaks. As Multifaith Chaplain, I attended a conference of health and emergency workers.¹⁰ I was meant to be comforting people who were scaring me. At that conference, we practiced protocols dictated by specialist epidemiology nurses and infection control public health experts.

By the time public health orders were introduced, I already had access to university data and projections. I was learning to share information in new ways digitally and started designing 'lockdown life' a few weeks before we started our community stay-at-home health order restrictions. I organised for deliveries of things I might need to tide me through what I assumed could be eight to ten weeks of isolation. I made sure I had plants to grow my own fresh greens and dry goods to keep me fed. I was well-stocked for my bodily needs.

I spent more than 120 days in official 'lockdown' that year. During that period, the only bodily touch I experienced was when I went to donate blood. (Blood donation is considered an exemption as it is an essential service.) My friends in Melbourne spent 267 days in lockdowns between March 2020 and October 2021. Some of them were utterly reliant on technology for human contact.

⁹ 2019 saw the worst bushfires in Australian recorded history. See Bushfires—Black Summer, Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub, accessed 3 April 2022, <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/black-summer-bushfires-nsw-2019-20/>.

¹⁰ Held at Westmead Health Precinct, Western Sydney, which was provided a crisis hub for New South Wales research and response to the emerging COVID-19 situation in early 2020.

Spending so much time physically isolated from others has a mental health cost. In Australia, most of our emergency departments were not full of COVID-19 cases. They were full of admissions of people who had made attempts on their lives. Isolation from human contact is costly. It makes me wonder: in such times, when people are experiencing social and communal crisis and trauma, what is the response of missional liturgy? How can our prayers and sacraments, our rites and poetry, become part of the work of healing and wholeness?

The term 'haptic' refers to touch and non-verbal communication and connection. In the last few months, I have been part of a conversation about 'haptic wondering', online sacraments and spirituality. In February 2020, believing lockdowns were coming, I published a 'Sacrament of Empty Hands' for the World Methodist Council.¹¹ It contained a Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, based on our communion/eucharistic prayers. It was written with the assumption that we would not be able to share bread because we could not gather as a body. I have heard from many people around the world about their experiences of sharing their common empty hands. However, where I am, my community chose not to go in the same direction. (An excerpt from this liturgy appears at the end of this essay.)

Since April 2020, my oversighting church, the Uniting Church in Australia, authorized and encouraged ministers to conduct online communion. I was more than a little challenged by the decision. The questions and concerns were layered. Yet, today, I look forward to Zoom communion. Together, we hold up bread and juice and know the Body of Christ is supported by both an online and unseen cloud of witnesses. Somehow, I am comforted that God's imagination is still creating new things.

This is my body, given for you. When we hold our bread up to the camera and invite the community to bless one another's bread from a distance, we are performing a rite physically. We each feel the bread. We each see the people. We each hear the words. We each sing of the holiness of God. We each offer a blessing of peace in Auslan sign language. This *we-eachness* is part of my body in isolation becoming part of the Body of Christ with others in mystery. As the Canadian United Church of Christ puts it in their prayer of affirmation: *We are not alone. We live in God's world.*¹²

¹¹ See Amelia Koh-Butler, 'The Liturgy of Empty Hands', Hyphenated Faith, accessed 20 March 2022, <http://ameliakoh-butler.blogspot.com/p/the-sacrament-of-empty-hands.html>.

¹² United Church of Canada, 'A New Creed (1968)', accessed 3 April 2022, <https://united-church.ca/community-faith/welcome-united-church-canada/faith-statements/new-creed-1968>

New Frontiers for Common Prayer

I continue to grapple with the question of what is prioritized in online worship as I prepare for the mid-2022 gatherings of the World Methodist Council and World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women.¹³ Unlike the World Council of Churches, we have decided to hold both events online. With the social justice emphasis of the Wesleyan tradition, it is not surprising that both sets of organisers have made this stand. They are conscious of our most vulnerable member nations' churches and the problems of trying to gather, when so few countries have access to vaccines, especially when fourth waves of Delta and Omicron are impacting even those countries with access to good health care.

So, how have churches in different countries responded to questions of digital church or non-gathered worship? I am in the process of coordinating a series of papers around the theme of feasting and fasting. In August 2021, worship and liturgy coordinators from fifteen countries met in a series of focus groups on Zoom. We heard stories of nationalised worship services in the Czech Republic held on radio, with people coming onto their balconies with bread and wine. We heard stories of household and bubble churches. We heard stories of countless pastors and priests leaving pastoral ministry because they were either ill from COVID-19 or were exhausted from the challenges of change, restrictions and isolation.

In one Zoom session, I talked with a United Methodist bishop in the southern United States of America. The normally brash and authoritative leader was quiet and reflective. She had gone from being bishop for one large conference to two large conferences. During the previous three months, she had conducted the funerals of fifteen of her ministers, most of whom had insisted on holding in-person services for Easter 2020 and paid the price within weeks. She estimated that a large number of parishes would close and there would be a significant shortage of pastoral leaders for a long time to come. This year, I have started teaching with both Elaine Heath's Neighborhood Seminary and the new online United Methodist Northwind Seminary. Both of these institutions are developing courses and liturgical specializations for online and non-physically-gathered worship.

I name these things because, despite our lengthy lockdowns, or perhaps because of them, in Australia we do not yet seem to have done as much serious work on alternative long-term forms of discipleship and worship. Shall we start to explore:

- Bubble church?
- Interactive online communities?
- Workplace chaplaincies online

¹³ World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, accessed 3 April 2022, <https://wfmucw.org>

As a chaplain to Western Sydney University and the Westmead Crisis Health Response Team, I am aware that these core community organisations are crying out for chaplaincy and welcoming pastoral, spiritually inclusive ministry. What are we doing when we are spending our time and resources measuring square metres within our buildings when people beyond the church are desperate for spiritual comfort and guidance?

Over the last two years, people have asked our congregation members for prayer:

- by the letterbox and at the Post Office
- on the bus
- at the railway station
- in the COVID-19 testing queue
- at the pharmacy

My congregation has written prayers in chalk on footpaths, tied prayer ribbons to fences, and organized encouragement banners to be hung from bridges. We have planted sunflowers across four suburbs as signs of hope. We have been learning about new ways to share photos and develop social media conversations. We have been working on learning how to make a website in four languages. We have been learning Auslan sign language for some responses to use on Zoom. We have to start using a different kind of liturgical imagination.

‘Unless a Grain of Wheat’

During our extended lockdown, we were allowed to go outside for exercise (on our own or with one other socially distanced person). I would sometimes find myself walking and enjoying the clean air (no bushfires and no cars). I would experience a moment of delight or joy and then be almost brought physically crashing down by a tsunami of grief from my husband’s death, making it difficult to breathe or keep standing. Apparently, this is quite common. I don’t remember learning about it in seminary, but several other widows and widowers (and my grief counsellor) have confirmed that it passes—eventually. Their encouragement helps me keep faith. The experience confirms for me the linking of body-mind-spirit. Sometimes my body recalls me to live as one whose faith is in resurrection, but not as one who denies death. So, how can we incorporate what we are learning about grief and loss and trauma as we proclaim good news?

In August, we sent sunflower seeds to members of our congregation. They planted them and we shared pictures with each other to show how the plants shot up tall. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the glorious golden sunflowers become our outdoor flower arrangement.

1 Corinthians 15:36-38, The Message¹⁴



Some skeptic is sure to ask, 'Show me how resurrection works. Give me a diagram; draw me a picture. What does this "resurrection body" look like?' If you look at this question closely, you realize how absurd it is. There are no diagrams for this kind of thing. We do have a parallel experience in gardening. You plant a 'dead' seed; soon there is a flourishing plant. There is no visual likeness between seed and plant. You could never guess what a tomato would look like by looking at a tomato seed. What we plant in the soil and what grows out of it don't look anything alike. The dead body that we bury in the ground and the resurrection body that comes from it will be dramatically different.

After periods of fallow or fasting, our fields and bodies are cleansed and renewed. We are ready, not to go back to old ways, but to start fresh. We hope we can integrate the wisdom of our discipline and experience. We pray we can offer our bodies as a worthy and living sacrifice of praise. As we emerge from solitary confinement Down Under, we are planning to weave connection and diversity into our lives, beyond what was previously sought or tolerated. While the earth remains, our experience of it has changed. We have learnt to connect differently. We have learnt how to inhabit our bodies with each other.

This is the Body of Christ.

In the breaking, we become the promise of resurrection.¹⁵

When my spirit is freed to go home, I pray my body can continue to be good news for the student doctors who learn and the patients they will treat. I pray the dust of my bones will nourish God's good earth.

In the Uniting Church in Australia, we have a 'Church in the Digital Age' task group, set up by our National Assembly. We are tasked to ask ecclesial-ordering and liturgical-pastoral questions: How have our attitudes changed? How is the context for mission and ministry evolving? What difference does digital engagement make? We are continuing to explore the Spirit's gifts in the light of extreme change. We regard the collective crises of 2019, 2020, 2021 as the push to become more adaptive and open to possibility.

¹⁴ Eugene Petersen, *The Message* (Carol Stream, IL: Navpress, 2014), accessed 19 April 2022, <https://messagebible.com/scrapture/?text=1+Corinthians+15%3A36-38>

¹⁵ Online communion liturgy, Eastwood, Sydney, 2021.

Excerpt from 'Sacrament of Empty Hands'

A Call to Worship for an Online Community

**The One who created every physical cell
and every aspect of energy calls us together now:**

From before time, God created the lands and waters,
given into the care of the people.
[Insert the Name of the traditional custodians of the Land]
We honour and respect those who have cared for the lands we are on,
now being woven together in this new sharing of story.

Across times and places,
God has moved and continues to move,
enlivening us with breath and vibrancy.

The Word who gave life before words were formed sings to us now:
the buzz of feedback reminds us of continuing creation and the promise of completion,
the flicker of image reminds us of past, present and future,
being stitched together from beyond time,
the wonder of time and place testifies to the One of all times and places.

The Community of God,
Creator, Redeemer and Comforter,
draws us in, into the heart of God,
to find comfort, rest, courage and home.

Come, Holy One—draw us into you!

Sharing

In this empty plate/basket [*lift and show*],
we choose to see the world's hunger.
We remember that millions of people, this day,
lack bread for Communion, bread for breakfast, bread for life.
We acknowledge that we ourselves hunger, this day,
in ways that no earthly bread can satisfy.

Hospitable God,
**meet us in our unmet hungers –
and help us to put our abundance
at the service of the poor.**

In this empty cup [*lift and show*],
we choose to see the world's thirst.
We remember that millions of people, this day,
lack wine for Communion, fruit for juicing, water for life.
We acknowledge that we ourselves thirst, this day,
in ways that no earthly cup can quench.

Hospitable God,
**meet us in our unmet thirsts –
and help us to put our fullness
at the service of the empty.**

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.' (Matthew 5:6)
In the name of Christ, Amen.

Invocation

Pour out the Holy Spirit on this empty plate/basket, this empty cup, that they may be
for us, even in their emptiness, the body and blood of Christ, so that we may take his
Life into our lives, and be taken and blessed, broken and given for the world.

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Baptism, Confirmation, First Eucharist: Sacraments of Initiation or Separation?

Monica Barlow

ABSTRACT

The number of practising Catholics (usually counted as regular Sunday Mass attendance) has been in evident decline for many years. Yet many parents still present their children for the sacrament of baptism and then for the sacraments of confirmation and first eucharist without any apparent desire to be connected with the local parish. Research into this anomaly is presently being conducted in the regional Catholic Diocese of Wollongong in New South Wales in an attempt to remedy this situation.

Introduction

This study focused on preparation for the sacraments of first eucharist and confirmation. The present practice in the Diocese of Wollongong is the reception of first eucharist at about seven or eight years of age and confirmation around 12 to 14 years. Across the diocese, there is a wide range of ways of preparation for these sacraments, sometimes focussing on the children and sometimes on both children and parents/carers, using a variety of published programmes from other dioceses (such as those of Sydney, Brisbane, Broken Bay) and individuals. At present there is no diocesan policy for the sacraments of initiation.

A brief outline of the relationship of baptism to confirmation and first eucharist is warranted. Baptism begins a person's sacramental life within the Catholic Church and foreshadows the reception of further sacraments, including first eucharist and confirmation. Preparation for baptism generally relies on the parish priest or a person designated by him and therefore is of an ad hoc nature.

The Catholic Church within and beyond Australia has experienced a general decline in active participation over the past few decades.¹ The absence of parents and their young families from church involvement has significantly contributed to this decline.² Roman Catholic teaching documents, including both the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Code of Canon Law*, emphasize the depth of importance placed on the

¹ For background information regarding the declining levels of religious participation among families, see P.S. Brenner, 'Investigating the Effects of Bias in Survey Measures of Church Attendance', *Sociology of Religion* 73:4 (2012): 361-83; C.D. Bader and S.A. Desmond, 'Do as I Say and as I Do: The Effects of Consistent Parental Beliefs and Behaviours upon Religious Transmission', *Sociology of Religion* 67:3 (2006): 313-29; P.S. Brenner, 'Cross-National Trends in Religious Service Attendance', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 80:2 (2016): 563-83.

² A. Barratt, 'Evangelisation, Mission and Pastoral Strategies', *The Heythrop Journal* XLIX (2008): 764-93.

ritual expression of its baptised members through regular Sunday Mass attendance. Parents are expected to be involved in first eucharist preparation following the baptism of their children. However, the disengagement between the obligation of Sunday Mass attendance and the decline in this attendance, particularly by parents, has become a matter of serious concern for the Australian Catholic Church.

The church expects that parents will continue to seek the sacraments of confirmation and first eucharist following the baptism of their child.³ The eucharist is the spiritual life-source for every baptised person.⁴ The eucharist lies at the heart of prayer and worship among baptised communities of the church. Baptism is the spiritual rebirth that points to a child's participation in the eucharist as the opportunity to be more deeply involved in the life of their parish through expression of personal and communal faith.

Baptism seeks the anointing of chrism at confirmation, an action that leads to what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to as 'an increase and deepening of baptismal grace' that renders a person's 'bond with the Church more perfect'.⁵ Furthermore, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* portrays the chrismal anointing at confirmation as enabling a person to receive 'a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to profess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the cross'.⁶

The church therefore understands that the parent's request for the sacraments of initiation is an expression of their desire for the child's full membership in the church. Membership means that as the child grows into adult maturity, he or she will actively and publicly declare what this membership implies. Despite this expectation, current survey findings of Sunday Mass attendance and participation in the church generally cast doubt on parents' understanding of this commitment and their readiness to actively demonstrate it in their own lives and in the lives of their children.⁷

Children, by nature of their developmental stages, are inherently dependent on the care, protection and nurture of their parents.⁸ As such, children are limited in their ability to understand the theological concepts that lie beneath the sacraments of initiation. This cognitive limitation does not, however, lessen the child's ability to be

³ The *Rite of Baptism of Children* summarizes the role of parents before, during, and after the liturgical celebration, including the role of the parish priest in facilitating preparation for this ministry. See, for example, 'Rite of Baptism for Children', paras. 1-7, in *The Rites of the Catholic Church* (New York: Pueblo, 1976), 188-90.

⁴ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: Doubleday Press, 2012), para. 1375.

⁵ *Catechism*, para. 1303.

⁶ *Catechism*, para. 1375.

⁷ National Centre for Pastoral Research, National Church Life Survey 2016, accessed 11 April 2022, <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/national-church-life-survey-ncls/>.

⁸ G.J. Stoyles, P. Caputi and B. Jones, 'An Investigation into the Beliefs of Children and Their Parents about What Designates Prominent Influences in the Formation of a Child's Spirituality', *Journal of Religious Education* 60:3 (2012), 4-13.

spiritually sensitive to the world, other people and God. Hart⁹ found that children as young as three years were able to sense the goodness or otherwise of adults with whom they came into contact. Hart suggested that young children were highly sensitive to the spiritual world though this sensitivity appeared to lessen as the child grew older. It seemed to Hart and others¹⁰ that childhood spiritual sensitivity did not rely on cognitive development for its action. Rather, cognitive development offered increased insight into the meaning of the child's inner capacity to sense the spiritual realm.

Of great importance in the parents' care of their children is the modelling of belief and practice by the parent. Parents exercise a notable influence on the religious practice and commitment of the child, both during childhood years and beyond this developmental period.¹¹ If parents impress the importance and value of religious practice and beliefs on their children, then the consistency of this message, together with frequent Mass attendance by parents, is likely to lead to religious transmission among their children. However, Bader and Desmond also found that religious transmission is weakened when parents mix this message with behaviours that are incongruent with it.¹² The positive effect of parental religiosity has been found to occur irrespective of whether a society is predominantly secular or not.¹³

A tension exists in the presentation of children for the sacraments of initiation. The church is committed to caring for those who are baptised and does so not only through the sacraments of initiation but also through every aspect of its sacramental and parochial life. Parents continue to request sacraments that symbolise their children's entry and welcome into the church. Yet parents appear to ignore the expected responsibility of forming their children in the tenets of faith and belief, as well as in their active practice as members of the church.

The current study explored the beliefs and feelings of parents about the Catholic parish-based preparation of children for the sacraments of confirmation and first eucharist in the Diocese of Wollongong.

⁹ T. Hart, *The Secret Spiritual World of Children* (Mau, HI: Inner Ocean Publishing, Inc., 2003).

¹⁰ G.J. Stoyles, P. Caputi, G. Lyons and B. Jones, 'What Influences the Formation of a Child's Spirituality? An Initial Study of the Preparation of Children for Admission into the Catholic Sacraments of Initiation', *Journal of Religious Education* 59:1 (2011): 30-39.

¹¹ See, for example, Bader and Desmond, 313-29; D. Voas and I. Storm, 'The Intergenerational Transmission of Churchgoing in England and Australia', *Review of Religious Research* 53:4 (2021): 377-95; D. Voas, D. & I. Storm, 'National Context, Parental Socialization, and the Varying Relationship Between Religious Belief and Practice', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 60:1 (2021): 189-97.

¹² See also B.H. Barrow, D.C. Dollahite and L.D. Marks, 'How Parents Balance Desire for Religious Continuity with Honouring Children's Religious Agency', *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 13:2 (2021): 222-34.

¹³ See Voas and Storm, 189-97.

Method

The current study was undertaken within the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong, NSW, following the request of the bishop. The Diocese of Wollongong lacked a formal ethics committee for the perusal of research undertaken in its midst. Hence, a committee of people who had relevant experience in areas that pertained to the focus of this study was brought together to consider any ethical concerns that might be present. This committee comprised teachers, parents, and the author of this study paper. Each committee member was provided with copies of proposed study questions. Consideration of and responses to the ethical content of each question was undertaken using email correspondence. Extensive email discussion occurred throughout this process. Item alteration, modification and at times rejection of items resulted from consideration of all questions.

The following areas comprised a questionnaire for parents, namely, why they presented their children for confirmation and first eucharist and reflections on the style of parish preparation for reception of these sacraments. This questionnaire was sent to all parents whose children were in school years parallel to the reception of confirmation and first eucharist. Collaboration between the study author and the Catholic Education Office of the Diocese of Wollongong ensured smooth dispersal of questionnaires to Catholic school parents. In relation to State schools, religious education teachers within these schools facilitated dispersal of the questionnaire to parents. Questionnaires were accessed on a Google supported website and a final submission date for responses was given.

An introduction outlining the research purpose was included with the study questions. Additionally, invited participants were informed that their responses were voluntary and anonymous. Anonymity was also explained. Out of respect for anonymity, limited demographic information was asked for. This meant that local details could not be accessed. The study author's name and contact details were provided should any invitee require further information either about the questionnaire itself or the purpose of the research. It has not been possible to ascertain how many questionnaires reached parents as their dispersal was out of the hands of the researcher. However, 416 responses were received from parents/carers and, while a good sample, it may represent only about 14 percent of possible responses.

The method of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke¹⁴ was used in the current study. At this point, a research assistant participated in the thematic analysis of data. This person possessed relevant skills and experience in areas pertaining to research needs of the study. The compiling of questionnaire responses led into the

¹⁴ V. Braun, V. and V. Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3:2 (2006): 77-101.

systematic generation of codes. Each code comprised salient and interesting features of the overall data set. Separate themes were then developed from these codes according to their meaning. This process was reviewed and refined through several iterations of the data set, resulting in the development of themes that represented the various narratives embedded within the data. Finally, a name was given to each theme. A small group of parents, teachers and clergy was formed. This group discussed the thematic analysis of data with a view to confirming its validity.

Results

The following tables present the data extracts, interpretation of their meaning and themes generated for the qualitative data emerging from the Parent Questionnaire. Data extracts often reflected similar ideas. Hence, the most prominent extracts have been inserted into these tables.

Four thematic titles were developed, namely: ... *‘for my child’*; *Yearning for God*; *Losing control of the process*; and *Doing what is required*.

Table 1. Thematic results for the parent questionnaire: ‘...for my child’

Thematic title:		<i>‘...for my child’</i>
Text	Code	Theme
‘The structure of the programme is not flexible. Attending so many sessions at night with small children is difficult, especially for those families who may be single parent families with multiple children.’	An inflexible programme potentially impinges on meeting the responsibilities of family life.	<i>Programme structure</i>
‘I’d like to see the parent aspect pitched a bit higher than it has been or else forget the irresistible urge to do compulsory faith formation for distracted/disengaged parents and focus instead on the pastoral ‘stuff’ (for parents) and understand what the kids are being taught (to support them)’.	Desire for a parent-centred focus that promotes interest.	<i>Programme content</i>
‘Supporting my child in any activity they participate in is a valuable use of my time.’	Time is not wasted when it is expended on behalf of the child.	<i>Programme engagement</i>

The comments of Table 1 appeared to concentrate on the preparation programme itself, including when the programme is offered (day and time), its content and the parent's willingness to become engaged in the programme. Comments for the first two themes (*Programme timing* and *Programme content*) gave the impression that parents felt excluded from development of the programme structure, both in its timing and its content.

It seemed that the needs of caring for one's family, especially in the case of younger, dependent children, clashed with the evening timing of sessions, as also did the number of sessions that parents were expected to attend. There was also an apparent call for greater inclusion of parents in developing an approach to formation that encouraged parents to reflect on and be challenged by knowledge and understanding of their faith. One participant commented: 'Parents are expected to attend but are rarely involved in the actual programme'. Finally, it was evident that parents were willing to expend their energy and time on any aspect of preparation that promoted their children's own interests.

In other comments, parents appeared to see the preparation programme in terms of opportunity. As one participant commented: 'Parent/child sessions should be an opportunity to further develop the family's spirituality and strengthen connections and relationship within the parish family'.

Opportunities for spiritual development were linked to church membership. Participant comments pointed to this wish, as in one instance: 'I want all the children...and their parents to have a positive experience of Church'. In another comment, there was recognition of the programme being an opportunity for developing '... a deep love and appreciation for the Catholic faith'.

The quality, depth and content of the programme seemed to be an important issue for some parents. Comments indicated that programme content was overly long, heavily theoretical and was presented in a manner akin to a lecture. The result of this matrix appeared to be feelings of boredom and lack of enjoyment in what was being offered. This response was considered to include both children and their parents: 'Children typically do not enjoy participating in the preparation programme and I feel like I am forcing them to attend and participate'.

The wish for an overhaul of programme presentation and content did not appear to imply that parents were making these comments from the basis of disinterest. There was the sense that parents sought to be challenged and formed in their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith. One participant's comment supported this notion: 'Sacramental preparation should seek to educate parents, particularly regarding why we practise what we do as Catholics'.

Finally, the theme of *Programme timing* implied that the busyness of family life casts a sense of frustration over the programme’s structure. One parent believed that commitment to four sessions increased the burden of other activities in the child’s and family’s life: ‘... very busy with sport and other outside school activities ... having to commit to [four] sessions when you’ve already made commitments to other activities is very hard.’

Table 2. Thematic results for the parent questionnaire: *Yearning for God*

Thematic title:		<i>Yearning for God</i>
Text	Code	Theme
‘I want the sacraments, not just so my child can have a ‘sense of God’, but have a deep, profound and meaningful relationship with him which leads to salvation’	The child enters a relationship with God through the sacraments of initiation that leads beyond this life.	<i>Child-God relationship</i>
‘Being part of the Catholic sacramental program (sic) gives them a solid foundation to think about faith, spirituality and caring for self and community’.	The preparation programme nurtures the child personally, spiritually and socially.	<i>Value of preparation</i>

The comments of Table 2 addressed the child’s journey towards the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist through their preparation programmes. The comments for both themes indicated the parent’s understanding of why the child was being presented for these sacraments. Being bound to God in a relationship that nourished the child’s personal, spiritual and social life was believed to be possible through the sacraments of initiation. The value of preparation was seen to lie in the child’s ability to develop a personal relationship with God through his or her engagement with the programme.

The espousal of the preparation programme demonstrated its link to reception of the sacraments. Hence, the programme was not considered to be lacking in this area. The preparation programme itself was also seen to nurture the child’s spiritual and personal life. Furthermore, it was not only a ‘sense of God’ that the parent sought for the child, but a promised relationship with God that was ‘profound and meaningful’ and that focused on the child’s life in both this world and the next. Hence, the child sensed the being of God through his or her sacramental preparation. The use of the words ‘sense of God’ indicated that the child’s experience of God through the preparation programme extended beyond the notions of understanding and knowledge into the sensate arena of being embraced by God.

Other comments took up this desire for the child to sense the being of God in his or her sacramental preparation. For example, one parent wrote: ‘I just want my children to have a lovely relationship with God’. In a similar vein, another parent wanted the child to ‘feel closer to God’.

Table 3. Thematic results for the parent questionnaire: Losing control of the process

Thematic title:		<i>Losing control of the process</i>
Text	Code	Theme
‘It turned us away from engaging with our local parish once we were told our children were not worthy of participating in the sacramental programs (sic)... disheartened at the treatment of others and inflexibility’.	Judging the child as not being worthy to receive the sacraments leads to a barrier for engaging with the local parish.	Disempowerment
‘NOT AT ALL family friendly—if you miss 1 session they won’t let you do the sacrament... ridiculous’.	An inflexible programme does not consider that family requirements might prevent attendance.	<i>Inflexible</i>
‘I don’t believe the way this is done in certain parts of our Diocese is conducive to improving connections with the parish. The ‘forced’ nature of it can be a deterrent if anything’.	An association is seen to exist between the programme’s implementation and resulting connection with the parish.	<i>Deterrent to parish connection</i>

The comments in Table 3 pointed to the desire of parents to be active participants in the preparation of their children for the sacraments of initiation. Thematic comments reflected a relationship between priest/parish and parent that seemed to be at odds in the aspects that shaped it. At one end, there was the criticism of parents about the way preparation was conducted, wherein the worthiness of children to receive the sacraments was judged, with programme expectations leading to feelings of unfriendliness. At the other end, it seemed that the preparation programme was aimed towards ensuring that the child was ready for the sacraments and that the reception of a sacrament was couched in an appropriately dignified and serious parental attitude. A conflict was therefore apparent in how both parish and parent viewed the preparation programme. One parent described the preparation process as being ‘forced’, subsequently deterring the wish to relate to one’s parish.

There was an evident desire of parents to be active participants in the development and implementation of the programme. This desire spanned several arenas. The notion of inclusivity carried with it the hope or expectation that the parish would recognise how the demands of family commitments prevented regular practice: ‘... children were denied by...work/family commitments (that) prevent us from attending regularly...if the church is not willing to accept us when presenting our children for sacraments, then there’s a lot to question.’

Other comments identified the content and style of preparation. These comments referred to the role and personal approach of the parish priest as well as criticising a checklist approach. ‘it is dependent on the parish priest...if the priest is not welcoming or engaging, it feels more like a checklist tick-a-box...’

Comments also indicated an over-emphasis on the practicalities involved in receiving the sacraments at the expense of deeper learning about the meaning of the sacraments. ‘The bulk of the meetings were about practicalities...when to sit, when to stand, how loud to speak, etc. Very little time was dedicated to exploring the role sacraments play in the story of our salvation or how to progress in the spiritual life.’

The desire for a broader approach to learning through the preparation programme was reflected in a participant’s comment, which expressed the wish that the structure of the programme would ‘make it more prayerful and a willingness to engage more with the parish.’

In general, participant comments appeared to describe a situation wherein parents attended the preparation programme for children’s sacraments with a desire for this preparation to be different from how it was presented. There seemed to be an underlying sense that parents wished to have greater input into the aims, process and outcome goals of the programme.

Table 4. Thematic results for the parent questionnaire: *Doing what is required.*

Thematic title:		<i>Doing what is required</i>
Text	Code	Theme
‘It is part of the responsibility of being a parent if that is how we want our children raised. I see it more as part of what we should naturally be doing...do not see it as adding anything extra that needs to be done.’	Preparation of the child for the reception of sacraments is a responsibility belonging to parenthood.	<i>Parental responsibility</i>
‘I look forward to preparing my child, but I do not look forward to parish preparation programmes as they lack the depth and richness of the Catholic faith.’	Enjoyment of preparing the child for sacraments conflicts with enjoyment of the preparation programme.	<i>Conflicted enjoyment</i>

The two comments in Table 4 described the parent’s involvement in the child’s sacramental preparation as residing primarily in parental responsibility for the child. There also appeared to be an added desire for the parent to benefit from the programme through increased knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith. A further comment indicated that the increase in knowing and understanding one’s faith did not necessarily include regular Sunday Mass attendance: ‘I think it is important to maintain our faith even though we may not attend church on a weekly basis.’

Participant comments gave the impression that parents did not have negative feelings about the requirement to ensure that their children were properly prepared for the reception of the sacraments of initiation. Parents seemed to see preparation as deserving of particular attention, as well as providing the child with support and guidance: ‘I believe that a parent should be with their children during Sacramental preparation for support and guidance.’

It was apparent that preparation programmes have the capacity to provide parents with opportunities to share time with their children in the context of faith formation, even though this formation might not include regular Sunday Mass attendance. The further value of preparation programmes was found in helping parents to exercise their involvement in the child’s sacramental journey as an expression of their commitment to the child’s spiritual welfare.

Discussion

The data findings for the current study indicated that parents present their children for the sacraments of initiation in the belief that they will have a 'deep, profound and meaningful relationship with him (*sic*) which leads to salvation...' This desire seemed to go further than simply a personal relationship with God, namely, 'being part of the sacramental program (*sic*) gives them a solid foundation to think about faith, spirituality and caring for self and community'. Both comments provided a succinct reason for presenting the child for these sacraments. Parents seemed to approach the presentation of their children from this perspective.

At the same time, involvement in preparation did not appear to offer parents what they were looking for in presenting their child. There was evident dissatisfaction from parents across several areas of the programme structure. These areas included content, mode of delivery, inclusivity in parish life and theological knowledge of the sacraments at an adult level.

Narratives appeared to be seeking opportunities for parents to express these needs and let those responsible for the running of programmes to hear and respond to them. The overall theme of narratives gave the impression that parents were calling for a new approach to sacramental preparation, one that provided a clear focus on parent and child with a view to both parties becoming an integral part of the process.

Data findings offered insight into what this new approach might look like. An overarching hope and expectation was evident among parents that, having entered preparation with their child, there would be the opportunity to express the context of their family and personal lives. This context included issues such as work-life balance and family priorities, personal spirituality, matters of religious understanding and commitment and the underlying reasons why they were presenting their child for sacraments, even though these reasons were not always clear in their thinking.

Such reasons were at times implicit rather than directly stated. For instance, one parent placed this aspect in the setting of parental responsibility, seeing this responsibility as 'part of what we should naturally be doing rather than...adding anything extra that needs to be done'. This parent appeared to see preparation as part of overall parental responsibility and not as an added extra. The fact that preparation might expect more than simply the day-to-day duties of being a parent seemed to be absent from this participant's thinking. For instance, that 'extra' would be the expectation of participation in the parish. It would seem, therefore, that the task of helping parents tease out why they are presenting their children for sacraments needs to be fundamental to any form of preparation.

An approach to preparation that has its focus on parent and child rather than on presupposed church and parish expectations would allow parents to become an integral part of that process. Parents would therefore come to see that their baptismal promise of being the primary formators of their children in faith was being supported by the preparation process rather than being imposed on them. This approach presumes that such a programme would seek to give parents the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfil that role. Parents therefore would adopt a directional influence in how the programme unfolded. The parent who stated that ‘being part of the Catholic sacramental program (*sic*) gives a solid foundation to think about faith, spirituality and caring for self and community’ would give credence to this method.

A parent-focused approach would offer parents the opportunity to depth the understanding of their personal relationship with God beyond the mere awareness that this relationship existed. The comment that ‘parent/child sessions should be an opportunity to further develop the family spirituality and strengthen connections and relationship within the parish family’ supported this intention. There would be the need for parents to arrive at this deeper level of understanding at their own pace, and not feel that it was seen as the ‘irresistible urge to do compulsory faith formation.’

There was the sense running through all comments that an elephant existed within the preparation room. That is, parents appeared to be willing to undertake the expectations of preparation, though there was also the feeling that parents needed to prove that they were acceptable in their motives and predispositions. It would be of interest to identify the extent to which those responsible for preparation were capable of recognising the extent to which this hesitancy existed.

There was an overriding tenet in comments of the primacy of the child in the life of parents, and this primacy extended into the child’s sacramental preparation. That is, parents appeared to see the child’s reception of sacraments as doing the best for their child. There is a mutuality of intent in preparation that centres on the child. In the same way as the parent seeks to do the very best for the child, so too might the parish see this wish of the parent as a fundamental basis in sacramental preparation. In this way, the child becomes the link between parent and parish, both in preparation for and celebration of the sacraments. The child becomes the prime focus of any preparation endeavour. This focus is not about ensuring that the child knows everything about a particular sacrament. Rather, helping the child to understand why a sacrament is important in their faith life means that the parent can share that exploration as a continued faith journey with his or her child.

Future research would seek to know the beliefs and attitudes of sacramental preparation leaders in relation to how they view the motives and desires of parents who present their children for sacraments of initiation. This research would provide a basis for evaluating sacramental programmes as to which are based on best practice.

The Healing Power of the Liturgy

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ABSTRACT

*How does an experience of corporate confession in the liturgy relate to our understanding of what is in fact happening in the liturgy itself? This paper considers the author's own experience of corporate confession following a time of deep personal trauma and, using Kolb's experiential learning cycle, considers how that particular experience relates to Christology and the Trinity. It also draws upon the field of performance studies to demonstrate how the liturgy is a localised performance of the eternal glorification of God that is taking place within the Godhead between Father, Son, and Spirit (what is described herein as *liturgia Dei*). From this theoretical framework the right performance of liturgical elements is determined by the faithfulness of Christ as mediator between God and humanity, not by the faithfulness (or otherwise) of the church and its members. As such, joining in the liturgy is a joining in the faithfulness performance of *liturgia Dei* in a localised setting.*

There has always been a certain, personal appeal toward the liturgy for me. There has been joy found in researching, teaching, and participating in it over many years. In 2020, though, the liturgy became much more than a fascinating topic of conversation amongst like-minded friends. It became a source of deep personal healing, restoration, and grace, when my marriage of 20 years crumbled and along with it my ministry as an Officer in The Salvation Army.

This autoethnographic paper, utilising Kolb's experiential learning cycle,¹ will explore the healing power of the liturgy amid deep personal trauma. It will conduct a comparative exploration of the role that the liturgy can play in providing a place

¹ David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education Inc., 2014). Kolb's cycle goes through four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. It is a theoretical framework designed to enable students and others to reflect and analyse experiences in order to consider their applications into the future.

of healing for those who are suffering under the weight of their own brokenness. In particular, it will compare the role that corporate confession plays in the liturgies of the Anglican Church and The Salvation Army. It will highlight how the corporate nature of the Anglican liturgy provides a place for the individual to join with others in confessing sin at the entry into worship, contrasting it with how it functions as the apex of worship at the conclusion of the Salvation Army meeting. In comparing these differing functions, it will consider how corporate confession, and its place within the broader liturgical life of the church, opens the way for healing for the broken.

Concrete Experience



Marriage breakdowns are incredibly painful. For seventeen years I was an Officer in The Salvation Army—an Officer who taught cadets (Officers in training) and other students the foundations of this denomination’s theological and liturgical tradition. My name was well known. My family had been a part of this denomination for at least four generations in every direction. I have a photo of my great-great-grandfather sitting with my father as a babe on his lap, and my great-grandfather and grandfather standing to his left and right, all the men (except the baby) wearing the garments of a Salvationist.

Pictured left: James, Phil I, Phil II, and Phil Couchman III (My father)

I was a Salvationist of Salvationists.

But then it came crumbling down. The façade cracked and the faults in the construction of my life were exposed for all to see. Behind this façade was an incredible amount of pain. My marriage of 20 years had ended, my kids were hurting, and my employment was over, along with it all the securities that accompanied it—house, car, health insurance, future opportunities, and so on. In a very short period, I had to find a new home, a new car, a new job, and new furnishings, all while trying to keep my head above the emotional floodwaters that surrounded me, and all of this during COVID lockdown.

What I was not prepared for was the mix of silence and shame I experienced from my lifetime spiritual home. In a strange twist, lockdown provided a brief and unusual buffer from this additional layer of pain. But as restrictions eased, and people began to emerge from a government-imposed chrysalis, I had to come to terms with the

fact that it would be a long time before I would cross the threshold of a Salvation Army Hall again. I asked myself, ‘Would I ever?’ Importantly, it is necessary to note that these events were unique to my specific circumstances and not due to Salvation Army policy regarding divorced persons and their ongoing ministry as officers in The Salvation Army. In the distant past, both parties would have been automatically excluded, albeit temporarily, and this was done in the name of compassion. Such a policy no longer exists and so whilst the persons are not officially excluded from ministry there remain the social experiences such as the ones described above that lead to a *de facto* exclusion if not *de jure*.

To move on from this experience I knew the thing I needed, perhaps more than anything, was somewhere safe to confess; I needed forgiveness. But where does one turn when the only place you’ve ever known is no longer accessible, no longer open? As a student and teacher of Christian worship, I was drawn toward the liturgy. So, when the time came to find a new place of worship, I started with the local Anglican church. I took myself off to my nearest church, sat amid the congregation, and participated in its liturgy. The opening prayer immediately expressed what my heart had been longing to say:

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.²

Confession

The starting point. The Lord is with us and opens the hearts of those present to receive, to respond, to restore. Together, we recognised our shortcomings—for me, perhaps more than ever before—and together we cried out for mercy.

Kyrie eleison (Lord, have mercy)

Christe eleison (Christ, have mercy)

Kyrie eleison (Lord, have mercy)³

Soon after, following a formal communal prayer of confession, the priest pronounced absolution:

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith, pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you to do his will, and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.⁴

² Anglican Church of Australia, *A Prayer Book for Australia* [APBA] (Mulgrave: Broughton Publishing, 1995), 119.

³ APBA, 120.

⁴ APBA, 120.

There it was, confession and forgiveness, right at the beginning of the service. In my Salvationist experience, the call to confession was not usually the starting point of worship, but rather the end. It was where everything led to; requiring a carefully considered appeal to those present to rise, publicly identify themselves, and move to the front as a public act of confession. It is public, within the setting of corporate worship, yet still individualised, and it is the apex of public worship.

Here, in this local Anglican church, confession is a stance that everyone adopts together, from the outset, based on the mercy of Christ, and so it felt so different. The tension was lifted. I felt... relieved. I felt... healing.

Reflective Observation

The call to confess sin is a scriptural imperative and emphasised strongly in the evangelical tradition of which The Salvation Army is a part. James 5:16 connects the confession of sin with healing and whilst there wasn't healing of a physical sickness through this experience nevertheless certainly emotional and spiritual healing took place. Questions emerge as to where this sense of relief and healing comes from. Was this a matter of wishful thinking? The experience of something new? Or was it a matter of finding something accessible given the perception of being unable to return to the familiar place? The assumption herein is that the experience was genuine. Of interest for this paper, though, is the question of whether the inclusion of corporate confession at the beginning of the liturgy facilitated the healing that took place. To address this question, we compare the location of corporate confession within Salvation Army and Anglican worship.

It is important to note that, for this paper, the focus is on corporate confession within the liturgy. *A Prayer Book for Australia* [APBA] includes a service for *Reconciliation of a Penitent* for individual confession.⁵ Furthermore, it is noted that 'confession' also refers to the act of subjectively declaring the objective content of the faith through the recitation of the creeds (or similar affirmations of faith).⁶ Whilst there is an important connection between the two meanings of confession,⁷ nevertheless, the focus here is on confession of sin in corporate worship.

Abstract Conceptualisation 1: Confession in Salvation Army Worship

William Burrows stated in 1951 that 'The focal point towards which all Army activities drive is still the [Mercy Seat]. No Sunday ends in any Salvation Army Hall without a prayer battle in which men and women are urged to make a decision for

⁵ APBA, 774.

⁶ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 3.

⁷ Especially since "forgiveness of sins" features in both *The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed* and *The Apostles' Creed*.

Christ.⁸ In practical terms, after the sermon, the preacher will call for a response of some kind from those present. Individuals will respond by coming and kneeling at the Mercy Seat and praying. Someone else present may come and pray with them during this time for a specific need, and this may be a person specifically trained for that task. A specific appeal may be directed to those present who are not yet Christians, an action which reflects the influence of nineteenth-century revivalism upon the founders of The Salvation Army, William and Catherine Booth. When a person comes to the Mercy Seat they will be invited to recite a form of a 'sinner's prayer'. Whilst there is no set form of 'sinner's prayer' it would generally include confession of one's sins, a request for forgiveness from God, and an acceptance of God's rule over the person's life from that point onwards. Having prayed such a prayer, the person rises from the Mercy Seat a new person in Christ and is considered a part of the fellowship of the church immediately.

The Mercy Seat is the name given to an item of furniture situated front and centre in Salvation Army worship spaces. Whilst the construction materials are unimportant the symbolism evoked by its presence is not. General Shaw Clifton (the former international leader of The Salvation Army) once wrote:

At the heart of Salvationism is the symbol of the human soul encountering its Redeemer-Creator, the Mercy Seat (Exodus 25:17; 26:34). No Salvation Army place of worship is complete without a Mercy Seat. It is our pulse, our heartbeat. There the sinner finds forgiveness and the saint still further grace.⁹

Clifton's emphasis upon the Mercy Seat as the location where sinners find forgiveness is not to be intended to be exclusive. Rather, Salvation Army theology emphasises that forgiveness is found wherever confession takes place; the location is unimportant. Nevertheless, in functional terms, Salvation Army worship is constructed in such a way that the appeal to sinners and saints alike to come forward, confess their sins, and receive forgiveness, serves as the capstone of public worship. It is the culmination of all that comes before and the incentive for all that follows.¹⁰ As a result confession of sin, and the forgiveness that comes through it, is offered to each person attending; usually in every worship event. Indeed, the language of an 'appeal', the term used to describe the moment after the sermon where the preacher or worship leader seeks to convince individuals in attendance to come forward and kneel at the Mercy Seat, to confess their sins and find, through these actions, the assurance of forgiveness from

⁸ William Bramwell Burrows, *The Mercy Seat* (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, 1951), 20-21. Here, for the sake of clarity, I have adjusted Burrows' use of the term 'Penitent Form'. The Mercy Seat is also known by this and several other names. For this paper, though, the term Mercy Seat will be used.

⁹ Shaw Clifton, *New Love: Thinking Aloud About Practical Holiness* (Wellington: Flag Publications, 2004), 22.

¹⁰ For further thoughts on the place of the Mercy Seat in Salvation Army worship see Adam Couchman, "'Not My Will but Yours Be Done': The Use of the Mercy Seat in Theodramatic Perspective," *Studia Liturgica* 51, no. 2 (2021).

God, focuses upon individual response for those who sense the need on that given occasion. The communal nature of corporate worship is lost, or at the very least set aside for this moment whilst individuals respond, or not.

Abstract Conceptualisation 2: Confession in Anglican Worship

Charles Sherlock notes that, ‘Services in APBA typically open with praise, setting our eyes on God rather than ourselves. It is this that brings us to confess our sins and seek forgiveness.’¹¹

This not only confirms the placement of confession within the experience above but also points toward the theology behind it. Further, Sherlock notes that the confession at this point in the liturgy is “‘general’ rather than “‘personal.’”¹² Ramsey notes that

In every parish the Prayer-Book entitles the laity to hear the Gospel preached, and the scriptures expounded, and also to receive the full sacramental teaching of the historic Church including the ministry of Confession and Absolution for those who desire it.¹³

Variations of language are made available for different seasons which suggests some different theological emphases involved. For example, ‘God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy, welcoming sinners and inviting them to the Lord’s table.’¹⁴ There is a need to ‘prepare for his coming,’¹⁵ a recognition of ‘our weaknesses and infirmities’¹⁶ and ‘our darkness,’¹⁷ as well as a recognition that ‘the oneness of the peoples of this land has been broken by acts of oppression and the failure of compassion.’¹⁸ This latter variation emphasises the communal nature of the confession as it occurs within the liturgy.

Within APBA general confession can occur towards the beginning of the service or after the Ministry of the Word. It was the former in the experience above meaning that confession occurred very early in the liturgy. In either location, confession serves the purpose of preparing the gathered community to receive communion. That is, it is not the apex of worship but an important support step along the way. Furthermore, since all persons gathered are invited to participate together with

¹¹ Charles Sherlock, *Australian Anglicans Worship: Performing A.P.B.A.* (Mulgrave: Broughton Publishing, 2020), 126.

¹² Sherlock, *Australian Anglicans Worship*, 126.

¹³ A. Michael Ramsey, “The Gospel and the Catholic Church,” in *Vocation of Anglican Theology: Sources and Essays*, ed. Ralph McMichael (London: Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd, 2014), 194.

¹⁴ APBA, 126.

¹⁵ APBA, 147.

¹⁶ APBA, 149.

¹⁷ APBA, 150.

¹⁸ APBA, 161.

each other in confession, and absolution is offered to ‘all who turn to him in faith’,¹⁹ this means that confession is a corporate activity with the shared assumption that all persons need to confess sin at every given opportunity. Confession and forgiveness of sins are offered to all within the journey of the liturgy.

Abstract Conceptualisation 3: Performance Theory and Liturgy

To further aid in the analysis of the experience above attention turns to the field of performance studies which, it will be shown, demonstrates how shared confessions and abstract concepts evidence themselves in liturgical performance.

In the fully divine and fully human person of Jesus Christ glory is given to God the Father through the embodied, theodramatic performance of worship. This embodied performance within the person of Jesus Christ reveals that worship is essential to the divine nature. From a theodramatic viewpoint, the glory of God visible in the person of Jesus Christ is not a static, motionless picture of the inherent worth and splendour of the divine, but rather a dynamic, dramatic, audience-engaging, performative glory that is eternal, ongoing, and inherent to the very nature of God. God glorifies God eternally (see John 17). To summarise this eternal divine worship the term *liturgia Dei* is introduced to describe worship that is essential to the divine nature.

Further, the language of performance, and the categories offered by performance theory, will aid in this comparison. In turning to consider how performance theory relates to theology consideration must be given to an alternative and frequently used term; ‘participation’. Christina Gschwandtner suggests that the question of the relationship between human and divine, invisible and visible, heavenly and earthly, was a crucial question for patristic authors. They were confident that ‘the two realms relate to each other, participate in each other, and depend on each other.’²⁰ The word ‘participation’ has commonly been used to aid in articulating this relationship. Kathryn Tanner suggests that:

Participating in God is just what it means to be a creature. God is (for example) life itself, life through itself, while everything else receives its life from God, without simply being it, in and of itself. Any creature therefore has life in some degree or fashion and can lose it. Expressing much the same thing in a Thomistic way, one could say God does not participate in being but *is* it: to be *God* just is to *be*; in God there is no distinction between what God is (essence) and the fact that God is (existence).²¹

¹⁹ APBA, 120.

²⁰ Christina M. Gschwandtner, “Mimesis or Metamorphosis? Eastern Orthodox Liturgical Practice and Its Philosophical Background,” *Religions* 8, no. 5 (2017): 10.

²¹ Kathryn Tanner, “In the Image of the Invisible,” in *Apophatic Bodies: Negative Theology, Incarnation, and Relationality*, ed. Chris Boesel and Catherine Keller (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2010), 130.

Here Tanner argues that the ground of being is God's very self. The distinction between creature and God is centred in this theological reality. God *is*; and therefore does not 'participate' in something that God *is not*. Creatures exist only within God and, as a result, 'participate' in God. As a result of this Tanner emphasises a qualitative distinction between divine and creature.

To participate in being is, by definition, not to be it, if participation means participating in what one is not; and therefore with participation arises a distinction between essence and existence, the very constitution of created things.²²

This distinction between creator and creature is theologically significant, and participation language remains useful to a point. That point is the incarnation. The incarnation, by creedal definition, is the union of creator and creature in the person of Jesus Christ; fully human and fully divine. As a result, participation language breaks down at this point. Christ is not 'participating in what [he] is not',²³ including in his acts of worship. The use of participation language fails in that it risks depicting Christ as something other than divine and human at one and the same time. The risk is to suggest that Jesus' acts of worship are *out of character* for either his divinity, his humanity, or both. In its place performance language is helpful. In theodramatic terms, Jesus is *performing* out of who he is—the Logos, the second person of the Trinity hypostatically united to the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. He performs *in character*, revealing his divine and human natures in their fullness.

Performance theory suggests that, in any performance, there exist the categories of *creator*, *personae*, *performer*, and *audience*. Here it is suggested that these categories apply to God. These terms apply to both the immanent and the economic Trinity. Furthermore, Richard Schechner's analysis of performers in the theatre is relevant here: 'Each function is meaningful only in terms of the whole set.'²⁴ That is to say, God creates, exists, and performs worship for the audience of God. The *personae* are the three persons of the Trinity, each one creating and performing the theodrama. The complex relationships between *creator*, *personae*, *performer*, and *audience* are grounded in God's being.²⁵ Drawing upon these four categories it is suggested that behind the visible performance of the church's liturgy there is a God who exists in all four of these roles: *creator*, *personae*, *performer*, and *audience*. As such, any performance of liturgy in the church is not independent of the worship of God but rather a performance that joins in with the eternal performance of *liturgia Dei*.

²² Tanner, "Image of the Invisible," 130.

²³ Tanner, "Image of the Invisible," 131.

²⁴ Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, Rev. and expanded, Kindle ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), Loc. 416.

²⁵ Damaskinos Olkinuora, "Performance Theory and the Study of Byzantine Hymnography: Andrew of Crete's *Canon on Lazarus*," *Ortodoksia* 59, no. 1 (2019): 14.

The church performs liturgy within the liminal space of *mediation*, in Christ by the Spirit. Whilst performers make every effort to complete the actions prescribed in the liturgy effectively there remains a liminal quality for any performance. If not, it remains an act of a magician trying to manipulate and control the divine through the correct performance of the rite. Instead, the liturgy relies upon the mystery of the God who is wholly other and invites creation to join in theodramatic performance in Christ, by the Spirit.

Hans Urs von Balthasar notes that in the theodrama, ‘God cannot stand at the periphery of the play; he must be at its centre.’²⁶ The challenge is to describe how God relates to the performative action of the theodrama. Does God remain wholly separate from it, remaining *creator* but not a *performer*? Or does God perform within the theodrama, thus entering onto the stage and becoming wholly engaged in the action? Balthasar outlines a thoroughly Trinitarian and Christocentric response to these questions:

He is *above* the play in that he is not trapped in it but *in* it insofar as he is fully involved in it. The Father seems to remain above the play since he sends the Son and the Spirit; but in fact he could not involve himself more profoundly than by thus sending them: ‘God so loved the world that he did not spare his only Son, but gave him up for us all’ (Jn 3:16 and Rom 8:32).²⁷

In both Salvation Army and Anglican worship, confession is performed as a part of the larger liturgical drama, a drama that belongs to God—the *theo*-drama. The APBA functions as a written script for liturgical performance whereas, in Salvation Army worship, the performance is improvised based upon unwritten script(s) recognised in a liturgical structure common across various Salvation Army worship events. For example, the call to repent (either at the Mercy Seat or not) follows an unwritten script that suggests that this takes place after the sermon.

In both settings, the roles of *creator*, *personae*, *performer*, and *audience* are shared with the gathered believers and the persons of the Trinity. *Liturgia Dei*, the eternal worship taking place within the Godhead, is the ground upon which worship takes place. Father, Son, and Spirit eternally glorify one another and then invite and enable creation to join in. The Son mediates between Father and gathered believers, and the Spirit unites them with the Son as he prays on our behalf. Worship takes place *in*, *with* and *through* Christ.²⁸ The persons of the Trinity and the persons of the gathered church are the *personae* who participate in worship; in both an eternal and temporal sense. As a result, they are also the *performers* and the *audience*; moving between roles seamlessly but all grounded within the being of the Trinity.

²⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, Five vols. (San Francisco, CA.: Ignatius Press, 1988-1998), 3:505.

²⁷ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3:514.

²⁸ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 3:429.

Whilst the *APBA* and the unwritten structure of Salvation Army worship function as ‘scripts’ in this drama, the archetypal and eternal ‘script’ of the theodrama is not a text but a person, the *Logos*. As the embodied performance of the divine, the Word-Act, Jesus Christ, embodies the perfect performance of both divinity and humanity, the two natures united in the one person, in the one performance. The church is united to Christ by the Spirit, becoming the ‘body of Christ’ (1 Cor 12:27). Through this union with Christ, by the Spirit, the church joins in and continues the performance of the divine nature upon the stage of the world. All Christians improvise their liturgical performances within their cultural context as they live in union with Christ by the Spirit. Here improvisation is not a matter of ‘making it up on the spot’ but rather accepting the offer from the divine with a ‘Yes’ and ‘Amen’ (2 Cor 1:20) that lives out the plot revealed through the divine Word. Such embodied performances rely upon the direction of the Spirit who has ultimate authority over how the theodrama is performed and ensures that the divine purposes within it are fulfilled.

Furthermore, since the *Logos* is the ‘script’ the written and unwritten scripts of Anglican and Salvation Army worship do not exist outside of the performance of the Word-Act. Simply stated, whilst the *APBA* is a book that can be read the text is intended to be performed within the context of *liturgia Dei*—divine worship. It is performed in (or rather within) the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This raises the question of right or fitting performance. The language of performance may raise concerns about authenticity; namely, whether fitting performance is a matter of pretending to be something that one is not. It has ‘nothing to do with hypocrisy, insincerity, or the prideful attempt to achieve salvation by works, and everything to do with active participation in the theodrama.’²⁹ Performance in theodramatic perspective is to ‘put on the Lord Jesus Christ’ (Rom 13:14), an act that involves moving beyond the reciting of lines to embodying the life of Christ upon the stage of the world. Paul Fiddes suggests that ‘we find our address fitting into a movement like that of speech between a son and father.’³⁰ When we pray we do so *to*, *through*, and *with* Jesus, addressing God as Father, by and in the Spirit. Jesus, our Great High Priest, joins with us in our prayers so that we might join him in his. Christian prayer is rightly addressed to ‘Our Father’ (Mt 6:9) since we do so ‘in Christ’ who prayed to God as ‘My Father’ (Mt 26:39).

In returning to the confession of sin, questions of authenticity and effectiveness, and comparisons of liturgical structure, are subsumed within the theological significance of *liturgia Dei*. The assertion of T.F. Torrance is significant here.

²⁹ Wesley Vander Lugt and Trevor A. Hart, eds., *Theatrical Theology: Explorations in Performing the Faith* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2015), 8.

³⁰ Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2000), 37.

In a profound and proper sense...we must speak of Jesus Christ as constituting in himself the very substance of our conversion, so that we must think of him as taking our place even in our acts of repentance and personal decision, for without him all so-called repentance and conversion are empty. Since a conversion in that truly evangelical sense is a turning away from ourselves to Christ, it calls for a conversion from our in-turned notions of conversion to one which is grounded and sustained in Christ Jesus himself.³¹

As with repentance and conversion in Torrance's theology above, so too for confession in worship. Whether confession takes place individually or communally, as the apex of worship or as a step along the journey, authentic confession is not determined by the character of those performing, or how faithfully the text is followed. Rather, efficacy is dependent upon the fitting performance of the *Logos*, the Word-Act. Jesus Christ, as the mediator, confesses on our behalf and his confession is faithful and true. Furthermore, Jesus Christ, as the mediator, forgives on God's behalf and his forgiveness is faithful and true. As a result, the healing that comes through confession and forgiveness of sins is grounded in the person of Jesus Christ. And so, when an individual joins in the worship of a local church bringing with them the need to confess sin, to be forgiven, and to experience the healing that comes through this, then we can be assured that 'If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' (1 Jn 1:9).

Active Experimentation

Returning to my experience and considering now the broader implications, it is clear that corporate confession plays an important part in Anglican and Salvation Army liturgies. It can be surmised that the same is true for liturgies in other traditions as well. Confession within the liturgy enables members of the congregation to perform *liturgia Dei* within a shared setting. Prayer in the liturgy, whether that is confession, praise, thanksgiving or otherwise, is a joining in with the prayer that is taking place in eternity. It is a performance of *liturgia Dei* in, with, and through Christ, by the Spirit, for the glory of God. Much more than participation in a localised setting it is a joining in with the eternal glorification of God which exists between Father, Son, and Spirit in heaven and on earth. Such glorification of one person of the Trinity to another is seen in Scripture in John 17. The church, in ongoing liturgies, enters the same performance of the glorification of God, not by its own merit, or the correct pronunciation of the words of liturgical scripts (written or unwritten). Rather, it is through a spiritual union with Christ, enabled by the Spirit, that joins our prayer with his prayer. As such, right performance is not dependent upon the faithfulness, or otherwise, of the one who prays but rather the faithfulness of the one who takes our prayer, sanctifies it, and

³¹ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1992), 86.

offers it up to the Father on our behalf. As such when a prayer of corporate confession, such as the one prayed from APBA, is offered the 'thoughts of our hearts' are truly cleansed and we are enabled to 'perfectly love you' and 'worthily magnify' God's holy name.³² In and through the name of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God the Father.

³² APBA, 119.

What Songs Shall We Sing? Enclosing the Open Space of the 2022 Conference

Bryan Cones



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ABSTRACT

Open Space Technology (OST) made possible a different kind of conference for the Australian Academy of Liturgy, yielding richer opportunities to respond to papers and extend the conversations about the topics raised. Ample opportunity for breakout conversations proposed new areas to explore and collaborate. The breadth of the conversation suggests that OST—or at least the spontaneity and freedom it makes possible—might be a helpful addition to any conference, online or face-to-face.

The Australian Academy of Liturgy’s 2022 conference, like those of our companion academies *Societas Liturgica* and the North American Academy of Liturgy, charged boldly into online spaces, like so many of our liturgical assemblies. As did our colleagues and our congregations, we discovered some new gifts, enlivened by the Open Space Technology [OST] platform outlined by Nathan Nettleton in the last issue of this journal.¹ In addition to keynote addresses marked by near-Pentecostal spontaneity in the chat boxes, OST made possible multiple breakout conversations that in turn suggest directions for future research, collaboration, and even issues of this journal. What follows is one observer’s report of the conversations and the themes they evoked.²

¹ Nathan Nettleton, *New Process for AAL Conference Not Really So New*, *Australian Journal of Liturgy* 17:4 (2021): 243-45.

² The quotations below were posted in public comment boxes on Zoom and in the OST interface and collected by Nathan Nettleton, which he has shared with me. What follows here seeks to focus more on the conversation than on the contents of papers and presentations, some of which are published in this issue.

Praying for and from Land and Country

Brooke Prentis' keynote on praying as an Aboriginal Christian Leader in 'these Lands now called Australia' provoked questions regarding the legacy of colonisation embedded in liturgical practice, with particular attention to liturgical time and the common lectionary. Comments ranged from the desire for some liturgical unity to the acknowledgement that lectionary patterns and liturgical seasons have largely been imposed on indigenous and other communities by external authorities. At the same time, many commenters noted that the common lectionary was an important fruit of the ecumenical liturgical movement. 'Much of the push over many decades has been to promote unity by having the whole world using the one lectionary', noted Nathan Nettleton. 'So, pushing for local lectionaries would be seen by many as somewhat schismatic'.

As to seasons, attendees noted the difference between the liturgical seasons and natural ones, which vary greatly across the continent. The former, as Barry Craig noted, 'emerged from programs within the life of the Christian community, most specifically Lent as a time of preparation of catechumens for baptism... followed by Easter and mystagogical education of the newly baptised'. Still, Beverly Phillips echoed many when she wondered 'whether there is any possibility that an Indigenous lectionary that acknowledges the seasons ... could be developed', presumably by beginning with the wisdom of Aboriginal Christian Leaders themselves. A breakout conversation proposed by Phillips asked how churches might develop 'prayer that constantly and consistently acknowledges an Indigenous history and presence in our liturgies'. Brooke Prentis offered Common Grace's materials for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice, including liturgical and theological resources.³

The questions regarding both lectionaries and seasons spun out into conversations of their own, each in search of a flexibility that many liturgical resources do not yet imagine. A 'season of creation' conversation shared resources already made available at the denominational level (the Uniting Church's 'Uniting Earth' project), one inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Laudato si'*,⁴ and resources from Common Grace.⁵ A conversation on an Australian variation of the Revised Common Lectionary suggested that the ecumenical bodies who produced it may not have the energy for a full-on revision. Michele Lees offered an approach both pastoral and practical:

I really appreciate the RCL as a solid guide to preparing worship each week, but I know I can move from that when I have good reason and for a special service. . . . For example, in Echuca Moama we have the meeting of three rivers,

³ Common Grace, 'Resources', accessed 5 April 2022, https://www.commongrace.org.au/aboriginal_justice_resources.

⁴ Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, accessed 5 April 2022, <https://www.laudatosi.va/en/enciclica.html>. Academy member Charles Rue published *Eucharist and Laudato Si': Care for Our Common Home* (Columban Mission Society, 20XX).

⁵ Common Grace, 'Season of Creation', accessed 5 April 2022, https://www.commongrace.org.au/season_of_creation_2021.

so River Sunday is most appropriate. The resources follow different readings to the RCL, and these resources have improved over the years and become more substantial.

A later conversation led by Garry Deverell engaged liturgy and colonisation in Australian contexts; comments focused not only on acknowledgment of Land and Country but on seeing Country itself as a theological and liturgical source. Still, even a 'season of creation' may introduce difficulties, with Kieran Crichton noting such resources might 'inadvertently reinforce a colonial mentality. So much comes from England, or other indigenous cultures, so that it becomes a celebration of foreign imagery'.

Online, Hybrid, Digital: What of Online Worship?

With the pressures of the pandemic shifting prayer toward the technology, online common prayer in its various forms appeared in Amelia Koh-Butler's keynote, in Howard Harris' paper on the dangers of fundamentalism in online environments, and in the breakout group exploring the South Yarra Community Baptist Church's decision to shift permanently to digital common prayer. Across conversations, issues surrounding forms of participation, the dangers of a return to a clergy-centric liturgy, the surprising bursts of creativity, and the post-pandemic future of online forms of common prayer raised more questions than answers and yielded a broad variety of opinions.

The topic suggested a need for some distinctions in the category of 'online worship': Livestreaming, Zoom-mediated, Facebook Live, and recorded services all raise different issues. Then comes the question of which prayer: services of the Word alone, such as Morning Prayer, or some form of eucharist or communion? The latter raised serious questions regarding access—'spiritual communion' for some and 'real communion' for others—as well as 'efficacy'. Barry Craig argued that online eucharist, among other liturgies, is impossible because it 'requires the actual gathering of the body'. Others, not least keynoter Koh-Butler, saw it differently, with Garry Deverell, arguing:

You can share the eucharist virtually. We are bounded together across time and space by the Holy Spirit, who animates all fleshly material. . . . In my particularly Indigenous-catholic sacramentalism, the distance between our bodies in space is bridged by the creator who creates and inhabits space.

The comment box and a later 'Church in the Digital Age' breakout signaled plenty of room for conversation. One commenter wondered what 'good order' (in terms of liturgy) might mean online (or face-to-face, for that matter).

Liturgy at Life's Edges

A constellation of papers and conversations spun around not only the end of life but the endings in life, and how common prayer shapes what they mean. Carmel Pilcher's keynote on the impact of COVID-19 on Tongan and Fijian ceremonies around death, highlighted not only the grief caused by the pandemic but the barriers to making meaning when public health restrictions prevented travel across the Pacific Islands. Issues of colonisation, inculturation and contextualisation again appeared. At issue is how much (if any) deference liturgical traditions received from the 'liturgical North' should be given in contexts that continue to experience colonisation, liturgical, theological, and otherwise.

Such questions extend also to the post-religious context of contemporary Australian culture. A breakout on grieving rituals asked how to mark the destruction of a bush fire—with Alison Whish averring that 'lighting candles doesn't seem quite the right thing'. Caro Field organized a conversation on 'Healing Rituals and Informality', noting the experience of preparing funerals in rural areas for families not connected to the church. As one mourner noted, 'I was a bit concerned when I heard that granny's funeral was going to be in a church, because I'm not religious, but this was great, and I really appreciated what you had to say.' The conversation produced some helpful 'dot points': ministers can help anyone normalise death; COVID-19 has brought more people 'into' church (often online) for funerals; the official resources, with some tweaks, are a solid starting place even for non-religious funerals; such rituals suggest other, similar patterns for losses in life, such as the loss of a pregnancy. The OST discussion led Michelle Eastwood to invite contributions to a book of rituals addressing the lack of contemporary, contextualised liturgies to fit for various needs within the Australian church, with attention to the largely secular Australian context.

While some losses need rituals of their own, Adam Couchman's paper (published in this issue) suggests that the basic elements of some liturgies, such as the confessions that begin many, have the same effect. While some of those texts may seem rote and general, they can be informed by the experiences participants bring to them, even generate an experience of grace that the source's author or the preparers of liturgy could not have imagined. Comments orbited around the connection between the individual and communal, the personal and the corporate. Because the paper was rooted in personal experience—and so 'ethnographic' or descriptive—commenters also explored the interplay between received theological reflection and that generated in the 'theological moment' of the liturgy itself. Couchman's invocation of 'performance theory' is apropos: Much of what liturgy 'means' can be found only in the doing of it.

Always Ancient, Always New: Liturgy 101

While the pandemic and its aftermath absorbed much conversation, there was also plenty of on-the-ground, back-to-basics, ‘how-do-we-do-this-well’ conversations about good common prayer. One breakout considered questions that have been on the mind of liturgical preparers and reformers since the early days of the liturgical movement: What is participation? Fiona Dyball convened a conversation on the symbolic doorways to participating through ‘embodied, worship’—an antidote to the overabundance of word many assemblies suffer on Sunday morning. Good music, good formation, and a shared embodied postures and gestures all appeared. Colleen O’Reilly offered a lovely Anglican practice: ‘Censing the whole congregation and greeting them with a bow is very common at the offertory’. Erica Marshall’s comment about ‘transparency’ as the quality of a good presider might yield an essay of its own.

Formation—for both liturgy and Christian life—appeared in the conversation surrounding Monica Barlow’s paper on research with parents in confirmation and first eucharist programs in her Roman Catholic Diocese of Wollongong (published in this issue). The dialogue turned on the challenges facing more than just Roman Catholic churches: declining Sunday participation, confirmation as a ‘sacrament of departure’, the need to develop something beyond a one-size-fits-all approach. Lying beneath all of them is the need to create communities that, in Jenny O’Brien’s words, model ‘kind, welcoming, hospitality... the messy, wonderful experience of living faith’.

Barlow’s research suggested the need for connections between church and home, liturgy and living—another perennial question. An early breakout, but one that connects many of them, sought the marks of a ‘compelling liturgical lifestyle’: What of the ‘liturgy of living’ before and after the liturgy of the assembly? And how might they each contribute to deepening the other?

Further Openings?

The 2022 conference certainly broke new ground in the ‘how’ of its gathering. It is possible that it also yielded greater opportunity for interaction and collaboration than a face-to-face format. What it certainly made present was an active academy of practitioners, scholars, and liturgical leaders posing questions old and new to address the current moment in the lives of the churches they represent. With more questions than answers—and some questions that probably cannot be answered—it seems ‘open space’ indeed is, as Nathan Nettleton suggested in his introduction to the process, an environment where ‘the Holy Spirit is most free to energise us and take us somewhere new’. To quote him once more: ‘Perhaps our churches could learn from that!’⁶

⁶ Nettleton, ‘New Process’, 245.

A Piece of Australian Liturgical History: The Vocational Heritage of Diana Hopton and Gilbert Sinden SSM

Charles Sherlock AM



The Rev Dr Charles Sherlock AM taught Theology and Liturgy for four decades in Melbourne, chiefly at Ridley College. He was a member of the Liturgical Commission that drafted *A Prayer Book for Australia* (1995), and of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission II and III (1991-2017).

ABSTRACT

Brother Gilbert Sinden made a distinctive contribution to the life of the Anglican Church of Australia, as Editor of *An Australian Prayer Book* (1978), the first modern English prayer book in the Anglican Communion. Recently, his personal copy of the draft presented to the 1977 General Synod was made available, along with significant documentation. This article records this slice of Australian liturgical history and explores its significance.

From time to time, materials that shed light on a small corner of history are unearthed. In 2021 Archdeacon David Thornton-Wakeford of the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide was given a copy of the 1977 draft of *An Australian Prayer Book* (1978), with related materials, that sheds some light on Australia's liturgical history. The decade of liturgical experiment from 1966, when the recently formed Liturgical Commission issued *Prayer Book Revision in Australia*, to the authorising of AAPB in 1977, brought enduring change to the life of the Anglican Church of Australia, akin to the experience of Roman Catholics in the wake of Vatican II. But this significant transition period is increasingly forgotten.

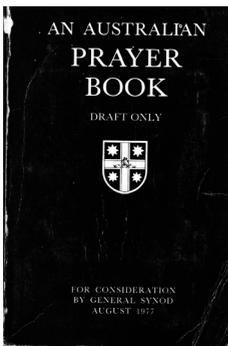
So, when David contacted me, as a member of the Liturgical Commission that drafted AAPB's successor, *A Prayer Book for Australia* (APBA, 1995),¹ I suggested that the documents he had received should be written up before being archived. His response: 'Would I be willing to undertake the task?' This article is the outcome of that question.

¹ For a fuller account of the Anglican liturgical heritage in Australia from 1788 to the present, see the opening chapter of my *Australian Anglicans Worship Performing APBA* (Melbourne: Broughton, 2020).

Background

The story revolves around two people: Canon Dr Richard Albert Gilbert Sinden SSM, and Mrs Diana Hopton. Their unique partnership played a key part in enabling Australian Anglicans to make the transition from the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662), used since the First Fleet arrived, to praying in modern English, and becoming familiar with forms arising from the Liturgical Movement.

Brother Gilbert (as he was mostly known) lived out his calling as a monk of the Society of the Sacred Mission. Prepared for ministry and then a tutor at Kelham Theological College, UK (1949-62), in 1963 he came to St Michael's House, Crafrers in the Adelaide hills, teaching Old Testament, New Testament Greek and Liturgics.² A member of the Liturgical Commission from 1971, in 1975 he took on the mammoth task of being the editor of what became AAPB (1978). The first revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662) wholly in modern English, AAPB was a liturgical pioneer in the Anglican Communion.



Diana Hopton's copy of the draft book

Mrs Diana Hopton, who worked as a secretary at St Michael's House from 1972 to 1977, typed successive drafts of the manuscript of AAPB from tapes dictated by Brother Gilbert. It was a massive task: The book is over 700 pages, with rubrics and detailed tables as well as text. In June 1977 the draft book was sent to each General Synod member, giving them a month to propose amendments. Diana typed the book in full at least twice, before the days of correcting typewriters—and no typos were found in it by Synod members! Brother Gilbert, based for some weeks in Sydney, at work in preparing for the General Synod, sent his copy to Diana before the month was out, as the inscription shows, and later wrote to her from the Synod floor (see the letter below).

A Treasured Book

Diana Hopton clearly treasured the book that Brother Gilbert sent her, whose production she had been so closely involved with. She pasted in a delightful photograph of Brother Gilbert and herself at St Michael's House on the inside front cover, attached Brother Gilbert's two-page letter from the Synod to the reverse of the title page (see below), and included a photograph of her typing the book on the inside back cover. Interleaved in the book's pages are a photograph of Brother Sinden from a church newspaper, the original typed list of Australian plants (see below), and materials related to AAPB's successor, *A Prayer Book for Australia* (APBA).

² Although he lived under the monastic discipline of the *Society of the Sacred Mission*, and so was known as Brother Gilbert, his official recognition was being licensed as a Lay Reader on 10 April 1963.

At the time, Diana's husband, John, was rector of The Church of the Epiphany, Crafers, where he ministered from 1967 to 1980. When they moved to St Edward the Confessor, Kensington Gardens, Diana worked for the Head Mistress at Seymour College, Adelaide, a secondary school for girls. The couple retired to Riverton, where John undertook locum ministries until his death in 1988. The following year Diana moved to Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills, living there until she died in 2019. When her son Andrew, going through his parents' belongings, found the draft of AAPB with its inclusions, he soon realised its significance. He passed it to his friend Archdeacon Thornton-Wakeford, with the request that it be placed in a suitable library.

As indicated at the beginning of this article, David contacted me, asking for advice on where it should be lodged. In doing so, he noted that I spent five years with Gilbert at St Michael's House, Crafers from 1968 to 1972. During most of my time there, we were the 'guinea pigs' in St Michael's Chapel for many of the draft offices and rites that, with many revisions along the way, would eventually find their way into AAPB.

As noted above, on the inside front cover of the book that Brother Gilbert had sent to Diana Hopton is pasted a photograph of the pair at St Michael's Crafers. On the title page, opposite the photograph, is this hand-written inscription (lineated as in the original):

*Di,
You have seen this before –
heard it and typed it –
but here it is again
with affection and many
thanks.*

Gilbert s.s.m.

29.6.77

On the reverse of the title page is pasted a handwritten letter from Gilbert to Diana, which would have reached her some six weeks after the book arrived. The letter is dated '1.8.77', though from its contents it was certainly written on 1 September 1977. Given what must have been a sense of excitement at the events around him, and it being the first day of the month, the mistake is understandable. That first day of September—the first day of spring in Australia's temperate climes!—was the Thursday of the 1977 General Synod, which had begun on Monday 29 August. To explain the letter's significance, some background is needed.

THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN AUSTRALIA
 LITURGICAL COMMISSION



in the form of General Synod,
 "St. Paul's"
 West Sydney, N.S.W.
 1. 2. 77

Dear John and Di,

Thank you for your use drop of support duly delivered by Steve Smith! In the event, the Commission enjoyed its first celebration on Tuesday night, after the Committee stage - second reading had passed and signed copies being the Canon as an ordinary bill with only one dissentient (GERRARD, 1977) (of course). This was an overwhelming vote in more senses than one! The historic moment came yesterday morning with the unanimous passing of the 3rd reading (and consequential mechanical resolution) on the voices. But in the meantime we'd already celebrated, thanks to you. Marcus called it an even more significant event than the passing of the Constitution in 1961: 'The passing of AAPB through the General Synod with such remarkable agreement represents a milestone of consensus for the Australian Church'. I think the Synod is still somewhat stunned at the general agreement and the general determination to have a book and to have this book. Amendments were minimal, though the Commission staff put up a number which had been incorporated as part of the text of the Book before it was considered in Committee.

I spent Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning at my desk here making up the 'sealed book' which has to be deposited with the bill for the act. This will be signed into effect at 5.30pm this evening, and I hope to get a photo of committee, speak all Cameron (an excellent) chairman of committee, spend all yesterday checking my amendments of this copy of the draft AAPB.

Synod will probably end tonight. Then I have to sit down and prepare the schedules for diocesan synodmen and the material for the printer. These must be ready by Monday

morning. I expect to spend Monday and maybe Tuesday with John (and the printer) - to come home on Tuesday evening or Wednesday sometime.

Meanwhile, I've tidied up the Australian Dictionary and the Wesleyan man reading's report, which go to press at Lutterham when I get home.

I've filled 3/5 of a cassette, Di, but won't send it to you as I'm in mid-flight and won't remember where I've flown to if I don't bring it back.

Patricia finished talking about a canon to relieve Ministers in the use of the Imphire (a backhanded way of disciplining some of Sydney's mavericks) and one on to Assistant Bishops.

Thanks again for your thoughtfulness both of you, and for all your work, Di, which has now come to fruition. It's a good feeling to know it has been so wonderfully well received. All already have notes for 40,000 copies.

Much love.

Love & prayers

Will

The two pages of the letter

The Letter: Background

After the Synod's opening formalities, the initial item of business was the First Reading of 'The Australian Prayer Book Bill' for a Canon to authorise AAPB 'for use together with the *Book of Common Prayer, 1662*' across the national church.³ Discussion of amendments under the Second Reading filled the Tuesday, taking seven hours in total—a third of the time anticipated. One vote was lost closely on the voices, but that the mover did not ask for a head count reflected the co-operative ethos of the meeting. Ultimately just one change was made to the draft book, relating to the Lord's Prayer.⁴ This positive process far exceeded expectations, given the historical tensions across Australian dioceses (see below).

On the Tuesday evening, with the Second Reading over, a key procedural turning point was reached. Important decisions require a 'Special' rather than 'Ordinary' Bill: After such a Canon has received two-thirds majorities in General Synod, it must be

³ Australian General Synods follow parliamentary procedure for formal decisions, 'Canons'. The first reading introduces the main intentions of a Bill, and unless it is highly controversial, is passed without discussion. The second reading, after speeches from the mover and seconder, proceeds 'in committee' to consider amendments clause by clause: This is a Bill's crucial stage. It usually follows the first reading after a day's break, but the 1977 Synod gave permission for *The Australian Prayer Book Bill* to come on straight after the first reading. The third reading is a vote to approve the Bill as amended.

⁴ The one difference between the draft book and AAPB is that the Lord's Prayer in the latter is throughout in modern English. The draft book used a 'traditional' form in First Order services.

accepted by three fourths of diocesan synods (meeting annually), and all metropolitan ones, before coming back to the General Synod (typically meeting every three or four years). This ‘Special Bill’ process would have delayed—and possibly terminated—the publication of AAPB for years. But a ‘Special’ Bill can be classified as ‘Ordinary’, and so if passed, come into effect immediately, if 75 percent each of the Bishops, Clergy and Lay members of General Synod agree.

Brother Gilbert describes what took place on that Tuesday evening:

The Acting Primate, as President,⁵ carefully explained the voting procedure and its significance. He then called upon the house of laity to vote, and the two Secretaries counted the votes and reported to him. When the President announced that the house of laity had voted unanimously to allow the Australian Prayer Book Canon to proceed as an ordinary bill, the hall exploded with applause. Minutes later, the President announced that the house of clergy had approved the motion by 85 votes to 1, and the house of bishops approved it unanimously. As each vote was announced, there was further prolonged applause.⁶

Members of the Liturgical Commission—not all of whom were synod members—celebrated that evening, with Diana’s gift of a ‘drop of support’ much appreciated. As the letter notes, she had earlier given this bottle of wine to the Rev Stuart Smith, an Adelaide priest who would be at the Synod, for delivery to Brother Gilbert at a suitable time.

The next morning, the Third Reading was passed unanimously, and Brother Gilbert spent the day making up the ‘sealed book’ that formed the official text. The letter below was written only an hour or so later, as General Synod continued work, before the official signing of the Canon at 5.30pm. It was thus the first thing Brother Gilbert wrote once he had seen the authorisation of AAPB through its birthing. It represents a contemporary account of an historic liturgical turning-point for the Anglican Church of Australia.

⁵ The Archbishop of Sydney, Marcus Loane, was Acting Primate in August 1977, following the retirement of Archbishop Frank Woods (Melbourne), and was thus President of the General Synod. Archbishop Loane was subsequently elected as Primate, serving until 1982. He was followed by John Grindrod (then Archbishop of Brisbane), who had chaired the Liturgical Commission that drafted AAPB.

⁶ Gilbert Sinden SSM, *When We Meet for Worship. A Manual for Using An Australian Prayer Book 1978* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1978), 29. On the one negative vote, see footnote 8.

The letter: transcript

The letter is written in blue ink, on this letterhead:

The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia.

Liturgical Commission [central logo]

To the right of the central logo is written
on the floor of General Synod,

‘Shore’ School,

North Sydney, N.S.W.

1.8.77⁷

The transcript below of the body of the letter follows its lineation.

Dear John and Di,

Thank you for your drop of support duly delivered by Stuart Smith! In the event, the Commission enjoyed it as a celebration on Tuesday night, after the Committee stage + second reading had passed and Synod approved treating the Canon as an ordinary bill with only one dissentient (+LEWR,⁸ of course). This was an overwhelming vote in more senses than one! The historic moment came yesterday [Wednesday] morning with the unanimous passing of the 3rd reading (and consequential mechanical resolutions) on the voices. But in the meantime we’d already celebrated, thanks to you.

+ Marcus called it an even more significant event than the passing of the Constitution in 1961: ‘The passing of A.A.P.B. through the General Synod with such remarkable agreement represents a milestone of consensus for the Australian Church’. I think the Synod is still somewhat stunned at the general agreement and the general determination to have a Book and to have this Book. Amendments were minimal, though the Commission itself put up a number which had been incorporated as part of the text of the Book before it was considered in Committee.

I spent Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning at my desk here [at Shore] making up the ‘sealed book’ which has to be deposited with the bill for the act. This will be signed into effect at 5.30pm this evening, and I hope to get a photo of that event. Bishop Cameron, (an excellent) chairman of committee, spent all yesterday checking my amendments of this copy of the draft AAPB.

⁷ ‘Shore’ is the short name for the Sydney Church of England Grammar School. The 1977 General Synod met at its Northbridge campus, not North Sydney—but Brother Gilbert was not a Sydneysider! As noted earlier, the date was 1 September 1977, not 1 August.

⁸ ‘Bishop RENFREY’ is added here in pencil. This refers to Bishop Lionel Renfrey, Dean and Assistant Bishop of Adelaide, well known for conservative liturgical views. Not being a diocesan bishop, he was a member of the House of Clergy in the 1977 General Synod.

Synod will probably end tonight. Then I have to sit down and prepare the schedules for diocesan synodsmen⁹ and the material for the printer. These must be ready by Monday (The letter continues over the page.)

morning. I expect to spend Monday and maybe Tuesday with John Sands the printer, + to come home on Tuesday evening or Wednesday sometime.

Meanwhile, I've tidied up The Australian Lectionary and the weekday mass readings' report,¹⁰ which go to press at Lutheran when I get home.

I've filled 2/3 of a cassette, Di, but won't send it to you as I'm in mid-flight and won't remember where I've flown to if I can't turn it back.¹¹

They've finished talking about a Canon to relieve Ministers in the use of the surplice (a backhanded way of disciplining some of Sydney's mavericks) and are on to assistant bishops.¹²

Thanks again for your thoughtfulness, both of you; and for all your work, Di, which has now come to fruition.

It's a good feeling to know it has been so wonderfully well received. AIO already have orders for 40,000 copies.¹³

Must stop

Love + prayers

Gilbert

The Australian Native Plants List

Enclosed loose-leaf in the book is the original typed list of Australian native plants that Brother Gilbert prepared for his meeting with the designer of AAPB, Mr Arthur Stokes, on 8 November 1976. Botanical drawings of these are found on the cover of

⁹ While all clergy and bishops in the 1977 General Synod were men, some women were members of the House of Laity: Brother Gilbert is writing before inclusive language became prevalent.

¹⁰ This refers to the detailed 160-page 1977 Report of the Liturgical Commission, *Collects and Readings at the Holy Communion on Weekdays*, which Brother Gilbert had prepared in the lead up to the Synod. This remains an important reference in preparation of the annual lectionary booklet, which provides daily, Sunday and Festival readings for Holy Communion, Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. Both the AAPB-based booklet, published by the Anglican Information Office (AIO) Sydney, and its successor based on *A Prayer Book for Australia* (APBA), were edited by Pamela Raff (Rockhampton) for four decades. Her sustained and precise work formed another most significant 'back-room' contribution by a laywoman to the ministry of the Word for Australian Anglicans.

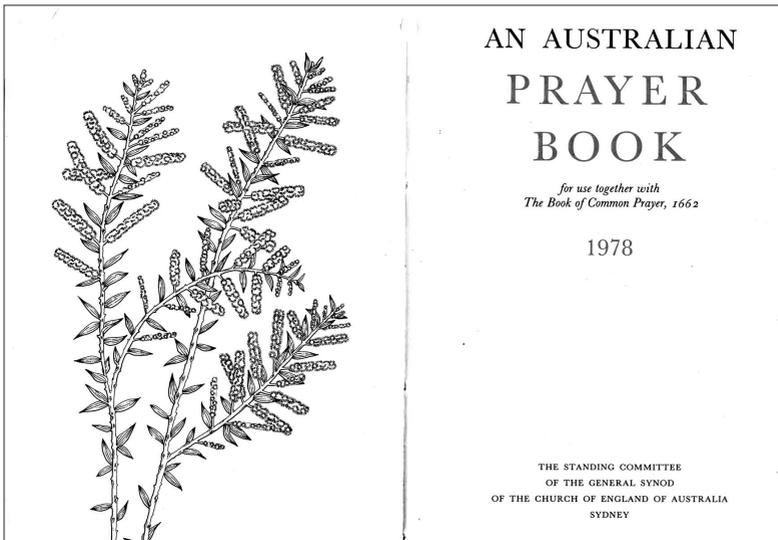
¹¹ The 'mid-flight' and 'flown to' references are to Brother Gilbert's writing, not flying back to Adelaide! The cassette probably contained sections of *When We Meet for Worship*, published a year later.

¹² The surplice is the white vestment required by BCP rubrics to be worn by ministers at all times in public worship, though now widely superseded by the cassal. The wearing of distinctive robes was beginning to be resisted by some clergy at the time: This Canon was an attempt to respond by providing pastoral guidelines. The Assistant Bishops Canon tidied up an earlier one from 1966.

¹³ The print run for AAPB would run well past 100,000 copies, and for a decade or more after 1978 provided the General Synod office with significant funds.

AAPB and the title page of each group of services. This pictorial element expressed Brother Gilbert's desire that AAPB be received as an Australian contribution to corporate prayer. The list, too faint for clear reproduction, is:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. SPIKE WATTLE
Acacia oxyderas | Title page |
| 2. STIFF BOTTLEBRUSH
Callistemon rigidus | Morning and Evening Prayer, page 17 |
| 3. WHITE CEDAR
Melia azedarach variety
Australasica | Holy Communion, page 111 |
| 4. GREVILLEA ROBUSTA
Silky Oak | Collects, Readings and Calendar, page 175 |
| 5. PYRAMID TREE OR
ISLAND HYBISCUS ¹⁴
Lagunaria Petersonii | The Psalms, page 305 |
| 6. COPPER LAUREL
Eupomatia Laurina | Baptism and Pastoral Services, page 497 |
| 7. RED GUM
Eucalyptus camaldulensis | The Ordinal, page 603 |



The title page of AAPB with Acacia Oxyderas.

¹⁴ In AAPB, the name printed is Pyramid tree or Norfolk Island hibiscus.

AAPB in Wider Perspective

The 20-plus dioceses in which Australian Anglicans live range from closely populated city-based collections of suburban parishes to outback areas where a parish may cover a million acres. This ‘tyranny of distance’ and isolation from one another, heightened by a history of doctrinal and governance differences, meant that it was not until 1962 that a Constitution for ‘The Church of England in Australia’ was agreed.¹⁵

The Constitution’s opening Sections state the (unchangeable) ‘Fundamental Declarations’ and (difficult to change) ‘Ruling Principles.’ These enshrine BCP (1662), with the Articles and Ordinal, as ‘the standard of doctrine and worship’ for the Anglican Church of Australia. Further, unlike other parts of the Anglican Communion, the power of General Synod is permissive rather than decisive: While its agreement is needed for any major change, the decision takes effect in a diocese only when the diocesan synod accepts it.

So liturgical change, though widely sought from the 1960s, could not take place lightly, and the long-standing divisions over the way BCP was used could not be brushed aside. Yet the first major decision of the first General Synod in 1962 under the new Constitution was to set up a commission ‘to consider whether revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* was needed.’¹⁶ Given Australian Anglicans’ history of division, a large (male-only) body from across the national church was appointed: six bishops, four deans, five archdeacons, eight canons, five priests and five laymen!

Despite ongoing suspicions, limited meeting time and vigorous letter-writing in church newspapers, this seemingly unwieldy group worked, issuing the ground-breaking *Prayer Book Revision in Australia* in 1966.¹⁷ Even so, in the ferment of experimental booklets that followed—two for Morning and Evening Prayer, three of Holy Communion services, trial uses for weddings, funerals, illness and more besides—the question on many Anglican lips was not so much ‘How might we best

¹⁵ See John Davis, *Australian Anglicans and their Constitution* (Canberra, ACT: Acorn, 1993). The Constitution is available at <https://anglican.org.au/governance/constitution/> [accessed 4 April 2022]. Divisions over liturgy go back to the diverse attitudes to the Anglo-Catholic revival of the first diocesan bishops, consecrated in 1847. This diversity was reflected generations later in the varied responses to the attempted revisions of BCP by the Church of England in 1927 and 1928, which failed to pass the UK Parliament. Locally, a 1946-47 court case over a Holy Communion (red) booklet issued by the Bishop of Bathurst, brought by a group of laymen from the diocese of Sydney, heightened tensions. The name of the national church changed to ‘The Anglican Church of Australia’ in 1981.

¹⁶ The Church of England had set up a Liturgical Commission in 1955, which in 1958 issued *Liturgical Revision in the Church of England*. Colin Buchanan and Trevor Lloyd tells its story until 1980, when *The Alternative Service Book* was published, in many ways the English equivalent to AAPB. Beyond several visits to Australia by Colin Buchanan, however, there was little contact between the English and Australian Commissions until the Inter-Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC) formed in 1985. See Colin Buchanan and Trevor Lloyd, *The Church of England Eucharist 1958-2012* [Alcuin / GROW Joint Liturgical Studies 87/88] (Norwich: Hymns Ancient & Modern, 2019).

¹⁷ This book not only answered ‘Yes’ to the question as to whether revision of BCP was needed but provided sets of ‘conservative’ (BCP translated) and ‘radical’ rites (based on the Liturgical Movement), all in modern English, for trial use!

worship today?', as 'How do we stay faithful to 1662?' From 1971—when Brother Gilbert joined—the Liturgical Commission began to work on what would become AAPB, authorised at the 1977 General Synod.¹⁸

The new book was a breath of fresh air for Australian Anglicans. It spread across the nation rapidly, going through several printings. By 1980, most parishes, schools and cathedrals were worshipping in modern English, using modern service structures, and exploring the flexibility which some of the new book allowed. It was a major factor in lowering barriers among Australian Anglicans. Fussy ritual and 'low-church' stiffness alike declined in favour of a more relaxed ethos, as rigid adherence to text and rubrics lessened. Parishes experienced more lay participation in reading the scriptures, taking the intercessions, administering communion, and participating in 'worship committees'.

These positive outcomes owed much to the way in which Brother Gilbert (Adelaide, and 'catholic' in outlook) and the (then) Rev Donald Robinson (Sydney, an 'evangelical' New Testament scholar) worked together. Robinson was then Vice Principal of Moore College and would become the Archbishop of Sydney a decade later.¹⁹ Both men risked considerable misunderstanding by their cooperation, but their careful work, assisted in particular by the Rev Dr Evan Burge, a priest-scholar in Melbourne, fostered the cooperative ethos and overwhelmingly positive outcome of the 1977 General Synod.

The Chairman of the 1977 Liturgical Commission, Bishop John Grindrod, in expressing his appreciation of the work done by its long-term members, paid particular attention to the contributions of Brother Gilbert:

The Commission latterly, particularly as we have moved towards the production of a book of services, has been helped enormously by the quite phenomenal capacity and ability of Brother Gilbert Sinden, who was appointed Editor for the Prayer Book project. Combining the knowledge of a liturgist, the power of thought of a theologian, the speed of a touch typist, the know-how of a printer, and, if you needed a meal together, the skill of a high-class cook, he has been an amazing presence on the Commission!²⁰

¹⁸ An account of the Commission's work can be found in John Grindrod, 'The Story of the Draft Book', in *When We Meet for Worship*, 17-21, followed by Brother Gilbert's account of the General Synod, 21-29. Legally, AAPB did not replace BCP, but stood 'under' it: In practice, however, it quickly came to stand 'alongside' BCP. Beyond cathedrals and a few parishes, the use of BCP declined, prompting the formation of Prayer Book Societies in Sydney and Melbourne.

¹⁹ Andrew Judd, 'Donald Robinson and the Imperfect Unity of *An Australian Prayer Book* (1978)', *Integrity* 1/1 (2013), analyses Robinson's contributions to AAPB and the debates around its formulation: <https://integrity.moore.edu.au/index.php/Integrity/article/view/4> [accessed 4 April 2022]. It is surprising that none of the essays in the *Festschrift* for Donald Robinson, *In the Fullness of Time* (Sydney: Lancer, 1992), reflect on his scholarly work on prayer book revision, though its importance is noted in the chapters outlining his ministry.

²⁰ 'The Story of the Draft Book', 20.

The Sinden Legacy

Having completed the mammoth task of seeing AAPB through to publication, Brother Gilbert completed his 320-page detailed ‘manual’ on using every service in *AAPB, When We Meet for Worship*, in time for it to come out alongside AAPB, less than a year after the General Synod! And all this was before word processors: He dictated the 700-odd pages of AAPB several times to Diana Hopton ‘who typed nearly every word of AAPB at least twice and often more, and a great deal²¹ of his manual on it.

Brother Gilbert had become the Warden of St Michael’s House in 1972.²² When the Society moved its base to St John’s Halifax in Adelaide city in 1978, he was ordained deacon on 1 May (Phillip & James) and priested on 24 May 1979. On that same day, the degree of Doctor of Theology (*honoris causa*) was conferred on him by the Archbishop of Adelaide, Keith Rayner, on behalf of the Primate, in recognition of his significant academic contributions to the Anglican Church of Australia in the production of AAPB.²³

Brother Gilbert (as he was still known) spent the next two years leading St George’s College, Jerusalem, where AAPB became familiar to worshippers: He was made an Honorary Canon of St George’s Cathedral in 1983 in recognition of his service. When SSM set up a priory at Diggers’ Rest on the outskirts of Melbourne, he moved there, and from 1 June 1989 he became Personal Assistant to David Penman, the Archbishop of Melbourne, making a significant contribution to that diocese.

Gilbert Sinden SSM fell asleep in Christ on 21 November 1990.

Postscript

In seeking to fill out details of Brother Gilbert’s ministry, I was surprised to realise how little has been written about this man whose contributions to the mission of God in Australia and beyond have long-lasting significance. I would welcome his inclusion—along with Leon Morris, Michael Gumbuli Wurraramara, Mary Andrews and Stuart Barton Babbage—in the Calendar of the Anglican Church of Australia.

²¹ *When We Meet for Worship*, Introduction.

²² Robert Elson provides an illustrated description of life at St Michael’s House in 1971, the year Brother Gilbert joined the Liturgical Commission: <http://users.picknowl.com.au/~robertel/SSM.html> [accessed 4 April 2022]. The House, still in SSM’s hands, was destroyed in the 1983 Ash Wednesday (16 February) bushfires in the Adelaide hills.

²³ The Minutes of the Council meeting of the Australian College of Theology on 29 October 1979 record its agreement to nominate to the College the award of the degree on Bishops R.G. Arthur and D.W.B. Robinson, Canon F. N. Falkingham, and Brother Gilbert S.S.M. A postal vote of College members conducted by the Registrar confirmed the award.

Divine Resonance: Meaning-Generation via Instrumental Music within Christian Worship

Jennifer Wakeling



Jennifer Wakeling is a musician, educator, and researcher whose special interests lie in the fields of music theology and music in Christian worship. Jennifer is passionate about exploring ways for worshippers to engage deeply and imaginatively with the qualitative and feeling dimensions of Christian meaning-generation through the use of textless music.

ABSTRACT

When textless music is performed in Christian worship, a distinctive kind of musical-liturgical dynamic space of meaning-construction possibility emerges. Jennifer Wakeling's doctoral dissertation, grounded in the theology of symbolic mediation and Peircean semiotics, explores the potential meaning-construction process whereby a series of sonic events—indeterminate in meaning—performed within a specific Christian worship context, can elicit Christian meaning for worshippers at experiential, conceptual, and transformative levels.

Many years ago, while performing Mozart's Piano Sonata in C major (K330) in a concert, I had a profound experience of oneness and intimacy with the audience during the second movement. The intensity of the experience left me wondering whether the audience and I had encountered Christ at that time through that piece and, if so, how? Most importantly, could such an encounter have been transformative for us? Due to my work as a church musician, these questions took on importance in relation to the spiritual function of music in Christian worship.

Twenty years later, I began to investigate these questions through my doctoral dissertation. The dissertation investigated how, and in what sense, the performance of instrumental music (IM) in Christian worship can function as a medium of Christ encounter and Christian meaning-generation for worshippers. Stand-alone IM—IM performed separately from text and any other medium or action—is non-verbal and purely qualitative. Its meaning is multivalent and relies heavily upon the sensory, imaginative, emotional, and transcendent realms of human experience. So, how can Christian meaning be generated through it at experiential, conceptual, and transformational levels?

This investigation was particularly pressing due to my church background whereby, on one hand, I had been exposed to views which diminish the value, or invalidate the use, of IM in worship because text is seen as the only viable medium for God's self-communication. On the other hand, I had been privy to views which value IM's Christian revelatory capacity but over-identify the work of the Spirit with IM in a way which, to my mind, risks verging on pantheism. The unfortunate impression can arise that the Spirit is compelled by a certain series of sonic vibrations to 'turn up'. I felt compelled, in response to such views, to contribute to the search for a theologically, scientifically, and musically rigorous conceptualisation of IM's Christian revelatory capacity.

The result of this dissertation is a theoretical contribution to the field of musical-liturgical semiotics. Semiotics is the study of signs and how they signify. Musical-liturgical semiotics involves, in this case, how IM functions as a sign within a liturgical context. Musical-liturgical semiotics is grounded here theologically in symbolic mediation as a model for divine revelation.¹ According to this model, God acts to communicate, but God's communication is not directly accessed. It is mediated symbolically by verbal and nonverbal entities.

More specifically, the theological grounding of the musical-liturgical semiotics involves the development of a four-dimensional structure for Christian symbolisation in general which could be applied specifically to IM in worship. This structure is underpinned by the work of Paul Tillich, Karl Rahner, and Louis-Marie Chauvet pertaining to symbols; Tillich's discussion of the art-religion interface; and Rahner's transcendental theological anthropology. The four necessarily interrelating dimensions of Christian symbolisation are: material/mental entities; human subjectivity (operating at universal, communal, and individual levels); Christian context (most broadly, Christian faith and tradition, and most specifically, Christian worship services); and divine communication (God's initiating act of self-communication). In sum, for Christians, divine communication is mediated historically and immediately via a range of material and mental entities functioning as symbols interpreted through the lens of human subjectivity (at all three levels) formed specifically within a Christian context (broadly and specifically, historically and immediately).

When a piece of IM is performed in worship, the following elements each play a crucial role in the process of Christian symbolisation: the piece's specific musical properties and structures (as a material entity); worshippers' interactions with those properties and structures (involving human subjectivity at all three levels); and the constraints on, and possibilities opened up through, these interactions consequent to

¹ Avery Dulles identifies this model in *Models of Revelation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 131-154.

the Christian context (broadly, historically, specifically, and immediately, including what precedes and follows the IM performance in worship). A distinctive kind of musical-liturgical dynamic space (MLDS) emerges in which a unique and specific set of intra-musical, liturgical, and extra-musical/-liturgical factors and interrelations between factors converge.

To probe deeply into the complexity and intricacy of MLDS, aspects of the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)—in particular, his tripartite structure of the sign and collection of ten sign classes—are recruited as the dissertation's central theoretical component.² Peirce was an American philosopher, scientist, mathematician, and logician. Peirce's tripartite structure of the sign reflects the irreducible triadicity of signification. There are no dyadic—necessary and automatic—relations between signs and that to which signs refer (their objects). Rather, a sign elicits a response (an interpretant) in the interpreter whereby the sign can be brought into relation with its object. This irreducibly triadic semiotic approach focussed the investigation's scope on the potential interpretive processes undertaken by worshippers.

Peirce's collection of ten sign classes scaffolds the construction of a unique musical-liturgical semiotic model. Within this model, a piece of IM is fundamentally a series of sonic events—quantifiably measurable vibrations—indeterminate in meaning. However, when heard, a piece of IM elicits—it is perceived as embodying—a certain quality. There is a way the piece feels on account of how listeners perceive and structure what they hear. This quality is originally indescribable (logically speaking) but functions as a sign when it brings to mind some extra-musical situation at least implicitly and perhaps explicitly. The piece is thus perceived to be like this extra-musical situation in some way and comes to be heard in terms of this extra-musical situation. For example, when a piece of IM is heard as melancholy or cheerful, evokes images of landscapes or dramatic action, or suggests notions of resolution, transcendence, or intimacy, it has brought to mind what it is like to experience specific kinds of extra-musical situations.

Within worship, there is a large collection of conventional Christian signs: sacraments, sacred texts, images, sounds, gestures, etc. Unlike IM, these signs function (predominantly) in a law-like manner—by habit and rule (for example, the bread and wine signify the body and blood of Christ by convention). These signs also signify (partly) by virtue of the qualities they embody (for example, the bread and wine signify the body and blood of Christ through qualitative likeness). When IM is contextualised thoughtfully and effectively within a worship service, what is brought to mind through the IM piece by virtue of its quality can be conditioned by what is brought to mind through a conventional Christian sign on account of its quality and

² In this summary, I use 'symbol'/'symbolisation' and 'sign'/'signification' interchangeably.

conventional meaning/s. In this way, conventional Christian signs can constrain and open up possibilities for how the piece of IM signifies, that is, for the extra-musical situation/s that can be brought to mind by the piece's quality. At the same time, the piece can condition the qualitative signifying capacity of the conventional Christian sign. The piece's own quality can determine what feelings, images, and ideas can emerge from the conventional Christian sign, potentially expanding and nuancing for a worshipper how this conventional Christian sign signifies, enabling new or deeper levels of Christian insight and growth. For example, a piece may have the qualitative capacity to bring to mind a range of situations in which a person experiences compassionate warmth. However, when this piece is performed after a gospel reading, the situation brought to mind could involve specifically the compassionate warmth of Christ's love for the world. Thus, Christ's love for the world could be tangibly felt, reflected upon, and compelling in a new, unique, musically nuanced way.³

This mutual interrelation between IM and conventional Christian signs takes place within the context of one most general Christian sign: the Christian (social) imaginary. The Christian imaginary is a Christian embodied understanding of reality which is rooted in the Christ event and 'is implicit in the practices of Christian worship.'⁴ encompassing the entire range of conventional Christian signs. Conventional Christian signs cohere to form the Christian imaginary like premises in an argument. The Christian imaginary functions as an argument sign in the way it can assert itself through these conventional Christian signs as a way of understanding reality that can be adopted by Christians with increasing depth, intricacy, and diversity. Thus, when IM functions as a sign nested within one of these conventional Christian signs, IM can play a role in forming, nourishing, expanding, and nuancing the Christian imaginary for worshippers, facilitating aspects of worshippers' ongoing Christian formation and transformation.

The perceived benefits of this proposed musical-liturgical semiotic model include its account for IM's original autonomy as a series of sonic events while emphasising the crucial role of an IM piece's specific properties and structures. The model's rhizomatous nature accounts for the diverse and expansive range of meaning-generation possibilities through an IM piece alongside the constraint of these possibilities by a well-established Christian framework. It is hoped that this model may assist in advancing the use, understanding, and effectiveness not only of IM performance in worship, but also other music forms and media within worship.⁵

³ This example relates to my concert experience performing Mozart. While the performance was not within a liturgical context, prior to the concert I had in mind Jesus' compassion on the crowd (Mark 6:34 and Matt 9:36). I had prayed backstage that I would play with a sense of compassion for the audience. The second movement of the Mozart sonata is full of 'sigh' figures which embody a quality that can be linked with the expression of compassion. The music became for me an experience of Jesus' expression of compassion for the audience (and the entire world).

⁴ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom (Cultural Liturgies): Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 68.

⁵ This is not to say Christian meaning-generation cannot take place through IM apart from worship, only that the focus of this dissertation was IM performance within worship.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE GENERAL MEETING

Since stepping into the President's role in late 2020, there have been two tasks that have been high on the list of priorities for completion. The first of those, the finding of a new editor for the *Australian Journal of Liturgy* in succession to Angela McCarthy, has now been successfully completed with the appointment of Dr Bryan Cones as the next editor of the *Australian Journal of Liturgy*.

In highlighting this development, I would like to publicly acknowledge the very significant contribution Angela has made to the life of the Academy as the editor of our journal. Angela has filled the role of editor since 2015, having previously served the Academy as president, as convenor of the West Australian Chapter, and in many other ways across her 30 years of membership of the Academy. As Angela steps away from the editor's desk, I believe a big 'thank you' to Angela is well and truly deserved. Thank you, Angela.

The second outstanding task I inherited in stepping into the President's role was blithely described at the time as 'reviewing and updating our constitution'. The task is a little more complicated than simply updating a constitution that has been in force since the Academy's foundation with only a few amendments since. Much has changed in Australian society and the Australian churches in the intervening years since the Academy was founded and the original constitution adopted.

In looking at the President's Report to the 2019 General Meeting, the need for a much more significant conversation was clearly identified. It is only now, some three years later, that the conversation will start to crystallise in preparation for the adoption of a new constitution. These efforts will make possible the incorporation of the Academy for the protection of members, while meeting the expectations of our broader society in terms of good governance. There is still a process of conversation and discernment required to bring this undertaking to a successful conclusion.

Regretfully, the need to be involved in other roles within my own church has meant I have not been able to give this issue the attention it needs and deserves in the last 12 months. Having been freed from those responsibilities, it is my hope that there may be a small ‘working group’ who can assist in finalising this task in preparation for a special General Meeting towards the end of 2022 to finalise our new constitutional and governance arrangements.

National Council

I would like to publicly acknowledge and thank the members of the Academy’s council for their continuing efforts on behalf of the Academy over the last few years. Your commitment has been an inspiration to me personally, and the conversations during our meetings have been helpful in looking towards the future of the Academy.

Executive

I would also like to express my thanks to my fellow members of the Executive: David Nelson (Secretary) and Jason McFarland (Treasurer). These demands of these roles have been different to what we expected and your adaptability in difficult circumstances is much appreciated, as is your ongoing commitment to the work of the Academy.

The current Executive is scheduled to remain in office until the beginning of 2023, at which point I hope we will have a new structure in place.

Conference

Lastly, and certainly by no means least, my thanks to Kieran Crichton and the members of the Victorian Chapter for their organisation of the January 2022 conference. The challenges faced in pivoting from the originally envisaged in-person conference in Melbourne to the current online experience have been met and a wonderful experience has been delivered.

Andrew Doohan, President

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AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF LITURGY EDITOR'S REPORT

It is appropriate, as I leave the position of Editor of the AJL, that I share some thoughts of my experience in this role. I became editor in 2015 and under the guidance of Robert Gribben, the previous editor, I assumed all the responsibilities for the *Australian Journal of Liturgy*. It has been a very good experience and through this service I have met many wonderful academics and liturgists. I have particularly enjoyed working with Sharon Boyd, the associate editor who joined me in 2019, and Christine Lai, Creatives Officer for the Communications Office (Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne), who did our design work and organised the preparation and posting of the journal. Both women have been excellent colleagues.

Throughout the COVID-19 period, without the advantage of a full conference, it was challenging to get material for publication, but this latest issue is a bumper one which I hope you enjoy. As Editor of our journal, you do not get to choose very often what you would like to publish as you are dependent on the members and others to submit material. It is also difficult sometimes to get a balanced ecumenical view if the submissions are not there. As I reviewed all the conferences through the details published in this AJL, it became apparent that there is a need to have something on inclusivity. I hope that you look through the assembled history of our conferences and office bearers for the Academy.

A focus on inclusivity and liturgy could have a wide-reaching focus that could include the following:

1. Those who have been abused, or are generationally affected, or have perceived abuse and are afraid
2. Those in aged care who have been deserted by family and friends
3. Those who are alone through homelessness, fear or mental illness
4. Those who have been victims of domestic violence
5. Those who wish to marry or have a blessing in a same sex relationship
6. Those who struggle with infertility and loss of pre-birth or still-born babies
7. Those who have been damaged through natural disasters and lost homes and livelihoods
8. Those who work with First Nations peoples (some of this has been included in inculturation topics)

There are good liturgists who are active in these areas but we have not had a dedicated look at the liturgies that are of use, or of material that could be used in future and worked through a conference context. I vividly remember a talk in our Academy by Dorothy McRae-McMahon who spoke of a liturgy that she prepared with sex workers

in Sydney. The bowl of water that she supplied as one of the symbolic elements was renamed a 'bowl of tears.' There are so many on the peripheries who are unseen and uncelebrated.

It is obvious that this journal also needs a much greater online presence. Currently full copies go onto our website and the e-deposit system for the National Library after an embargo six months. For an academic journal to get appropriate reach it needs specific backing for academic dissemination.

Library systems, such as a DOI (digital object identifier) account for the journal, can ensure that the material does not disappear from the web. There are other methods as well and I have applied for some of them, but in order to become listed a journal needs the support of an academic institution. I asked the School of Philosophy and Theology at UNDA but was not successful because the only link was my personal membership. To get professional academic points it is necessary to be on various academic lists one of which is the Deans of Theology list; AJL is not on that list.

Recently I have put *Pastoral Liturgy* fully online as a free access journal with UNDA but was surprised by some major liturgists who still wanted a PDF copy that they could print. Within our membership there will still be some who want it in hard copy as well. For PL I came to an arrangement with Gatto Christian Shop to print and post as required so that PL no longer has that distribution need or cost. This situation will need close attention for our membership. Becoming President unexpectedly in 2011 was a challenge, as the financial records were all handwritten and had no invoices, receipts or names of members or institutions, although there was a good spreadsheet kept up to date by the Secretary with members names and contact details. With the help of a close friend who is a bookkeeper we put all the accounts into MYOB and removed many institutions and members who had not paid fees for many years. We now have a smaller circulation, but each recipient pays for the privilege. When the journal goes online the financial implications of that will need to be carefully considered.

Thank you for your support over the past six years of my editorship. I offer particular thanks to State Chapter convenors for your approach to members to submit to the journal. Deep gratitude also goes to the editorial board for their unstinting assistance. I have been on this national council for the last 26 years as State Chapter convenor, President and Editor so it is time to step aside.

Dr Angela McCarthy
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BRISBANE CHAPTER REPORT

The Brisbane Chapter meets on the first Tuesday of every second month. A major change that we have made over the past few years was to change the time from early evening to mid-morning. It is, of course, difficult to accommodate everyone's timetables, but in general the morning meetings have been better attended. Prior to the change in time, we had added lunchtime gatherings as a way of including those who did not like to come out at night or who had family commitments that precluded attendance. One of our yearly meetings was a trip to Maroochydore to enable those who live slightly to the north to join our gatherings. Our Christmas get-together continues to be one of our best attended meetings and we thank our hosts David and Marcia Pitman for their continued hospitality.

Our meetings always begin with a short liturgy prepared by one of our members and usually include an opportunity for members to report on what has been happening in their own setting.

Like everyone else our meetings have been impacted by COVID-19 though we have not been as restricted by lengthy lockdowns as have those in other States. During this time, we have met as much as possible and have, like other groups taken advantage of meeting via Zoom. We are restricted by issues relating to venue and to the differing levels of familiarity with technology. This means that we have not ventured far into hybrid meetings. That will be a challenge for 2022.

Highlights of the past few years have been

- Jenny Close presented a critical and wide ranging review of *Presiding Like a Woman*, edited by Nicola Slee and Stephen Burns (London: SPCK, 2010). Her presentation was followed by an animated discussion as to whether or not there were real differences in presidency that related to the gender of the presider.
- John FitzHerbert presented his chapter 'Ritual Apologies and Reconciliation in Australian Society' in *When We Pray*, edited by Stephen Burns and Robert Gribben (Bayswater, VIC: Coventry Press, 2020). The chapter generated a great deal of dialogue especially around what did or did not constitute an apology.
- We shared resources that might be useful during Holy Week. These included Anna MacKenzie's powerful poem, 'Starting Over—Fighting Back' (John FitzHerbert); a YouTube video of the Stations of the Cross for use on Good Friday or during Holy Week (Jenny Close), and Geraldine's depictions of the Stations of the Cross. These latter led to a fruitful discussion about a number of other Stations that members had commissioned, observed and used.

- Clare Schwantes presented a summary of her PhD proposal, 'A Liturgical Hermeneutic of Scripture'. In summary, Clare argues that existing approaches to scriptural interpretation predominantly imagine a solitary reader approaching the scripture texts with a scholarly lens and do not account for the process of interpretation that takes place when pericopes are proclaimed from the lectionary in the ecclesial context of the Catholic Mass. Clare will argue that meaning emerges when Scripture readings are proclaimed in the liturgy due to the collision of four horizons: that of the biblical text, the lectionary text, the homilist, and the worshipper, who each contribute presumptions and experiences to the interpretive event. In addition to these four horizons, the proposed model asserts that interpretation of the scriptural proclamation is influenced by two contextual factors: the liturgical event and the ecclesial community. It was challenging and exciting to consider the different ways in which the scriptures are received in the liturgical setting.
- Those of us who attended last year's conference reported on the process and our experience. David Pitman reported specifically on the paper presented by Ryan Lang, 'A Song in the Night'.
- A number of members attended 'Liturgy, Prayer, Pastoral Care and Pandemics' delivered by Sr Prof Julia Upton, RSM. St John's Cathedral hosted an event for those who are not familiar with Zoom.
- An online meeting, during which we welcomed a new member, provided an opportunity for us to introduce ourselves which was a great opportunity to be reminded of everyone's gifts and backgrounds. Members from as far away as Townsville were able to join us for what turned into one of our most productive meetings. Our worship on this occasion centred on 'Seasons of Creation', which segued smoothly into a rich discussion around resources sparked by Richard's sharing of a new publication *Landscape Liturgies*. Mention of that book led to a discussion of other resources (facilitated in part by participants' having easy access to their libraries).
- Jenny Close offered the paper that she had presented at the Australian Catholic Theological Association. She posed the question: 'What does the church have to offer women in terms of the Plenary Council values of inclusivity, participation and synodality?' The paper focussed on an exciting and ground-breaking project in the Townsville (Catholic) Diocese in the 1980s and 1990s (*Never Ending Story*) that looked at more inclusive forms of leadership in the church, particularly with regard to worship. Key themes were servant leadership, the inclusion of lay people and the raising up and training of lay leaders. The expression of lay leadership seemed to be particularly pronounced in indigenous communities in which the elders were responsible to the bishop and not to a parish priest. There was a very animated discussion as we all recalled the initiatives of that time and bemoaned the fact that they had now lapsed.

Both during and after the meeting numerous resources were referenced. There is a lot of energy around basing one or two future meetings on the question of participation (lay) in worship and inclusive leadership.

Moving forward we are looking for a venue with good internet so that we can offer hybrid meetings. We continue to be a strong, supportive group who enjoy the times when we can meet, share ideas and enter into discussion.

Marian Free, Brisbane Chapter Convenor

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SOUTH AUSTRALIA CHAPTER REPORT

The South Australian Chapter has continued to meet about five times each year. Mostly this has been able to be in person as SA has experienced minimal periods of lock down. Currently we have five members.

Our 2019-2021 activities have included reading sections of *Liturgy with a Difference*, edited by Stephen Burns and Bryan Cones, and enjoying the subsequent discussion. Howard Harris presented a discussion of points gleaned from his participation in the online conference about gender and liturgy in April. The meeting was streamed from Edinburgh. He also presented a paper about creation.

Rev Jenni Hughes was a guest speaker to tell us about the Centre for Liturgy, Music and Arts which is currently based at Brougham Place Uniting Church in North Adelaide, where Jenni shares the ministry with her husband John (www.cmla.org.au).

Later in 2019 Dr Jenny O'Brien presented material from her thesis given its focus on Advent. We congratulate Jenny on being granted her doctorate, which involved defending her thesis at Sant'Anselmo in Rome while on the way to Societas Liturgica in Durham in 2019.

We have also made good use of the keynote papers from the Societas Liturgica Congress in Durham in 2019 and from 2021, when the Congress was online, hosted by University of Notre Dame in the USA. Most of us in South Australia found the time difference from middle North America too difficult to manage as virtual real time participation, so were very grateful to be able to discuss at least the keynote papers.

Some members have been involved with planning significant worship occasions for the wider Church, including for the recent plenary council meetings in Adelaide. COVID-19 has provided a particular lens to work with in managing some of these large church celebratory and grieving moments.

Our members have participated enthusiastically in various online occasions offered by the wider Academy across Australia. Jenny O'Brien presented a paper on the liturgical implications of Pope Francis' *Fratelli tutti* as a guest for the Victorian Chapter, utilising the online format they have adopted. Howard Harris has provided papers for both the one-day online conference in January 2021 and also for the 2022 conference, 'Has Online Worship Encouraged Fundamentalism?'

Our plans for 2022 are still a little fluid, but it is likely we will choose a suitable book and read it together as this seems to suit the current membership. Although we are a small group, we all enjoy the opportunity our meetings provide to hear of news from our different traditions and discuss liturgical developments in them. We value the opportunity to join with the Victorian Chapter for their online offerings, too, when the topics are of interest.

Alison Whish, South Australia Chapter Convenor

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NEW SOUTH WALES CHAPTER REPORT

The New South Wales Chapter experienced the same COVID-19 related issues as the other Australian chapters and indeed other organisations in 2020 and 2021. The year 2020 Started well for the Chapter with a good gathering and planning meeting coinciding with the biannual gatherings of liturgy representatives rganized by the National Liturgical Council in Parramatta. The chapter was fortunate enough to have Rev Paul Turner join us in conversation. Shortly after this event, lockdowns of various kinds prevented any in-person gatherings and online gatherings were yet to be learnt. After we experienced lockdowns and living with COVID-19 the chapter was able to gather online in July 2021 to listen to Dr Jennifer Wakeling discuss her PhD topic, 'Divine Resonance: Meaning-Generation via Instrumental Music within Christian Worship'. This was well received by the members present and stimulated discussion.

That was the last time the Chapter was able to meet; however, many members tuned into the Victorian Chapter's online events in 2021 and we are grateful to Kieran Crichton for that opportunity.

Planning is underway for 2022 with a gathering planned after Easter Sunday.

David Nelson, New South Wales Chapter Convenor

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Chapter reports were not available from the Victoria or South Australia Chapters.

BOOK REVIEWS

Reviewed by **Michelle Eastwood, Victoria**

Seven Last Words: Cross and Creation

By Andrew McGowan; Illustrations by Bettina Clowney

Cascade Book, 2021, 96 pages

Andrew McGowan's *Seven Last Words* is not a liturgical book. However, its subject matter—the words spoken from and to the cross—is deeply connected to the greatest celebration in the liturgical calendar.

The book is comprised of two main sections: 'Cross and Creation' and 'Conversations at the Cross'. The first is a series of sermons given in 2016 and 2018 reflecting on the seven sayings that are recorded as Jesus' words on the cross. McGowan thoughtfully places these words into the context of the gospel tradition and also within the wider context of the biblical text. Thus, in reference to the words 'I am thirsty', McGowan draws attention to the way these words evoke an image of the eating and drinking at Passover, as well as the shared cup of eucharistic celebrations. These words are also connected to words from the Psalms that allow an understanding of John's claim that these words are spoken 'in order to fulfil the Scripture' (Jn 19:28).

In terms of the phrase, 'It is finished', McGowan shows that it can be heard with reference to completion within the creation narratives, that what was created in Genesis has been recreated on the cross. The capacity to draw together diverse ideas, themes and understandings from across the biblical and Christian tradition is a key feature across this book.

The second set of reflections were developed during a sabbatical year in 2020 and formed not as sermons—as in the first section—but 'formed as responses to the events of that year' (p. vii). This second set of writings has a different tenor to the first, which seems to reflect both the passage of time between the first writings of 2016 and the second in 2020, as well as the different intention of the pieces. Sermons are written to be spoken and heard, whereas reflections are more likely to be read and pondered.

Named principally for individuals who are included in the gospel narratives of the cross, in this second section McGowan gives life and nuance to those who have sometimes become little more than caricatures within the Easter stories. Judas, Mary and Nicodemus are considered in terms of their own narrative arc within the biblical text.

Of particular interest to this reader was the way McGowan connects Mary's words at the beginning of Jesus' ministry at the wedding at Cana with her presence at the foot of the cross. McGowan notes that Mary's journey with Jesus from the annunciation through to his death is marked by both listening and transformation, and may be encapsulated in the words, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Unfortunately, Mary is the only female character who gets her own chapter in this section of the book.

Dismas, one of the robbers or 'insurrectionists' hung beside Jesus on the cross, and Longinus, the Roman centurion, are placed in terms of their historical context. The notion that they are fundamentally 'bad people' is problematised through a consideration of the cultural issues of the day.

'The Father' is considered, particularly as portrayed in John's gospel, is read through the lens of the transfiguration and the idea of 'lifting up' in order to glorify God's name. The angels or heavenly hosts are also featured, albeit through their silence and absence from the cross in contrast to their loud presence at Jesus' birth.

The insights contained in this book encourages the liturgist to place the events of Holy Week and Easter within a larger tradition of creation, transformation and mystery that informs all elements of worship. The inclusion of artwork by Bettina Clowney, which punctuates each sermon or reflection, reminds the reader of the importance of visual and aesthetic elements of worship. The choice to focus on the silence of the angels is a reminder that both sound and the absence of sound are important elements of a time in worship.

The choice of seven sermons followed by seven reflections provokes a sense of wholeness connected to the theological resonances of this number. The book also feels like it has a sense of rhythm both within each sermon or reflection and within the wider volume. The rhythm of the book is reminiscent of the rhythm of Holy Week, which sits within the wider rhythm of the liturgical year.

In this book McGowan provides bite-sized and easily digestible pieces, which encourage the reader to pause and reflect on the echoes of the whole Christian tradition which can be heard within this consideration of the cross. Even for those who do not share McGowan's theological convictions, there is much to recommend this book, particularly for those with the responsibility for developing liturgies and worship experiences for this pivotal celebration within the church year.

Reviewed by **Robert Gribben, Victoria**

Sacrum Convivium, Die Eucharistiegebete der Westlichen Kirchen im 20. und Frühen 21. Jahrhundert, Band I: Kirchen der Reformation.

Vierter Teil: Feierordnungen von Kirckenunionen.

(Eucharistic texts of 1980, 1988, 2005)

Edited by Irmgard Pahl and Stefan Böntert

Aschendorff Verlag, 2021, Xxviii +548 pages

Which is, being translated: ‘Sacrum Convivium, The Eucharistic Prayers of the Western Churches in the Twentieth and Early Twenty-first Century, Volume I: Churches of the Reformation. Fourth Part: Celebrations from Church Unions’. The recent volumes are included in the series *Spicilegium Fribourgense*, vol. 49.

This multi-authored volume is the last in a series under the guidance of the eminent scholar Prof. emerita Dr Irmgard Pahl, of the University of Bochum in Germany. Miners of liturgical texts will have delved into her first collection illustrating the development of eucharistic prayer, *Prex Eucharistica* (1968), co-edited with the late Swiss theologian Anton Hänggi, with texts from the early church; and her second, *Coena Domini* (1983), which examines the liturgies of the Reformation (Volume 1, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Volume 2, the eighteenth to the early twentieth).

This note concerns the final two volumes in the series, her co-editor being Prof. Stefan Böntert (Bochum, Erfurt), concerned with texts from the late twentieth to the early twenty-first centuries. The first volume has appeared (2021), entitled ‘Churches of the Reformation’ and has articles and liturgies from Lutheran, Methodist, Herrnhuter/Moravian, United/Uniting Churches and two from ‘ecumenical groups’, Taizé and the so-called Lima Liturgy.

The second volume went to the printer in mid-April and is entitled ‘Roman Catholic Church, Old Catholic Church, Churches of the Reformation’. The latter category includes German- and French-speaking Switzerland, the Netherlands, Presbyterianism in Great Britain and the USA, and the liturgies of the Churches of South and North India. The Anglican part (from Colin Buchanan) includes Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, Kenya, New Zealand, Southern Africa, South India, Sri Lanka and the USA. Understandably, not all texts from even the traditions named above are considered (most curiously, Scotland is absent). Authors were asked to propose texts significant for ecumenical discussion.

Texts are in their original language; commentaries are in their authors' first tongue and in translation, in German, French and English, which still leaves much of interest to English-only readers. So, for instance, in volume 1, you may peruse the liturgies of the Lutheran Tradition in the Netherlands in Dutch and English, the same tradition in North America, of Methodism (UK, New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Nigeria, Korea), Moravian (North America, Great Britain, Jamaica), the United Church of Canada, all in English; the commentary on Taizé (1971) is in French; 'Lima' has the text (1983) in English but the commentary in German.

In the forthcoming volume, English is found for Old Catholic (Netherlands), Reformed and Protestant (Netherlands), American Presbyterianism, Anglicanism and the Indian United Churches. Swiss-Romande is in French; German naturally predominates.

The liturgical texts are printed without any of their original setting-out (such as in 'sense lines'). Many of the authors will be known to Societas Liturgica members. I need to state that I am one of the authors (Section 4, Orders from Church Unions; Chapter 1, *The Lord's Supper According to the Uniting Church in Australia*, 459ff) so I have here confined myself to description. I chose the three iterations in *Holy Communion* (1980) ('the little blue book'), *Uniting in Worship* (1988), and *Uniting in Worship 2* (2005). I wrote about its earliest form in AJL 1-4, 1988! However, my concern is that the volumes are known to AAL members—though comparative liturgical texts is not as popular a pursuit as it once was.

The cost may not be great for such handsomely produced volumes. It has been possible to place a copy of the first volume in the Dalton McCaughey Library in Parkville.

Reviewed by **Charles Sherlock**

God is Enough: The Alpha and Omega of Church
By Matt Brain
Broughton Publications, 2021, Xii + 138 pages

Reviews in AJL are typically of books directly related to liturgy. This one is not—yet each chapter has close links with matters liturgical.

The author is the Anglican Bishop of Bendigo, whose concern in writing this short volume is enabling congregations to move beyond anxiety into graced living out of what they espouse ‘in church’. Five chapters explore five ‘traps’ faced by churches today in ways that wise ministers will find helpful, followed by ten short reasons to be hopeful.

So, why review this book in AJL? Two features stand out.

First, each chapter makes explicit reference to an aspect of (mainstream) liturgy: the pattern of praise scripture, intercession, eucharist, and particular aspects such as the Great Litany and the dismissal. It is refreshing to find a book concerned with the mission of God at a grassroots level instinctively turning to the ‘routines’ of Christian living as resource, rather than new ‘programmes’.

Secondly, there is a sustained emphasis on the golden truth that (as I would put it) ‘worship = liturgy and lifestyle interwoven’. ‘Liturgy’ as a term is avoided in favour of ‘worship’, given the intended audience. Yet it is crystal clear that ‘worship’ is far more than just an hour or so on Sunday. There is a generosity of spirit here, too: Yes, God’s grace is active alike in believers living out the gospel but also in sustaining human community.

The subtitle, ‘Alpha and Omega of Church’, brings out these connections in another way. Christian worship has both its origin and goal, its *terminus a quo et ad quem*, in Christ, the Alpha and Omega of creation. Churches whose worship is thus bookended are graced indeed!

I thus commend this book to liturgists. May it help us see more clearly our distinctive calling in the light of the wider mission of God, and so play our part in contributing to it.

Reviewed by **John FitzHerbert, Queensland**

Assist Our Song: Music Ministries in the Local Church
By Douglas Galbraith
Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press. 2021, X + 310 pages

*In all the music we make
may we and all believers be enabled
to cry out the Kyrie eleisons of the oppressed,
to sing the Alleluias of those restored to life,
and to uphold the Maranatha of the faithful
in the hope of the coming of the Kingdom.*

*—written by Douglas Galbraith for the Royal School of Church Music's Celebration Day
in Glasgow Cathedral (St. Mungo's), 18 September 1999*

Douglas Galbraith is a Church of Scotland minister. He is also a composer of sung Christian texts as well as being a highly respected musician.

Galbraith has served as a university lecturer in theology, especially liturgical theology, as a chaplain, and as head of the Church of Scotland's department for worship, music and doctrine. He is also an advisor to the Royal School of Church Music and has served as chair of its Scottish Committee.

Long-serving members of the Australian Academy of Liturgy will remember Douglas served and ministered for several years amongst Australian Christians. Some will have worked alongside him as a colleague. Others will have sat at his feet in lectures.

I remember Galbraith's association with Trinity Theological College, Brisbane, the Uniting Church of Australia's theological college in Queensland. Now-distant-but-still-accessible personal memories recall his contribution to its life as a vibrant faculty member and the same to the then-young-and-emerging Brisbane College of Theology (BCT).

The BCT was an ecumenical theological institution with foundational member colleges from the UCA (Trinity), the Anglican Church of Queensland (St. Francis' Theological College) and Banyo Seminary (the provincial seminary of the Roman Catholic Churches in Queensland). BCT no longer exists but this does not diminish the contributions of many staff, such as Douglas Galbraith, who ministered in this Spirit-inspired way within the Churches of Queensland as well as in other parts of Australia.

Assist Our Song is a living testament to the *practice/s* of Christian believers working together as one in worship while at the same time drawing on shared understandings of scripture, pastoral care and mission over the now-many-decades beginning in the 1960s.

The book has six sections; each section has between two and four subsections and the main sections are titled:

1. Worship and Music
2. The Music
3. The Choice of Music for Worship
4. Ministries of Music, Their Tasks and Responsibilities
5. Skills
6. Related Issues

Galbraith writes as a keen observer of what has occurred over these seven decades as well as being a participant in Christian worship as a music minister, an ordained presider and as teacher throughout this time span.

My personal reading of this text was akin to being in a masterclass on music within Christian liturgy. At the same time, the author kept me engaged as a partner-in-dialogue. One of the ways Galbraith did this was by peppering questions throughout the chapters that invite ecclesial and personal reflection upon liturgical music practice *then, now* and into the *unknown future*.

I highly recommend this book. Firstly, it ticks all the basics of a contemporary Christian liturgical theology, which prioritises the ministry of the liturgical assembly as a living, breathing and pulsating assembly of believers. Galbraith balances the Triune God's mission in the world for the life of the cosmos with God's call to the churches to serve the *missio Dei*.

Secondly, Galbraith reminds us time and again of the *sine qua non* of sung praise by, with and for the Body of Christ. This corporate song is not for and of itself, but is intended to remind, encourage and empower Christ's Body to be *in the world (ad extra)* while at the same time nourishing and sustaining believers, catechumens and seekers (*ad intra*).

Thirdly, there are rich insights into the many historical and contemporary developments musical traditions and practices within mainstream Christian churches, including Anglican sung prayer, the development of hymnals across the centuries as printing became the new media, and so-called contemporary worship music, for example from *Hillsong Publishing*.

Fourthly, Galbraith's attention to 'skills' for organists, accompanists and singers is welcome. His setting up of this within the framework of liturgical ministry with the worship event and the people of God as the 'doers of the liturgy' reinforces the ministerial reality for musicians who serve the Christian assembly in worship.

Fifthly, Galbraith is not afraid to offer kindly critiques of liturgical and musical practices both contemporary and somewhat older. I appreciated his concern for the safety of children and vulnerable adults in the creation of music within our churches (chapter 17). This was not on our horizon until recent years, much to our corporate ecclesial shame.

Sixthly, from four appendices at the conclusion of his book, Douglas' resources for the preparation of worship are inclusive of both written and online formats (Appendix 2) and recommendations for further reading, study and formation (Appendix 3), all of which encourage the reader to delve deeply and ecumenically.

Finally, Douglas Galbraith reassured me of the rich formation I initially received in liturgical formation and across subsequent decades. *Assist Our Song* filled in more than a few gaps in my appreciation of the diversity of Christian music across the churches. I was left with a desire to explore more in both the practices of worship and diverse liturgical reflections upon the event of Christian liturgy.

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