

Hospitality in Worship

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Main points to the Workshop

- The Northeastern Iowa synod seeks to develop "worship consistent with our heritage" as part of its evangelism strategy.
 - The first roadblock to our developing worship is a series of unhelpful assumptions we have made regarding the nature of worship, its relationship to evangelism and the prospects for changing worship. We have to replace these viewpoints with more accurate and productive ones. If we can reset our perspective, we can access a wide range of tools and approaches that move us toward a vision of faithful worship that helps our evangelism.
- „ Overview of a program for worship renewal.

My goal for the workshop

To challenge, call and begin enabling you to start or deepen a program of worship renewal that will be faithful to Christian principles and center and support your parish's evangelism program.

My ministry in support of that goal after the workshop

To help congregations to a renewal of worship by being available for consultation and developing resources.

A false, disempowering belief:

We must choose between orthodox, faithful liturgical worship and hospitality to visitors.

Components of this false belief:

- Liturgical worship is inherently repulsive to modern people.
- The lectionary, church year, sacraments, etc. are impediments to bringing people to Christ.
- Liturgical worship requires German chorales or classical music or the LBW.
- Contemporary music is inherently evangelistic.
- "Bringing people to Christ is more important than a bunch of dumb rules." or "The heritage of 1,500 years is more important than the transitory fads of the moment."

Disempowering consequences of this false belief:

- People who believe in liturgical worship can accept that their churches won't grow.
- People who believe in evangelism attempt to change worship without understanding it.
- Despair and discouragement.
- A great number of unproductive debates.

But it is actually the case that:

If worship is what it is intended to be, it will support evangelism.

Components of this perspective:

- Having a clear grasp of the purpose and importance of worship.
A purpose statement: "Our purpose in gathering is for the worship of God (and not anything or anyone else) and the experiencing of God's benefits (so we practice being the body of Christ) for the living of a godly life." (connecting worship to our ministry in daily life)
(See supplemental paper on "Notes for effective worship." for an explanation of how this statement helps our choices in worship.)
- „ Worship should deepen the faith (evangelize) of all who are present:
 - intriguing** visitors with a vision
 - inviting** new members to become closer
 - invigorating** the faithful by reminding them of what they believe.
 1. Making worship accessible to children.
 2. Sharpening the connection of the gospel to problems of daily life to support the ministry of laity in daily life.
 3. Understanding and using the potential in our heritage of Bible texts, singing, liturgical texts and the lives of the faithful.
- Accepting that worship in our congregations is too often not what it should be: neither a testimony to the grace we have found in Jesus Christ, nor friendly to visitors.
 4. Poor singing and other contradictions between the theology being proclaimed and the reality being experienced
 5. Perceived to be unresponsive to sins and pain of contemporary life
 6. Lack of understanding and knowledge of why we do what we do
 7. Many reforms are worse than the problem (entertainment, worshiping the singers, etc.)
- Having a vision of how worship is connected to the rest of the ministries of the parish and to the ministries of the laity in daily life. (Presented in worship renewal program.)
- Having the skills to plan and develop effective worship.

(See supplemental paper on "Notes for effective worship." for discussion of some of these skills.)

A false, disempowering belief:

Changing worship will mean the loss of our heritage (again)

Components of this false belief:

- „ Historically: past changes have been loss.
- „ Contemporarily: moving off the LBW means loss of faithfulness to the gospel

But it is actually the case that:

Change is necessary to become faithful.

The new perspective leads us to see:

- „ Various features of current worship are not faithful: poor singing, poor leadership, disjointed liturgy, suspicion of strangers.
- „ Change can be recovery (gain) not loss
 1. focus on the stories of the Bible
 2. teaching about worship
 3. singing a few old hymns

A false, disempowering belief:

Changing worship will cause conflict in the parish.

But it is actually the case that:

Change can proceed with consensus.

The new perspective leads us to see:

- „ Much opposition to change is based on experiences of poorly implemented changes
 - Method: do this because it is good for you
 - Content: sing this because we say you should like it

Components of a new strategy:

- „ The way we change can build consensus
 1. Involvement of laity in choices
 2. Allowing various elements of lay leadership to "sign off" on changes
 3. Making slow changes, step by step
 4. Adhering to promises about experiments, schedules
 5. Choosing changes that relate to the specific parish
 6. Using the new technologies

A false, disempowering belief:

Changing worship is massive and expensive.

But it is actually the case that:

Changing worship can be incremental and inexpensive.

Components of this new perspective:

- „ Renewal of congregational singing.
- „ Reform of bulletin
- „ Reform of prayers
- „ Learning hymns one at a time

A false, disempowering belief:

Changing worship is just one more program to do.

But it is actually the case that:

1. Change can mean less work as programs are integrated.

- „ Integrating Christian Education and Worship
(see supplemental paper on "Passing on the Faith")
- „ Integrating New Member Assimilation and Worship
 1. Using the liturgy as basis of new member classes
 2. Offering your basic Christianity classes as sermons in worship
 3. Using Sunday fellowship time effectively

2. Change can be energizing

- „ Uplifting, well sung hymns as well as those that are deeply meditative and meaningful
- „ Preaching that show the connection of Bible stories and the gospel to the problems of today.
- „ More spiritual forms of worship.
- „ More joyful (not the same as "funny" or "cheerful") forms of worship.
- „ Singable hymns (both old and new).

A false, disempowering belief:

No one will come because they are too busy, stressed or self-absorbed.

But the reality is:

People make choices and know they need help with life.

The new reality leads us to:

- „ Understand how trapped and bewildered many people are with modern life.
- „ Increase focus on Sunday morning and on Sabbath time.
- „ Increase focus on offering spiritual time rather than inviting to tasks or events.
- „ Always inviting people to what we have to offer rather than by guilt or obligation.
- „ Being free to terminate programs that are being done out of guilt or momentum.

A false, disempowering belief:

Lutherans are a cold, uncaring people.

Disempowering consequences of this false perspective:

- „ Undermines all our evangelism.
- „ Leads us to focus on everything that goes wrong.

But the reality is:

Lutherans in stable settings are shy because they have not had the chance to learn skills of hospitality.

The consequences of this new perspective:

Find formal forms of friendliness

- „ The people:
 1. nametags
 2. trained greeters

- „ Architectural hospitality:
 3. Signs to the building: everyone does not know where the church is
 4. What is their first impression? (or, is there mud in the parking lot?)
 5. Doors to building
 6. Signs in the building (where is the sanctuary? the bathrooms?)
 7. Do we worship the fans, the speakers, the organist's head, or the cross?
 8. What could a coat of paint do?
 9. Space for knees and hips
 10. Table service and food
 11. Lighting

- „ The liturgy:
 12. Readable bulletins with spiritual content that highlight structure of the liturgy
 13. Choice of hymns
 14. Teaching the liturgy (not apologizing or explaining it away)
 15. Congregational leadership being visible
 16. Praying for people outside of church (community, specific people)
 17. Visitors get in free (but be careful...)

- „ Follow-up:
 18. Giving something to visitors (bread, a mug) rather than asking for something
 19. "Friendliness over time"

The False choice

Traditional Worship

Contemporary Worship

VIEW OF EACH BY THOSE WHO ARE PRO-TRADITIONAL

Faithful

Worshiping the microphones

Orthodox

Heretical

Has substance

Fluffy and transitory

Worship is a duty (and that's good)

Worship is entertaining (and that's bad)

VIEW OF EACH BY THOSE WHO ARE PRO-CONTEMPORARY

White Northern-European

Speaks to current culture

Legalistic

Meets people's needs

Dull, alienating and boring

Exciting

Worship is work (and that's bad)

Worship is entertaining (and that's good)

THE ACCEPTED FALSE-CONSENSUS

Orthodox but repulsive.

Heretical but packs them in.