



*We exist to honour God
and make followers of Jesus
in Kelburn and beyond*

About Worship

According to Saint Paul, “our true spiritual worship” is the giving of ourselves entirely to God in all areas of our lives.¹ What are we doing, then, when we gather for ‘worship’ each Sunday for an hour or so?

Someone has said that the communion service is “the family coming home for dinner”. When families gather around the dinner table they bring their experiences and preoccupations with them. In healthy families, at special meals, talk will turn from the competing individual stories to the shared story of the family – “remember when Dad and Mum had that water fight with our water pistols and we all joined in...” etc. etc. In eating together and in telling and re-telling these stories the family culture is strengthened and deepened. Individual identities are shaped and members are equipped to leave home to live out who they are in the rest of their life.

The gathering and the table talk is just as important as the food at such meals though the eating together remains a central part of the sense of unity achieved at such times. Years later, when the kids leave home, or mum and dad pass away, the meal can remind the children of who they are and where they came from

In many ways, this is what we are doing when we gather together to hear God’s Word, respond to it in prayer, affirmation of our faith and praise and celebration for what God has done for us in Christ. Together we are reminding ourselves of who we are and what we are here for.

The celebratory meal will be the place where this especially takes place – though not all stories have to take place around the Lord’s table any more than families can only talk when they eat together. When people gather for dinner, talk before and after the meal is as important as the table talk itself. This is why listening attentively to God’s story – the words of Scripture – and hearing it unpacked is at the core of our worship – it gives the meal context and so its meaning.

Someone else has said that Sunday worship is like the assembly is to the school. The assembly is part of the school but it is not the school. The school is what happens in the classrooms, on the playing fields or in cultural events. In a way, the school is also what happens as students socialise beyond the school gates.

The assembly, when it’s well done, embodies all this. Through processing, standing, sitting, singing (doing things in unison), through speeches, presentations – at some schools, even through prayer – the assembly doesn’t just keep everyone up-to-date with what has happened since the people last assembled, but *re-tells* the story of what it means to belong to this school.

In doing so, the assembly gives a sense of belonging that is bigger than the form class or sports team. It reinforces the basic values that underpin school life. It gives the school a sense of cohesion and identity, and it strengthens the dynamic of how things happen at the school.

¹ Romans 12:1-2.

Seen through the lens of such metaphors, we can see that what goes on Sunday is really about what goes on in the common life of the family of God throughout the week in their homes, life groups, places of work and so on. Without such a common life our worship is reduced to ritual (however 'free' it may appear), sermons to lectures, prayer and sacrament to magic that somehow seeks to conjure up Jesus' presence.

Worship that sees the Sunday hour as 'it' – the place and time God is manifest – is really Old Testament worship and has little to do with an understanding of church where the people are God's temple, the household of God in whom Jesus is manifest.² Like the school assembly and the family meal, Sunday worship is *about* 'it', it is *part* of 'it' and we may, of course, encounter Jesus there, but it is *not* 'it'.

Notice how, regardless of what metaphor we may prefer to describe worship, there are three important elements here:

- worship both springs from and feeds into the wider life of the 'celebrating community' who gather to worship
- worship is *formational* – it is about *the* story that I become part of. It is not primarily about me and my story.
- worship equips those who celebrate for living out the gospel as they go.

This is a huge relief for worship leaders for it means that we don't have to 'deliver' good worship, we simply have to help call out from those assembled the Christ in them whom they bring.

To unpack...

Worship and the Celebrating Community

Regardless of how worship takes place or what it looks like, it is the worship leader's job to facilitate the 'celebrating community' in its worship together week by week. It is the 'celebrating community' who come together to worship – this is their work, their liturgy.³

The assembled people give *attention* to calling forth an energy or dynamic involving gathering, listening and responding to God, who engages them through Word and Sacrament and in prayer. **It is the intentional giving of themselves to each other in this service that makes God present.**

The Catholic theologian Eugene Walsh has written,

"The celebrating community must know itself first as a people given over to the task of bringing itself alive at Sunday mass as a community of Christian hospitality [a place where the community becomes *present* to one another in the Spirit of Christ]. **This is a task for the entire community... which needs to be helped to discover and accept its responsibility for its unique ministry...** only then can it respond effectively to the ministry of the [worship leader and other ministries]... Only to the degree that the people achieve this **context of hospitality** [of being *present* to one another in Jesus], are the energies of other ministries released."⁴

Liturgy, then, is about what we *do* as a *gathered people*, it is not just about saying words together in a book or following a set pattern or worship any more than it is just doing our own thing as a

² Ephesians 2:19-22.

³ Grk. *laos* + *ergon* = *leitourgikios* = the work of the people.

⁴ Eugene Walsh, *Celebration: theology, ministry and practice*, OCP Publications, Portland OR, 1994 .NB. This section borrows extensively from Fr. Eugene's little book though also adapts it freely. In doing so it doesn't claim any endorsement from the now deceased author.

collection of individuals freely expressing ourselves. The set liturgy gives dramatic shape to our worship – it goes from somewhere to somewhere, it has its highs and lows, it has mundane and special moments. Sometimes it includes a “meal”, sometimes it doesn’t. Whatever it includes or excludes it does this in an agreed (authorised) way so that we are formed in Christ together according to the historic orthodoxy of the church – not according to the predilections of the worship leader, the musicians – or the vicar.

Though there is an order of service, a structure, the worship leader is there to facilitate the unfolding of the people’s worship, not to *make* it happen or dominate *how* it will happen. The worship leader is not an MC. Nor are they to direct people through an order of service by announcing a list of tasks (“now we shall stand”, “now we shall...”).

Rather, the worship leader *embodies* the worship that the people themselves come to offer. The worship leader does this through who they are – what they bring of themselves ‘*in Christ*’ to the worship time – what they say and don’t say, and how they do this – even their use of space about them.

The worship leader must make good ‘signs’ to facilitate good worship. Yet it is the people who create the worship. However sonorous our voice, however good our diction, however clever or pious our intro patter, it is the people’s work that will make good worship – **worship that builds faith, gives life and so glorifies God.** This requires the wholehearted *presence* and participation of the people who have assembled for worship – and this will be encouraged and nurtured when the worship leader themselves is *present* “in Christ”,⁵ and giving attention to their leading.

So the people come to make their offering of worship. The work of the worship leader is to help this happen.

Prayer Book Worship

A series of services are given as options in the ‘New Zealand Prayer Book / He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa’ (NZPB / HKMA). It is good to take the time to be well acquainted with these, including their structure, specific instructions given and options provided.

As you become familiar with these services, let the cadences of the liturgy sink in so you will become at ease with the services – both what you retain and what you leave out in any given service. **When you are focused yet at ease, so will the people be.**

Template Worship

“The 2004 General Synod / te Hīnota Whānui approved a framework for planning and arranging Liturgy using ‘A New Zealand Prayer Book He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa’ and Other Liturgical Resources. The framework can be found as Appendix A to these Standing Resolutions”.⁶

Further, standing resolution 5 of the 2006 General Synod allowed for each tikanga of our church to develop this framework in accordance with the provisions of the NZPB / HKMA. “The prayer book is the foundation of the template and provides the principle content for its use. However new understandings may happen from the process of rethinking familiar services; in some cases to provide additional insights and in others to discover completely new possibilities”.⁷

⁵ Rom.12:5.

⁶ www.anglican.org.nz/Resources/Lectionary-and-Worship Scroll down to ‘template’ link.

⁷ Ibid.

This innovation was not without its critics from widely disparate ends of our church.⁸ Many think it threatens common worship and so the unity of our church. Others that it has lost the balance between word and sacrament and elevated other elements of worship to an equal place for which they have no warrant. Others still have questioned the legality of the template as authorised worship under the constitution of the church.

In response to objections such as these, General Synod has since abandoned Template Worship as an authorised *form* of worship but holds to it as a guide to better use the authorised worship we have (a very confused and very Anglican solution, which some would say is only bettered by Motion 30).

Never-the-less, **the template recognises the reality of the need for innovation while retaining structure and boundaries** for this. Of the essence of the template is the reconstituting of God's people in response to the opening of God's word and the "sending out" of God's people to be a witness to Jesus.

Note that the template questions the idea of church as a 'eucharistic' community since a variety of responses can be made to the opening of the word. Not all elements need be included from the first and last parts of the service, though ministry of the Word remains central and always precedes the missional response since it casts the framework within which the response can be understood. In many ways, this is little different from what we have in our Morning Prayer service but expressed in a much simpler way. Getting rid of clutter and wordiness is good.

At a practical level, then, this means that in conceiving a service outside of the NZPB/ HKMA, as well as thinking through the above it is good to read carefully through page 511 of the prayer book even if you are not planning to include the Lord's Supper.

Preparing for a Service

Developing a service is a complex process and involves many others. You need to **imagine yourself** into the service – ask: what do I imagine will happen here? What will it look, sound and feel like? Where will it lead the people?

To do this effectively **takes time**. You need to discuss the theme for the service with the preacher and the music director. It's as well for you to have an idea of what you want before you do this while also retaining an openness to their input.

Be careful when you have gone through this process since there can be many variables on the day which can throw you off balance even if you are using a tightly structured prayer book liturgy – the people may be unresponsive, children may scream at quiet moments, an ambulance may go by etc., etc. The task is to remain focused on where you see the service going and how it is to **form those involved**.

In any case, seek God prayerfully throughout. Above all remember, it is giving attention to **bringing yourself in Christ to the service** that will be decisive in promoting good worship.

Deciphering the lectionary reading system is a dark art for beginners. Reference the parish website for your service and / or ask the Vicar if you are in doubt. Just the same, once you get into this you will find both the lectionary and the Prayer Book a rich resource and an effective one when used sensitively and with discernment. It can also be a huge obstacle to the genuine participation of the people in their celebration. So a real commitment is needed for the prayer book to function as it should – an aid to formational worship.

⁸ See +Brian Carrell's important article "[Scratching Where It Itches – Issues Facing the Anglican Church in NZ Today](#)" See also Bosco Peters' uncompromising and dismissive critique of the template www.liturgy.co.nz/newsviews/template.html

A Word of Caution

Lastly, at his institution the Vicar is charged with safeguarding the worship life of the parish, including Word and Sacrament, prayer and music. For this reason it is always good to go through with the Vicar ahead of time how you see the service unfolding – where will it come from and go to? What will happen in it and where? What will be said (and not said), sung and not sung and why? What do you imagine the service has to “say” and how will it form those who take part in it, deeper in Christ? You also need to discuss this with the preacher for the day, the music director and whoever is leading the “prayers of the people”. Make time for all this ahead of time.

Despite the best prep, people sometimes misunderstand what is “said” in a service by any one of those involved. If the Vicar is taking responsibility for this it is as well for him to know in advance what is intended. In any case, it is always good to pray through the service personally and meeting with the Vicar helps this.

Warm regards



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The Template

Gathering

- Opening greetings and responses
- Doxology/ psalm/ Gloria/ praise song
- The Law
- Words of assurance
- Repentance
- 'Absolution' – inclusive or declarative
- Peace (alternative)
- Other – notices regarding the common life of the parish
- Collection
- Special event

Word

- Scripture reading – incl., Gospel if a communion service
- Exposition/ proclamation
- PPT or video
- Children's talk

Missional Response

- Discussion
- Testimony
- Creed
- Prayers – of the people, for healing, anointing
- Praise songs/ hymns / chants etc
- Peace (alternative)
- Lord's supper
- Other 'actions' – a commissioning
- Blessing
- Sending