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Developing A Program For
Interpersonal Ministry in the Liturgy
For St. Paul Lutheran Church
Shreveport, Louisiana

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October 12, 1990

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CONCORDIA SEMINARY
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

DEVELOPING A PROGRAM FOR
INTERPERSONAL MINISTRY IN THE LITURGY
FOR ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH
SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA

A MAJOR APPLIED PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
WESLEY M. TONCRE

SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA
12 OCTOBER, 1990

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ABSTRACT

INTERPERSONAL MINISTRY IN THE LITURGY

This major applied project explores the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, the tradition of the Fathers and contemporary ecclesiastical thinking in an attempt to discover and begin to define the contributory role of the individual worshiper in Lutheran corporate liturgical worship today. Further, it develops a workshop structure that is designed to provide members of one particular congregation with the knowledge, attitudes, skills and opportunities to execute those roles by serving one another effectively in response to God's ministry to them while they are gathered around Word and sacrament.

It is noted that neither Holy Scripture nor the Lutheran Confessions restrict God's instrumentality for ministry to people in corporate worship to the ordained clergy alone. Together with the Church Fathers and contemporary ecclesiologists, they cry out for more than a personal, private and internalized participation by worshipers. However, as liturgy is presently done among us, there is little opportunity for God's gifted people to mediate God's grace to one another directly during this sacred time.

Having gathered a Task Force on Worship to study the materials in Part One, the pastor sought practical ways in which the members of congregation might a) desire to participate in such a service, b) know what their ministry is about, and c) develop schemes to do it without compromising truly theocentric worship anchored in the proclamation of justification by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Together they developed a pilot one-day Worship Workshop which includes components that 1) explain the liturgy in relational terms, 2) understand the peculiar nature of adult learning, 3) provide opportunity to practice intercessory prayer and absolution, 4) help members discover their spiritual gifts together with their potential use in the liturgy, 5) put the above into practice in worship, and 6) evaluate the workshop in terms of its impact on the individual and corporate worship future of the congregation.

PART ONE

THEOLOGY OF RELATIONAL WORSHIP

I. OVERVIEW AND PASTORAL CONCERNS

The purpose of this part of the paper is to serve as the theological, confessional and historical basis of the writer's major applied project, as well as to sketch a vision of what that project intends to accomplish.

There are those who would dismiss the efforts that follow as a vain attempt to put new wine into old wineskins. I prefer to see it as an invitation to God's people to drink deeply of the wine of gladness which has been hidden for so long under our very eyes, hidden within the familiar yet foreign wineskins of the Divine Service.

My concern is Church Growth, or rather, the growth of a particular congregation--St. Paul Lutheran Church of Shreveport, Louisiana--that may be experienced when and if the manifold gifts of the Holy Spirit are employed by the gathered Christians in order to meet one another's real needs within the context of the Eucharistic Liturgy. It is my thesis that such worship is the design that the Spirit has given for this congregation at this time in her history in order to deepen her discipleship and that, through it, Jesus may "draw all men" unto himself. That is not to say that other elements of Church Growth and life are unimportant. But this paper will focus only on those

elements that relate to the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit--through Word and sacrament--from person to person as an appropriate response of God's people while gathered at his table.

To many Christians in the "Bible belt"--who trace their religious roots to American revivalism rather than European tradition--Lutherans seem a strange breed. For example, we at St. Paul, Shreveport, claim ours is an "exciting church." Yet we wrap our worship experiences in the same garments they wore forty years ago. Cassock, surplice and Lutheran Hymnal can still be found. The organ accompanies congregational singing and by the duly robed and lofted choir tries valiantly to lead worship from the rear. To be sure, six or eight less folks sit sullenly through the "new liturgy" than did five years ago. From time to time we throw in a folk-mass for the token middle-aged hippies who have not yet wandered to non-denominational churches. We recently began to use alb, chasuble and worship assistants. But things are still fairly predictable and by the book, much as our folk would have us believe their lives to be. Our exciting church has the best baroque choir in the Ark-La-Tex region. Our organist plays Lutheran chorales on our state-of-the-art imitation baroque organ more proficiently than do the high-salaried recitalists at our prestigious local Episcopal cathedral. Our chasubles are real silk, the chalice is genuine gold and our pastor can chant not quite

as well as our lead tenor, but neither these things nor the eloquence emanating from our pulpit, are the factors that give us claim to the title, "exciting."

The fact is that whenever we gather in the name of Jesus to receive his pure Gospel in the preaching and the sacraments, God, himself, comes among us to work faith and to give forgiveness of sin, life and salvation to all. We call it "Divine Service" because that is the best we can do since English lacks the subjective genitive. If we still used the German Gottesdienst--"service of God"-- that would make clear the reason for our excitement. "The Son of man comes to serve, not to be served." God comes here to do a service to his people and that is exciting.

Of course we keep our excitement quiet. As Lutherans, the Theology of the Cross and Deus absconditus have trained us not to expect much in this life, so we are seldom either surprised or disappointed. Most of the time, we experience what we have sought after--a womb-like inner peace--as we wrap ourselves comfortably in the familiar and predictable. Peace is what we have every right to expect from our religious rituals, have we not?

Occasionally however, we do suffer some degree of distress. It may be triggered by a delinquent member explaining his absence, "When I'm in church, I don't feel needed. When I'm not there, I'm not missed." More ripples are created by the interview with the hurting first-time

visitor who says, "Well, I came, but nothing happened." Widow Gloria, returning from her semi-annual visits to her daughter and family--who belong to one of those unchurch-churches with the stage, TV cameras and deafening decibels--can always be counted upon to disturb. Her testimony, now shared a score of times, remains unchanged. "O, Pastor, you know I don't go for a lot of what they do--the loud music, tongue-speaking, and altar calls--but you know, I really feel loved by Jesus when I go there. I wish it could be that way here!" I have often reminded her that a church is like a family and that, when we were growing up, other families seemed more loving and attractive to us than did our own. Later, of course, we found that not to be true. She always listens respectfully, but is not persuaded. Even I have tired of listening to my hackneyed rejoinder. (I'll have to ask the circuit pastors if they have any more convincing comebacks.)

Such comments, if not carefully ignored, could lead our exciting church to ask serious questions. Rather than ask, we comfort ourselves with the assurance that people who think along such lines are given to expectations that we consider, rightly, to be foreign to true Lutheran worship. (Most of us are quite happy that no holy hour events of consequence depend on our presence. Such responsibility would threaten our freedom of absence!)

No matter how I rationalize, I am still confronted with the ugly possibility that, while in our liturgy God comes to serve his people in exciting ways, those very people may feel unnecessary to the event, unloved in the process, and leave without the portion He has prepared for them. If that is true, then the fault clearly cannot lie with the Treasure. It must, therefore, lie with the cracked clay pot in which that Gospel-treasure is hidden. Here it helps, at least theoretically, to be Lutheran. Our Reformation heritage implies that we eagerly and frequently assess and re-form the pot so that the exciting Treasure might have preeminence. Let us pretend that we really can do that, at least at the most important level in the church, that of the local congregation. Because the yearning of the widow, the complaint of the delinquent, and the pain of the searcher refuse to disappear, it may be that the Head of the Church wants to raise a pastoral issue which could impact the growth of this congregation and the effectiveness of her ministry in a powerful way.

We might best phrase this issue as a series of questions. To whom and where in the life of the congregation belongs the responsibility of caring for the real needs of people? Can, or should, the Lutheran worshiper--accustomed for years to study necks, absorb

words, get his blessing and go home--become a caregiver,¹ an absolver of other persons, within the context of the liturgy? Or, to use the cleaner language of Peter Brunner, can truly Pneumatic worship--that which the Holy Spirit conducts--exist without opportunity for each to bring his or her gift?² Is that caregiving in the name of Jesus, assigned by him to the individual, to find its expression solely in the home, business, face-to-face and parson-to-person setting? Or is there a Divine design for such Church-growing ministry in the worship-gathering as well?

Then, if such caregiving proves to have basis in Scripture, Confessions and the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church, and if it can be demonstrated that meeting the needs of our people requires such modification, we will attempt to deal with some of the resultant adaptations of catechesis and liturgical form from the perspective of Church Growth.

¹Throughout this paper, "Caregiving" means "Distinctively Christian Caregiving," popularized through the Stephen Series, as developed by Kenneth C. Haugk in Christian Caregiving: a Way of Life (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) especially chap. 2.

²Peter Brunner, Worship in the Name of Jesus, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968) p.237.

II. GOD'S WORD ABOUT WORSHIP/PRIESTHOOD

Caregiving is part of Yahweh's original design. It is what he does. His intention for the newly created order reaches a climax in Gn. 1:26. All is finished and declared good. It lacks only a Godly-hearted governor. The second creation story is more precise. Adam--the man after God's own heart--is placed in the garden to "work it and take care of it" (Gn. 2:15). This is not a good arrangement. It lacks reciprocity. The man is alone, except for God. The caregiver needs to be cared for by one like himself, one who is flesh-and-blood. Enter Eve. Then, grasping for godness, they die to the world, to each other and to Yahweh. The caregivers have nothing to give and can only be cared for. God's Gospel to them is delay of execution, skins for defense, and the promise of seed in which to hope. God's caregiving is both tangible and verbal, temporal and spiritual, at the same time.

God must now establish for himself a special order of caregivers through whom he will be able to minister to his creation. Noah found favor and is installed as caregiver for the post-deluvian order (Gn. 6:18-20). Next, Abraham--and in him the rest of the patriarchs--is called to a new identity (Gn. 12:1-3). "Leave...and go...and I will

bless you." His apostolate is defined, "and all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you."

Yahweh reveals the means of that blessing for the outsiders in Ex. 19:5-6, but with a twist. It is still the covenant of the Caregiver that is the foundation of Israel's apostolicity. The proof of the covenant is his dry-footed rescue and his naming of this no-people as his own. It is in the receiving (keeping) of the covenant that they become the "great nation" of Gn. 12. Israel's greatness as Yahweh's Temple-treasure emerges, not because he has no concern for the outsiders, but precisely because he does care for them. Israel will be to the nations what Aaron is to Israel. Is. 14:1-2 gives shape to the yearning heart of the Caregiver that would gather the afflicted to this priestly place and "Israel will possess the nations." Is. 49:6 makes of this holy people a "Light to the Gentiles," to "Bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Vv. 8-11 list the outward signs of this salvation: restoration of the land, restoration of sense of place, breaking captivity, reentry into light, guidance, feeding and protection, removal of obstacles from the path of the outsider and those coming home from far away. Is. 61 further describes the nature of the care to be given by the holy people--Yahweh-like care that flows from the anointing of the Spirit--as binding up the broken hearted, setting prisoners free, bringing the Lord's favor and vengeance, comforting those

who mourn, trading despair for hope, and imparting a new name.

Note how both sign and nature are expressed in a delicate interweaving of the temporal and spiritual, tangible and intangible, concrete and abstract, inward and outward caring action. Is this by divine design or is it due to the inability of the Hebrew language to express the abstract except in concrete terms? While this could involve a major study by itself, Jesus--according to Mark 2--hints at an answer. The presenting symptom is paralysis. Jesus diagnoses sin and prescribes forgiveness. The man walks away! The astounded audience--whom we suppose to have perceived sin and sickness as inextricably linked--responds, "We have never seen anything like this!" (V. 12) Perhaps they mean the connection that Jesus makes between the world of God and the world of men rather than the sight of a previously paralyzed man carrying his mat off into the morning sun. He welds the spiritual and physical into one with these words, "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." (Vv. 10-11) This, together with a long list of other ministry events in the gospels and Acts, suggests that the hebraic worldview, which sees God's caring action as wholistic, more closely approximates his mind than does that of contemporary secularized Western Christianity. Nor are we of the Lutheran Church - Missouri

Synod immune to that divided view of God's world. Perhaps the wall between temporal and spiritual worlds, so carefully constructed in generations of young minds by our catechetical instruction, needs to be scripturally and confessionally reassessed.

The effectiveness of this priesthood is to be evidenced by the eagerness of the gentiles to come and offer their gifts, without reservation, in the temple where the Lord's priests minister (V.6). This is Church Growth! Is it also a recognized objective of our corporate worship?

Here is the divine twist: the covenant man of Genesis has become a covenant people. The priesthood is now corporate, not individual, and it is a priesthood that acts toward Yahweh and the world, not toward itself.

This corporate nature of the priesthood--the church as a priestly people distinct from the notion that each Christian is a priest--is carried through in I Pet. 2:4-10, together with the same sense of the church's corporate priesthood over against the world.

The usual doctrine of the Universal Priesthood-- "Allesamt durch die tauff zu priesten geweyet," (WA6, 407, 22-25) as Luther's interpretation put it, has little real ground in IP 2:4-10 where the predicates for this newly elected society are collective and corporate, applicable only to a people, a community, and not to individuals. ...Both terms [hierateuma, body of priests, and basileon, royal residence] are corporative and have been interpreted by the author of IP in this sense. It is semantically inadmissible to attempt to reduce either of these words to an individual-distributive classification and thereby to suggest that each individual believer is being depicted as a "king" and a "priest"....'To offer through Jesus

Christ Spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.' This task...does not indicate participation in the Eucharistic oblation...but rather consists in the exercise of a holy life and well doing coram Deo and pro hominibus. This activity is basically a witness orientated toward the world....This idea [of the priesthood of each believer] will have to seek a locus other than the text of IP 2:4-10 which depicts not the rights and privileges of individuals but rather the election and holiness of the corporate People of God.³

Even Jesus, in his sacerdotal prayer, envisions the priesthood of the church being carried on in a corporate fashion and within sight of a watching world. The very unity, rather than the individuality, of the church stands as testimony before the world (Jn. 17:20-23).

That would seem to end the discussion. The classic passages pertaining to the priesthood of all believers do not support the priesthood of each believer. If there is no caregiving role for each believer in the worship-gathering because the priesthood is something abstract, corporate and other worldly, must we stop here?

No, because there exists a plethora of Biblical warrant for the unique, special and personal priesthood of each believer, we must continue the search. In a picture different from that of priesthood, our Lord paints the means by which his caregiving will be conferred. The most eloquent expression is found in the "Shepherd" passages. Leading, protecting, feeding and giving care are all wrapped

³John H. Elliott, The Elect and the Holy, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966) pp. 223-225.

into this image. It is the very image Yahweh claims for himself in Ezek. 34:11-16. It is this role as Shepherd (Pastor) that Jesus claims in Jn 10:11-30. To it he adds, quite significantly, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no man can pluck them out of my hand" (V.28). That is true because it is the Father who shepherds in the Son.

Jesus further expands the Father's caregiving when, in Jn.21:16, we read,

"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'

This charge does not apply solely to Peter, since Paul gives the shepherd's charge to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."

We are left in no doubt as to who does the shepherding of God's flock. Heb. 13:20 calls Jesus the "Great Shepherd," and Peter reminds the elders of their shepherd role as we together await the appearance of the "Chief Shepherd" (I P 5:4). According to 2:25, Jesus, alone, is the Shepherd and Bishop (Overseer) of our souls. Traditionally we have tied the Shepherd passages to those who serve in the pastoral office. If the priesthood is corporate and not individual, if shepherding belongs to the

pastor, then perhaps our delinquent friend really ought to feel unnecessary. Or is there more to be uncovered?

Let us begin again, with Jesus, on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jn.7:37-39. "If a man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me," then, in a broad sweep, "as the Scripture has said", he brings all the thirsty yearnings of a desert people together with all the Living-water promises of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Zechariah. To them belong the promises from Yahweh that he would restore life to his dried out people. Living water became a dramatic symbol for Yahweh's caregiving. Jesus makes of believers the carriers of that Living Water. The promise is singular, personal, and inclusive, "He who believes...from his belly." It is the caregiving that belongs to the Father and the Son now given to the individual believer, "From his belly [quite physical and tangible] shall flow rivers of living water." In Ezekiel, the rivers flow from the Temple. In Rv.22--the view of the Lord's Day Eucharist from the heavenly perspective--the river flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. What does that make of the believer but a vital and personal participant in the life-giving care that his Father gives?

Moving from symbols and images to teaching whose meaning is less obtuse, we note that Jesus specifically and repeatedly instructs the disciples concerning absolution. In Mt. 18 forgiveness is central because the Father cares

(V.14). The parable of the Unmerciful Servant makes the point. The caregiving that snatches the brother out from under judgement belongs to "each of you" (V. 35). We note that Jesus puts binding and loosing into the context of the worship-gathering in verse 20. Something is implied that goes beyond the granting of heavenly validity to the decision of the Voters' Assembly in cases of excommunication. It makes the central concern of the gathered disciples the caregiving which consists in admonition, absolution⁴ and restoration of the brother in the Name of Jesus. He elevates the brother's spiritual status to the level of a personal matter for each of the rest of those who gather in his name. Mt. 5:23-24 also suggests that reconciliation is a personal responsibility and is to be accomplished within the context of the worshiping community. It is noteworthy that Jesus does not say, "Forget it, don't bring your gift, let your animosity have its day," as some of our people think they have been instructed. Jesus makes the urgency and inescapable nature of forgiving care integral to the worship-gathering.

Not only does Jesus inform us of the concepts, he also models how they are to be applied by the believing community. If corporate worship means to gather in the name of Jesus around Word and sacrament, then Thursday evening,

⁴For a discussion of the use of absolution by the laity, see appendix 3.

as John describes it in Chapters 13-17 of his gospel, fills the bill. While John fails to mention it, the other evangelists remind us that there was a liturgical structure to the worship-gathering that night consisting of the ancient Passover rite. If it is legitimate to attempt to harmonize the gospels, we observe a great deal of spontaneity alongside the structure of the prescribed liturgy. That blend was carried on into the primitive Church for several generations. On this evening, Jesus introduced the liturgy of the Eucharist in the context of an extended family gathering. It is apparent that what happens here is first a real meal--with all the interchanges, conversation, and interpersonal dynamic that are part of mealtime--before it becomes a ritual. This writer wonders if Jesus' "This do!" also pertains to the footwashing, dialogue, admonition, absolution, teaching, comforting, eating and drinking as well as the sharing of the bread and wine. According to the evangelists, psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, knowledge, wisdom, prophecy, and instruction all find a place in this corporate worship event.

It is clear from the footwashing who is served and who is Servant. It is also clear that flesh is never comfortable with that arrangement. We can easily identify with Peter's eagerness to wash the Master, as well as his refusal to see himself in need of washing by the Servant.

Holy Absolution was evidenced under many forms that night. Footwashing (Jn. 13:5), table fellowship (V.26), word about being clean if washed a little (V.10), name of endearment (V.33), trust of partnership (Vv.34-35), promise to share place (14:5), promise to answer prayer (Vv.13-14), promise of resurrection (V.19), promise of the Spirit (v.26), and bequest of peace (V.27) are just a few of its expressions. We also note that no sincere and heartfelt confession of sins precedes this absolution and that no confession of faith in the Real Presence is required or expressed. Is Jesus somehow able to be unbound by the present ignorance and faithlessness of the disciples in view of what he knows will be revealed in and to them? Would these men, as they were that Thursday, be accepted at our altars next Sunday? The questions may disturb but must be addressed.

This worship-gathering is inclusive, protracted, unhurried, intimate, honest and free-flowing, thus so very unlike the often seen Fifty-five Minute Special. It was also--this ought to encourage those who can't sit long--peripatetic. It included a walk into the garden to face Snake again and finally. The disciples--called to a ministry of prayer--are needed. And, as do we too often, they promptly fell asleep.

Some are quick to point out that all these direct instructions and interactions take place between Jesus and

the Eleven. They insist that the commission and promise in all four gospels speak specifically to only the Eleven. That is true. Only Paul, in I Cor. 15:6, suggests that the charge may have been given to more than the Eleven, and it may well be that he had his own reasons for negating the apostolic exclusivity. One can only guess what sort of stress Paul felt as he was met in place after place by those who questioned the authority of his Gospel because he was not part of the Eleven. Still, neither the witness of the gospels nor Paul are able to tell us whether the Eleven are to be seen as the exclusive recipients of the caregiving ministry of absolution, or whether they are simply representative of the whole church as trustee thereof. It will be up to the young church to help us answer.

We look to the book of Acts to provide us with some insight, model or suggestion concerning the caregiving of the laity in the worship-gathering. Here we may discover much that is important to caregiving in the Christian community, but precious little about that ministry within the context of the liturgy.

Luke tells us about the importance of prayer meetings that include the whole church, especially for apostolic appointment and conflict resolution within the community. In Acts 1:14-15 the nominees selected by the Eleven and the women were subjected to the whole group of the "brothers" for prayer and the ratification of lots. To deal with the

discrimination charges in Acts 6, the apostles called a general assembly of "all the disciples together," in order to present their agenda. Interestingly, that agenda consisted not only of adding staff, but also included the apostolic relinquishment of the caregiving role in order to "give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." The result of the apostolic release of that ministry is indicated in V. 7, "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."

Sandwiched between these two events is the prayer meeting to end all prayer meetings. Better, it is the beginning of all prayer meetings. Its effects are still being felt today, as the Holy Spirit continues to shake the false foundations on which people build their lives. Upon their release from the custody of the temple police, Peter and John shared the events of the day with the church. The church responded by raising "their voices together" (4:24), a skill in corporate prayer which they had learned in the synagogue where all co-prayed with the leader by lending their hearts and their unanimous "Amen." The results of the prayer are listed beginning with V. 31. The place was shaken "And they were all [not just the apostles] filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly...they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,

and great grace was upon them all....those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money...and put it at the apostles' feet and it was distributed," and this is only the beginning. There is sound reason to suspect that Luke is telling us that all the rest of the book is God's continued response to this whole-hearted prayer of the church.

We may conclude from this passage that everything important to the mission fulfillment of the church is somehow connected to the single-hearted prayer of the whole church in a place, which very prayer originates in the heart of God. The prayer of the church is of crucial importance for the effectiveness of the caring ministry that is to be done through the individual worshiper. Later passages reinforce this premise by preceding with the prayers of the church the effective proclamation of the Gospel, signs and wonders, inclusion of gentiles, appointment of later apostles and the sending of missionaries. One might see a Lucan suggestion that without the prayers of the church, nothing happens. John, in Revelation 8:3-4, concurs in that opinion. One of the more dramatic illustrations of this principle comes to light when one contrasts the dismal failures of Paul's attempts at evangelism in Acts 9:20-30 with his phenomenal successes beginning in 13:12 and continuing through the rest of the book. What accounts for the difference? According to Luke, the watershed in Paul's ministry is the prayer and laying on of hands by the

Antiochene elders as they were instructed by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:23-35 may also lead us to believe that, in response to the prayer, the Holy Spirit broke the Ministry of the Word loose from the grasp of the apostles and shared it among all the Spirit-filled church. The apostles were left to bear witness to that which they had seen--the resurrection of the Lord. They apparently still believed that the ministry of caregiving belonged to them inasmuch as they received and dispensed the money. We might also conclude that this dimension of ministry, as well as meals-on-wheels, was later relinquished to the new deacons.

The apostles did not create an arbitrary dichotomy between the spiritual and temporal in which only the latter was to be relinquished to the non-apostles (the laity). Philip, the layman, deacon of ch. 6, became the baptizer/evangelist of ch. 8. But even here, Peter and John reserved oversight to themselves. They went to Samaria to examine complete what Philip began. Their apostolic pastoral responsibility was to make sure the new disciples were Spirit-equipped to reproduce.

The Pentecost Epilogue of 2:42-47 is the only reference in all the book of Acts that closely resembles the worship-gathering. The ingredients are all there: gathered in the Name, breaking of bread, apostles' doctrine, fellowship, and prayer. It is striking that Luke does not

mention any other sort of Eucharistic gathering. He lists prayer meetings, council meetings, preaching meetings, evangelistic rallies, but no Communion services. Peter's vision and Paul's call from Macedonia present problems for those who hold fast to the doctrine of the Means of Grace, for both take place outside the context of the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments in the assembly. They both seem to be instances of immediate revelation. One could conclude that Luke sees only the ministry of the word, prayer, baptism, and the impartation of the Holy Spirit by apostolic manumission to be important, and that liturgy and Lord's Supper are really inconsequential.

I suggest another reason for Luke's apparent silence. The "Holy Things" were for the holy people, not for the uninitiated. Any public revelation of the details of that which occurred after the doors of the worship-gathering were locked would have been considered the casting of pearls before swine. What happens in the Eucharist was (and still is) too valuable, too powerful, too holy to be shared with any uninstructed and accidental reader of his book. So Luke withheld it.

The whole of Acts, from 2:42 onward, is the Pentecostal Epilogue, and 2:42-47 is the stage on which all of the rest of the drama is acted out. The worship-gathering is the context within which the church lives. The

Acts of the Apostles can be seen as one protracted and unbroken Eucharistic gathering convened by the Holy Spirit who breathed the invocation on Pentecost and has not yet spoken the dismissal. Luke will not let us relegate liturgy to a time and place removed from the rest of life--as we are sometimes tempted to do--for if life is not the church's liturgy, she has none.

Paul agrees. Among that which he labels "liturgy," Paul includes the financial support sent by the Philippian congregations via Epaphroditus to help pay his prison bills (Php. 2:17,30). He also lists the special offering, solicited most persuasively in II Cor. 8-9. He uses words that we apply today to specifically religious activities--liturgy and ministry (diakonia)--to describe this special collection. Most often, he uses the latter word to describe the minister and the holy calling, as in II Cor. 4:1, "Through God's mercy we have this ministry," and 5:18, "God...gave us the ministry of reconciliation," and 6:3, "That the ministry not be blamed." There seems to be no differentiation in Paul's mind between the ministries of the apostle and non-apostle except in function. He facilely applies the title of that ministry to which he is called to the monetary offerings sent by the plain folk. It is clear to Paul: the worship of the church--her liturgy--is done in the streets all day and night by all her people. Thus it is no surprise to find lacking any reference to the assembly

for worship in the catalogue of that which is called "liturgy," "ministry," or "worship." Have the apostles no concern for the caregiving ministry of the church when she is gathered in the Name around Word and sacraments?

God has a design for the church and the world. "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11). Among the logistics that Paul sees as necessary in order for that design to be realized in the world, one factor stands central, "To prepare the saints for works of ministry (diakonia), so that the body of Christ is built up until we arrive at unity of faith and the thorough knowledge of the Son of God, and so that we mature, and so that we attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (4:12-13). Only its ability to edify determines the worth of anything in the church. Love, (Agape) is superior to knowledge in I Cor. 8:1 because "love edifies,"--builds up the other(s)--while knowledge can be an ego-trip. Prophecy is preferable to tongues as a manifestation of the Spirit because tongues edifies the speaker while prophecy edifies the church. In I Cor. 14:26, Paul sets forth a principle that is to take precedence even over the sacred Principle of Decency and Order, "Let everything be done to edify." Conceivably, there are such things as might be good for the church, are

decent and orderly, but if they will not produce growth, the apostle permits no place for them. This is abundantly clear in I Cor. 10:23-24, "Everything is permissible, but not everything edifies. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of the brothers." Of course, this permission pertains only to those things that are neither commanded nor forbidden by the Lord.

Edification--growing up and out--ascends to this primary position because of Paul's perception of the church as organic. While yet earth-bound, her destiny is to receive, possess and re-present to the world--fully and accurately--all that Jesus is and has done. Nowhere in his use of the term "Body of Christ," will Paul permit us to think in terms of symbolic similitude. "He is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18), "For the sake of his body, which is the church" (V. 24), and "God...appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Eph. 1:22-23), are only a few of the passages that insist the church is not like the body of Christ, she is the Body of Christ. This is the "mystery" he refers to in Eph. 5:32. It is for this reason that bringing her up to everything she already is, in the experience of the present moment, is so essential. If the body lacks anything, it is the Lord's arm that is shortened. This is not a mere matter of getting

along in a group--even a group with noble purpose--but a matter of life to the world.

Edification is not only essential for the body as a whole, Paul gives it primary priority for each individual member as in Rm. 12. Having first feasted on the mercies of God, God's people yield their bodies to him as the only appropriate act of worship (Vv.1-2). But just how is one to go about making such an offering? Each is to employ his or her spiritual gifts for the upbuilding of the others (Vv.6-8). Each of the gifts listed in Vv. 6-8 present a vital facet of Christ's caregiving ministry to his body. Without prophecy, service, teaching, admonition, giving, leading and mercy, the body can operate only at partial power, struggling for survival, instead of fulfilling her present destiny. In Eph. 4:7, Paul speaks again of the gifts, "But to each of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." In this instance however, he lists the gifts of Jesus to his church which come in the form of persons: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers" (V.11), as the gifts given to each of us for all of us.

Ordained ministers have an important place in Christ's shepherding care of his church, but they do not have the only place. In I Cor. 11-14, Paul has no specific admonition for the elders, leaders or professional church workers in Corinth. It is a word to the people and deals

specifically with the knowledge, attitudes and practices that bear on each of their ministries of caregiving in the worship-gathering. Like a river of life, one theme winds its way through these four chapters, "Agape... does not seek its own" (13:5). With all the rhetorical and spiritual power at his command, the apostle presses hard to permit the Holy Spirit to break through the internal alienation that characterizes the church in Corinth and keeps her from possessing and presenting Christ's fullness. In 11:11, he begins, "Woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman." In Vv. 20-21, he admonishes, "When you come together it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else." "Anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgement on himself" (V.29). "So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other" (V.33). "But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers along with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices along with it" (12:24-26). "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy...he who prophecies

edifies the church" (13:13-14:1,4b). "Strive to excel in those gifts that build up the church" (V.12). "You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified" (V.17). "When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church" (V.26). "Strengthened for what?" we may ask. So that if an unbeliever comes in, "He will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" (V.25). What is at stake in this matter of "discerning the body," is not simply the health of the members of the congregation, but the power of the Gospel to work faith in the hearts of the unbelieving and thus to grow the Church!

It is to this end then, that Paul instructs on the matter of the motive and procedure for the practice of the spiritual gifts in the worship-gatherings of the congregation. The basic principles are, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (12:7), "All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church....in a fitting and orderly way" (14:26,40). The directions are given to the whole church--the people. The responsibility for motive and order is laid upon every member of the group. Each individual is charged with making a contribution for all. This is both

urgent and important. Indeed, it "is the Lord's command" (V.37), and must be dealt with very seriously.

Further apostolic instruction to the church places the responsibility upon each member of the body for the adequate perception of the Gospel by the brother. In Col. 3:11-17, Paul suggests that, since Christ is "in all" [the members of his body], it follows that the qualities of his love will be manifested by each toward the others. Patient persistence, forgiving, sharing the Word wisely for instruction, admonition, encouragement, and stimulating each other to sing are some of the things that he expects to happen among the gathered ones. An approximate parallel in I Thess. 5:12-22 demonstrates that Paul sees these interactions occurring within the context of the worship-gathering. The encouragement to let the Spirit have his way, in prophecy and whatever else, applies to the worship-gathering according to I Cor. 14.

James 5:16-20 makes the hearing of confession, absolution, intercessory prayer and restoration to the Way the concern of each of his listeners. Since this letter, like all the the epistles, was to be read in the worship-gathering, one would expect the hearers to seek out ways to implement these instructions immediately--in that setting--as well as in their scattered, individual, daily worship. Yet the New Testament contains no incontrovertible evidence to sustain that conclusion. Still, Paul's lists of

spiritual gifts in I Cor. 12-14 and Romans 12 seem to spread the responsibility for edification to every member of the body. He makes this especially clear in I Cor. 12:7, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." Certain listed gifts, i.e. wisdom, knowledge, discernment, prophecy, healings, teaching, interpretation of tongues, admonition, giving and leadership are placed within the context of the worship gathering according to I Cor. 14.

One more question must be asked of the Biblical witness. By what means does God dispense his healing Gospel? While Paul speaks of the "foolishness of preaching," as the Spirit's tool, he does not claim that preached words are the only tool the Spirit uses to create faith and to deliver forgiveness of sin, life and salvation to people. His world-view is far too wholistic to permit a separation between word and hand.

Throughout Old and New Testaments, hands are as important as words as transmitters of promise and power. Covenant was struck and oaths were bound by the hand under the thigh together with the word of promise (Gn. 24:2ff; 32:25ff; 47:29ff). Yahweh's "right hand" led Israel out of bondage (Ps. 98:1); his "finger" wrote the Torah (Ex. 31:18). The powerful witness of the early church was due to the "Lord's hand" (Ac. 11:21). Jesus cast out demons by the "finger of God" (Lk. 11:20); touched a leper to convey healing (Mk.1:41); blessed the children by taking them "up

in his arms," and "laying his hands upon them" (Mk. 10:16). Onlookers (Mk. 6:2) were "astonished" at "What mighty works are wrought by his hands!" He placed "his right hand on" John in order to dispel his fear (Rv. 1:17). The apostles continued the tradition of the transmitting touch as is evidenced in the healing of the lame man (Ac 3:7), ordination of the seven deacons (Ac 6), the empowering of the Samaritan Christians (Ac 8:17), Ananias' ministry of sight and Spirit to Saul (Ac 9:17), Saul and Barnabas' ordination by the church at Antioch (Ac 13:3), filling of the Ephesian elders with the Holy Spirit (Ac 19:6), the ordination of Timothy (I Tim. 4:13), and apostolic directives for the ministry of healing (Jas. 5:14). The touch from the believer is a touch from God.

The hand also reaches out to receive that which is promised. Jesus ordered the man with the withered hand to stretch it out to receive his healing (Mk. 3:5). "Those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him" (Mk. 3:10). A hopeless woman reached to touch the hem of his garment and accessed the promise that he incarnates (Mt. 9:21). For John, the authority of his witness lies in his having touched the one whom he heard and saw (I Jn. 1:1). While not every instance of communication of the Gospel includes touch, the word and the hand are associated frequently enough that we can sense a design for the personalized hand-delivery of that which is promised.

In summary, the Scriptures seem to warrant the assertion that our Lord intends to reveal his wisdom (grace) through the Church as she is gathered around him at his Table to receive his Gospel and to share it by the exercise of all the spiritual gifts he gives to her in order to break men free from their bondage to the "rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms," and bring them along to our heavenly home.

III. WORSHIP/PRIESTHOOD IN THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

The Lutheran symbols have little to say, except in an extended sense, on the subject of interpersonal ministry of the Gospel by the people within the context of the worship gathering. Nevertheless, they do shed some light on the issue in regard to the doctrine of the Church, the use of the liturgy, and the priesthood of all believers.

Of worship in general, they say, "God wants us to believe him and to accept blessings from him; this He declares to be true worship."⁵ "The service and worship of the Gospel is to receive good things from God...the highest worship in the Gospel is the desire to receive forgiveness of sins, grace, and righteousness."⁶ Luther, in his explanation to the third article, points up the role of the believer as co-participant in the blessings of the Gospel which may imply a more active level of participation in worship than that normally experienced among us.

This is the sum and substance of this phrase [Communio sanctorum]: I believe that there is on earth a little holy flock or community [Gemeine] of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding. It

⁵AC, Ap., IV, 228, The Book of Concord, Theodore Tappert, tr., (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959) p. 139.

⁶Ibid., 310. p. 155.

possesses a variety of gifts, yet is united in love without sect or schism. Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and co-partner in all the blessings it possesses. I was brought into it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God's Word, which is the first step in entering it....Through it He⁷ gathers us, using it to teach and preach the Word.

He even seems to envision some future time in which Christian worship will be something more than the tickling of popular music and instruction from the pulpit.

The third kind of service [the other two being the Formula Missae, and die Deutsche Messe to be used for those not yet Christians] should be a truly evangelical order and should not be held in a public place for all sorts of people. But those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should sign their names and meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacrament and to do other Christian works. According to this order, those who do not lead Christian lives could be known, reprov'd, corrected, cast out, or excommunicated according to the rule of Christ, Matthew 18. Here one could also solicit benevolent gifts to be willingly given and distributed to the poor, according to St. Paul's example, II Corinthians 9. Here would be no need of much and elaborate singing. Here one could set up a brief and neat order for baptism and the sacrament and center everything on the Word, prayer and love. Here one would need a good short catechism on the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Our Father....But as yet I neither can nor desire to begin such a congregation....In the meanwhile the two above-mentioned orders of service must suffice. And to train the young and call and attract others to faith, I shall--besides preaching--help to further such public services for the people, until Christians who earnestly love the Word find each other and join together. For if I should try to

⁷Ibid., p. 417.

make it⁸ up out of my own need, it might turn into a sect.

Corporate worship, specifically the Mass, was seen by the Confessors as primarily pedagogical. The liturgy is useful if it teaches the people what they need to know about Christ in a language that they understand.

The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the⁹ Word may receive faith and fear and so may also pray.

There follows a warning--pertinent to the church of every age--against leading people to assume that there is some intrinsic value in participating in a liturgy which they do not thoroughly understand.

No one has ever written or suggested that men benefit from hearing lessons they do not understand, or from ceremonies that do not teach or admonish, simply ex opere operato, by the mere doing or observing. Out with such pharisaic ideas!¹⁰

Concerning the corporate dimension of worship, the Confessions also warn against that form of non-discernment of the Lord's Body that caters to American Christian privatism.

Nor is it right (even if everything else is in order) for anyone to use the sacrament, which is the common possession of the church, to meet his own private need

⁸ Helmut Lehmann, gen. ed., Luther's Works, (hereafter cited as AE) vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965) pp. 63-64.

⁹ AC XXIV, 3, Tappert, p.250.

¹⁰ Ibid.

and thus trifle with it apart from the fellowship of the church.¹¹

References to what we have come to call the "Universal Priesthood" in the Confessions, speak to the fact that the keys--the authority to administer the Gospel--were given to the whole church and not merely to certain individuals. Therefore it follows that pastors have the valid right to ordain in their own churches. It also follows that in emergencies, "even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another."¹² In the Large Catechism, Luther is more specific as he describes the priestly role of the Christian in absolution,

Beside this public, daily, and necessary confession, there is also the secret confession which takes place privately before a single brother.... Thus by divine ordinance Christ himself has entrusted absolution to his Christian church and commands us to absolve one another from sins. So if there is a heart that feels its sin and desires consolation, it has here a sure refuge when it hears in God's Word that through a man God looses and absolves him from his sins."¹³

It is clear from the Enchiridion, however, that such lay involvement is considered exceptional and that normally the pastor will serve as confessor,¹⁴ presumably since this

¹¹Ibid., p. 294.

¹²Ibid., p. 331, 61-69.

¹³LC, V, 13-14, Ibid., p. 458.

¹⁴SC, V, 21, Ibid., p. 350.

is a vital part of his role as administrator of the sacraments.¹⁵ Confessional talk about priesthood most often relates to the divine right of the local congregation to elect and ordain pastors for the purpose of administering the Gospel. This limited scope is reflected in Melanchton's brief exposition of Ephesians 4. From the list of gifts, he selects only pastors and teachers for his discussion and suggests that they are "given for the work of ministry and building up the body of Christ."¹⁶ There is not the slightest suggestion of the role of the pastor as one of those who equips the saints for ministry or guides them in the discovery of their spiritual gifts and ministries. This was simply not a real part of the concern of the Confessors.

The Smalcald Articles allude to the ministry of intercessory prayer in the church, but define neither the process nor context, "Although angels in heaven pray for us (as Christ himself also does), and although saints on earth, and perhaps also in heaven, do likewise...."¹⁷

If we move outside the Confessions to look at fragments of Luther's pastoral heart (engraved by the memory of countless Masses, where he stood agonizingly alone,

¹⁵AC, XIV, Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁶Tr., 67, Ibid., p. 331.

¹⁷SA, II, III, 26, Ibid., p. 297.

alienated and terrified), a viable basis for interpersonal ministry emerges. The following paragraphs, under the title, "The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods," (1519-1520), touch upon the interdependent nature of the Christian community within the context of corporate worship.

[Certain sins] assail us as long as we live. Here we need not only the help of the community of saints and of Christ in order that they might with us fight this sin, but it is also necessary that Christ and His saints intercede for us before God, so that this sin may not be charged to our account by God's strict judgement. God gives us this sacrament as much as to say, "Many kinds of sin are assailing you, take this sign by which I give you my pledge that this sin is assailing not only you but also My Son Christ and all His saints in Heaven and on earth. Therefore take heart and be bold. You are not fighting alone. Great help and support are all around you.

Whoever is in despair, distressed by a sin-stricken conscience or terrified by death or carrying some other burden on his heart, if he would be rid of them all, let him go joyfully then to the Sacrament of the Altar and lay down his woe in the midst of the Community of saints and seek help from the entire company of the spiritual body--just as a citizen whose property has suffered damage or misfortune at the hands of his enemies makes complaint to his town council and fellow citizens and asks them for help.

The immeasurable grace and mercy of God are given us in this Sacrament to the end that we might put from us all misery and tribulation and lay it upon the Community of saints and especially on Christ. Then we find strength and comfort. "I will go to the Sacrament to receive a sign from God that I have on my side Christ's righteousness, life and sufferings. If I die, I am not alone in death, if I suffer, [all believers] suffer with me."

As love and support are given you, you must in turn render love and support to Christ and His needy ones.... See, as you uphold all of them, so they all in turn uphold you; and all things are in common, both

good and evil. Then all things become easy, and the Evil Spirit cannot stand up against this fellowship.¹⁸

See to it that you give yourself to everyone in fellowship and by no means exclude anyone in hatred or anger. For this Sacrament of fellowship, love, and unity cannot tolerate discord or disunity. You must take to heart the infirmities and needs of others as if they were your own. Then offer to others your strength, as if it were their own, just as Christ does for you in the Sacrament.

For this reason slanderers and those who wickedly judge and despise others cannot but receive death in the Sacrament. They fall into such blindness that they do not know what else to do in this Sacrament except to fear and honor Christ, there present, with their prayers and devotion. When they have done this they think they have done their whole duty. But Christ has given His Holy Body for this purpose, that the thing signified by the Sacrament--the fellowship, the change wrought by love--may be put into practice. To Him it is more important... that we may properly exercise our fellowship with one another.¹⁹

There must be a sorrowing, hungry soul, who desires heartily the love, help, and support of the entire community--of Christ and all Christendom--and who does not doubt that in faith all these desires are obtained, and who thereupon makes himself one with everyone. Whoever does not take this as his point of departure for arranging and ordering his receiving of the Sacrament is in error and does not use the Sacrament to his salvation. It is for this reason also that the world is overrun with pestilences, wars and other horrible plagues, because with our many [heartless] masses we only bring down upon us greater disfavor.²⁰

But what form and shape are these assurances to take, and at whose hand?

¹⁸ AE, pp. 53-54.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 65.

IV. WORSHIP/PRIESTHOOD--PASTORAL CONCERNS

So much has already been written about the goal, method and means of pastoral care in the church that one would expect the field to have been so carefully defined, described, and measured that nothing remains to be said. The multitude of books, videos, films, and workshops that deal with the Priesthood of Believers and spiritual gifts is so overwhelming that we can echo the old farmer who has no room for new advice because he "Ain't a-farming half as good as I already know how." Still, I perceive a significant gap in our knowledge and practice as it pertains to the caregiving role of individuals in the worship-gathering.

Textbooks on Pastoral Care--with the notable exception of Worship as Pastoral Care, and The Pastoral Ministry Of Church Officers--are written for the clergy, elders, and those who train them. Understandably, they focus on ministering to people in the close confidentiality of one-to-one relationships, the mutuality of need in support groups, or in the confessional intimacy of small groups. No one would deny the powerful impact of the Gospel of Jesus on the lives of persons in these contexts. They are absolutely essential vehicles for the effective mission and ministry of the Gospel for some people. But what of that majority in

the church who will never make an appointment with the pastor, seek counsel from an elder nor participate in a Bible study, sharing or support group?

There are only two things that involve every member in the church I serve: pastoral visitation and corporate worship. The former is too often encased in dishonesty and the latter can be easily cloaked in anonymity. Who will break through their shells and bring these people the personalized Gospel? How?

Someone somewhere once said, "The ministry of the people is to the world; the ministry of the ministers is to the church." In our tradition, it seems that Ministry of Word and sacrament is perceived as the exclusive domain of the ordained pastor. Thus it is easy to extend his responsibility to cover all that occurs in the holy hour. The one-way communication that often results can produce the same response from the listener as does television viewing, except that in church one has to wait until the offering to go to the restroom (unless one has usher duty). One is expected to be a receiver and is--except during hymns and prayers--free to disengage. Non-participation in the Office of the Word is easy. "I didn't understand that Gospel," a loud "Amen!" or "Pastor, please put that last point in simple language I can understand," are usually considered out of place, even though they may well express the sentiment of the most of those present. As the rain of

God's law and Gospel fall abundantly within the nave, too many of his people seem to stay perfectly dry under their umbrellas of personal anonymity. They have come into the presence of the Living God and are fully prepared to leave just as they came! Neither convicted nor convinced, they feel a little better for duty's sake. But, for many, it is hardly their delight. Who will break through their cocoons? How?

Martha, the frail and gentle wife of a seventy-three year old retired parochial school-teacher, lay dying in their modest bedroom. "Pastor," she began tearfully, "I'm almost afraid to ask this, but is there any way that I can know now whether I will spend forever in heaven or hell?" Citing two of Jesus' promises from John's Gospel, I told her they were hers. A sigh and a sudden radiance in her face told me all I needed to know. Ed, her husband, said softly, "Pastor, if I had only known that fifty years ago, it would have changed everything about the way I taught." Who will free the Marthas and Eds?

We believe that the Holy Spirit works faith where and when he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel.²¹ I know that; though I suspect this affirmation may be used as an effective means to avoid confrontation. I confess that I have used that article of faith to fend off nightmares and

²¹AC, V, 2, Tappert, p. 31.

sleeplessness from time to time. But suppose that the very same Spirit has structured a kind of divine safety net--a flesh-and-blood means to personalize and custom-fit the Gospel to particular persons at specific times in their lives--that lay buried since the second century? Then the problem is not the predictability of the Holy Spirit, but whether one beggar will say to another, while the bread is hot, "George (better, "Honey,"), this bread's for you!"

Many of the respected Pastoral Care textbooks emphasize the corporate responsibility for caregiving by insisting that the people be trained to give such care as part of their priesthood. But the recommended execution of this priesthood always seems to find its expression other than in the work of corporate worship. Yet the various gifts listed in the epistles bear on all sorts of human needs and conditions for they administer, as Peter says, "God's grace in various forms."²² Their use benefits both individuals and the body corporate. Their nature implies a design for divine caregiving that involves every member of the body and provides opportunity for neither visitor nor worshiper to escape into anonymity. They touch both believers and unbelievers with an impact that cannot be ignored. It is probable that our Lord gave these gifts expecting their faithful and powerful use in communicating

²²I Pet. 4:10.

his judgement and grace to persons, and that in sensitive, personal ways. Consider the impact of the celebrant's touch on the shoulder of a communicant facing surgery soon, a whispered prayer, the profound reality of being safe in the Father's hands--guaranteed by the Son's flesh and blood and the touch of the brother who has been there.

The implications for building fellowship are significant. It is easier for someone to feel closer to Christians who publicly remember him or her before God than to Christians who seldom²³ get around to sharing such an expression of care.

Is there a better time for such ministry than that most sublime of moments when God meets man in Word and sacrament? What better place than that where two or three (or two or three hundred) are gathered in the Name and presence of the One who would draw all men unto Himself? In I Cor. 14:22-25, Paul suggests that the appropriate use of these gifts in the assembly will preclude people leaving unaffected and will result in Church Growth.

If we bring the witness of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions to bear on this issue, the results may be phrased in the following manner. Care is what Yahweh does. His name is love. Love is tough, tenacious, practical and multi-faceted. Those born of God love his children. He has moved all of history in such a way as to raise up for himself a people loved--in the life, death and resurrection

²³David S. Luecke, Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance (St. Louis: Concordia, 1988), p. 118.

of Jesus--who will love; blessed who bless. This is his eternal unswerving purpose. He serves his people in divine service and is served of them. Both his service and theirs is mediated by water, bread, wine, words and hands of brothers. Theirs is to receive that with which he graces each of them in hands outstretched to brothers who both offer and need the forgiveness of sin, life and salvation. These are the outward signs that custom-fit the Bread of Life to the hand into which it is to be placed, thus the touch of the believer is a touch from God.

Therefore, it is rank blasphemy to so privatize the corporate worship of a body of believers that I use the means solely for my own benefit, without assuming the pain of the wounded brother and lending him my strength. To go to receive my blessing and refuse to enter the struggle for yours, brings judgement on me, the body, and cripples our mission and ministry. But what have I, a poor miserable sinner, to offer you?

The Word speaks, "What you freely receive, freely give!" At his homecoming, the Head of the Church gave to his body all those gifts necessary to edify it. It is edified only by the Gospel that shatters bonds, enlightens the blind, sets prisoners free, heals, lifts up, and restores. It is edified in the binding of the strong man and the loosing of the captive brother to be brought home. A portion of whatever it takes to do that is distributed by

the Spirit to each member of the body. Gift and responsibility for its use are singular and personal, urgent and important. For the caregiving admonition, the absolution and the restoration-of-the-brother are central to worship, that is, of course, if God is to serve the brothers successfully, and the brothers are to serve God by serving one another. The hand that touches with the touch of God must also be extended to receive.

The responsibility and privilege to preside over, oversee, equip, train, model, teach, permit and encourage expression of caregiving by the people in corporate worship belongs to the pastor as teacher and administrator of Word and sacraments.

Just what is the specific nature of this interpersonal ministry in worship? Can it be defined more carefully? Here I have encountered considerable difficulty in that what has emerged in my experience only as brief vignettes and occasional glimpses is better described and imagined than defined. To this end, the following examples may serve as descriptions that suggest definition or as foretastes of what could be. They are samples compressed from a span of thirty years and many parishes.

On Thursday, Dorothy had been told by her physician that her cancer, now in the fifteenth year of remission, had begun to show itself again. Before worship the next Sunday, she mentioned that to one of the ladies. The lady's husband

ushered that morning. As Dorothy knelt at the rail for Communion, he stood behind her, placed his hands on her shoulders, and whispered a brief prayer. On her next visit to the doctor, Dorothy was given a clean bill of health. She gave glory to Jesus. Her testimony stimulated widespread expectation among the folks.

Nancy was torn. Her scoliosis demanded surgery. She was afraid and asked for the prayers of the congregation. During the prayers of the church, she came to kneel at the rail. Pastor invited all who desired to join in the prayer to come. Half the congregation crowded around her to touch and pray for her. Her recovery was remarkably quick and complete. Much later she recalled, "I knew Jesus held me close through the whole thing because of their prayer. I can still feel his love in their hands on my back."

George had been a member of the congregation thirty years and had held almost every elective office. His business ethics were a half-notch above criminal. The week past, he had dishonestly won the bidding on a lucrative government contract over the company of another member. Ron, owner of the other business, knew of George's tactics. On Sunday, during the Peace, George felt a firm hand grip his as Ron drew close and said, "Christ's peace be with you, George," and returned quickly to his place. Not another word passed between them that day. Thursday afternoon George came by Ron's office. He asked, "Knowing what you

knew about what I did, how could you say what you said to me Sunday, and with such obvious sincerity?" As Ron answered with his testimony of Jesus, a new life began for George.

Each Sunday she waits until the first hymn begins before taking her seat. From the back of the nave she scrutinizes the assembled worshipers, looking for that one who is ill at ease with the hymnal. Deftly sliding in next to that person, she helps find the way through the complexities of our liturgy, whispering simple explanations when needed. More than a few have stayed to join, recognizing in her care, a tactile dimension of Jesus' care for them.

My underlying pastoral concern is the passionate desire to stand before Jesus on that day and say, "Of those you have given me, none is lost," recognizing that many of the "given" are, as yet, undiscovered.

V. PAST AND PRESENT WORDS ABOUT WORSHIP/PRIESTHOOD

Any consideration of caregiving in corporate worship must take into account the wholistic tradition of worship that has accompanied the Gospel from Pentecost forward. For the Christian community, alive by the Spirit, all of life is worship.

Whenever we talk of having worship services on Sunday, our usage is improper, for it distorts the real meaning of worship. When worship is not seen as the total life of the new person in Christ....we have much difficulty fitting ourselves into Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. With worship happening only at appointed times within the church building, we have trouble being priests to one another.²⁴

It is for this reason that the apostles were careful not to distinguish worship from life and to make it simply a cultic exercise. As noted earlier, Paul refuses to use any special term to contain the worship-gathering.

The only reasonable deduction is that the New Testament writers did not bring the word [leitourgia] into common usage because it was inadequate to express the new ideas of priesthood and ministry which had emerged. They used diakonia because they were thinking of a kingdom of priests and not an exclusive class.

²⁴Frederick J. Downing, "Wholeness of Worship," Renewing the Congregation, Robert W. Long, ed., (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966) p. 70.

Moreover, this word was adequate to express Christian ministrations or service of any kind.²⁵

The global effect of the Gospel in the lives of believers impacted their relationships in such a way that they became much more--in their life together--than those who held in common certain goals or aspirations.

The Christian Church is not only a company of devotees, who come together for an enthusiastic celebration of their own salvation, but a genuine fellowship, in which each is joined to the other in...the common possession of the Holy Spirit, which is expressed in encouragement and a right disposition toward each other.²⁶

Thus it was that the church in Jerusalem could pray in "one voice," and that the church down through the centuries expects the involved participation of its people, especially in the prayers and offerings.

Prayer, including the celebration at the altar, was purposely performed in such a way that the people were taken up into it.... Not only was the prayer spoken in the plural, it had also to be explicitly co-executed by the people.... St. Jerome boasts that in the Roman basilicas the Amen resounds like heavenly thunder.... Before the invitation the priest turned toward the faithful and conveyed to them a formal greeting, one which they had to answer, thereby again expressing their union with the celebrant. Such was the care that earlier centuries manifested that the faithful might take an active, a living part in liturgical prayers.²⁷

²⁵ Cyril Eastwood, The Royal Priesthood of the Faithful, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963) pp. 54-55.

²⁶ Gerhard Delling, Worship in the New Testament, Percy Scott, tr., (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962) pp. 80-81.

²⁷ Josef A. Jungmann, The Early Liturgy: to the Time of Gregory the Great, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1960) p. 169.

The primitive Church does not only refocus us on the inclusive nature of worship and the corporateness of the fellowship, it also instructs us as to the heavenly dynamic of the Church's mission and ministry.

The Worship of primitive Christianity was not the Christians' own devout doing, but the action of God.... In Christ, their teaching, their prophecy, their praying is carried out: anything that did not take place in Him, that is, which did not spring from the life in the Lord and in the action and power of His cross and resurrection would be vain action.²⁸

Thus every body of believers, small or great, participates in the breathtaking scope of her worship and its crucial effect on the whole of human history.

Fulfillment, consummation, and present salvation ...come to the Church in Worship: thus Worship is...in its very essence, the continuing decisive working-out of salvation-history,²⁹ which ends in the eternal adoration of God.

Just as the worship of the Church among the world from day to day became for the world a touch from God, even so, he chose a time to serve her as he gathered her people as his own under the Name of Jesus and around Word and sacrament. His dream of a kingdom of priests found fruition in her worship as "free and unrestricted spiritual utterances took their place alongside fixed liturgical

²⁸Delling, p. 181.

²⁹Ibid., p. 182.

forms."³⁰ His commitment to salvation by incarnation was not wasted on her. She understood well that the gifts of his grace--summarily embodied in Jesus--embraced her body, soul, spirit and relationships. She would permit no spiritualization or intellectualization of the life-giving message. Anything less than the whole Gospel for the whole person was unthinkable. Word and touch, physical and spiritual, were married. Although much of the charismatic contribution of I Cor. 14 disappeared by the time of Justin Martyr, still, Tertullian writes concerning the importance of the physically interactive dimensions of worship,

The flesh is the hinge on which salvation depends. As a result, when the soul is dedicated to God, it is the flesh which actually makes it capable of such dedication. For surely the flesh is washed that the soul may be cleansed; the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated; the flesh is sealed, that the soul too may be fortified; the flesh is shadowed by the imposition of hands, that the soul too may be illumined by the Spirit; the flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ, that the soul as well may fatten....³¹

St. Cyril describes the ointment used after prayer for the Spirit as, "the gift of Christ and of the Holy Spirit," even though it is material and applied by human hands.³²

³⁰Oscar Cullmann, Early Christian Worship, (Chicago: Henry Reginery Co., 1953) p. 21.

³¹Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, 8, Sources of Christian Theology, Paul F. Palmer, ed., (London: Darton, Longmann & Todd, 1957) vol. I: Sacraments and Worship, p. 108.

³²Ibid., p. 22.

Ambrose, "On the Mysteries," VI,30 does a similar thing with the fragrant oil and the new white garment--associated with Christian initiation in his day--when he says,

How many souls regenerated today have loved thee, Lord Jesus, saying: "Draw us after thee: we run after the fragrance of thy garments,"³³ that they might drink in the odour of resurrection.

Precisely because they understood what Paul meant when he told the Corinthians that they (corporately) were the temple of the Holy Spirit, the Fathers expected--in the context of worship--that ordinary human actions were imbued with extraordinary significance. For after all, a temple is where God is. It is therefore a place where things happen. Both the primitive church and the Fathers would have little use for the attitude of American Puritanism which permits only the ear to be the receptor of that which works faith. Over time, and for reasons too involved for this paper, the participatory nature of worship became progressively abstract.

The early Christian concept of worship as a group of laymen "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"(Col.3:16), slowly gave way to an actor-audience concept of worship. The priests and the clerics said the liturgy, and the laity merely observed, instead of both doing the liturgy. At this point, instead of all of life being regarded as something offered to God, Christianity in popular

³³Ibid., p. 30.

practice degenerated into visits to the church building to hear the priests say the Mass.³⁴

While the preceding paragraph describes the tragic pass to which the ministry of God's people in worship had come at the time just prior to the Lutheran Reformation and goes on to describe steps Luther took to restore it, the substitution of "pastor preach," or "choirs sing," for its last four words would aptly describe much of what passes for Christian Worship today. One would expect better of Lutherans.

Yet there were no deacons or other regular assisting minister roles with the exception of cantors and the introduction of musical ministries and choirs in the congregation in the Reformation Church's normative life.³⁵

One liturgiologist writes of worship among Lutherans in the 1930s,

The result was a horrible sterility. Doing the liturgy was not something to be enjoyed; it was a routine which the church, for mysterious reasons of its own, imposed upon her children.³⁶

Forced by the multiplication of liturgical miscarriages produced as "contemporary worship" in the 1960s

³⁴The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, Board for Church Extension, Standing Committee on Architecture, Architectural Handbook, (St. Louis: LC-MS, 1987) pp. 6-7.

³⁵Aubrey Bougher, "Overview of the Role of Assisting Ministers in the Lutheran Liturgy," The Bride of Christ 9 (January 1984): 21.

³⁶Herbert F. Lindemann, New Mood in Lutheran Worship, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1971) p. 15.

to revise and modernize their worship forms, Lutherans went to work and produced solid, bright, engaging and edifying new liturgies in both Lutheran Worship and Lutheran Book of Worship. The "Peace" cracked open the door to serious and significant interpersonal possibilities for ministry during the holy hour, as is evidenced by the great difficulty with which it was introduced in many parishes. Yet, except for that moment of self-conscious anxiety, it is still easy for people to use these forms to do private devotions together, in which absolutely nothing passes from heart to heart.

Carl Schalk diagnoses the malady this way,

What has been lost is the sense of the participating community at prayer and praise. We have forgotten that we are called to be a royal priesthood offering up prayer, intercession and praise on our own behalf as well as on behalf of those who themselves cannot or will not pray and praise. As we begin to share this vision, we begin to see that we are all "assisting ministers," each participating in ways commensurate with our talents and abilities for the mutual edification of all. When that begins to happen, then the vision of a participating community is ready to take more specific shape in the worshiping assembly.... To offer opportunities for the involvement of our whole selves in worship is to affirm an essentially incarnational view of the Christian faith, a view that is true to the biblical vision of life and worship.³⁷

Following through on the same theme of incarnational Christianity, Richard Paquier comments,

The Spiritual life of man is the life of a soul intrinsically united with a body. It follows from this that the various movements of the believing soul have direct and natural correlation with bodily attitudes.

³⁷Carl Schalk, "Renewing Parish Worship," Christian Century 102 (1985): 587.

In this regard, the fear of the Protestant Christian of externalizing his religious feelings through bodily expression is an inhibition against nature and results from either a hereditary throwback, or education that contradicts biblical truth. It is a symptom of a deep psychological cleavage.³⁸

As to the requirements of each worshiper to lend the self to the corporate effort he adds,

If the church wishes to demonstrate before the world and remind itself that it is a community of brothers, the Body of Christ, it is important that the faithful gather together as closely as possible in the sanctuary.... And anyone who isolates himself... disrupts the community and... he creates diffusion. He weakens considerably the possibility of singing totally in unison and renders incoherent the prayers or responses said in common.³⁹

It is especially the corporate and corporal dimensions of worship that bother us, not simply because we are fiercely individualistic Americans, but because we are self-conscious creatures of flesh. We cannot get outside ourselves and into the brother unless the Lord breaks our bonds. We cannot be uncared-for caregivers. And this care is precisely what the Lord has come among us to give in Word and sacrament. Our response to his grace is to remain dissatisfied until the brother has experienced it as well. This is Christian caregiving.

The liturgy itself and a congregation's experience of divine worship already functions... as pastoral care. The pastoral care that occurs as we are meeting and

³⁸Richard Paquier, Dynamics of Worship: Foundations and Uses of Liturgy, Donald Macleod, tr., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967) p. 93.

³⁹Ibid., p. 97.

being met by God in worship is a significant by-product that we have too often overlooked.⁴⁰

But how is this care to be delivered and by whom? Who is in charge to see that it is done and that God gets the glory? Elmer Towns suggests,

The layman will find his role when the pastor finds his... When the minister is directing his efforts at "equipping the saints," then the laity can be expected to discover their spiritual gifts and use them in ministering to one another.⁴¹

Ortiz also sees the pastor as the catalyst for corporate ministry.

Each believer needs to know his place in the body. Most church congregations are not a spiritual building, but a mountain of bricks. There is a difference. However good the materials may be, if they are not situated in their right place and correctly related to one another there is no building. The evangelists are continually bringing in new bricks... instead of a builder, the pastor becomes a caretaker of bricks.⁴²

It would seem then, that the burden lies with the pastor to develop the priesthood of the laity instead of doing priesthood for them. But just what is the priesthood? In the context of the liturgy, does it entail anything beyond certain assigned tasks and singing, praying and listening with one's whole heart? Scott Hendrix, in a

⁴⁰William H. Willimon, Worship as Pastoral Care, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1979) p. 48.

⁴¹Elmer Towns, The Complete Book of Church Growth, (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1981) p. 204.

⁴²Juan Carlos Ortiz, Call to Discipleship, (Plainfield, N. J.: Logos, 1975) p. 26.

fashion that attempts to be faithful to the Confessional understanding defines the priesthood of all believers as follows,

The priesthood of believers does not stress the competence of the individual per se, but rather the access of every Christian congregation to the Word of God without having that Word mediated by a particular hierarchy or by an unbroken line of succession.⁴³

But Walther has already described the priesthood in very personal and functional terms that provide a solid base for the development of interpersonal ministry in worship,

The point is not that the pastor has a mysterious power to remove sins, but that Christ has already removed them and that now everyone should tell everyone else....⁴⁴

Both Church Growth people and charismatic Lutherans seem to prefer Walther's interpretation to that of Hendrix when reference is made to the priesthood of all believers as it relates to the pastoral office. A distinction is struck between the finished work of Christ and his unfinished work. His remaining work can only effectively be accomplished by a Spirit-filled body fully equipped with every spiritual gift.

Those who are ordained to the pastoral office represent Christ, particularly in his shepherding role, and as such exercise an oversight function. A primary function of their oversight is to raise up, encourage, order, and release other ministries in the body of Christ.... On the one hand, therefore, those involved

⁴³Scott Hendrix, "A Lutheran Response to Gerald Bor-chert," American Baptist Quarterly 6: 167.

⁴⁴C. F. W. Walther, The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel, Herbert J. A. Bouman, tr., (St. Louis: Concordia, 1981) p. 100.

in charismatic renewal can affirm the pastoral ministry as a God-given office in the church.... At the same time they want to leave room for the Spirit to raise up the entire variety of ministries promised in Scripture.⁴⁵

No small disagreement has arisen in our church over whether the spiritual gift lists of I Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4 are prescriptive or descriptive. That is, are such gifts available today in the church for interpersonal ministry in corporate worship? This discussion affects not only conscientious pastors, but proponents of Church Growth, synodical stewardship programs and charismatics as well. Together they press our backs to the wall, fairly forcing us to make a choice we have successfully avoided all these years: are we or are we not dispensationalists? If we are not, how can we refuse to repent of our clerical strangulation of the Spirit and his gifts and aggressively seek those gifts for the sake of the mission of the Church? If we are dispensationalists--who view signs and wonders and spiritual gifts as essential for the apostolic era but absent now--where and by what authority do we place our limits? If prophecy is no longer for the Church, how can we be sure the authority to absolve sinners is still valid? How can dispensationalism ever offer anything but an arbitrarily segmented and truncated

⁴⁵Laurence Christenson, ed., Welcome Holy Spirit: a Study of Charismatic Renewal in the Church, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987) pp. 127-128.

imitation of life in the Spirit? What timeless purpose is served by the Spirit's recording the events of yesteryear if they are not patterns and promises for today? Some attempt is made by contemporary Lutherans to fill the ministry gap, yet the issue is side-stepped.

Among us, only the ordained pastor, successor to the early church bishop and presbyter, preaches and presides at the eucharist. Rm. 12:3-8 teaches that not all ministers have the same function or office although all have a share in the ministry of Christ in the world and at the altar. Assisting ministers, moreover, are not just "helping out" or "filling the gap" or "saving time." As with the body-imagery of St. Paul, they have their own rightful calling, and the LBW liturgy [preface] notes that it is a matter of principle that these roles should not be usurped by the pastor, just as a lay member should not preach or preside, the Manual on the Liturgy says, "the presiding minister should be assisted by others whose ministries contribute to the whole work of worship."⁴⁶

In the following passages, Peter Brunner attempts to deal with the matter of spiritual giftedness for interpersonal ministry in worship.

Also the... association of Baptism with the consecration which produces charismatic gifts must be considered here.... Every member of the body of Jesus receives a share of these gifts. Also the administration of worship by the people of God is effect and display of the charismatic Spirit. Only by it can the acclamation of the Lord be carried out here on earth (1 Cor. 12:3). The cooperation of the people of God in the proclamation of worship through psalm and song, the prayer-confirming-and-sealing-amen-acclamation, in general the pneumatic coadministration of worship in the proper usus, include the charismatic

⁴⁶ Phillip Pfatteicher and Carlos Messerle, The Manual on the Liturgy: Lutheran Book of Worship, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979) pp. 10-11.

Spirit, which is exemplified in gifts and services from which no baptized person is to be excluded.⁴⁷

No member of the congregation may be excluded from the charismatic-prophetic cooperation in the service of the proclamation of the Word which is administered by the assembled congregation in its entirety. The gifts received in Baptism and Holy Communion constrain every Christian persevering in the faith not only to witness personally to the world by words and conduct, but they also constrain him to engage in the charismatic-prophetic service in the ekklesia, in which the one addresses the Spirit-filled and Spirit-giving Word to the other, and all address it to all.⁴⁸

However, as one continues to study his work, a certain difficulty becomes apparent. He seems unable to think imaginatively and innovatively about the liturgy. Thus he attempts to force what he calls "pneumatic ministry," into the structure as it exists, making no room for the outward flesh-and-blood expressions of its interpersonal nature. It seems to be a case of what we know we ought to do but cannot, due to the strictures of time and convention. Nevertheless, it is worth the risk of change and innovation because it is that which Jesus has come to create and prepare for Himself.

In the New Testament, for the Apostle Paul, at least, the fundamental criterion, as Christians gather for worship, is... the nourishment, growth and grand delight of the community.... The Lord's service, understood as God working through persons to create a genuine human community, suffuses and permeates all of life.... To neglect or stifle anyone's "gift," no

⁴⁷Brunner, p. 88.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 117.

matter how strange, may... be,⁴⁹ cheating the Community of what God wants it to have.

At this point the reader might be gripped by a fear that what I advocate is a spontaneous, democratic, religious free-for-all that would pass as worship because people are being touched. Far from it. I cite Elaine Ramshaw,

The pastoral way to increase community bonding through ritual is not primarily to "put on" inspiring ritual performances which will draw the people together as an audience, but to draw them into the task of celebrating the liturgy, of creating anew, in this place, the ancient rituals that bind the whole church of God.⁵⁰

Perhaps the vision of what might be, what was once, and what has been carefully designed for the Church at worship is best capsulized by Karl Rahner,

...A church in which the office-holders too, in joyous humility, allow for the fact that the Spirit breathes where he will and that he has not arranged an exclusive and permanent tenancy with them. They recognize that the charismatic element, which can never be completely regulated, is just as necessary as office to the church ... that office too, is really effectively credible in the sight of men only when the Spirit is evident....⁵¹

⁴⁹John W. Burkhart, Worship, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982) pp. 108, 111.

⁵⁰Elaine Ramshaw, Ritual and Pastoral Care, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) p. 30.

⁵¹Karl Rahner, The Shape of the Church to Come, (London: SPCK, 1974) p. 27.

VI. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRIESTHOOD AT WORSHIP

For interpersonal Gospel ministry administered by the Holy Spirit through those gathered in the Name around Word and sacrament to occur more frequently and effectively, I offer these "Ten Basic Principles".

1. Caregiving is what God does. By Baptism and faith in Jesus' finished work he has raised up a race of those for whom he cares to care for one another and to his world. This is his ministry of pastoral care. By it he grows the Church.
2. He has placed his children in the world to care for it in his Name.
3. He calls his children together out of the world to care for them. In that setting of corporate worship they are cared for and care for one another. Thus they learn how to care for his world and bring it with them to him.
4. He gifts each of his children peculiarly to build up-and-together those he calls together in a place under the Name of Jesus.
5. He gives the gift of pastor to those in that place.

6. He gives the pastor oversight of the ministry of Word and sacrament by which he cares for his children in that place.
7. While he gives the pastor oversight, he gives all his children the ministry of mediating his grace to one another.
8. He gives his gifts for only one purpose: to equip his children to mediate his grace to one another and to his world so that none will be lost to doubt, unbelief, apathy, or despair.
9. The structural context for the use of these gifts currently exists, and within it some already function effectively.
10. To receive, identify and use these gifts is not natural for his children, it is learned behavior.

While some of the Ten Basic Principles are self-understood and quite generic, they provide essential components of the content and context of the ministry of the people of God in worship. Others hide practical implications that must be explored in greater depth. There is a danger, however, that such exploration will be so specifically related to the uniqueness of the congregation I serve that it will be less than useful in any other setting. Therefore, I will attempt to "broad-brush" the practical concerns so as to make them useful for wider interests.

First, and above all, note who drives the verbs in the Ten Basic Principles. This is a matter of God at work. It is not another innovation, method or process to involve people more deeply in worship so as to strengthen their bonds of loyalty to the local congregation. It might do just the opposite because of the present cultural commitment to privatism. Because this is God at work, it is high risk worship and a caveat is in order. But then, worship that is in Spirit and truth is always high risk. It is God who cares what happens to each of those he has called together. He has risked everything to make their forgiveness, life and salvation real to them in this gathering. Because he is anthropocentric in worship, we are freed for theocentric worship.

Secondly, since he is the Prime Actor in our gathering, he is also the focus and object of our worship. His will is for his people to stand bold to bless as whole, forgiven, free, loved and restored persons. His priorities become ours. Together, we will the same as He, with all our trust, love and gifts. He makes it happen and is glorified.

Thirdly, note the verb he drives. This is a matter of grace. He lives to give. There are no qualifiers. He needs neither begging nor bargaining to convince him of our need and that of the brother. Before we ask he has answered. Erudition, deep spirituality, knowledge of the mysteries, piety or its proud absence are not prerequisites

for this mission. Those who seem unable to get beyond the cross and absolution are welcome here. Please understand. This is not a matter of charismatic worship, spiritual renewal, liturgical innovation or Church Growth. It is Christ preparing his Bride for his arrival. It is her learning to say from her heart, Maranatha!

So much for the first of the Ten Basic Principles, except to note that it encompasses all the other nine and without it at the head all the others are useless.

The implications of Principles Two and Three are far-reaching and widely ignored. Corporate worship, we remind ourselves, is not simply God's means to benefit me, my wife, our child, our dog. Without exotic abstractions, we simply posit Jesus' instructions concerning that which we receive by the Spirit through Word and sacrament, "You have received freely, give freely," as pertaining to wife, child, neighbor, enemy. What we lack is the "how to" directive for worship's extension into life, together with testimony of God's reliability. Both belong where the whole church is. For us to see what God deals to us in worship as our hand to be played in the world requires some coaching. We must see it for the sake of the world that will never go to church.

Some people fear priests and ministers; others feel hostile or bitter toward them; many simply don't expect much from them; and only a few feel free to knock at their door.... This is true for other professions as well.... The healer has to keep striving for a spirituality... in which healer and patient can reach out to each other as fellow travelers sharing the same broken human conditions... We are all healers who can

reach out to offer health, and we are all patients in constant need of help.⁵²

The very structure and flow of the liturgy forces us to deal with our own inner struggles, hostility, illusions, and duplicity in the bright light of God's absolute and his absolution. The more we are cared for by the Pastor of our souls, so much more are we able to hear and respond to the muffled screams coming from the violence, denial and pretense that underlie the contrived placid images of those around us.

Principle Four recalls us to the Divine purpose in giving us our talents, skills, abilities and resources. It establishes as priority for their use, "the edification of the church." Stewardship directors take note. In God's economy, the edification of the church--because of the cosmic dimensions of her mission and ministry--takes precedence over use of those gifts for making one's name or living. Investment of gifts and energies in vocation or profession may impact some lives for a time. The same investment for the edification of the church can affect many lives for eternity. The arm of the Lord to heal and judge is shortened by the misdirected gift, the skill withheld, the word unspoken. Use of one's gifts in worship is a

⁵²Henri J. M. Nouwen, Reaching Out: the Three Movements of the Spiritual Life, (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1975) p. 65.

matter of stewardship, of reasonable response to the mercies of his grace (Rom.12:1-3).

Principles Six and Seven are the subject of many books and divergent opinions that need not be rehashed here. Implicit is the extreme peril in which the pastor places himself and the church if he usurps to himself the people's ministry. The principle may be clear, but the practice proves that it is far easier to be responsible only for oneself than for the preparation, absence, and conduct of a number of worship "assistants". To facilitate the ministries of the people takes prayer, sensitivity, energy, training, scheduling--and that most precious of all commodities--time. Worship planning, management and training must become top priority for the pastor who would see this bud bloom.

Part of the price to be paid is the conflict the pastor may experience if one or another member announces enthusiastically that the Holy Spirit has distributed the gift of preaching to him/her. Perhaps it will be a more frightening thing such as a member who claims to have a prophecy which must be shared after the Epistle, or a "message in tongues" during the offering. Herein lies the importance of Principle Eight. It restores priority of function, restraining gifts from becoming ego-inflating ends in themselves.

The pastor who is not driven by the phantoms of those lost because the Gospel was not hand-delivered to them in a shape they could receive--ghosts of the past that inhibit peaceful sleep--needs to stick with what is safe, predictable and entirely under his control, until his sleep does become so fitful. He must not only keep--tattooed on the inside of his eyelids--the image of those who leave the Table unhealed, he must hold the vision of what could be forward enough in his mind that he draws vivid and contagious word pictures of it for those he teaches. If it has become so for him he will, from time to time, find himself awestruck by what he "sees" as he serves his associates the bread and wine. He must be so well prepared for worship that he has no anxiety for what comes next and is able to perceive that time of worship in all its heavenly significance, just as it was revealed to John.

Principles Nine and Ten are also interlocked in practice. The position I have taken in regard to the existing structure of worship will probably be contested by some, especially if their situations place severe time constraints on the length of corporate worship episodes.

Others will disagree because they are convinced that our liturgy cannot provide a suitable vehicle for such caregiving. Being a child of the sixties, I felt it part of my Divine call to perpetrate on God's people scores of new, fresh, updated and contemporary designs for worship. Most

of them succeeded only in driving my people to new depths of confusion and frustration. No longer deluded about my ability to craft a better structure than has the whole body in two millennia, I share Wilhelm Loehe's conclusion,

We must beware of using our liturgical freedom to produce new liturgies. One should rather use the old forms and learn to understand and have a feeling for them before one feels competent to create something new and better. He who has not tested the old cannot create something new. It is a shame when everybody presumes to form his own opinions about hymns and the liturgy without having thoroughly looked into the matter. Let a man first learn in silence and not act as though it were a matter of course that he understands everything. Once a man has first learned from the old he can profitably use the developments of recent times for the benefit of the liturgy.⁵³

If there are to be new forms generated in a specific place, it will not be the forms that bring forth the ministries. Instead, a deeper understanding of the form of worship we know will lead to its greater flexibility and multiplication in the specific vernacular of its users.

New forms of worship must arise out of the discovery by the congregation that they have more gifts to offer in worship than they had previously supposed It is not the new forms that bring worship to life, but the process of discovery.⁵⁴

There are many who demand abolition of the Mass in favor of what they call "Spirit-led" worship. Apparently this is a call for spontaneity in worship. Such a thing has

⁵³Wilhelm Loehe, Three Books About the Church, James Schaaf, tr., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969) p. 178.

⁵⁴J. David Bridge, "Pastor's Problems," Expositor's Times, 93 (1982) 8: 233.

neither history in the church nor in the synagogue. At Nazareth, Jesus was handed the scroll which had been opened to the assigned lection. The Corinthian worshippers each brought something to worship. Obviously they planned to share it. The Quaker meeting is not broadly practiced within the Christian community, and with good reason. Our God plans painstakingly. Israel's forty-year apprenticeship in civics ought to demonstrate that. He executes his plans in exhaustive detail. Compare the Messianic prophecies to Jesus' ministry as a case in point. Numbered hairs, airborne sparrows, and spring meadows all evidence careful planning and meticulous execution on his part. Like Father, like children. Even "spontaneity" in worship, where it is practiced, is carefully planned, orchestrated and controlled. Those who interpret New Testament worship as spontaneous need to take into account the biblical picture of those involved as

Being well versed in the Word of God, had a good understanding of the essential elements of corporate worship and the sequence of those elements best suited to the psychology of men, and lastly and most importantly, were filled with the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵

It is in the development and communication of that well-versed understanding that the pastor can most fruitfully invest his time. His first priority must be his own understanding of the structure, flow, dynamic, meaning

⁵⁵Lindemann, p. 105.

and impact that belong to this distillation of all of history. He would not be ill-advised to seek out a brother whose congregation is known for its vital and vibrant sacramental worship and ask how that brother teaches his people about worship, and how he plans and administers it. Then give some careful attention to Geoffrey Wainwright and Peter Brunner in order to gain a comprehensive--if not clear and simple--grasp of the elements of worship, their meanings and mysteries. In all, asking the vision of the Spirit for his place and people.

Examine all the elements. What do music, rhythm, movement, words, color, intonation, posture, aroma do to people? In the worship episodes for which he is responsible how is everything being brought to bear on persons? What is worship's intent? How is the accomplishment of that intent measured? If worship is coming into the presence of the Living God to "Lift the cup of salvation," then we leave changed. A change that is not detectable is no change at all.

Perhaps the dimension of worship that is most difficult for many of us to grasp is that of its corporateness. Americans, Christian or otherwise, are fiercely individualistic. We Lutherans add to that a privatistic reserve when it comes to the sensitive personal areas of our lives. Those factors, coupled with the narcissism of the old Adam/Eve make corporate worship an

enigma for most of us. The seeming inability of many, if not most, LCMS congregations to incorporate the sharing of the Peace into their worship might serve to demonstrate how offensive the corporate dimension of our worship really is.

Unlike the unfortunate laity, experienced pastors are often able to escape that tension, since they need never submit themselves to others in worship. Even when visiting sister congregations, we often busy ourselves with analysis and comparison. Seldom do we relinquish our role as evaluators long enough to be carried along in the flow of the River of Life that the Spirit pours forth through Word, sacrament and the mutual consolation and conversation of the brothers.

Recently a noted theologian of our persuasion--an acclaimed expert in Lutheran worship--was heard to say about his visits to sister congregations, "When they sing a hymn that does not express how I feel, I do not sing." I suspect that his attitude is more the rule than the exception among those who lead, as well as those who follow. To celebrate our baptismal unity in corporate worship yet each reserve to himself the right to non-participation is a total contradiction. It is an expression of the enmity of this world, not the harmony of the Kingdom. It is to refuse to discern the Lord's Body. One hears echoes of Luther's reasons for plague and famine.

Nevertheless, the same people who avoid the "herd instinct" in worship have no difficulty being part of the church softball team or part of the corporate team at IBM or General Motors. What--beyond the flesh--accounts for the difference? I believe there are four reasons. First, on the ball field or at IBM each man knows his position and it is clear what is expected of him. Second, in both situations, something significant to others depends on his performance. In worship, on the other hand, some sing; some do not. Some listen; some sleep. There seems to be no clear job description for the worshiper. Further, what of any significance to anyone else depends on the participation of any individual? Would it make any difference if his place were empty or filled by someone else? "What's expected?" and, "What difference do I make?" are legitimate questions that deserve thoughtful, clear, and practical answers from the pastor and fellow-worshippers. Third, both IBM and the ball team have clear and measurable goals. What are the goals for worship? Fourth, for one to surrender oneself to the body corporate, leaders must have earned a high level of trust. Can the people trust the pastor not to play tricks on them, not lead them where they do not wish to go? Has he demonstrated, in other areas of their life together, that he can address whatever surprises may occur, so that they are sure he is able, lovingly, to restore the meeting to order? No sensible worshiper will surrender

to a process that is under the control of one he cannot trust.

To experience his people's anxieties, the pastor might charge a layperson with leading the Prayers of the Church (including paragraphs that the pastor has not seen, but have come from that assisting minister's heart and hand). Let him keep track of the number of times he corrects or modifies those prayers under his breath, distancing himself from the corporate body. Congregations that develop contexts in which persons serve as spiritual guides to one another have far less difficulty with corporateness. People used to being accountable to another for their faith and life move more freely with this flow. Pastors are like that too. The pastor who submits himself to no brother "in reverence to the Lord," will likely grow a congregation whose corporate worship is hamstrung.

The corporateness must be taught from the ground up--in hymns and prayers and liturgy--if it is eventually to be expressed toward the specific needs of worshippers. We must not assume that people know how to pray the "one heart and one mind" way that is required for prayer in the church. On the other hand, if we ask people to plug their whole hearts into the church's prayers, we must see to it that those prayers clearly and unequivocally flow from the clear will of God and that they are prayers the Spirit has taught us to pray.

If we are able to teach the need for "losing oneself" in the hymns, prayers, and liturgy, and at the same time, the Lord comes to us in Gospel and sacrament freeing us from our self-consciousness, then we are ready to participate in whatever ministry the needs of the brothers require. It is not a matter of building something new, but being grasped by what already is.

When the pastor, in his own study of worship, is freshly gripped by holy awe during the holy hour, it is time for him to create a task-force with whom he will share his discoveries and who will eventually assist him in worship planning and management. It is essential that he take them through this process, else they may give birth only to balloons, banners and Jericho-marches set to Willie Nelson tunes (all of which, in certain congregations, might be quite appropriate)! In addition to the teaching concerning the power of God's spoken and sacramental Word, he will want to give great care to the explication of that Word communicated through the caring acts of the body: the "Peace," and its power to loose (for it is, indeed, the Word of God), to restore and to heal; the power of touch in the name of Jesus; the distribution as opportunity for the "mutual consolation and conversation of the brethren." The group should be large enough to do meaningful practice of hymns, liturgy, ministry, and study of the word, so that it becomes a confident and competent group before it tries to

share with the "Big Church," what it has learned. The time commitment for members of this group needs to be short enough so that over a period of two years, the majority of worshipping members will have been involved.

This ought not sound strange. Choirs practice. Most pastors practice preaching. Acolytes practice lighting. Why in the world should not worshipers practice worship?

When God's Spirit-filled people have firm handles on the nature and goal of worship--both God-ward and man-ward--know what is given to them, feel the Father's sense of urgency, recognize their spiritual gifts, trust the worship leader, know how they are necessary to the others, and are freed by Jesus--incarnate in the words and bread and wine and shared among flesh-and-blood brothers and sisters--then, can their worship become un-selfconscious enough to minister to the needs of the brother?

An experiment designed to answer that question, at least for the people of St. Paul Lutheran Church of Shreveport, La., is developed in detail in Part II of this project.

PART TWO

WORSHIP/PRIESTHOOD WORKSHOPS

INTRODUCTION

The phrase, "Adult Education in the Church," triggers a whole plethora of images in the imagination. There are formal instruction classes, Bible classes, seminars in Christian resource management and discovery of spiritual gifts. Adults are trained as worship assistants, musicians, societal change agents, evangelists, church-planters and caregivers. Support groups form to help adults cope with stress, parenting and marital communication, as well as the whole gamut of human problems. The breadth and variety of opportunities and subjects for Christian adult education seem limited only by the perceived needs of the people and the imagination of their leaders. Formats range from the intimacy of small group bent on changing each other's lives to the cool anonymity of large lectures that simply impart new data. Such a scurry of activity would seem to indicate that the Church is serious about the charge to teach which she has received from her Lord.⁵³

However, according to his instruction, teaching and learning are not ends in themselves. The Great Commission makes teaching and baptizing serve the ends of discipleship.

⁵³Matt. 28:18-20.

Like all legitimate adult education, that which is uniquely Christian implies significant and measurable change in the disciple or learner so that the exteriors of our lives are becoming "the signature of the interior."⁵⁴

All too often, at least in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, we seem to have equated the impartation of data or completion of a course with growth as disciples. Not as complaint, but as illustration, the synodical policy by which we determine the eligibility of communicants well demonstrates this point. Pastors are to refuse the Lord's Supper to all but those who sometime, somewhere--presumably successfully--completed a certain course of study resulting in membership in a local congregation.

By following this practice whereby only those individuals who are members of the Synod or of a church body with which the Synod is in altar and pulpit fellowship are ordinarily communed, pastors and congregations preserve the integrity of their witness to the Gospel of Christ as it is revealed in the Scriptures⁵⁵ and confessed in the Lutheran confessional writings.

Communicant membership in a congregation of the LC-MS is seen to equal a full and personal relationship with Jesus. A name on the roll of membership is equivalent to an adult

⁵⁴Jacob Boehme cited by Dale E. Griffin in The Subject is Persons (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970) p. 20.

⁵⁵Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper, a report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, May 1983 (St. Louis: LC-MS, 1983) p. 22.

understanding and acceptance of the mystery of the Real Presence. This confusion of process with purpose is roughly parallel to "social promotion"--so widely blamed as the cause of rampant functional illiteracy--in public education. It leads church educators to assume growth without change.

Worse, in the minds of Lutheran people it equates discipleship and growth in sanctification with course completion. Thus members are encouraged to feel satisfied having taken a course in evangelism without the slightest change in their level of concern for, or outreach toward, those who are unsaved. Were there a correspondence between that which is taught and that which is believed, would not the people of the church demand celebration of the Lord's Supper at least weekly? If discipleship is accumulation of a prescribed body of knowledge and adults understand their pre-confirmation training as sufficient to provide them the necessary credentials, it is no wonder Lutheran adults exhibit no outward signs of an inner hunger for Bible study.

Pastors of our tradition are carefully trained to do "Word and sacrament ministry." That is, we proclaim the Word and administer the sacraments faithfully, with no thought of results. We brand those who would measure or

evaluate results as "Triumphalists."⁵⁶ Basic principles of adult education require evaluation of progress toward measurable and attainable goals. Here we experience some conflict growing out of our traditional aversion to prescribing what the Holy Spirit must do in the lives of his people. We remind each other that the wise farmer does not uproot his plants to see whether or not they are growing. Yet Jesus, Peter, James, John and Paul all encourage us to attend to the correspondence between what we say we believe and how we live.⁵⁷ They expect Christians to change noticeably as they grow!

Perhaps we have become so accustomed to teaching children--expecting today's information to become tomorrow's transformation--that we assume the same process to be operative in our attempts at adult education. Unless our pastors and teachers are trained to teach and lead for positive, systematic, measurable and sustained change--as adult education and Scripture both insist are necessary--how can we expect it to be otherwise?

⁵⁶Evangelism and Church Growth with Special Reference to the Church Growth Movement, a report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, September 1987 (St. Louis: LC-MS, 1987) pp. 45, 49.

⁵⁷Matt. 12:33ff.; I Pet. 2:2-3; Jas. 2:18; Rev. 2:1-3:21 and Rom. 12:3 are but a few of the pertinent references.

The workshop which this paper designs, while quite limited in its scope, nevertheless necessitated an excursion into the vast arena of Adult Education, its theories and practices. Developing a workable plan has changed considerably my understanding of the adults in my congregation and how they learn. Both seem to me to be subsumed under Jesus' urgent desire to reflect Himself in the changed lives of his disciples. No longer simply a classroom or counseling-room function for the frantic few in crisis and the mysterious minority who are "into" Bible study, adult Christian education is what the Church does. Formerly frustrated by the few adults involved as students in my congregation's frequently futile education endeavors, I now see a powerful potential for Gospel-powered, Christ-centered, other-oriented, changed-lives growing out of the one facet of our church life in which almost all the members of the congregation are involved.

Our corporate worship offers heretofore untapped opportunities of unimaginable consequence for people whose lives need change and who can be instrumental as agents of divine change in the lives of others. Available to his gathered people by means of Word, sacrament and the "mutual consolation and conversation of the brethren," Jesus himself is present to accomplish his discipling agenda. He is present to forgive sin, give life and salvation--freedom, insight, release, healing, new life, deliverance,

righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit--to make loving footwashers of all who believe.⁵⁸ Surely, this must be the ultimate educational (i.e., developmental--the root sense of educate) opportunity for the Body of Christ!

What strategies and techniques must be employed in order to permit it to become the ultimate educative--consistently life-changing, discipling, redemptive--experience for adults? Whatever the answer to this question, it must be practically and effectively applicable to the adults of the particular congregation which I serve. The deployment of proven strategies and techniques of Adult Education to serve a portion of the quest for that life-changing educative experience within the context of the Lutheran liturgy is the focus of this part of the paper.

Who are we, who are gathered for worship? We are adults who learn in certain unique ways. We are the people to whom our God yearns to deliver his grace in Jesus by the power of his Spirit through Word and sacrament. We are the sanctified community, set aside for God's own purpose. We are disciples whose learning curve often seems to appear excruciatingly flat. We are here at Jesus' invitation in order to drain the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord in the congregation of the faithful. We are "the Lord's portion in a howling wasteland." We are here to

⁵⁸Lk. 4:18-21; Matt. 10:1,6-7; Rom. 14:17.

learn--to grow, to be restored, to be changed--by the grace
of our God at the hands of one another. We are here to do
the Liturgy--the work of God's people.

I. THE LUTHERAN LITURGY--WHAT IS IT, WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Here at St. Paul, we can assume that members of the congregation have been exposed to basic training in the Lutheran Liturgy via The Doctrine in the Liturgy⁵⁹ or one of the earlier adult courses structured around liturgy, life and doctrine. But members with seniority will still--from time to time--exclaim, "Pastor, I just discovered that most of what we say and sing in the liturgy comes right from the Bible!" Therefore, an overview of the liturgy, from a perspective other than academic, appears to be a necessary ingredient for the Worship Workshop. In this section, I will attempt to loupe each facet of the diamond that is the liturgy and characterize it with a word that both clarifies its meaning and respects its mystery.

There are basic ingredients in the liturgy that mark it as Lutheran.

A Lutheran service is one that is built on the article of justification by grace through faith. It is a service that expounds the Word of God as both Law and Gospel. It is centered in the reading of Scripture and its exposition and the administration of the Sacraments. It follows the Mass form which was inherited from many cultures and peoples of the last twenty centuries. It is not culturally biased to one

⁵⁹Donald L. Deffner, The Doctrine in the Liturgy (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1988).

group. In fact, most of the material found in the Mass is a direct quotation of Scripture or a paraphrase.⁶⁰

The other basic ingredient, which ought to be self understood, is often overlooked. To be sure, Word and sacraments are the avenue God uses to deliver his grace in Jesus to us. They are therefore, basic to worship. But, without a gathering of people of faith, there can be no worship. People are not simply important to worship, they are essential. Thus the concern expressed in the earlier section.

The liturgy is a celebration of the living presence of our crucified Lord in our midst. With the speaking of the name of the Holy Trinity--in the invocation or the apostolic greeting--we are reminded into whom we are baptized and in whose presence we gather. We are here together to receive and share his gifts of grace. We greet our Lord in the Kyrie and give him glory in the Hymn of Praise.

The liturgy is a dialogue with God. He speaks to us in the words of Holy Scripture, and much of what we say and sing in response is also from the Scriptures. The First Lesson encourages us. The same God who was faithful to Israel will be faithful to us as well. Instruction by an apostle as to what it means to live as God's grace-child is usually the thrust of the Epistle. We rise to greet

⁶⁰"What is Basic in Lutheran Worship?", a statement of the Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, (1989).

Jesus as he comes to us in the Gospel. To really hear the Gospel is to play the role of those to whom Jesus speaks or toward whom he acts. The sermon proclaims and applies the Gospel to our situation. Having heard it all, we begin our response with a strong, "We believe!"

The liturgy is a banquet in which Jesus Christ is both our host and menu. He invites us to intimate table-fellowship with him and is the Bread of Heaven which we break and eat, the very Lamb of God who takes away our sin. With all believers who ever were, we are joined in this foretaste of the heavenly bridal feast which will mark our ultimate rescue and reunion. Others speak of "receiving Christ," here we actually do receive him--flesh and blood! No matter what may seem to divide us from one another, here he binds each of us to himself, and therefore to each other.

The liturgy is a re-presentation of the drama of our salvation: of Jesus' coming among us in human flesh, his baptism and temptation, his ministry of teaching and healing, his suffering in the Upper Room and in Gethsemane, his crucifixion and death, his resurrection and ascension, his appearing and the giving of the Holy Spirit, his promise to come again to close history, and his saving action through his church in the meantime. Over the course of a year, the whole drama is played out before us and with our participation. With Jesus, we are cast into the

contemporary chapter of the drama of Salvation-by-Grace-Through-Faith.

The liturgy is discipline. It has a predictable structure and flow which are carefully designed to move us beyond our feelings and outside of ourselves into the objective reality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Not thrown together haphazardly or at the last minute, the liturgy requires careful planning and preparation because "order is the symbol of God's speaking and acting in the church."⁶¹

The liturgy is theogenetic. It originates with God, not with us. Worship is to lay one's life down before another. Jesus did precisely that before the Father and for us.

The liturgy is Christocentric. It does not center on God in general but on Jesus Christ through whom, alone, God is known and accessed. It is Jesus' finished work on Calvary, applied to us in Holy Baptism, that is our ticket of admission to worship.

The liturgy is Pneumatic, that is, it is of the Holy Spirit. God cannot be worshipped except "in Spirit and in truth," according to Jesus. Worship of any one or thing outside our own self-interest is humanly impossible. It is

⁶¹Robert E. Webber, Worship is a Verb (Waco: Words Books, 1985) p. 134.

God the Holy Spirit who translates God's grace to our need and our prayer to divine language.

The liturgy is incarnational. It is neither a mystical out-of-body experience nor a taxing mental exercise. It is an encounter with God who became flesh to tabernacle among us in Jesus. It is therefore, a tangible thing. Words are to be said, sung and heard with all the heart. Art, music, dance, other people, body language, expressive movement, color, sound and smell all serve as accessories to the vehicle that delivers God's grace. The Word still becomes flesh and blood in the bread and wine. Life emerges out of drowning in the water with the Word, so our liturgy is sacramental as well.

The liturgy is ecumenical. It connects us intimately with all who have come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord. In the liturgy we are part of that crowd that cannot be counted of every land and race and tongue. We are no longer alone. We are together with one another for something far beyond the group-doing of private devotions. Those others are not a distraction, they are a part of the vehicle of grace, being those by whom the Word comes to us. Our worship is relational. Faith, hope, love pass from heart to hand to hand to heart in the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren. We are involved. The very word means, "work of the people." We participate in each others' struggles,

pain, joys, victories. We both lend to and borrow from one another that most precious and seemingly fragile faith.

The liturgy is shepherding. In the law, God himself hooks our hindquarters with his crook in order to, through the Gospel, restore us to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls and bring us back home where we belong. It is caregiving, this corporate worship. He hears our silent cries, loves us out of our stubborn rebellion and holds us close to him and to one another. "Your sins are forgiven, rise up and walk!" The broken heart leaves its guilt and despair at the altar and takes away the hope and heart of the Master. It is a healing thing. It restores our souls and our relationships. We hear and accept for ourselves the "It is finished," that he spoke over our sin and we transfer it to one another.

The liturgy is dynamic. Rooted and centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, "the power of God unto salvation for all who believe," it can shatter the deepest and most demonic bondages known to human nightmares. In the liturgy, the power of God is unleashed against the gates of Hades. They cannot stand. That power is often more evidenced in the holding of the hand through the valley than it is in the miraculous removal of all discomfort. Here deliverance takes place much to the embarrassment and in full sight of the Principalities and Powers, in demonstration of God's amazing grace.

The Lutheran liturgy is our corporate worship. Worship is what the Church does. It is the very heart-muscle that supplies the body with her life. It provides the source of our strength, vibrancy, resilience, resolve, joy and victory throughout the whole week and within all our relationships. The liturgy is

The adoration of God and offering up of self and others to Him, the seeking of His grace through His Word of forgiveness, the sharing of His grace through the acts of mutual edification.⁶²

While the doing of the liturgy is not always and everywhere accompanied by the use of art and dance, it is seldom simply spoken. There is, I suspect, a very good reason for that. The words, and the Word, apart from music, have limited access into the whole person. The words can so easily be blocked by the walls that defend our souls. Yet those same words, set to the right music, can penetrate the walls and home in on their target with life-giving effect. Perhaps it was a wealth of such experiences that prompted Luther to place music on a pedestal alongside theology.

But what is "right" music? Are there certain progressions of tones, chord structures and rhythms so inherently evil that they are beyond being redeemed by being pressed into service to the King? Must their structure bar them from being used in Lutheran liturgical worship? Is a sixteenth century chorale--a tune many laymen claim is

⁶²Richard R. Caemmerer, cited by Deffner, p.5.

unsingable--intrinsically more Godly and ecclesiastically acceptable than a praise chorus whose theology is not deeply profound, but which everyone sings heartily? Not a little controversy among professional church workers presently wraps the answer to these and related questions. The opinions of pastors, on whom the mantle for structuring the liturgy rests, seem to range from a willingness to do whatever makes people feel good to a snobbishness that rejects out-of-hand any tune that has not come from pre-romance classical quills.

Far be it from this poor parson to propose a solution that will find wide acceptance among the divergent interest groups. Nevertheless, I do see certain principles that may be applied for the sake of better communicating the Gospel to more people.

First, music must be the servant of the Word. While, by itself, while it may "soothe the savage breast," music has no ability to mediate between the Holy God and sinful men.

If church music claims the centre of the sanctuary it has displaced the centrality of Christ and has lost its distinctive mission in the life of the church....It therefore willingly accepts the role of servant to the Savior, a function which is liberating rather than restrictive as it witnesses to the grace of God in Christ, who is both the glory of God and the glory of mankind.⁶³

⁶³Robin Leaver, Duty and Delight: Routley Remembered (Carol Stream, IL.: Hope Publishing Company, 1985) p. 55.

Perhaps that says all that needs to be said to choristers, instrumentalists, and even preachers concerned about their "performances."

The second principle flows from the first. If music is to serve the Word, then it must have the effect upon the people who sing or hear it that the Word seeks to work. That which once set the tone for high praise and celebration may not serve the same purpose for the musically disadvantaged American of today. Those responsible for leading worship need to watch, ask and listen to see which music affects which people in which ways. I ought not assume that, just because J. S. Bach communicates the message so powerfully to me, that he does so for the people whom I serve.

I extrapolate the third principle from the character of God's love. Long before Hallmark, he cared enough to send his very best--his own Son. As noted earlier, this establishes the nature of true Christian worship. As the Father is, so are the children. It is ours to respond to his love with our best. Note the plural pronoun. Our best is not the same as my best. It is not the same as our well-trained organist's best. If the everyday musical vocabularies of most of the people who are St. Paul include only Country and Western, then our best will not sound like the best offered by a congregation whose members have had strong training in music in the parochial school over

several generations. Still, it is to be hoped that the best we have to offer today will be eclipsed by the quality of that brought tomorrow. That leads to the next principle.

It is quite probable that some sacrifice in musical quality is called for in the present in order to encourage those to sing who have given up. Engaging all worshipers in the song is important because singing bonds worshipers together and brings about a sense of organic unity in the body. Such sacrifice ought to be short-lived.

Principle Four says that we need to grow in our means of musical expression and our ability to participate therein as part of our discipleship--a living out of a facet of Romans 12:1-3. Perhaps that means we might create a new order of Assisting Minister--the Song Leader--whose friendly, skilled, careful and warm hand-waving makes it impossible for the most musically illiterate member to fail to sing "Isaiah Mighty Seer," with gusto.

The fifth, and final, principle is the principle of continuity. It is a reminder that bathwater and babies are sometimes difficult to separate, no matter whether it is a matter of throwing out the one or bringing in the other. Struggling to keep the balance between the traditional and contemporary helps to remind us that we are part of the una sancta, and somehow accountable to "that great cloud of witnesses," for our stewardship of that which we have received.

To accept the gift of tradition is to link ourselves with Christians of other times and places, reminding ourselves that we are indeed a part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. To reject that gift is to go it alone, to cut ourselves off from the mutual edification of the whole church...In emphasizing continuity with the past, it is never at the expense of the new but always as the context or environment for new manifestations of the Spirit in worship and music. Rooted firmly in a rich tradition, we do not avoid the new but are careful to avoid novelty, eccentricity, or quixotic attempts at newness for its own sake.⁶⁴

But why all this concern with liturgy and music? It is not the development of optional liturgical niceties for their own sake that concerns me.

For Lutherans, corporate worship is not simply a pleasant option; it is the indispensable and central work of the gathered Christian community from which all other facets of the church's life and mission, including one's individual worship life, derive their strength, purpose and direction.⁶⁵

If the organs of the body are blocked from receiving what the heart pumps to them, the whole body suffers. Church Growth, education, nurture, caregiving, stewardship, missions and fellowship all go sour. But where worship is strong, there

Fruitful participation issues forth in mission....The purpose of liturgical participation is the glorification of God and the equipping of Christians

⁶⁴Carl Schalk, Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise (St. Louis: Concordia, 1988) p. 55.

⁶⁵Carl Schalk, Music in Lutheran Worship, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1983) p. 3.

with power, to carry out the mission of the church in the world. The two are inseparable.⁶⁶

⁶⁶Craig Douglas Erickson, "Liturgical Participation and the Renewal of the Church," Worship 59 (May 1985): 232.

II. THE WORSHIPERS--WHO ARE WE, WHY ARE WE HERE?

This section of the paper will attempt to evaluate the environment of and techniques used in liturgical worship as to their effectiveness in educating adults. Because

The conditions under which an adult educational activity takes place will often determine the success or failure of the activity. The adult educational transaction tends to be enhanced when conditions are desirable and wholesome, but it tends to be curtailed when conditions are undesirable and inadequate.⁶⁷

changes and modifications will be recommended, where appropriate, in order to make our corporate worship experiences more amenable to the service of the Gospel as the Spirit seeks to use it to change the lives of adults.

I can remember but few times when people said that Sunday worship gathering was the most life-changing thing that ever happened to him/her. It is surely possible that lives were changed and I simply was not informed. It is conceivable that whole crowds of people have had their burdens lifted, spirits renewed, lives rejuvenated and have carefully kept it secret. However, I think that improbable. We seem to believe that the collective weight of a lifetime of faithful attendance--notice the passive nature of that

⁶⁷Robert H. King, "The Teaching--Learning Process in Adult Education," Lutheran Education (November 1970) p. 143.

word, "attendance"--at worship is somehow salutary, even though little impact is ever identified by participants. Pastors are not usually amazed when members express the feeling that a given worship service was somehow less than pivotal. Perhaps that can be understood by remembering that our liturgical forms antedate the field of Adult Education by a millennia or two. They will probably outlast contemporary educational theory by just as long unless the Bridegroom comes to claim his Bride first.

It is not the structure of the liturgy that poses so much of a problem for adult learning as does its execution and environment. To borrow some McLuhanese, it is the "medium," not the "message" that turns off untrained adults. Certain characteristics of adult learners must be taken into account if the educational transaction is to occur. Of special concern to those worship leaders who would disciple are these:⁶⁸

1. They are experienced adults, not children.
2. Their hearing and eyesight are not what they used to be.
3. Their attitudes are fixed; they resist change.
4. They are here voluntarily and expect something.
5. They are practical, concerned with their present life.

⁶⁸Characteristics 1-5: King, pp. 139-142.

To these we might add that adults have proven themselves and thus expect to relate to those who teach as peers, not pupils. They learn best when definite results and positive reinforcement are presented quickly. To disregard the implications of these characteristics is to transform potential and eager disciples into bored and critical spectators who find the solitary meaning in worship to be the security provided by familiar sounds and motions. Not that familiar ritual is unimportant, it certainly is. Psychology is only now discovering how necessary is a sense of rootedness to emotional and social stability. But the King who comes to wash the feet of his subjects so that they can wash one another has far more life-changing Good News for us than that.

How attuned is our worship facility to these characteristics of adults? Our nave has a name that is foreign to most people. That helps to reinforce their feelings of inadequacy. It is long, high, and narrow. Lighting was designed by the same person who did the catacombs. Brick, glass, wood, and other hard, polished surfaces make it acoustically alive. Instruments, choirs and organ sound magnificent in this setting, but the echoes totally confuse the spoken words, especially for those who must wear hearing aids. Because of the low light level, those whose sight is dimming sing only what they know by memory and feel angry if an unfamiliar hymn or liturgy is

used. They have a right to; they are left out. Pews in rows line the nave and all face front. It is difficult to relate to someone whom you only recognize by the back of the neck. The seating arrangement clearly dictates that everything important comes from the front. This may communicate to those who sit in the pews that they are expected to be either passive receivers or spectators, but certainly not actors and participants of any importance.

How might these factors affect an entry-level, or first-time, worshiper? Here follows a composite of impressions shared by a wide range of first-time adult visitors to our worship-gatherings.

"Up front the holy things were fenced off from the rest of us. Only strangely uniformed persons went through the fence. Those who occupied the chancel seemed different from and more important than those of us who occupied the pews. Then came the important actor--the pastor. Why, he even dresses differently than we do. He must be different from us. Who in the world is Uriah the Hittite, and what has that to do with my life, my wife, my job? The preacher talked down to me from his high pulpit. I don't need pontification, I need someone to listen to me! I knew it was time to sing. But I sing poorly and visibility in there was marginal, at best, so I just watched and listened. What I heard and saw led me to think that your people are not very excited about what you say they have here. The 'beat'

of those German songs that you always sing simply escaped me. I heard the pastor and choir director both say that it is better music than the music I like, but it feels no more 'Godly' to me than the tunes I can hum. It just seemed to be foreign."

Recall that one of the characteristics of adult learners is a sense of inadequacy and fear of failure.⁶⁹ Can you see how our sights and sounds of worship have worked on this worshiper's sense of inferiority and his fear of doing the wrong thing at the wrong time? Can you feel his alienation? Perhaps that can be compensated for by other activities before and after the service and during the week. But our friend is one of the seventy-five percent of the people in this room whose only association with the others gathered here is during this hour. Why should what happens here have to be compensated for in a setting that has far less potential to change his life?

Our friend continues his reaction to our worship-gathering. "Row by row, in best military style, the people were ushered up to kneel for Holy Communion. Was this real? Did anything happen to them? As they walked back to their seats they all looked as if they were embarrassed and not at all happy. Finally, after we finished trying to sing the last tedious song, they ushered us out row by row so that

⁶⁹ Ibid.

nobody could stop to talk to me, even if they wanted to."

May certain changes in the environment, structure or process of the worship-gathering be made in order to ease these entry-level worshipers into the educational process?

Even while we consider the reactions of the first-time visitor who has no training or background in liturgical worship, we must also take into account the others. They are not all hiding in anonymity, nor are they idolaters of tradition. Many of them will tolerate any liturgical aberration quite patiently. Simply because Jesus found them here, these events have deep, heartfelt and eternal significance for them. Some are here because everything good that God has done for them has had its vehicle or found its expression in a setting such as this. It is the only kind of worship-gathering they know and they want to know no other.

Proposed changes to the environment, structure or process of the worship-gathering will produce turmoil within these people and probably cause an unnecessary dilemma for the congregation. One possible route around that dilemma respects the needs and loyalties of both groups. Opportunities for worship-gatherings that include interpersonal ministry might be offered in addition to, rather than instead of, that with which the majority seems quite content.

Granted, Lutheran worship, "as it comes from the box," may be anything but an electrifying experiment in personal spiritual growth for most folks. But if we were to follow the Duncan Hines special recipe and add an ecclesiastical egg, a little oil, bake it in a round pan and use cream-cheese frosting, might we not have something just as delightful for entry-level adult and faithful members as well?

Remodeling the lighting system is both a great expense and an engineering nightmare, but the bulletin could be printed in a type-face large enough to be read under poor light. If we carefully monitored the sound system and added an inductive coil to feed hearing aids directly, everyone could hear and feel a part of what is happening. We could sing at least a few of those hymns that are familiar and a song-leader in the front could help us learn some new ones. The pastor might use several mini-lectures instead of one long sermon. Sermon outlines might be printed in the bulletin for all to follow. He could preach from the aisle or elsewhere among the people since wireless microphones are available. If he's daring enough, he might have a panel of reactors take the last five minutes of sermon time. He could open it for discussion, or at very least, follow the service with discussion opportunity over coffee in the parlor. He might select his sermon topics in consultation with the people. He could ask four or five members each

month to provide their input on the basis of what they perceive their needs to be. The petitions of the Prayer of the Church might be spoken by the people from the pews instead of by the clergy for the church. Processing to the rail might be less military without any loss of reverence. Twenty or thirty people at a time would fit nicely behind the rail and around the altar where they could talk to and pray for and counsel each other as they wait to receive the elements. Heads of families might be given the elements to share with the members of their households. Dismissal could be chaotic enough to permit hugging, handshakes, greetings and tears.

These simple accommodations to adult needs, while not compromising the content of the Divine Service could at very least serve to make it a bit more "user-friendly" for all but those who understand corporate worship as doing private devotions together. They value their Sunday morning anonymity very highly and work hard at staying uninvolved, untouched and untouched. Special efforts must be made to help them into the learning experience.

Of course we recognize that the very people these changes are designed to help will resist them--that is one of their primary characteristics--unless the changes are their idea.⁷⁰ Innovators beware! Many are the horror

⁷⁰Griffen, p. 85.

stories told by well-intentioned and well-educated pastors who knew just what their people needed and drove them to that water against their wills. Men have been known to get bucked off into the trough so often that they had to find another horse. That dilemma--how to help people get to where they need to be and are sure they do not want to go--is the concern of the next chapter.

III. TO EACH FOR THE GOOD OF ALL

(Taking God's Gifted People Seriously)

The style of worship-gathering that Paul strongly recommends to the Corinthian Christian in I,14, seems to flow from God himself as his character is expressed through the unique spiritual giftedness of each member of the Body. We still rely on the Holy Spirit to manifest his gifts through certain people--primarily preachers--in order effectively to communicate law and Gospel to the hearts of the hearers. What would the liturgy be like if the giftedness of each were to be employed in service to the Spirit's task of building all up in the Gospel?

Recall our friend, Joe, who could not understand how he is necessary to this worship. Suppose that he had received the gift of, "knowledge," among a few others, in his gift cluster. Consider how he might deploy it for ministry in such a way that it would become obvious to him that others are helped. If that were to happen, I suspect it would answer his need as well.

How often people complain of a sadness or depression whose cause they are unable to identify. One Sunday as God's people gather around the altar, Joe finds himself next to one of these "down" brothers. "You seem so sad today.

How can I help?" The brother responds, "I'm really down and I don't know why. Perhaps if you prayed with me...." As he prays, Joe senses a reason for the sadness. Hesitantly he suggests, "Is it possible that you feel sad because...?" "How did you know?" the other asks in surprise. Now the two of them have something to pray about--a confession/absolution issue. Both men will leave this worship joy-filled, certain that God has served one through the other.

This may illustrate the reasons for which I chose to include the identification and experimental use of Spiritual gifts in corporate worship as a major component of the Worship Workshop for St. Paul. My presupposition is that, given a) solid biblical information concerning spiritual gifts, and b) clues as to which gifts the worshiper possesses, and c) permission and place to use those gifts, the gifts of the Spirit will be manifested through ordinary Christian worshipers as they are elicited by the needs of individuals or the body as a whole, thereby conveying the assurance of forgiveness, life and salvation from Jesus to each worshiper in a uniquely personal--therefore powerful--manner.

In addition to that component of the workshop, if these are really God's gifted people with whom I am working, then I am obliged to respect their attitudes, opinions and feelings about worship. What follows is an attempt to take

that giftedness seriously and apply it to the planning stages of the workshop.

"Eat this, its good for you!" describes a parental attitude that is no stranger to many families. Responses vary from abject submission to volatile expressions of dislike--usually manifested in grotesque facial distortions--from the children. Sometimes respect for parental judgement carries the day. At other times, Rover--close at hand to consume every "accidentally" dropped treasure--takes the unpleasantry away. But when the pastor, as Reverend Father of the congregational family, uses the same technique on the adults in his flock, disaster is predictable. Hurt and angry over what he perceives their lack of respect for his authority, he may easily assume--quite falsely--that his people have no interest in growth. In reality, they are not interested in being told what is good for them. They are sovereign American and uniquely gifted Christian adults who admirably resist anything they feel is being foisted on them with neither their consultation nor prior permission.

Thus, while I may be absolutely convinced that the adult members of St. Paul Lutheran Church need to study and grow in their worship, and even if I have had a vision and a "word from the Lord," to reinforce my conviction, it would be against their nature for them to give themselves wholeheartedly to such a study. This same response has been demonstrated as, in years past, Concordia Publishing House

spent considerable sums to develop and introduce studies that are good for adults and yet, failed to recover their printing costs. One result is that market-research and field testing have become important components of ministry to adults. Many adults insist on being part of the process that selects and designs that to which they will commit their time and energy. That is not only good adult educational theory, but also good theology. It takes priesthood and spiritual giftedness seriously. Therefore it is no surprise that those study and growth opportunities that arise out of the employment of "diagnostic means to identify the educational interests and needs of adults,"⁷¹ seem to receive wider and more enthusiastic participation by those for whom they are intended.

While a great deal of time and energy are required to properly formulate, tabulate, analyze and report back on surveys, it is worth the investment because adults take seriously only those surveys whose information they believe will actually make a difference. Can our members be sure that the information they give will make a difference even if the results contradict what the pastor and other leaders have decided we ought to do? It is less threatening to clergy and lay leaders alike to bypass this step, even if the cost is another very poorly attended course, seminar or

⁷¹King, p. 144.

workshop. The real cost however, is not just the failure of a program. Rather, it is the failure of the Body of Christ in this place to carry out its Spirit-assigned ministry because it lacks the vision, knowledge, attitudes, skills, resources and relationships to function effectively.

Considering that cost, it is incumbent upon me to survey, interview, diagnose and discover where my brothers and sisters are and where they want to be, and then develop appropriate strategies that will help us grow together to that place where we should be. That is, I must broaden the base of both interest and desire so that the motivation for growth and participation in our community is something more than the parental authority exercised by the pastor.

Therefore, the initial strategy included three techniques. First the the Board of elders--constitutionally responsible for worship--was recruited as a problem-solving group. The problem was stated as follows, "How shall we ascertain what our people expect from corporate worship? How shall we determine the validity of those expectations? How can we replace invalid expectations with those that are valid? How can we evaluate the effectiveness of our corporate worship?" This four-part question formed the agenda of several consecutive and protracted meetings of the pastor and the Board of Elders. Expansion of the base had begun. Now it was possible to say "we" instead of "I."

As we attempted to apply this question to ourselves we discovered that we had not embarked upon a simple fact-finding mission, but rather an extended journey. Little did we anticipate the surprises that would cause us to modify our strategy several times. Nevertheless, from these discussions emerged two techniques to help us ascertain the attitude of the congregation toward corporate worship.

First, I was assigned to develop a simple and comprehensive survey determining the level of satisfaction with each major area of our life together at St. Paul-- worship, nurture, evangelism, stewardship, social action, fellowship--to be given out during Sunday worship and mailed to all in the newsletter. The Elders tabulated the results and shared pertinent information with each of the Directors responsible for specific areas of congregational life. Analysis was shared with the whole Board of Directors and published in the next newsletter for all to see. The Elders gave special attention to the responses to those items dealing with our corporate worship as they provide insight into the first part of our problem.⁷²

After I shared with the Board of Elders some of the insights gained from the seminar, "Strategies and Techniques for Ministers Teaching Adults," the second technique, based on a smaller number of people and more subjective, was

⁷²The questionnaire appears in appendix 1.

developed. Twelve members--ten percent of our average weekly communicant worship attendance--were selected at random to form a sample for personal interviews. They were asked to complete a series of statements and to answer questions designed to reveal their understandings of, personal expectations for and methods of evaluating corporate worship at St. Paul. They were to respond verbally and were assured of confidentiality.⁷³

Rather than bore the reader with detailed statistical results from these surveys, I will summarize the results and their implications as seen by the Board of Elders.

1. Over ninety percent of those responding to the initial questionnaire indicated that they were very satisfied with corporate worship at St. Paul. They recommended no changes in style or substance. Following a basic principle of management, "If it's not broken, don't fix it," we thought perhaps we ought to leave well enough alone until we analyzed the interviews.

2. Ten of the twelve interviewed had also responded to the initial survey. They were "very satisfied" with but could not define worship. We asked, "Ought we not be able to define that one thing all of us do together?"

3. Completing the statement, "I feel it was a good worship service when...", the twelve responded in widely

⁷³The list of questions is contained in appendix 2.

divergent ways. This indicated to us a lack of consensus as to goals and objectives for corporate worship. It also reflected that most worshipers saw their role in worship as that of private consumers or spectators. With the exception of the single interviewee who belongs to the choir, they did not see themselves as participants who were in any way important to the liturgical process or to the other people present.

4. Save for two of the twelve interviewed, all saw the primary action in worship to be human, not Divine. They perceived it as what we do and say toward God, not his gracious acting toward us. While Christian obligation and duty certainly have something to do with worship, unless they are grateful response to God's ministry to us in the Gospel, we have a community under bondage to the law. Our focus on the Servant King must be restored!

5. All saw their primary offering to others as what they put in their contribution envelope. Three thought verbal participation in song and response to be something they offered others, but considerably less important than the offering envelope. This suggests that instruction is needed concerning the place of personal interaction and the use of Spiritual Gifts in corporate worship.

6. "I'm here. Whatever God wants to do me--if anything--is OK with me. But I don't dare dictate to him by asking him for anything specific," seems to accurately

summarize worshipers' expectations. A history of unanswered prayer caused four respondents to pray only for others, and then in very general terms. Three had asked for the prayers of the church sometime in the last year, but only for needs other than their own. Apparently we need to sharpen our skills in what James calls the "effective, fervent prayers of the righteous."⁷⁴

7. Six were uncomfortable with the "Passing of the Peace." They felt that touching and personal interaction of any sort violated their childhood training in worship. The four who were raised in the Lutheran Church reported a greater degree of discomfort than did the two who were relatively new to the traditions of Lutheran worship. Discomfort is quite appropriate at many points in effective worship if God is ministering to and/or through us. This needs to be interpreted as an acceptable feeling.

8. Eight of the twelve rated their personal devotions as more effective than corporate worship in meeting their personal spiritual needs. The fact that none of their personal needs had ever been shared or prayed for in corporate worship could account for this. We need to structure a safe practice session in which people are encouraged to surface their needs and place themselves in the prayerful hands of their brothers and sisters.

⁷⁴James 5:13-16, KJV.

9. Remarkably, at the close of the interview, eleven of the twelve indicated that this was the first time in their adult lives that they had given any serious thought to corporate worship and as they struggled to answer some of the questions they became aware that they needed to know more. They indicated that they would welcome an educational event that would offer growth in this area, providing it would be more practical than theoretical and would not continue for a protracted period of time.

The Board of Elders concluded that if the twelve respondents are a valid and representative sample of the adult members of St. Paul then, for the sake of the very lives of our people, we must do something to foster measurable growth in all phases of corporate worship. Whatever we plan must deal with us as whole persons, that is, it must widely impact not just our knowledge, but also our attitudes and skills. Here lies a considerable risk. If we teach for change and people are changed, will the Elders permit the changes in corporate worship which such new understanding, perception and behavior may demand? Can this pastor competently preside over a liturgy in which worshipers are free to do things that are neither predictable nor under his total control? If the answers to these two questions cannot be unqualifiedly positive, we must stop here. To continue with the educational work suggested without permitting the practice of its results

would be self-defeating, not to mention Spirit-frustrating. Unlike so many other adult education processes that we have done together, here we must be prepared to deal with results. Pastor and Board engaged these questions with considerable discussion--honest, deep, fraught with personal anxiety--and prayer. We concluded that if the Holy Spirit chooses to use the results of our study and training with one another to make our worship-gathering something other than the usual, we will see it as his design and go whatever direction he may lead. On the other hand, we agreed that if no significant changes seemed to occur in our corporate worship, we would not attempt to force our people into the way we thought would be good for them. We would see this as the Spirit's direction as well.

Having counted the cost, we were now prepared to return to the four-fold question at the beginning of this section. We have no means to evaluate the effectiveness of our worship if we lack consensus concerning its nature, goal, objectives and processes. The questionnaires and interviews demonstrate that we have no such consensus. The perceptions and expectations of corporate worship that they reveal--allowances having been made for poor verbal skills and declining response speed of more mature adults⁷⁵--are far from those of Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions

⁷⁵King, p. 141.

and the traditions of the Church. How to close that gap?
What, if anything, can and should we do to bring each other
"up to speed," so that our gracious Heavenly Father is more
freely permitted to cause his Kingdom to come among us also?

IV. WE USE THE TOOLS OF LITURGY FOR MINISTRY

A. New Strategy: A Pilot Workshop

Sensitive to the negative effect that the authoritarian, "Eat your spinach!" approach had on them during their lifetime in the church and aware of the growth they had experienced as they wrestled with the initial statement of the corporate worship problem, the Board of Elders devised a plan to close the gap. Ideally, the plan would bring every worshiper into that same struggle at some level. They noted the change from satisfaction to desire to learn that marked the respondents to the questionnaire and concluded that a similar exercise in consciousness-raising could serve as an effective means to motivate potential participants.

These observations, coupled with some of the comments from the respondents, led them to settle on a workshop as the major strategy by which to attack the problem. In addition, the consciousness-raising questions are to be asked consistently over the next six months in newsletter articles, bulletin, worship notes, sermons, Bible classes and over coffee. (These saturation techniques are a

miniaturization of Bergevin's plan to use a plurality of structures to achieve educational goals.)⁷⁶

To avoid forcing "spinach" on the rest of the congregation, the Board determined to expand the planning base by asking twenty-five to thirty people to serve as a Worship Task Force. They charged them with the design and implementation of a pilot Workshop on Worship which will serve as a model for similar workshops to involve the rest of the congregation. Once the pilot has been carried out and evaluated and the model fine-tuned to their satisfaction, their job of the Task Force will be over. However, it is understood that those who demonstrate some skills in small group leadership and those for whom this event proves most meaningful will be asked to assist in recruiting participants and to serve as resource persons in the congregational phase. The Worship Task Force consists of, in addition to the five Elders and twelve respondents, ten others who were personally recruited by the elders using a questionnaire similar to that in appendix 2. Reflecting on some notes I shared with them from Wilbert, they felt that all Task Force members should be part of the planning process from the start in order for it to benefit

⁷⁶Paul Bergevin, A Philosophy for Adult Education, (New York: Seabury, 1961). While the author cites the various societal agencies that need to become involved for salutary changes in the whole society to occur, we simply adapted the approach microcosmically.

them in the fullest possible way.⁷⁷ As with the original respondents, all of those the Elders interviewed took their first serious look at their personal theologies of worship with the presentation of the questionnaire. It proved to be the trigger that interested them in that which they earlier assumed to be irrelevant.

In order to avoid overloading the pilot group with too many representatives of extreme opinions, the elders opted for a select group rather than publishing a public invitation. Most congregations have their share of those members whose hearts are in the Assembly of God worship style as well as those who remember the wonderful majestic sterility of worship at Central Lutheran. Both do whatever they can to press those styles and the resultant feelings on their local congregation. Loading the Task Force with too many of these who are sure that they know what worship is really all about--they are always first to volunteer--would be as deadly to the process as if the pastor were simply to lecture on the theology of worship for three or four hours! Either alternative would effectively short-circuit that part of the design that intends for this experience to be what Wilbert calls "exploring."

This word embodies a spirit of humility among teachers and learners, suggesting that they recognize personal and corporate limitations, and that it is quite impossible to cover all the issues or master all the

⁷⁷Warren Wilbert, Teaching Christian Adults, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) p. 148.

treasures contained, for example, in God's Word. There is always more and the very recognition of that reality is a safeguard against academic arrogance. Then, too, exploring has about it a spirit of adventure. Not only is there an expectant air of accomplishment with regard to that which has been planned, but further, there is the hint of unexpected discovery or achievement. Success for the exploring mission is crucially dependent upon the cooperative effort and combined talents of all the explorers. Shoulder-to-shoulder companionship, concern for the welfare of all, and a united effort which welds the individual members into a cohesive⁷⁸ unit are all characteristics of an exploring company.

In its first meeting, the Task Force made it quite clear that whatever developed as content for the workshop, it would tolerate no other context or methods than that of exploration. But, that is to get ahead of the story of the development of the process.

Charged with development of an educational process designed to involve and inform a maximum number of worshipping members and aware that their product had the potential to upset that which most of them thought quite comfortable and adequate in its present shape, the members of the Task Force went about their business with much anxiety. They decided to accomplish three things together. First, they developed their goals and objectives and--using as their "resource persons" the Pastor, Elders, and the men from a small group that had carefully studied the theology of corporate worship--determined the major themes for the content. Second, they determined the strategy to be used

⁷⁸Wilbert, p. 146.

and assigned responsibilities for implementation, facility and financing. Third, they will evaluate this pilot event and chart the future course for the most effective achievement of its goals and objectives.

At this writing, the Task Force has accomplished the first two items on its agenda. Concurring with the Elders' charge, the members have decided on a workshop as their strategy. It will take place on a Saturday with sessions from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Certain members of the Task Force have been assigned to prepare facilities, equipment and a noon meal. Pastor and Elders are requested to develop the objectives, content, and strategies for each of the sessions. The workshop will be entitled,

"WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH."

After some lengthy and frustrating attempts, as a committee of the whole, to define the objectives for the pilot workshop, the Task Force opted to assign this task to the Pastor and Elders. It was agreed that the following four questions properly focus the concerns which must be addressed in the workshop. The smaller group is to use these as the skeleton for their design of statements of objectives.

1. What is Lutheran worship?
2. Why are God and you and I here together?
3. What have I to offer that you need?
4. How shall we do it?

B. Goals and Objectives

Having finished their preparatory work, the members of the Task Force, now seeming quite committed to the process, happily left the detailed planning of each session to the Pastor and Elders. This section details the fruit of the labors of the latter group.

Referring to the initial presentation of the problem and to the four focusing questions given to us by the task force, it became apparent that a statement of our overall goal would help keep us in mind of our concerns that go beyond this pilot workshop into the total life of the congregation. Such a statement might prevent us from confusing the means--this particular workshop--with the end of more fruitful worship. While the development of this statement consumed much time and did not come easily, we felt it necessary to get ourselves on track and keep our work pertinent to our purpose. This is the statement that emerged.

"We will develop and implement a Worship Workshop process for the entire congregation in order that we might grow together toward a theologically sound consensus in our understanding and expectation, and thus participate more

fruitfully in and rightly evaluate our corporate worship experiences."

As we developed objectives, content and techniques for each session of the workshop, we checked them against our goal statement in order to align our procedures with our purpose.

Operating within the parameters defined by the overall (long-range) goal, we then developed the objectives specific to the Worship Workshop (short-range goals) according to the three domains for behavioral change: Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor. So that we could understand our terminology, we rephrased these as Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills.

Workshop Objectives

- A. Knowledge - that participants will be able to:
1. Gain insight into the sacrament-sacrifice dynamic of Lutheran corporate worship.
 2. Gain knowledge of the Biblical foundation of corporate worship.
 3. Understand how forgiveness of sins speaks to every human need.
 4. Comprehend the difference between corporate worship and personal devotions done by a group of people who happen to be in the same place at the same time.

5. Understand the nature, purpose and function of Spiritual gifts for interpersonal ministry in the liturgy.
6. Each identify at least one of his/her Spiritual gifts that can serve others within the liturgy.
7. Understand that the appropriate response to grace is relational, as well as personal and internal.
8. Each understand his/her role as actor, minister and recipient rather than spectator in worship.

B. Attitudes - that participants will be able to:

1. Be more sensitive to the needs of their fellow worshippers.
2. Appreciate their potential as God's instruments to meet those needs at once.
3. Value those opportunities for sharing, at the altar, what they have there received.
4. Feel personal interaction in worship to be appropriate when it is of a ministry nature.
5. Feel free to accept the seal of God's grace when it comes through the hands, words, prayers of the brothers and sisters.

6. Welcome those feelings of discomfort that sometimes accompany being used of the Lord for ministry.
 7. Experience a deeper sense of awe and wonder in worship.
- C. Skills - that the participants will be able to:
1. Contribute tangibly to worship.
 2. Meaningfully relate the purpose and process of corporate worship to others.
 3. Effectively use their Spiritual gifts to minister to the needs of others in worship.
 4. Confide their needs to the others.
 5. Pray effectively and confidently for and with one another within a corporate worship experience.
 6. Speak absolution to one another with boldness.
 7. Share insight from and commentary on the corporate implications of the lectionary.
 8. Rightly evaluate "worship" experiences.
 9. Put these skills to use in daily personal and family ministry.

We determined that the above goals met the qualifications for effective goals in Adult Education. That is, they are meaningful, realistic, attainable, measurable

(some not easily so), purposeful, student-oriented, understandable, consistent with long-range goals and will be shared--session by session--with those involved.⁷⁹

Upon careful examination, the objectives seemed to cluster around the four questions posed by the Task Force. This suggested a workshop design of four sessions. Each session is titled by one of the questions.

⁷⁹Wilbert, p. 166.

C. Design of Workshop Sessions

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

Schedule for the Day

10:00 Opening Devotions

10:15 Orientation

SESSION ONE: What is Lutheran worship?

10:20 Session objectives

10:25 Worship, an obligation?

10:40 "Lutheran Worship is...."

11:05 Bible Study

11:35 Evaluation

11:46 Lunch

SESSION TWO: Why are God and you and I here together?

12:30 Session objectives

12:35 Groups of 6/7 Bible Study-corporate promises

1:00 Groups report, Pastor's summary.

1:10 Buzz Groups: "Which Way the Arrows?"

1:20 Demonstration of Prayer Ministry by Elders

1:30 Diads do (or role-play) Prayer Ministry

1:45 Break

SESSION THREE: What have I to offer that you need?

- 2:00 Session objectives
- 2:05 Chuck Bradley film, "Discover Your Gifts."
- 2:35 Discussion of film
- 2:45 Spiritual Gifts Inventory
- 3:10 Check out your gift.
- 3:25 How can this gift work in worship?
- 3:40 Evaluation
- 3:40 Break

SESSION FOUR: How shall we do it?

- 4:00 Session objectives
- 4:05 Worship Assignments and preparation
- 4:15 Come, Let Us Worship the Lord!
- 5:00 Evaluation and close

D. Major Sessions in Detail

SESSION ONE: What is Lutheran worship?

Objectives - Having completed this session, participants will be able to:

1. Understand more clearly the primacy of God's action towards them via the Means of Grace.
2. Anticipate receiving more eagerly what He offers.
3. Identify at least three passages of Scripture which demonstrate Divine initiative in worship.
4. Distinguish sacramental components of the liturgy from the sacrificial.

Techniques planned for this session:

1. Group discussion to present and adopt or adapt objectives. (5 minutes)
2. Buzz Groups--3 or 4 persons each--complete the statements:
 - a. Christians ought to dress their best, look their best and offer their best in Sunday worship because....
 - b. I feel that if I'm faithful in carrying out my worship obligation toward God, then....Share results with whole group. (15 minutes)

3. Mini-lecture by Pastor, "Lutheran Worship is...."

- A. Theogenetic
Christocentric
Pneumatic
- B. Incarnational
Tangible
Sacramental
- C. Ecumenical
Relational
Participatory
- D. Shepherding
Caregiving
Healing
Restoring
- E. Dynamic
Releasing
Demonstration

(25 minutes including discussion)

4. Small Group Bible Study--same groups as 2 above.
- a. Can you think of a worship service in which God really ministered to you in a powerful way? OR can you remember one in which you yearned with all your heart for his touch and nothing happened? Would you share it with this

group? How did you feel? How did it affect your feelings about worship after that?

b. Some think that God's Gospel-work in people's lives is an internal and private matter between "a man and his God." What do Gen. 2:18; Mt. 10:27; Ac. 4:20; Rom. 10:9-10; I Pet. 2:9; I Jn. 4:17 say to this?

c. Who does the acting, takes the initiative, in worship? Ezek. 11:18-20; 34:11-16; John 3:5-8; 4:23-24; 6:44; 10:11-18; 14:6.

d. What is God's intention for the Church's corporate worship? Mt. 18:20; 28:18-20; I Cor. 14:24-25; Eph. 3:10; Rev. 5:6-6:1.

e. Share your group's results. (30 min)

Evaluation:

1. In section I of the evaluation sheet, please list two new insights into worship that you gained from this session. (5 minutes)
2. Phillips 66/76--Two groups, one of seven the other six, will be given the Lutheran Hymnal p. 15 and a checklist of the parts of the service. They will identify those portions in which we can expect something from God with a down arrow; those in which we do something toward God with an up arrow and those in which we act toward one

another with a horizontal arrow. The other two groups will do the same with the Lutheran Book of Worship p. 77. (6 minutes)

Resources: Pastor, Bibles, hymnals, study guides.

Equipment: Chairs, tables, markerboard, newsprint, markers, pens, pencils.

SESSION TWO:

Why are God and you and I here together?

Objectives - Having completed this session, participants will be able to:

1. Comprehend more clearly the personal interdependence inherent in corporate worship.
2. Perceive more accurately their own importance to the other worshipers.
3. Receive ministry more willingly from those around them in the worship service.
4. Identify at least three passages of Scripture which promise effectiveness of ministry to the corporate body.
5. Pray spontaneously and effectively with/for another person face-to-face.

Techniques planned for this session:

1. Groups of 6/7 Bible Study-corporate promises.

a. We saw God's intention for the Church in the world at Eph. 3:10-11. How does he expect to accomplish it? Eph. 1:22-23; 4:12-13?

b. According to Rom. 12:1-8, how does Jesus continue his ministry to the members of his Body?

c. Read I Cor. 12:7. To whom are Spiritual gifts given? For what purpose? 14:26 Which gifts must be used in the church? For what purpose? V.40 in what manner? 14:25 with what result?

d. Who is responsible for providing the "ingredients" for the corporate worship gathering? I Cor. 14:26,37; Col. 3:11-17; I Thess. 5:12-22.

(25 minutes)

2. Group discussion of reports, pastor synthesizes and summarizes. (10 minutes)
3. Buzz Groups assignment: Look back at page_ of your study guide. Notice where you placed horizontal arrows. Bend one end of each arrow up. How did Jesus minister through you to someone else at one of these points? What ministry did you receive from Him? How did you feel about that? (10 min)
4. Demonstration of "prayer ministry" by Elders.

Introduction by Pastor. "No matter what Spiritual gifts you may have, if you are a Christian each of us is charged by Jesus to pray for the others and to forgive sins (Jas. 5:16-20). This takes two Christians to do three simple things each. One who will pray a) makes self available, b) listens actively, c) prays. The other a) seeks out a brother/sister, b) says what troubles him/her, c) asks for prayer. Objective: that the Body of Christ may be healthy enough to function. The Elders will demonstrate." (10 minutes)

5. Practice--diads do (or role-play) prayer ministry.

Pastor: "James 5 talks not about the confessional so much as confiding in one another what bothers us--our weakness--and praying for each other. Let's try that, one-on-one, right now." (15 min)

Evaluation:

1. On the evaluation sheet, section II list one new insight you gained from this session.
2. Describe how you felt in your diad.

Resources: Same as Session One.

Equipment: Same as Session One.

SESSION THREE: What have I to offer that you need?

Objectives - Having completed this session, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the use of Spiritual gifts as God's means of touching and caring.
2. Welcome the use of Spiritual gifts in the liturgy to meet human needs.
3. Identify at least one of their Spiritual gifts.
4. Have some idea of how that gift might function in corporate worship.

Techniques planned for this session:

1. Film and group discussion to introduce Spiritual gifts. (45 minutes)
2. Personal Exercise--Spiritual Gifts Inventory⁸⁰ (25 minutes)
3. Buzz Groups--Check out your gift. Is this how the others see you? Are your "personal ministry" gifts transferrable to a corporate worship setting? How do the others' views modify your assessment? (15 minutes)
4. Buzz Groups--Brainstorm: "How can this gift work in corporate worship?" If all the gifts in this little group were seen in worship on Sunday

⁸⁰Roger Leenerts and David Hoover, "Spiritual Gifts, a Discovery Tool," in Enlightened With His Gifts (St. Louis: Lutheran Growth, 1979).

Morning, in what ways would our worship be changed? (15 minutes)

Evaluation:

1. How has this session affected your understanding of Spiritual gifts?
2. How has this session affected your understanding of your role in the worship service?
3. What did you discover are your probable Spiritual gifts?

Resources: Film, copies of Enlightened With His Gifts, one for each participant, evaluation form.

Equipment: 16mm sound projector and screen, pencils, pens.

SESSION FOUR: How shall we do it?

Objectives - Having completed this session the participants will be able to:

1. Understand more adequately their servant roles in liturgy.
2. Develop further their Spiritual gifts for ministry in the liturgy.
3. Seek and receive ministry more openly from the Lord through others in the liturgy.
4. Understand more clearly their worship responses to God's grace as relational as well as internal.

5. Serve others' needs more confidently and boldly in liturgy.
6. Feel their functional as well as personal importance to the Body which will lead them to more regular attendance.
7. Come to corporate worship prepared to make a contribution.

Techniques Planned for this session:

1. Small Group Problem solving. Participants will volunteer to serve in one of the following groups and will have 10 minutes to prepare their assignment for today's worship: Music selection; Read and comment on the three lessons; Prayers of the Church; Preparation of the altar and sacramental elements. Each group will be served by one of the Elders. The remaining Elder will serve as assisting minister. The pastor will preach the sermon(ette).
2. Demonstration/simulation. This is simulation only in the sense that the whole Body is not present. We are trying to experience what it might be like were we all together tomorrow morning with consensus. It is demonstration because we expect our Lord to demonstrate what can occur. From an educator's perspective the terms might be useful. From a pastor's

perspective, this is liturgy and therefore the real thing. We have now come together in the chancel for the Feast. Preconceived plans must be abandoned. (50 minutes?)

Resources: Sacramental elements, songbooks, musicians.

Equipment: That which is normally found in the sanctuary and chancel.

The basic "building-block" technique I have selected for use throughout the workshop is the "buzz group" of three or four participants. Membership in these groups remains the same throughout the day. Small enough to make the work of discovery personally engaging for each member, they are just large enough to provide a sense of "team" or community identity. It is that community identity--the ability to function as part of the corporate whole--that we seek to develop as foundational to effective interpersonal ministry within the liturgy. It is hoped that the experience of this group work will facilitate the involvement of the members as contributors in the worship experience.

V. WORKSHOP EVALUATION

The Task Force asked that provision be made at the end of each workshop session--no more than five minutes--for summative evaluation of that particular phase. They indicated that responses made while session content is still fresh in the mind would be more helpful than a single long evaluation at the close of the day. Final evaluation of facility, timing and other logistic concerns will take place at the close of the day. These evaluations will be processed by the entire group and recommendations for revision of this strategy for future workshops will be given to those who will serve as the core group for the next Task Force. So that the whole congregation may be apprised of what happens to people who participate in a Worship Workshop, a testimonial-style report on this pilot will be prepared for the next issue of the newsletter.

The form used for the final evaluation follows.

1. In what way has this seminar affected your

a. concept of corporate worship?

b. feelings about "going to church"?

c. feelings about actions in worship?

d. feelings about other people in worship?

2. What, in your opinion, was the most meaningful part of the workshop?

3. What was least meaningful for you?

4. Next time we do this, what or whom should we add, change or delete?

5. What suggestions have you for changes we should make in our worship services or concerning alternative styles of worship in addition to our present Sunday Eucharist?

6. Would you be willing to recruit others, serve as a resource person or help with the preparation for the next workshop?_____ How help?

7. Other comments, suggestions, etc.

PART THREE
BEYOND THE PROJECT

I. POSSIBILITIES

At this point in the report the reader might expect to find a number of conclusions. However, this is a report on a process just barely begun. Even now, many questions arise as to the practicability of such an experientially relational eucharist. If it "works" for St. Paul, is it transferrable to other believing communities? Is this something that must await the small group of dedicated ones, of whom Luther speaks, or can it be useful for the normal Sunday worship-gathering? Does this kind of worship require too much training to be useful for the uninitiated, or once begun by a few, will it transfer to the many? Will this emphasis on the corporately enfleshed Word eclipse the centrality of the preached and distributed Word? Can the stranger in our midst, thoroughly ignorant of liturgical worship but in love with Jesus, go with our flow? If the Lord wills, in time, we will have answers to these questions, as well as more questions to be answered. So far, we have no conclusions, but we see limitless possibilities.

Perhaps, at this writing, we have fulfilled the intention of this particular project by designing appropriate strategies and techniques of Adult Education to

help the members of St. Paul to begin to grow in their knowledge, attitudes and skills of corporate worship--a territory that, at first, they were certain they had no need to enter, much less to explore. If so--if this process accomplishes its intent--what might the outcome be? (As the reader may have surmised by now, we are focused on extending the application of Holy Absolution beyond the parson-to-person level to that of person-to-person within the liturgy, suspecting that its power will overflow into family and personal relationships.) What might happen in our corporate worship experiences? I hesitate to conjecture for fear that holding to the conjured image may abort a more beautiful reality. Perhaps just a bit of a broad-brush wash--a brief vignette--may not be out of order.

More than a score of people, other than the pastor, were involved in the planning of this service. Most of them will be involved as processional personnel, musicians, lectors, acolytes, altar guild, ushers, cantor, assisting minister for prayer, assisting ministers for distribution. All have been trained to carry out their assigned roles. Worship begins. It is Divine Service II, First Setting. As the pastor speaks the absolution, many of the people are "in touch" with the person next to or in front of them. Some hold hands. The most unusual thing about this is that they meet each other's eyes. It is not until the Office of the Word that we detect any other differences. After her

reading the lector asks if anyone has comment to offer. Three people, from their seats, clearly and loudly offer pointed and powerful application of the Old Testament Lesson. The same procedure follows the Epistle. Only two speak. The pastor follows the Gospel with the same invitation. Only one responds, but with a question about the meaning of the text. The Gospel is the text for the sermon in which the pastor offers an answer to the questioner. The sermon seems short. A brief question and answer session follow. Then all proceeds "by the book" until the "Peace". Now people are in motion. No one seems to be untouched. Several earnest conversations have begun. Here and there some tears, some anger, quiet whoops of joy. Bringing their offerings forward, the whole group gravitates to the open area in the chancel. They surround the altar and are surrounded by each other. They quiet now, unafraid to bump each other's elbows. The Assisting Minister invites the petitions of the people and the Prayer of the Church seems to be just that. With their hands, some lift their hearts in response to the Sursum. Holy silence envelops the sanctuary as the Verba are spoken. Then some whisper prayers as they touch others whose heads are bowed. A child intones "Jesus Loves me, This I know," and the chorus swells to include all. Those in charge of the distribution make their way, in systematically fluid fashion, through the group. Some fathers take both the bread and the wine first

and then distribute to their families. A chorus of "Behold the Lamb," begins in the far corner and is soon joined by all who have communed. A few remain at the altar for anointing and prayer by the pastor and elders. While the elders see to their needs, the pastor leads the Post-communion. The glance of the pastor cues the choirmaster to begin the choral benediction. The whole assembly becomes the choir. People clasp each other's hands while they sing to one another Aaron's priestly words. No one rushes for the exits, so the ushers gently suggest that room be made so that the next service may begin.

Perhaps not every time they gather for worship, but just frequently enough to leave indelible images on minds and hearts, the Spirit of God skillfully paints a similar pastoral scene on the experience of his called-out people. What happens here begins to penetrate familial and neighborly relationships. The cracked clay pots of II Corinthians lay down their preoccupation with their crackedness and begin to rejoice in the Treasure-gift--divinely potted--that is theirs for the sharing.

II. PERSONAL IMPLICATIONS

What will this mean for me as pastor, worship leader, congregational leader and person? Have I so much invested in this project that my effectiveness may be shattered if the experiments fail? Can I permit the participants the freedom to reject the style that the workshop suggests without ruining our relationship? Can I permit the Holy Spirit to bring the whole process out at a place which I have not imagined? If such relational worship exposes and meets real needs in significant ways, will this church grow --horizontally and vertically--or will it simply become ingrown? These, like the earlier questions, await the answer that will result from the process.

On the basis of the research above, and irrespective of the outcome of the workshops, I have changed and/or reinforced my own perspective on several issues that pertain to the Christian life.

First, disciples learn how to walk in the steps of our Servant-King by watching and listening. Watching and listening are not what we are called to do--especially not during that event which is called "liturgy", "work of the people." Here we are called to put to use, in the interest of the brother, that which we have learned.

Second, those who look to the church for high-touch human interaction in a high-tech and dehumanizing world are not asking the impossible or the novel. They seek that which Jesus empowers the Church--in her corporate worship--to provide.

Third, the same high-touch Gospel sharing is called for in the face-to-face and person-to-person environments of family, business and pastoral ministry as well.

Fourth, no human needs are presented to the Church which she is not gifted to meet.

Fifth, as worship leader, I must be sensitive to the Spirit's agenda, especially when different from my own, so that the liturgy might include those gifts he chooses to manifest.

Together with the Worship sub-committee of the Southern District, I have developed a modification of this congregational Pilot Workshop to be used for regional gatherings of congregations within the district. Because of its multi-congregational constituency, this workshop exchanges a multitude of interest groups for the component on spiritual gifts. These groups are developed prior to the workshop, on the basis of consultation with pastors and leaders of congregations in the region to be served. Materials and helps are provided so that participating pastors and congregational worship committees can easily custom-design their own congregational workshops to enhance

relational worship. The pilot for this program included forty participants and, according to the evaluations, was warmly received. Participants claimed to have found it valuable in that it helped them discover sound theological reasons and practical ways to begin to move corporate worship from spectatorship to participation in their own parishes.

**REMEMBER O LORD, YOUR CHURCH
SAVE IT FROM EVERY EVIL
AND PERFECT IN YOUR LOVE
GATHER IT TOGETHER FROM THE FOUR WINDS
AND LEAD IT SANCTIFIED INTO YOUR KINGDOM
YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR IT.**

(Didache 10:5-7)

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APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire distributed to all members of St. Paul.

CONGREGATIONAL NEEDS SURVEY

Because your personal feelings about St. Paul's mission and ministry are very important, this is the first of many questionnaires that will ask your opinion about certain facets of our church life. Please take time to answer the questions before you leave today. Don't think too hard about anyone question. Your first answer will probably be best. It is not necessary to sign the form. When you are finished, give it to Pastor or an usher or place it in the offering plate. Thank you.

On a scale from 1 to 5, please evaluate the following areas of St. Paul's life (put the number in the square...[2]).

1 - excellent, 2 - better than average, 3 -average
4 - will need improvement, 5 - fix it now!

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1. | Weekday Bible Class - Daytime at church | [] |
| 2. | Weekday Bible Study - Evening at church | [] |
| 3. | Home Bible Studies | [] |
| 4. | Evangelism | [] |
| 5. | Participation in community concerns | [] |
| 6. | Support for missions | [] |
| 7. | My level of participation | [] |
| 8. | Sunday School - Children's dept. | [] |
| 9. | Sunday School - Youth dept. | [] |
| 10. | Sunday School - Adult Classes | [] |
| 11. | Choir | [] |
| 12. | Music quality in worship | [] |
| 13. | Type of music in worship | [] |
| 14. | Men's Group | [] |
| 15. | Young Women's Group | [] |
| 16. | Youth Group | [] |
| 17. | Mission Guild | [] |
| 18. | Braille Workshop | [] |
| 19. | Participation of other members | [] |
| 20. | Men's Softball | [] |
| 21. | Ladies' Softball | [] |
| 22. | Volleyball | [] |
| 23. | Bowling | [] |
| 24. | Day Care | [] |
| 25. | Nursery during worship | [] |
| 26. | Nursery during other functions | [] |
| 27. | Visitation by Pastor | [] |
| 28. | Visitation by members | [] |

- 29. Worship Services []
- 30. Telephone Chain []
- 31. Church Newsletter []
- 32. Other: _____ []

SPIRITUAL LIFE

1. Which of St. Paul's programs have contributed most to your spiritual growth? _____

2. What do you suggest that might improve our worship services? _____

3. The one thing I need most from St. Paul is: _____

CIRCLE YOUR AGE GROUP:

- | | | | |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|
| Under 13 | 14-18 | 19-25 | 26-35 |
| 36-45 | 46-59 | 60-75 | more |

APPENDIX 2

Personal interview questions asked of a random sample of adult members of St. Paul Lutheran Church.

1. How long have you been a Lutheran?
2. How long a member of St. Paul?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10--1 being very satisfied and 10 very dissatisfied--how satisfied do you think the people at St. Paul feel about our Sunday worship experiences?
4. Asked by an unbelieving friend to explain what corporate worship is, how would you respond?
5. How do you think most people at St. Paul would complete this statement, "I feel it is a good worship service when....?"
6. Which is more true and why:
 - a) Sunday worship is my Christian obligation and duty.
 - b) Sunday worship is my joy and privilege.
7. What do most people think is the most important practical thing they have to offer in worship?
8. The last time you worshiped at St. Paul, did you expect anything specific to happen to you? If so, did it? Would you share it with me?
9. How do you feel when we "Pass the Peace?"
10. When it comes to meeting your own spiritual needs, which is more effective, your private prayer life or Sunday worship?
11. Do you (a)often (b)seldom or (c)never assess the effectiveness of Sunday worship for yourself? If (a) or (b), how do you measure?
12. Would you be interested in knowing more about how we can worship together more effectively?

APPENDIX 3

Comments on the use of the absolution by the laity.

Some have expressed concern about the use of absolution by the laity as it is envisioned in this project. Since a proper understanding of this issue constitutes the very heart of this Major Applied Project, I am eager to offer further clarification.

On page 142 above, there appears the following "aside." (As the reader may have surmised by now, we are focused in on **extending the application** of the Holy Absolution **beyond** the parson-to-person level to that of person-to-person **within** the liturgy, suspecting that its power will overflow into family and personal relationships.) This best summarizes what I have written and teach concerning the matter. I have added the emphasis for the sake of this discussion.

..."the words, 'given and shed for you,' require all hearts to believe." What of those present in any given worship-gathering who cannot meet that requirement due to ignorance, guilt, unresolved anger, life circumstances perceived to be the judgement of God, or a host of other reasons? How are these impediments to be removed? Why must their removal await a later time--an appointment with the pastor--when they are now surrounded by those who have experienced their condition and are charged with removing the "stones of stumbling" from their brothers' path?

The interpersonal ministry of absolution began to become significant for me more years ago than I care to remember. A professor said--probably as an off-hand comment when his lecture finished and there was time to spare--"Men, there is only one reason in the world for a Christian to marry a Christian: so that at arm's length you have someone who can say to you with all the authority of God, 'Honey, for Christ's sake, I forgive you.'" (Since the man is still teaching in our synodical system, I assume he has been found to be orthodox.) At first I received his comment with the same ho-humness with which students greet almost all professorial pronouncements. But later, after my wife and I had been married long enough to experience the hurt and pain that accompanies real love, those words began to assume shape and form in our lives until, now, they best describe the central purpose of our marriage.

It is one thing to hear the absolution spoken to me by someone who, at best, knows me casually. It is quite another to hear from my wife--who knows what I have **really** done--"Wes, for Jesus' sake I forgive you." I can hide from the reality of the former while the latter penetrates me thoroughly. I believe I am not amiss in labeling this

process, "absolution." Nor do I believe that I am amiss in seeing this absolution as being required of the Christian disciple by our Lord in Matt. 6:12,14-15; 16:19; 18:32-35; Mk. 11:25; Lk.17:3; Jn. 20:22-23; Eph. 4:30-32; 5:1-2,21-27; Col.2:12-14, et al.

No doubt it is also upon these passages that pastors and teachers--other than only those who trained me--have based instruction, similar to the following, as they teach the Office of the Keys. "When I speak the absolution aloud to the congregation, not only must you believe it for yourself, but you must also apply these words to all those against whom you have anything." Many laymen whom I have asked, vaguely remember having heard something similar during catechetical instruction and almost invariably ask, "But how do I do that?"

The question then arises, "How shall those, who have not been to seminary to learn how to speak absolution, learn to absolve their brothers/sisters/families?" Certainly they will not receive such training by instinct, psychology, culture, or public education. The "you ought to," admonitions of long-past and ill-remembered confirmation instruction do not seem to be adequate for adults. Here Luther is most helpful, as he sees a primary purpose of the Mass to be one of instructing people in how to "become Christian." Nothing is more important to the new creation that is the Christian Community than is the ministry of forgiving sins--absolving sinners (Jn.20:22-23) by means of Word and sacrament empowered by the Spirit and delivered by flesh-and-blood men and women. It is within the worship-gathering that such training needs to be given. Words of instruction without opportunity for practice may satisfy the preacher, but they do not constitute learning for adults.

I do not advocate the addition of any new thing to the Mass. Rather, I am encouraging a proper exposition and modeling of the "Passing of the Peace," by the one "rightly called" to preach, administer and absolve. The Church knows no other source of the Peace that she passes except the blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, that cleanses us from all sin. To share that Peace is to speak/do absolution. For his part, the pastor/presiding minister provides the foundation and source for that which is to be shared as he pronounces the general absolution, reads the Gospel and rightly divides law and Gospel in the preaching. He further **models** the ministry of absolution as in the Peace he intentionally seeks out members of his family, congregational "alligators," as well as his friends and supporters with whom to share it, inviting the congregation to follow suit and overseeing the process. Thus he deploys the life-giving power of Holy Absolution by interjecting it into the private contexts of the personal relationships of the gathered believers. That which he announces generally--gainsayable, deniable and avoidable in one's own heart and

mind--is applied specifically and personally by each to the other in order that it may be inescapable. Word, sacrament and the mutual consolation and conversation of the brethren together serve the end: that no one leave this place with his doubt or despair intact.

Contemporary controversy in the LC-MS over the place of "Lay ministers," may lead some to ask whether or not the laity has license to participate in the manner in which I have described. The passages cited above seem clearly to pertain to the church as a functional organism in any given place. Some insist that these passages pertain only to the duly-called pastor. The CTCR in its 1975 document on church discipline insists (rightly, I believe) that the "keys" belong to the whole church. The document then proceeds to give individual Christians the primary burden of responsibility for Christian admonition. The 1981 document "The Ministry" says, (P.42 #12) "Ministry in the church is ultimately the ministry of Christ. All members of the body of Christ are involved in it [How?]. The members of the priesthood of believers are not merely recipients of ministerial service. The ministry belongs to Christ and to the church." Thus I perceive that the exercise of the ministry of absolution--which belongs to the Office of the Ministry--belongs to the pastor and people together, especially in those moments when Jesus has gathered them so that he might do that ministry to and through each and all.

The author.