

DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP

SECTION I: WORSHIP

Worship is the action of acknowledging God's worth. Penitence, forgiveness, joy, a growth in Christian knowledge—all may and should happen while at worship, but all are results of the central meaning and action of worship: the acknowledgment of God's worth.

The words of the Bible in both Hebrew and Greek which are translated “worship” are all verbs describing the action (by bowing, prostrating oneself, or kissing the hand) of acknowledging another of greater worth. From votum to benediction, our worship is a dialogue both between minister and congregation and between God and people. It is the sung, verbal, and acted expressions of adoration, confession, forgiveness; the reception of grace in Word and Sacrament; and response in acknowledging God's worth.

God has initiated a self-revelation of his worth to Israel and in Christ, recorded for us in Holy Scripture, which reveals the God of justice and grace, a God who would have us live in covenant relationship with him.

When worship is the acknowledgment of God's worth, then penitence, forgiveness, joy, and growth in Christian knowledge—all these things will be added unto us. Even as the liturgy is a paradigm of the Christian life, so worship images the meaning of that life. Worship is losing oneself during the encounter with God's greatness. In finding this truth, everything else in worship and in life shall be added unto it: “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it” Luke 9:24.

The Source of Worship

The Triune God reveals himself in the history of Israel and in Jesus Christ, and this revelation is authoritatively set forth in the pages of Holy Scripture as the Holy Spirit opens our hearts in the experience of God's worth.

The history of Israel's worship, together with its fulfillment in Christ and the experience of the early church, provides us with the structure of worship.

We proclaim what the Bible tells us about God's worth: that he creates all things good; that when we sinned, God sent his only Son that we might have

life; and that through the Holy Spirit, God confirms us in that life. This is true worth.

Reality

Worship is not only the expression of piety but deals with the whole of life. Worship deals with reality; it encompasses the entire week. At the heart of the reality of worship is the worth of God, and we acknowledge that worth in action: in congregational amens, hymns, dialogue in Scripture (whether in sentences or psalm), prayers of confession, reception of the Word in forgiveness and hope, confession of faith, the peace, participation in the sacraments, the giving of our gifts in thanksgiving, prayers, and silence. Where the structure of the service enables this action to take place smoothly and naturally, it is a guide to the reality of faith. Worship enables believers to articulate faith and to act it out in word, song, and gesture. In the reality of worship these actions lead toward the living of Christianity all through the week. The ritual, or action, of worship is important because it is the pattern for life.

Because worship deals with reality, it has structure, for we are called by God to praise him, acknowledge our sin, experience grace, and go forth to live in gratitude. As God encounters us in many ways, so there may be variety in the response of worship, but because it serves as a corporate model for Christian life, it also has structure and sequence.

Corporate worship reflects God's worth in the reality of our calling to be members of the body of Christ. Because we are all members of the one body, we come together on the Lord's Day to worship as one.

SECTION II: STRUCTURE

Approach, Word in Proclamation and Sacrament, Response

Worship in the Old Testament was centered in the temple with its ritual of sacrificial atonement, and later in the synagogue and its service of the Word. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ becomes the once-for-all sacrifice for the church so that in worship the liturgy of the Lord's Supper becomes the fulfillment of the sacrifice of the temple. The service of the Word is in continuity with the synagogue service; the service of the Lord's Supper celebrates the distinctive fulfillment of the Old Covenant in the New Covenant of Christ's body and blood, thus embracing the fullness of God's revelation.

The service of grace, WORD IN PROCLAMATION AND SACRAMENT, exists within the structure of APPROACH and RESPONSE. This pattern is present throughout the Bible; the whole story of the Exodus, the illustration of Isaiah 6, the numerous miracles in the Gospel narratives—all have in common an approach wherein God and people confront each other. God is made known in word and act, and the people respond to God's presence. This same structure of biblical experience is reflected in the *Heidelberg Catechism* as a living reflection of biblical truth. The catechism is divided into sections on guilt, grace, and gratitude, as is the structure of worship: APPROACH, WORD IN PROCLAMATION AND SACRAMENT, and RESPONSE. The *Heidelberg* opens with a hymn of confidence before going on to the confession of guilt; so too in the APPROACH one sings adoration to God before confession and forgiveness. After bringing us to a recognition of our need for a Savior, the *Heidelberg Catechism* sets forth the means of God's grace through Word and Sacrament. Both proclamation and sacramental action are the means of God's grace; both indicate his initiative in coming to save us in the Word, Jesus Christ.

Gratitude is the response called for by the catechism. The model of law and the Lord's Prayer are a means of guiding us in lives of thankfulness in response to God's grace. Similarly, in the liturgy WORD IN PROCLAMATION AND SACRAMENT is answered by the thanksgiving of obedience and prayer.

As it is a model for life, it is fitting that the liturgy end with the RESPONSE, which can be articulated in the lives of the worshipers throughout the week: lives that are forgiving even as they have been forgiven; lives in which the worth of God shines forth in God-like ways as love and compassion are given without a demand for reciprocity; lives which seek good for others and show thankfulness in their daily dispositions.

WORD IN PROCLAMATION AND SACRAMENT characterizes the heart of the liturgy and furnishes content and structure. Within the context of PROCLAMATION AND SACRAMENT, we have freedom in the structure of worship even as we are allowed freedom within the structure of our lives. We may have freedom in worship as long as the biblical lessons control the structure for our worship. Our freedom is governed by the proclaimed Word. The lections determine the liturgy.

The elements are discussed in Section III in a sequence which has been normative, though an understanding of the structure and sequence of worship allows for a great deal of flexibility.

Worship is the action of acknowledging God's worth. Its essential structure is the APPROACH; God's grace given through the WORD IN PROCLAMA-

TION AND SACRAMENT, and our RESPONSE. Worship involves minister and congregation in a coherent dialogical sequence of action.

Adhering to the above, there are opportunities for many variables in worship: a service of WORD IN PROCLAMATION AND SACRAMENT within a restricted length of time could begin with a votum and the preparatory service; followed by the Scripture lessons and sermon; followed by the creed, the peace, offertory, and Lord's Supper; followed by a response of the communion thanksgiving, and benediction. Hymns could be sung while the elements were being served rather than where otherwise placed, thereby allowing for a brief but complete service.

Another example of freedom concerns the Sacrament of Baptism. While the normative location for the Sacrament of Baptism is in the section on WORD IN PROCLAMATION AND SACRAMENT, it is also appropriate to celebrate baptism within the APPROACH TO GOD by virtue of its content as confession, cleansing, and incorporation into the body of Christ.

SECTION III: THE ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

THE APPROACH TO GOD

VOTUM

The Votum begins worship by announcing who God is and who we are: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 124:8). Votum is a Latin word, meaning desire, which in the Middle Ages was applied to a layperson whose desire (*votum*) was to serve Christ with an intensity equal to that of those who had entered the monastery. Later it was used of the monastic vow. Thus the use of this term, votum, as the opening statement of reformed worship is to express the desire that our whole life, represented in this worship, is ever lived in the acknowledgment of God's help, and only his help, in heaven and on earth. The people will affirm this, their desire, with a vocal "Amen."

SENTENCES

The Sentences present an opportunity for the liturgist to set the tone or direction for worship. While the Sentences may be drawn from many places in Scripture, the Psalms run the full gamut of religious feeling, written with a beauty befitting the content of their religious expression.

The Sentences offer an opportunity to involve the congregation in worship in a very active way. The biblical truth about worship as the action of the people of God can be immediately demonstrated by having the people read the word of

Scripture responsively. This is not a new idea, but is as old as the Psalms themselves, many of which were sung antiphonally as the people approached the temple.

The lessons of the lectionary offer a rich treasury of appropriate sentences.

SALUTATION

The Salutation is the greeting by which Christ reminds us that he is in our midst, bringing grace, mercy, and peace. Ordinarily the Salutation will come from the Epistles. If an Old Testament greeting is used, a Christological or Trinitarian declaration should be added.

Since the Salutation conveys to the worshiper God's great gift of grace, mercy, and peace, bought for us by the precious blood of Christ, colloquial substitutes like "hello" or "good morning" are both inadequate and inappropriate.

Because greeting the congregation on behalf of Christ is a great privilege, the minister should deliver this greeting so that love and joy may be felt by all present.

HYMN

The greeting by Christ is immediately followed by the congregation's outburst of praise in a hymn. This hymn is an expression of joy that God is in our midst; we acknowledge God's worth as the almighty, merciful, loving, and sustaining Lord. Throughout the history of the church, hymnody has been perceived as prayer, and in the words of Augustine, "Those who sing, pray twice."

CONFESSION, ASSURANCE OF PARDON, AND LAW

The worshiper who rejoices in God's presence is confronted and judged by that presence. Worship is the acknowledgment of God's superior worth: God is righteous, we are unrighteous; God is sinless, we are sinners.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

In the Prayer of Confession we acknowledge that we are sinners. The corporate nature of the prayer reflects the truth that sin is not only individual, but shared by humanity. Sin is both individual and corporate. To deny either allows for self-righteousness. The prayer, prayed corporately, helps the congregation to recognize that in buying and selling, in peace and in war, we are inextricably a part of the inequality and exploitation of this world, and that we must face the truth about ourselves and our need continually to ask forgiveness. The corporate prayer may well allow for a period of silence in which we confess our involvement in corporate sin, as well as individual sins.

KYRIE ELEISON (LORD, HAVE MERCY)

The Kyrie is such a permanent fixture among Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant communions that it retains its New Testament Greek name. While its usage has varied, its Greek title is a reminder that all of Christendom includes this prayer as an integral part of its worship.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The truth stated liturgically in the Assurance of Pardon is the same as that of John 3:16—“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” It is Christ who forgives, by his incarnation, atoning death, and victory in the resurrection. Since the minister is God’s mouth, words of forgiveness have the full weight of biblical authority.

For this awesome task it befits the humility of the minister to use the words of Scripture for the absolution. The person seeking forgiveness needs to hear the full authority of Christ’s Word. Therefore, the minister is to pronounce authoritatively Christ’s truth with joy and certainty.

Appropriate scriptural declarations of forgiveness may be used in all of their biblical variety.

THE LAW OF GOD

The use of the Law in this sequence of confession, forgiveness, and law is a contribution of the reformed churches to Christendom. This is known as Calvin’s third use of the law: as a guide to Christian living. It is part of the *Heidelberg Catechism*’s structure of guilt, grace, and gratitude. Law is explained not in the section on guilt, but in the section on gratitude. From the perspective of judgment, the law has been fulfilled in Christ. In union with him Christians live in gratitude, in covenant relationship, and in obedience to God’s law.

While the Ten Commandments are read frequently at this point, the worship leader is free to use the law as it is found throughout Scripture.

PRAISE: PSALTER AND GLORIA PATRI, HYMN, OR ANTHEM

Having encapsulated the Christian life in the liturgical sequence of confession, forgiveness, and law, the natural response of the Christian is praise. We praise God by Psalter, hymn, or anthem.

The Psalter, the oldest book of songs for the people of God, is most appropriate as a means of praise. In many churches the Psalter lesson for the day is read responsively at this point. As a response of joy, the Psalm

should be read with alacrity, that the flow of praise may not be slowed or broken. The Psalm should be followed with its Christian attachment, a doxology—frequently the Gloria Patri. Because the church has attached the Gloria Patri to the Psalm to articulate its Christian perception of the Psalms, the congregation should stand for both Psalm and Gloria Patri.

There is also the opportunity to sing the Psalm, for many of the Psalms are to be found in our hymnals and may appropriately be sung at this point.

If there is a hymn that is appropriate to conclude the sequence of confession, forgiveness, and law, it may be used instead of a Psalm and the Gloria Patri. Praise has been so much a part of the worship of the church that the resources are many. The choir, as representatives of the congregation, may lead in an appropriate anthem which could take the place of Psalter (said or sung) or hymn.

THE WORD OF GOD IN PROCLAMATION AND SACRAMENT

The Word in Proclamation enables the congregation to grow in their worship of God, who is revealed in the Word. Accordingly, the Word of God is read and then made understandable and applicable to our age. God speaks to the congregation through the mouth of the minister, and through the Spirit opens the ears of his people.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

The proclamation of the Word begins with a petition entreating God to kindle the light of faith which enables the Word to come alive in us.

LESSONS

Lectionary

The full counsel of God shines through clearly when a lectionary is used to determine the Scriptures to be read and preached.

Lectionaries were developed with a concern for the entire Bible, for the liturgical year, and for the persons and work of the Trinity. The best minds of the church sought to exercise the teaching office by offering a guide to parish ministers, that the Holy Scripture in its fullness might be read to the congregation.

The lectionary has several advantages: 1) it covers a great breadth of Scripture—the whole counsel of God, helping guard the minister from tarrying too long in a favorite book or subject, 2) while providing a

sequence from week to week (usually from the Gospel); 3) it also relates the Gospel to its Old Testament antecedents (including an appropriate Psalter passage) and frequently to a lesson from the Epistles; 4) it follows the Christian year with its focus upon Christ; 5) it speaks to the persons and work of the Trinity; and 6) it protects the congregation from the possibility of a narrow preoccupation with the New Testament to the exclusion of the Old.

Lectio Continua

Meaning a “continuous reading,” the term has been used ever since the Reformation to describe preaching through a book of the Bible from beginning to end.

The advantage of this method is that it enables the preacher to treat the book as the whole that it was meant to be. It further enables the preacher to focus study on a book of the Bible with more thoroughness than might otherwise be possible, and enables the congregation to learn the message of an entire book of Scripture.

Ministers responsible for a morning and evening sermon each Sunday will almost certainly wish to prepare one of their sermons on the basis of lectio continua.

Heidelberg Catechism

The *Book of Church Order* of the Reformed Church in America requires that all the points of doctrine of the *Heidelberg Catechism* be preached every four years. Although the ecumenical lectionaries cover the points of doctrine, those who wish to follow the sequence of the catechism may refer to *Liturgy and Psalms* (1968), which has a lectionary for such catechetical preaching. Its advantage is that it offers the congregation a structure of theology and a familiarity with one of the finest of our confessions of faith.

SERMON

Preaching is the proclamation of the message of Scripture. Whether or not the preacher focuses upon the message of the sequential lesson or whether the preaching includes all of the lections will depend in part upon the content of the passages and the needs of the congregation, and the style and intent of the proclaimer. Preaching is an opportunity to speak God’s worth to the church. As such, it is both a part of worship and the occasion for worship. Within the context of worship, the primary emphasis of preaching must be upon God’s worth.

Preaching within worship is the setting forth of God’s worth, so that we, in

gratitude, may seek to be like God. The relevance of such proclamation lies in communicating how God's worth is to be reflected in our lives. A minister who preaches that the congregation may worship God in Word and life must show how a God-like life is lived in our day.

PRAYER FOR BLESSING

A prayer shall be offered as a thanksgiving for the truth revealed in the Word and as a supplication that this truth may be further revealed in our lives.

Note: When worship includes only the grace of the WORD IN PROCLAMATION, then the creed, offering, doxology, prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, hymn, and benediction may be understood as the congregation's RESPONSE to God's Word.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Having approached God in praise and confession, and having heard the word of grace, the congregation now responds in the affirmation of their belief through the creed.

The Apostles' or Nicene Creed will perhaps be most frequently confessed as a summary of our Christian faith. However, the extensive treasures of confessional statements which enrich our Reformed Church should not be overlooked. The Scriptures and doctrinal standards (the ecumenical creeds, the *Belgic Confession*, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, and the *Canons of Dort*), together with *Our Song of Hope*, which includes provisions for singing, may all be used for purposes of confession of faith.

The confession of faith is always to be made by the congregation and never by the minister alone, because it is the response of the congregation to the proclamation of God's Word of grace.

PEACE

As a token of our reconciliation with one another, the congregation exchanges the Peace. Even as Jesus commanded, we are not to celebrate our reconciliation with God unless in our lives we have been reconciled with one another and witness that we are members of one body.

The Peace may be shared through words, a smile, a handshake, a kiss, an embrace, or any other gesture that is appropriate within the social context of the congregation.

When the Sacrament is celebrated, this is the historic position for the Peace. When the Sacrament is not celebrated, theological warrant could be made for

the Peace after the Confession of Sin, or at the end of the service of the WORD IN PROCLAMATION.

OFFERING

In the early church, the offering marked the bringing of the food for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. After the Supper had been celebrated in the church, the remaining food was taken by the deacons to be distributed among the poor of the congregation.

When in some churches it became customary not to celebrate the Lord's Supper each Sunday, an offering of money was received at this time, some of which was used to assist the poor.

Today, after the offering of money has been received from the congregation, these gifts, together with the bread and wine for the Eucharist, are to be brought to the front of the church. The elements are placed on the Lord's Table for celebration, and the monetary offerings are put in another appropriate place.

DOXOLOGY

When the bread and wine of the sacrament are carried forward, together with the offerings of the people, the congregation rises to praise God in the familiar words of the Doxology. To its familiar meaning of extolling God for temporal blessings, from which we return a portion to him, is added in the eucharistic context the praise of thanksgiving for the gift of Jesus Christ which we are about to celebrate in the Lord's Supper.

The Word in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

MEANING OF THE SACRAMENT

When the Eucharist is celebrated frequently, it may be desirable to use a brief and felicitous description of the meaning of the sacrament which emphasizes remembrance, communion, and hope. The remembrance is of our Lord's passion on the cross and the resulting forgiveness of our sin; our communion is with our resurrected Lord Jesus Christ and the other members of that living body; and our hope is that as surely as we eat this bread and drink this wine, we will be raised from the dead unto everlasting life, since Christ in his ascension promises that he will come again to make all things new.

INVITATION

An invitation to participate in the sacrament is extended to communicants by the minister in the name of Christ, who is the host at his table. It shall be extended also to those communicants who are not members of the particular congregation.

COMMUNION PRAYER

A prayer shall be offered which includes thanksgiving to God for his creative work, providence, and revelation, especially in Christ. This prayer is usually punctuated by the acclamation of the people to Christ in the words of the Sanctus (Revelation 4:8b), and by their hosannas (John 12:13). This exclamation, which brings the historical past of the incarnate life of Christ together with the eschatological future, is entirely appropriate to the celebration of the Supper, which does the same. The short period of silence which follows reflects the description of worship in the book of Revelation, where after the adoration of God all of heaven keeps silence.

The Communion Prayer continues with thanksgiving to God for his work of redemption by the recalling of the birth, life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit; the offering of ourselves in Christ as holy and living sacrifices; a petition for the working of the Holy Spirit among us so that the breaking of bread and the sharing of the cup will be to us the communion of the body and blood of Christ; a petition for the unity of Christ's body, the church, which is affirmed in the celebration of the Supper; and in conclusion a thanksgiving for our hope in Christ, with the frequent addition of the ancient prayer of Scripture: Maranatha, "Come, Lord Jesus."

COMMUNION

In Communion the words of institution remain always the same, those Jesus spoke to his disciples in the Upper Room. Whether the blessing over the bread is separated from the blessing of the cup will depend largely on how the sacrament is distributed in a given congregation. For example, during the first meal in the Upper Room, the blessing of the bread began the meal, while the blessing of the cup probably came at the very end, when the cup of wine was shared.

When the congregation remains in the pew, the bread will be distributed immediately after the words of institution for the bread have been spoken. In an attempt to give some sense of unity, many congregations retain the bread and all eat at once when the minister recites the words for distribution (1 Corinthians 10: 16). Then in a separate gesture the words of institution for the cup are read, and again people retain their glasses until all have been served and the minister recites, "The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ."

In congregations where the communicants come forward to sit or stand around a table, the words of institution for both bread and wine will be said consecutively, and the bread and wine will follow one another around the communion table. In such instances, if the congregation serves one another, they will

frequently follow the minister's example by saying, "The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ," with the corresponding phrase for the wine.

THE RESPONSE TO GOD

THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION

Having heard and tasted God's grace in the proclaimed Word and visible Word of bread and wine, the congregation responds with a biblical Psalm of Thanksgiving. It should always be an occasion of celebration and ought to be entered into with joy by minister and congregation.

INTERCESSION

Intercessory prayers express our gratitude for God's gifts and our participation in the communion of the saints as we offer our concern for the world in the name of Christ. The intercessions may be concluded with the Lord's Prayer. The prayers of intercession are also a place where churches which practice healing may appropriately engage in that service within the liturgy. In this connection the laying on of hands and anointing with oil may also be practiced.

HYMN

Time permitting, if hymns have not been sung during the distribution of the elements of the Lord's Supper, it is appropriate to close the service with a final hymn of praise, rejoicing either in our Lord's resurrection or in his coming again. The *Nunc Dimittis*, or "Song of Simeon," may also be sung (Luke 2:29-32).

BENEDICTION

The service is closed with the Benediction. In the Benediction, as in the Salutation, the minister has the privilege of speaking for Christ, and bestowing Christ's blessing in the name of the Triune God upon the congregation as it goes forth to live out in full the paradigm of Christian life which it has enacted within its liturgy of worship. Insofar as the minister speaks on behalf of Christ and gives Christ's blessing to the congregation, it is appropriate that canonical words of benediction be used.

The Word in the Sacrament of Baptism

The Sacrament of Baptism will generally be placed either before or after the sermon as a means of grace, a visible Word of God. The preferred position in the 1968 *Liturgy and Psalms* was after the offering and doxology as a response to the Word. This sacrament may be placed at the beginning of the service, insofar as baptism represents cleansing from sin, ingrafting into Christ, and therefore entry into the church.

Because the acknowledgement of corporate sin, as well as of God's forgiveness in Christ, is included in all of the forms for baptism, the sacrament can be used instead of the usual Prayer of Confession, Kyrie, Words of Assurance, and Law.

The *Book of Church Order* of the Reformed Church in America requires that all services of baptism be performed as a part of congregational worship. At least one parent shall be a communicant member of the congregation in which the baptism is taking place, and while "godparents" may be present, it is required that the parents or legal guardians of the child take the vows.

Baptism shall be administered using water by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion in the presence of the entire congregation.

MEANING OF THE SACRAMENT

Baptism is the visible Word of God that we are cleansed in Christ's blood, buried with him into death that we might rise with him and walk in newness of life. In baptism we participate in the covenant of salvation, are ingrafted into the body of Christ, and are sealed by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

INSTITUTION

The dominical words of Matthew 28:18-20 should be used.

VOWS

The Christian names of the persons to be baptized shall be used, and in the case of infant baptism, parents or legal guardians shall respond to the questions.

The members of the congregation are also asked to make vows accepting responsibility for the nurture and upbringing of the baptized, and together will confess their faith in the words of the Nicene or Apostles' Creed.

PRAYER

A prayer will be offered to God in thanksgiving for the grace shown through Jesus Christ and signed and sealed by this baptism.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

Christian names (to the exclusion of family names) are used as the person/s are baptized in the Triune name.

The requirement of the state for the naming of the child at birth, coupled with the frequent delay of several weeks for the baptism of the child, have obscured the ancient Christian custom of giving the child its name at baptism. The family name is part of the child's inheritance by birth, but the "Christian

name” is given at baptism, marking him or her as a Christian. The church should not further confuse the issue by using family names at the baptismal service.

If baptism is to be performed by sprinkling, the nature of the sacrament as sign, or “visible Word,” should be respected, and a generous amount of water should be used in the trine gesture.

SECTION IV: A LITURGICAL MISCELLANY

Position of the Minister

Calvin began his service from behind the Lord’s Table, signifying that we could approach God only through his Son, Jesus Christ. Only during the service of the Word when the Scriptures were to be read and proclaimed would Calvin ascend the pulpit. After the proclamation he returned to the Table for the service of Response.

In more recent times it has also been suggested that there is a certain appropriateness in beginning the Approach to God at the baptismal font, signifying that only as we are baptized into Christ and have been washed in his blood are we able to receive the absolution he promises. For the Service of Grace, the proclamation of the Word could then be done from the pulpit, while the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper would be conducted from the Table. Following that same logical sequence, the minister could perhaps best lead the Response from the very midst of the congregation.

Choir

As skilled persons of articulate voice and accurate note, the choir is invaluable in leadership in public worship. The choir should always be prepared to assist the congregation in the singing of its hymns and responses, and should be prepared to set the tone desired by minister and chorale director. Similarly, the choir can be invaluable in assisting the congregation in clear, articulate spoken responses throughout the service.

When the choir leads in worship through an anthem, that anthem should be a part of the ongoing flow and sequence of the service and not an inserted bit of special music.

The use of the lectionary can be of great assistance to minister, organist, and choir director alike in enabling everyone to know well in advance which Scriptures will be used so that appropriate music can be selected to enhance the service.

The choir and organ should be placed in such a way as to offer maximum support for congregational hymnody, while at the same time minimizing any visual distraction from the means of grace as celebrated at pulpit, font, and Table.

Lections and Variety throughout the Service

The use of the lectionary offers a controlling principle for including a disciplined variety within many of the variable elements of the worship service. For example, the passage from the Psalm assigned in the lectionary can be searched for passages appropriate to Sentences. The Salutation can well come from the Epistle. The hymn of praise may be sought out in terms of the index of scriptural allusions in our hymnals.

It is also possible that the lections for the day may contain suggestive material which can be paraphrased for a prayer of confession, or that there may be words appropriate to the words of assurance (forgiveness). Similarly, the lections may contain material appropriate for the law. The possible use of the Psalm or the Psalter or a sung version of the Psalm is also obvious. During the exegesis of the lections and the preparation of the sermon, consideration should also be given to which confession of faith would be most appropriate—including stanzas from *Our Song of Hope*. Finally, the benediction could also be used from the Epistle from which the lesson is taken.

Virtues of Repetition

Because much of worship is repetitive, we tend to hear most frequently from those who wish more variety in worship. We tend to overlook the fact that many people cherish the virtues of repetition and may greet unwarranted variety with considerable hostility.

For example, while a wide variety of Scripture can be used for a guide to gratitude at the place where the law is read, the wise pastor will frequently include the Ten Commandments and the summary of the Law. Similarly, while one will not wish to ignore the treasures of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, or the pertinent contemporaneity of *Our Song of Hope*, the wise pastor will frequently include the Apostles' Creed for the congregation's confession of faith.

In the same way, while specially written prayers of confession may in many instances be very appropriate, variety should be introduced only when it contributes to an articulation of an element of worship within a coherent structure and flow, and is understood by the congregation. It must never be forgotten that the structured repetition of the liturgy is an important factor in the nurture of God's people.

Theology of Announcements

Those responsible for the leadership of worship should do all they can to assist the congregation in a knowledgeable awareness of the movement of worship from the Votum to the Benediction. To accept this responsibility raises anew the necessity for a liturgical theology of announcements.

There are two categories of congregational information which can be placed within the context of the flow of worship. One consists of those occurrences within the life of the church where the members are called upon to offer themselves in service. Such announcements could well be made as a part of the offertory. Theologically and liturgically, this would have the advantage of verifying the nature of the event.

A second category consists of announcements of births, weddings, healings, and other occasions for thanksgiving, as well as announcements which seek the prayers and sympathy of the congregation for those who have suffered loss through illness, death, or other distress. Most appropriately, these announcements should be made immediately prior to the prayers of thanksgiving and intercession in which these persons are to be remembered.

In sum, a proper liturgical theology would divide announcements into three groupings: the intercessory, which are made immediately prior to the intercessory prayer; those seeking the offering of self in service, which are made as part of the offertory; and all others, which are made before or after the service or are preferably confined to the church bulletin.

Respecting the Congregation

Ministers frequently fall into the habit of demeaning the congregation through excessive verbal instruction. For example, when there is a printed bulletin, there is no need to announce the hymn. It is good to allow the organist to play through the hymn once so that newcomers may become familiar with the tune. The congregation does not need to be told when to stand or when to sit. A simple gesture or, better, the example of the minister and choir will be adequate. Verbal instructions are breaks in the flow of the service and create an unnaturalness that is not necessary. The minister does not serve as a master of ceremonies but as a servant of the liturgy, which is the service of the people in the worship of God.

When the structure and flow of worship have been given due consideration by the worship leadership of the church, there will be an eager expectation on the part of the congregation that will enable the service to flow smoothly as a dialogue between leader and congregation in praise of Almighty God.