

Taking Worship Seriously



by Archie Pell



Anglican Agenda Series ♦ J.I. Packer, editor

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in Canada

Preface To The Series

The Anglican Agenda series of publications aims to open up current questions that call for thought, discussion, prayer and decision among members of the Anglican Church of Canada at this time. The series is sponsored by the Essentials movement, which seeks all-round renewal of life and strength in the Anglican Church, and its writers are Anglican Church personnel speaking out of their loyalty to the Church and their acute sense of its present needs. It is hoped that the series will spark deep personal reflection and group discussion within and between parishes, so that we all may be better prepared for the difficult and demanding era into which, as it seems, our Church is now entering.

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Worship Is Important

Books can tell us a great deal about their owner. If a pastor's study has John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in a prominent place on the bookshelves, then that pastor is probably Reformed or Presbyterian. If the pastor's bookshelves have all 55 volumes of *Luther's Works* front and centre, then she or he is probably Lutheran. But what about an Anglican pastor's study? What books will be on the desk or within easy reach on the bookshelf? In Canada it likely would be the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Book of Alternative Services*, accompanied perhaps by a liturgical "how to" manual or two.

Anglicans around the world are people who take worship seriously, for Anglicanism is a form of Christianity that began not with bold theological statements like Luther's *95 Theses* or the *Confession of Augsburg*, but with a series of worship reforms. In 1544 an English language version of the medieval Litany was issued, and it was followed by the Order of the Communion in 1548, an English language devotional supplement to the Latin Mass for use as people received the sacrament. The 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* provided in English reformed versions of all services necessary for regular parish use, and the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* was the culmination of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's reforming of public worship, giving Anglican worship the basic shape it has borne over the centuries. The theological *Articles of Religion*, known to most of us as "The Thirty-Nine Articles," came later; they were finalized and published in 1571.

If Anglicans take worship seriously, they do so because they take seriously the examples found in the Scriptures of both Hebrews and Christians. The people of God have always made worship central to their lives both as individuals and as a community. In the Old Testament the focus of worship for the people of Israel was first the Tabernacle, then later the Temple. Separated from the Temple and the worship conducted there daily, the Hebrews felt lost: "How shall we sing the Lord's song

in a foreign land?” (Psalm 137:4) When the exiles were able to return to their homeland, a key task was to rebuild the Temple so that Israel could restore its corporate worship life (Ezra 3:8-13 and 6:13-18). In the time between the Old and New Testaments, when Judas Maccabaeus led an uprising of the Jews against their Greek oppressors, the climax of the campaign was the cleansing and rededication of the Temple so that the people of Israel could once more gather there for worship (I Maccabees 4:41-59 in the Apocrypha).

For close to 1000 years the Temple was a call to and a focal point for worship of the one true God. Those who lived nearby made it the place for their personal worship. It was the place where Israelites from far and near gathered to worship together at major festivals such as Passover. These were occasions of great celebration, with incense, music, and splendid priestly garments. Yet even the daily morning and evening sacrifices were approached with intense seriousness, because the Hebrews knew that there was no greater duty for God’s people than to worship the Lord, the Creator of life, the God who had chosen Israel as His own people.

When we turn to the New Testament we find Jesus taking worship seriously wherever He went. Every Sabbath He would be found in a synagogue or, in Jerusalem, in the Temple (e.g., Luke 4:16). From an early age He spent the Passover season in Jerusalem (Luke 2:41) and eventually He used Passover to teach His closest followers about the meaning of His coming crucifixion (Mark 14:12-25). The first Christians followed Jesus’ example and made worship central to the life of the early church (Acts 2:46-47). Over the following 20 centuries Christians have continued to regard worship as central to the Christian life. During that time distinctive worship forms have arisen to emphasize various Gospel truths (compare Anglican baptism services to those in Baptist churches) or to communicate the faith in various cultural settings (compare Egyptian Coptic worship to a Vineyard service).

Anglican worship springs from this long tradition of Christian worship. It arose in England and has been adopted and adapted by a family of churches around the world, the Anglican Communion. Unfortunately we frequently take our Anglican worship for granted. At times we participate in it by memory, almost unconsciously. This book is meant to recall all of us Anglicans to a thoughtful, meaningful worship life in our congregations.

What Is Worship?

For generation after generation of ordinary Anglicans the answer to the above question has been found in the Exhortation at the beginning of the *Book of Common Prayer* services of Morning and Evening Prayer. Many would be able to quote from memory the key paragraph:

Although we ought at all times humbly to acknowledge our sins before God, yet ought we most chiefly so to do, when we assemble and meet together to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at this hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most holy Word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as for the soul.

This description of corporate worship introduces something that surprises, and may make feel uncomfortable, many 21st century Christians, namely **confession** as we “humbly acknowledge our sins before God.” Our Father God is holy, but we humans are sinners, imperfect people who rebel against God’s high moral and ethical standards for everyday human life. As 1 John 1:8-9 reminds us:

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

(ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)

So to approach such a holy God we need to confess the many ways we have offended against God’s laws for ourselves and plead for forgiveness on the basis of the sacrificial death on the Cross of His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Worship starts at the point where, through our confession and God’s forgiveness, our relationship with God is restored and made whole, allowing us to enter His presence and enjoy His fatherly fellowship.

Forgiven people are thankful people, and so **thanksgiving** is the second ingredient in our corporate worship — “to render thanks for the great benefits we have received at his hands.” Confession and forgiveness open our minds and hearts to the truth that our forgiving God is a generous God, who through His creation and the circumstances of our lives provides all that is necessary for us to live for Him. Beginning with divine forgiveness, God blesses us with food, shelter, family, friends, an occupation, and a supportive community of fellow followers of Jesus Christ. So we express our gratitude by saying “Thank you.”

Thanksgiving leads to the next component of worship, **praise** — “to set forth his most worthy praise.” Our word “worship” has Saxon origins in a word meaning to pay homage to a person who is one’s superior. Praise is our recognising and declaring the character and actions of our triune God. Praise focuses on the God we worship, not on the individual worshippers or the congregation. Praise is about “You,” not “me” or “us.” In praising God we find our hearts lifted by joy, and so our praise is regularly expressed by music in psalms, hymns and choruses.

The fourth element of worship is “to hear his most holy Word,” holy **Scripture**. Anglican Christians are Bible people. Two or three passages of Scripture are read at each act of corporate worship so that together all worshippers present are placed under the authority of the Bible. And where the Bible is publicly read, the message of one or more of those passages is explained and taught so that we can be knowledgeable followers of Christ. Scripture informs, challenges and guides our minds, and through our minds our whole lives.

Finally worship consists, in part, of **petitionary and intercessory prayer**, when we “ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as for the soul.” In thanksgiving we gratefully recognize our dependence upon God. In intercessory prayer we put that recognition into action in petitions that move outward in concentric circles. The needs of the people gathered in worship make up the inner circle of prayer. The next circle consists of the universal church, the whole worldwide family of God in Jesus Christ. The outer circle, no less important than the others, contains all people on earth and the nations in which they live. For all these peoples, near and far, we pray for God to supply the needs of the body — food for the hungry, money for the poor, healing for the sick. But it is equally important to pray for God to supply the needs of the soul — openness to the truth of the Gospel, reconciliation between enemies, godly laws in the nations. Thoughtful prayer in corporate worship expresses the mind of the congregation to the Lord and will inform our personal prayer life during the week ahead.

For a group of Christians to experience these elements in a complete worship experience when they “assemble and meet together,” a plan and working framework are necessary. That role is provided by **liturgy**, a practical combination of four things.

All Anglicans would quickly identify the first aspect of liturgy as being the **text**. We are a people of the book, in fact of two books: first of all the Bible and secondly the *Book of Common Prayer*. The Prayer Book

is, as we noted at the outset, the invaluable legacy of Thomas Cranmer, the reforming Archbishop of Canterbury. The printed text of a service gives unity and discipline to the act of worship, particularly when the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are being administered. Unity is achieved for the congregation by drawing their eyes and ears, and through them their hearts and minds, to shared words. In our everyday lives there is a babble of voices, each wanting its ideas and its way of expressing those ideas to prevail. But when a set service begins, our voices are blended into one, just as in Christ we become one people. At the same time the shared text draws the local congregation into unity with the wider church. The texts we use are formulated and authorized by national or regional Anglican synods and houses of bishops. In any ecclesial province, which is not usually a single national body, congregations are united into one church by their liturgical words.

Most Anglicans may be unaware of the discipline exercised by a worship text. The approved wordings for creeds, eucharistic prayers, and baptism by water are provided so that the local church and individual clergy will not stray from Gospel truth in what is said aloud. Anglicans trust that the leading of the Holy Spirit is discerned in a very particular way when the whole church (a diocese or province or national church) prayerfully works to produce a liturgical text. Individual Anglican worship leaders are then, in theory at least, held accountable by the wider church to conform to the discipline of holding to the approved text so that God's people will be nourished in worship by the whole church's understanding of God's holy truth.

The second component of liturgy is **movement**. Worship is more than the activity that television producers would call "talking heads" — or for that matter, singing heads. The central worship services of the Christian faith, the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are in part dramatic proclamations of the Gospel. In the Baptism service the candidate is brought forward, goes under the water, either by immersion or by it being poured on his or her forehead, and is received back into the congregation as a new member of the redeemed family of God. The person thus acts out our common story of becoming Christian: being called out of the world by Christ; submitting to Jesus Christ; joining fellow Christians in serving Christ.

In the service our Prayer Book calls "The Lord's Supper or Holy Communion," and modern alternative rites often call "Holy Eucharist," the Last Supper is symbolically acted out. The celebrant takes bread and

bleses it, takes wine and blesses it, and then distributes these to the worshippers as Christ did to His disciples. For their part the worshippers put their own faith into movement. Having heard the Gospel proclaimed, they come forward to be strengthened by Christ, in order to go out from the congregation to be the servants and ambassadors of Christ in everyday life. In the sacraments, movement with water and bread and wine becomes “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace” as the Catechism puts it.

Music is the third component of liturgy, and it is often what people remember most clearly when the service is over. Music draws people together as they sing the same words, particularly when singing of “we” rather than “I.” Hymns help us remember the Gospel truths proclaimed in Scripture, sermon, and sacrament, as the hymns of Charles Wesley or Timothy Dudley-Smith demonstrate. The style of music used can reflect and give expression to the wonder of Christmas, the contemplative aspect of Lent, and the joy of Easter. Music can engage the heart and give life to our words of faith.

Finally liturgy also encompasses and makes use of **symbols**. The colours of the hangings that decorate the front of a church remind us of different aspects of the Gospel message. For example, white at Easter points to the new life of the risen Jesus. The special clothes worn by the clergy, whether alb and chasuble or cassock and surplice, point to the reality that this gathering is not just another meeting, and that the cleric is present not as a personality in his or her own right, but as an ordained minister and servant of the Gospel. The worship space may be laid out in the form of a cross, reminding us of Christ’s death for us sinners, or in a partial circle to indicate that worship is a gathering around the table of the Lord as His family. Symbols wordlessly point us to different truths of the Gospel which lead us to worship the God who is Father, Son and Spirit.

What Does Worship Do?

In recent decades many Anglicans, along with most of their fellow Christians in other denominations across North America, have treated the main purpose of worship as making the worshipper “feel good” by the end of the service. This has led to much “church shopping” as people move from congregation to congregation, from denomination to denomination, seeking the elusive sense of self-gratification in worship.

This approach to worship is problematic for two reasons that begin to point us toward what good worship does.

First, to approach worship for “what it can do for me” elevates the style of the liturgy over the content. What pleases a person usually comes from the mechanics of worship, most commonly the language style of the liturgical text or the style and amount of music used in the service. Often the content of the worship — confession, thanksgiving, praise, Scripture, prayer — is not taken into account in reaching a conclusion about the impact of the service.

Second, while liturgy is about worship, worship is about far more than liturgy. As Evelyn Underhill’s often-quoted definition puts it, “Worship, in all its grades and kinds, is the response of the creature to the Creator.” Worship is an I-Thou relationship (or better, a Thou-I relationship), the place and occasion where the worshipper’s relationship with the redeeming Lord God is forged, repaired, deepened, and strengthened. This makes the fullness of the content paramount. The role of the components of liturgy is to bring this content together in a manner which enables a gathering of people to worship as one people. Whenever one of us, in any way, approaches a church service while elevating “me” as the central and most important character, the relational I-Thou nature of worship crumbles.

Archbishop William Temple has left Anglicans with a semi-poetic statement of the purpose of worship:

to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God,

to feed the mind with the truth of God,

to purge the imagination by the beauty of God,

to open the heart to the love of God,

to devote the will to the purpose of God.

What stands out in this definition is, firstly, that worship is meant to focus primarily upon God: Father, Son and Spirit. As the worshippers turn their full attention to God, to responding to God, each is transformed intellectually, emotionally, and in their actions. Put another way, the purpose of worship is to open the worshipper to the redeeming, saving grace of God in Jesus Christ so that God’s sanctifying Spirit can be an active part of the worshipper’s everyday life in a fallen world.

Second, Temple sees the worshipper as an active, not passive, partici-

pant. While God, the focus of worship, is the central and active agent in a service, the worshipper is also active. All the redemptive gifts that God offers in worship will fade like the final notes of a hymn unless the worshipper responds actively. A redeemed and redeeming life is offered. The life of the worshipper is opened to this. But the worshipper must reach out actively to accept what God graciously offers, as the Prayer Book post-communion prayer has us do:

And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice unto thee.

The worshipper is called, in response to God, to “quicken,” “feed,” “purge,” “open,” and “devote the will” in Temple’s words. These activities are our “reasonable, holy and living sacrifice,” our “response of the creature to the Creator.”

In some sense members of other religions, particularly the monotheistic Jews and Muslims, might well give their assent to the words of Underhill and Temple in so far as they speak of responding to “God.” What makes Christian worship unique is Jesus Christ. He is the root and reason for our worship, as Article 19 of the Thirty-Nine Articles attests:

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful [people], in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance.

The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper point us toward Jesus, the source of our salvation. They are, as Article 25 states, “certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace...ordained of Christ Our Lord in the Gospel.” Baptism originates in Christ’s example (Matthew 3:13-17) and teaching (John 3:5), and the Holy Communion in His command to “do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). These sacraments make our worship distinctively Christian.

The “pure Word of God” is the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments together. They tell us the story of God’s dealings with the human race beginning with our creation. We learn how humankind by choice moved away from our Creator’s purposes for us. So God promised to take redemptive action to restore our rebel race to His purposes and to a restored relationship with Him. That promise was fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Worship is Christocentric, and the reading of and teaching from Scripture proclaim

the uniqueness of Jesus and His call to all people to “take up [your] cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

There was a time when many Anglican congregations, along with most Protestant congregations, would declare to members and non-members alike that certain services were “worship” while others (often on Sunday evenings) were “evangelistic.” Just as this division was disappearing in most congregations, a new breed of “seeker-sensitive” congregations came on the scene. In these newer churches the main Sunday morning service(s) have few of the five marks of worship in them; praise is the mark most obviously present, but otherwise they have rather the style of entertainments. To many Anglicans these Sundays services, often referred to as “celebrations,” appear closer to a television talk show than a worship service. There are music groups, interviews, and “talks” which make much use of PowerPoint presentations, live dramas, and video-clips. Many people have wondered whether this means that “traditional” or “liturgical” worship forms, majoring on biblical instruction and prayer, are only for insiders to the church, only for members, and so need to be discarded for outreach-oriented Sunday gatherings.

Here the famous eighteenth century Anglican John Wesley can provide guidance. While known for his outdoor evangelistic preaching, he wrote of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper as being a “converting ordinance.” What Wesley was saying was that the Lord’s Supper should be the cornerstone of our weekly worship because Christ commanded us to “do this.” This sacrament nourishes each Christian for her or his daily following of and service to the crucified and risen Jesus. At the same time, however, as “a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ’s death” (Article 28), it is a proclamation in words (text, Scripture, sermon) and in actions (the blessing, breaking and distribution of bread; the blessing and distribution of a cup of wine) of how it is that we are saved and who it is that redeems us. The senses (particularly sight, hearing and taste) are bombarded with the Gospel message, and both the general confession of sins and the movement forward to receive communion provide explicit opportunity to respond to Christ’s call to repent and follow Him. As Canadian Anglican priest and evangelist Marney Patterson has often told Anglican clergy, the weekly service of Holy Communion is a weekly “altar call” to all who attend the service; it is evangelistic in the fullest and best sense of the word, and may properly be viewed and used as such.

Yet the seeker-sensitive church movement can help us remember that basic in our Anglican tradition is the firm intention that our wor-

ship speak to people intelligibly. Thus Article 24 requires worship to be conducted using language that worshippers in each particular place can understand. Article 34 clearly calls for worship forms to be adapted to the culture of each place, but with one condition. No form of worship, in text or in structure, can be “against God’s Word.” What a particular act of worship does and communicates comes under the authority of Scripture and must hold to Gospel truth, not deviating from it to fit human preference or convenience.

The fact that the *Book of Common Prayer* has been adopted and adapted in various cultural contexts shows how seriously Anglicans take Articles 24 and 34. While almost all Anglican churches around the world started out using the Church of England’s 1662 revision of Cranmer’s Prayer Book, gradually adaptations have emerged, some timid like the Canadian 1962 book, some more adventurous like the Anglican Church of Kenya’s *Our Modern Services* of 2003. All are recognizably Anglican, and at the same time all seek to speak from and to the cultures within which they are used. They seek to honour the Anglican tradition of biblical worship and yet be sensitive to the needs of believers and inquirers alike to hear the Gospel in proclamation and worship in words and forms which enable them to understand what they hear and to respond in ways that are genuinely theirs.

Taking Worship Seriously

To take worship seriously requires us to do more than think seriously about it; we need to act seriously as well. Worship, and particularly good worship, does not just happen. It is the result of the conscious preparation and participation by congregation and worship leaders alike, for all are active in worship.

1. Individual Worshippers

In the not too distant past there was an expectation that each worshipper would arrive at the service having prepared themselves to enter into worship. Many a parish would distribute booklets with checklists, some quite long and detailed, for members to go through in the 24 hours leading up to attending a service. The legalism of such lists is no longer part of the life of most Anglicans, but the need to prepare for worship is as strong now as it was then. That preparation might look like this.

During the days before the service:

- a) pray for all the participants who will have leadership roles in the service,

that they may be well prepared for the service and that they will be able themselves to worship as they carry out their parts in the service.

- b) pray for yourself, that you will approach the service with openness to experiencing God's presence and hearing God speak to you.
- c) try to avoid becoming over-tired in the 12 hours before the service, so that mind and body will be as alert as possible to whatever God may do in the service.

Attending the service:

- a) make a commitment to our Lord to be part of a public worship service every week, regardless of where you may be.
- b) arrive early, for it is easier to concentrate on the service if you have time to still your body and to quietly focus your heart and mind on what you are doing.
- c) think about how you will contribute to the service, what things you wish to confess silently during the general confession and what you wish to pray for during the intercessory prayers.
- d) follow the words of the service and the Scripture readings with your eyes as well as your ears to increase your concentration and understanding of what is spoken.

2. *Clergy*

There was a time when service after service was almost word for word the same, and all a cleric needed to do was show up and open the book. But now each service on a given Sunday may use a different liturgical text, and even where the same text is used, there will be differences in how the intercessory prayers are conducted or which of the alternative eucharistic prayers provided will be used. This means that preparation is necessary for a service to move forward in a way that enables worship rather than disrupt the attention and focus of worshippers by the leader's errors or omissions or mispronunciations. Thus the clergy need to prepare deliberately for each service they lead. Using Sunday worship as a reference point, a priest's preparation could well have this shape.

In the week before the Sunday service(s):

- a) pray for your own preparation and for your conduct of the service.
- b) pray for all who will have leadership roles in the service — readers, musicians, prayer leaders — and for the congregation, that all will be prepared to meet and worship the Lord during the service.
- c) start preparing the sermon and making any necessary choices of liturgical texts on Monday, so that unscheduled pastoral care situations during the week will not cause a lack of full preparedness on Sunday.
- d) contact others with leading roles in the service to ensure they remember and are prepared for their parts.
- e) take time to practice aloud all that you will be reading in the service.
- f) get a good night's sleep before the service to enable you to be focused and alert during the service.

On Sunday:

- a) arrive early to check all the preparations — markers in the lectern Bible; any vessels and linens for Baptism or Communion; markers in one's own books used in the service — to avoid distracting surprises.
- b) take time before each service to be alone and quiet, so that in prayer you can become centred on the service and your part in it.
- c) go over the text of your sermon at least twice, or until you are fully comfortable with your text, which may on occasion take longer.
- d) before entering the worship area, pray together with all who have leading roles.

3. Scripture Readers

In recent decades teams of lay persons have been used to read the Bible in public worship. This has added a welcome diversity of voices to our services, but it has also added some extra preparations for worship for such persons.

During the week before the service:

- a) look at your reading to check for any names that you are unsure how to pronounce so that you can seek help from someone who would know.
- b) practice reading the passage aloud so that the words become familiar and you can use the punctuation to assist in communicating the meaning.
- c) pray that your reading will help others hear God speak in and through His own holy Word.

On Sunday:

- a) arrive early to check how your reading is marked in the lectern Bible.
- b) read silently from the lectern Bible so that you are familiar with how it appears on the page.

4. Prayer Intercessors

Along with Scripture reading leading intercessions has moved from the clergy to a team of laity in most parishes. At the same time, often the intercessory prayers used are no longer the set prayers in a liturgical text, but are assembled and/or composed each week by the prayer leader to fit the circumstances in which the services take place. This requires a thoughtful, careful, prayerful week of preparation on the part of the intercessor.

During the week before the service:

- a) read the daily newspapers and check the all-news television channels to discover what events, persons and issues in the community, nation and wider world are currently of greatest concern.
- b) ask your parish priest who in the congregation has needs and whether their names can be used in public prayers.

- c) pray for discernment in choosing what issues and persons to pray for in the service.
- d) begin to assemble printed prayers (for example, from the occasional prayers section of the Prayer Book) and/or to compose prayers for the needs you have identified.
- e) practice praying these prayers aloud.

On Sunday:

- a) arrive early and check with the clergy to determine if there are any urgent last-minute needs that you should try to include in your prayers.
- b) pray that the prayers you say aloud will become the prayers in the hearts of all who will be worshipping with you.

5. Musicians, both instrumental and vocal

It often seems that music is the flashpoint in public worship, for people may react with strong emotions to it. There are people who say they will not go to another service “with that modern stuff,” which may refer to the style of music chosen or the type of instruments used. Some others object equally vehemently to the “old boring” forms of traditional hymns and chant tunes. Music is important as a means both of drawing worshippers together in praise and of communicating the great truths of the Gospel. So musicians need to prepare for each service as carefully as any preacher.

During the week before the service:

- a) pray for wisdom in choosing the music and skill in leading it.
- b) think prayerfully and carefully about the musical preferences within the congregation so that you can use the music fully to engage the congregation’s participation in worship, while if possible avoiding offense.
- c) look at the Bible readings for the service to discover the themes and truths in them, and use what you discover to help in selecting music.
- d) consider where the service is in the church year so that your choices can help people reflect on the themes and truths of the season.
- e) consult with the celebrant of the service so that the music chosen will fit into the service as the celebrant will be shaping it.
- f) practice.

On Sunday:

- a) arrive early to consult with the celebrant about last minute adjustments to the service.
- b) pray for freedom from self-consciousness and skill in involving the congregation in the music.

6. Congregations

Because worship is a corporate activity, “when we assemble and meet together,” the congregation as a whole has a role in worship that goes

beyond attending and taking part. It has a responsibility to ensure that its worship is of high quality and that it is an effective means of enabling individuals to relate personally to our Lord. Because 75 or 260 or 900 people are too many to sit around a table to discuss the church's worship, a representative group is needed. This group, a Worship Committee, may be established by the Parish Council or brought together by the rector. Either way it is the congregation in miniature working for the congregation at large. This group would meet regularly in order to:

- a) pray for and support the clergy, musicians and others who undertake leadership roles in worship.
- b) undertake public worship audits in the congregation to assess the quality of the worship and the reactions to it and to determine where efforts to improve it might be undertaken.
- c) periodically look at worship in other congregations to see what might be used in the committee's home church.
- d) work with the clergy, musicians and others to enable them to introduce positive changes in the congregation's worship life in a non-disruptive way.

There are many resources available to enable good worship to become better. Most are written for clergy. But one resource may be as helpful to lay persons as to clergy: the Worship Series produced by Grove Books, based in Ridley Hall at Cambridge University in England. Some books in this series that a Worship Committee might wish to use to begin their ministry are:

Understanding Anglican Worship, by David Kennedy

Worship Audit, by Mark Earey

Liturgy and Spiritual Formation, by Carolyn Headley

Mission and Liturgical Worship, by Mark Earey and Carolyn Headley

How to Plan and Lead All-Age Worship, by Chris and John Leach

For those who wish to learn more about the services and traditions in the *Book of Common Prayer*, Sue Careless has written *Discovering the Book of Common Prayer: A Hands-On Approach*. At the time of writing, Volumes 1 and 2 are in print, and Volume 3 is in preparation. These are published jointly by the Anglican Book Centre in Toronto and the Prayer Book Society of Canada.



Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What do you think of when you hear the word “worship”?
2. How would you define the word “worship” to another person?
3. How important is worship to your congregation? To you? Why?
4. In what ways do your congregation’s worship services enable you to hear God speak to you? To hear and understand the Gospel?
5. In what ways do your congregation’s worship patterns enable you to respond to Christ’s call to discipleship?
6. What are the things in a worship service that may come between you and the Lord?
7. What are you prepared to do to make your congregation’s worship services better for others? For yourself?

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