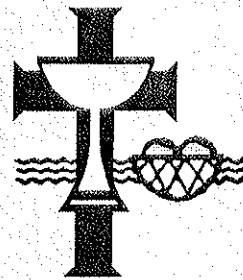


**The Parish  
Worship Committee**



Associated Parishes

*This booklet is one in a series dealing with the work of the Parishes of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada.*

*Prepared by the laity and clergy of the Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission.*

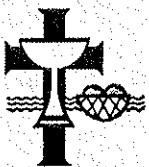
Throughout the commentary, there are references to 4 basic texts:

- BCP *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church (USA) (1979);
- BAS *The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada* (1985);
- BOS *The Book of Occasional Services - [year]* of the Episcopal Church. Page citations are from the 1994 edition.
- OC *Occasional Celebrations* of the Anglican Church of Canada

The Associated Parishes is a group of persons belonging to the Episcopal Church, the Anglican Church of Canada, and other Christian Churches, who are committed to the renewal of Christian life and worship. During the half-century of its existence, this group has especially concerned itself with providing an articulate expression of the principles of the Liturgical Movement in North America, as they have been experienced and tested with the life of our congregations.

Further information will be gladly supplied, and applications for membership will be received by the Coordinator of the Associated Parishes, P. O. Box 27141, Baltimore, MD 21230-0141 Regular membership dues are \$30 per year (\$15 for students and retired persons) or \$80 for three years. Members receive a set of brochures, the quarterly journal OPEN .

This group is governed by its Council, which is designated The Associated Parishes, Inc., a non-profit and tax-exempt organization, incorporated under the law of the state of New Jersey.



© Copyright 1987, Revised 1997  
ASSOCIATED PARISHES, INC.

## The Parish Worship Committee

### INTRODUCTION

Why are you reading this brochure? If it is because you are curious about parish worship committees, we hope to inspire you to develop one in your own congregation. If you have been considering such a possibility, we hope we can encourage you to get it started. If you already have one in place, we hope you will find here some new ideas or new approaches to old ideas that will add vitality to your project.

### THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENT

The "Liturgical Movement," which had its beginnings over fifty years ago, is a groundswell touching all major Christian bodies that has resulted in a new appreciation of the beauty and meaning of worship and its tremendous implications that touch all human life. It is rooted in the life of the parish, which is also its source of strength. In its earliest stages it was referred to as liturgical "revival" and has come to be known as liturgical "renewal." It was the impetus for the organization of THE ASSOCIATED PARISHES FOR LITURGY AND MISSION in 1946.

In *Liturgy and Society* A.G. Hebert wrote:

The Church bears witness to the world in various ways — by the lives of Christians, by their impact on social life, by sermons, books, wireless, by public manifestos, by personal example. All these ways of witness are directly dependent on the individuals by whom the witness is given. But there is another way in which the Church herself speaks more clearly, certainly and effectively than by the voices of her individual members. This is by the existence of the parish churches and the liturgy that is performed in them . . .

. By the influence of the Church service the regular Church people are molded; for the things which they do in Church make a deeper impression than the teaching which reaches their minds. Often they have thought that they came to Church chiefly to hear the sermon. This, however, they mostly forgot; but there were responses and prayers, commandments, creeds and scriptures which impressed themselves on their mind by constant repetition. All these things, the church building and the ritual and the ceremonies which take place in it, speak of the reality of GOD after a manner different in kind from the exhortations and instructions of the preacher.<sup>1</sup>

The Liturgical Movement has been a factor helping the Church to deepen its understanding of its own true nature as the Body of Christ, of which all baptized persons are the members and of which Jesus Christ is the Head. It has helped to restore to the Church the sense of community which was so evident in the early church and to reemphasize the importance of the ministry of every baptized person.

#### WHY HAVE A PARISH WORSHIP COMMITTEE?

All our worship is an expression of the praise and thanksgiving of a particular people at a particular time in a particular place linked with that expression in all times and in all places. The liturgy is an event of prayer linking the whole community in their relationship with God.

The purpose of a worship committee is quite simple: to make sure that the liturgy is as expressive as possible of that particular community while reflecting the connection with the Body of Christ in all times and all places. The liturgy should be an experience that is as broad and as deep and as beautiful and as intense as is possible, while retaining the sense of connection with the whole Church in time and space.

Our prayer books provide us with superb tools with which to make our worship true offering. As with all tools, to be useful they require our skill and attention. They should never be used carelessly.

The rector has canonical authority for the worship in a parish, within the guidelines established by the bishop as chief liturgical officer of the diocese. A parish worship committee can assist in planning liturgies appropriate for the resources and reflective of the life of the parish. Most rectors, however proficient in liturgy, welcome the insight that is provided by members of the congregation. They often have a longer history and more intimate connection with the parish than the rector. Most priests, recognizing that the final decisions are theirs, are open to suggestions and willing to explain their decisions about liturgy to their committee.

A parish with a healthy and orthodox Christian understanding of ministry realizes that liturgical ministry is the responsibility (work) of the entire community. Worship is too important to the life and growth of the parish community to be left to one or two people, even graduates of the finest seminaries and music schools in our Church. A thoughtfully chosen parish worship committee can emphasize that all participate in worship, each according to his or her order of ministry with the gifts God has given each of us.

Committee members should be encouraged to realize that in actual fact lay persons attending church Sunday by Sunday know something about liturgy. Most people seem to believe one basic premise: the priest has all the answers. They have not been to seminary; the priest has, and has learned all the intricacies — including the constantly changing rationales for when to stand and when to kneel, why there is (or is not) a gospel procession, why the choir does (or does not) process. Having had hours of training in liturgy, both academic and practical, priests do have answers. But lay people need to be aware that after their ordination priests have virtually no experience participating in liturgy from the congregation. Thus lay people can know that they do have a perspective different from that of the priest but one common to everyone else. It is a perspective the priest should find valuable.

## WHAT IS A PARISH WORSHIP COMMITTEE?

Recognizing the importance of full use of the Prayer Book, the Episcopal Church's General Convention in 1979 urged that there be a parish worship committee in each parish.

Parish worship committees vary widely in make-up and structure. Regardless of how the committee is structured, its members must have a commitment to some study of liturgy. They bring to it their intimate experience of the parish and the community. Their study of some basic writings about liturgy provide the framework within which that experience can be reflected upon and help them identify liturgical styles and expressions most appropriate for that parish.

## WHAT IS LITURGY?

Liturgy is always an expression of relationships — our relationship with God, with ourselves, with one another, and with the world in which we live. The rhythms of those relationships exist and are found in segments of time from moments through eternity. BCP and BAS provide the patterns which hold before us the full sweep of those relationships, reminding us always of the eternal truths about ourselves and about God. These patterns allow and encourage us to acknowledge our temporary anxieties and enthusiasms, placing them in the context of our faith, from before time throughout all time. From beginnings in initiation through death and burial, and from daily prayers and weekly Easters, our experiences become part of the fabric of our life in God's world.

In the primitive church, liturgy was the corporate concern of the entire community. We know that lay persons took active roles in the liturgy. It is sad historical fact that by the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries worship became the exclusive province of the clergy with the laity reduced to mute spectators viewing the mysterious actions of the liturgical ministers in awe, ignorance, and superstition.

The Protestant Reformation did not correct this situation, although it did bring the clergy and worship service closer to the people and, by allowing some democracy in parish government, permitted some lay involvement in planning for the worship life of the congregation. In actual practice, however, the minister retained essentially the same authority as the parish priest. The people "stayed in their place" and worship in Protestant churches was as dominated by the sermon as its Roman Catholic counterpart was by the consecration of the host.

One of the products of the Liturgical Movement in this century is the recovery of the concept that all who attend a worship service participate in it — each according to his or her "order" of ministry, be it congregation, celebrant, usher, deacon, preacher, reader, acolyte, organist, choirmaster, etc. Both lay and ordained have specific parts in the liturgy and both lay and ordained should be involved in the planning of worship.

## WHY PLAN LITURGY?

Without planning, liturgy in a parish usually falls into one of two patterns. Either it is disastrously ad hoc, always including the new and startling, or it is stagnant with a sameness Sunday by Sunday regardless of the season of the Church Year or the contemporary life of the parish. Many of us are attracted by a spontaneous celebration on Sunday, but its very spontaneity belies our connection to ourselves and to the world in another time and another place. Similarly, many find comfort in a sameness, Sunday by Sunday and year by year that is found in many parishes which make rote use of a very limited selection from their prayer book. This unvarying sameness encourages us to retreat into an emotional haven where we can escape the day-to-day life around us.

There is an unfortunate tendency for those primarily responsible for worship (clergy and musicians) to try to recreate in one parish services precisely as they are celebrated in another, disregarding not only the space and resources but, more importantly, the worshipers.

In *The True Function of the Christian Church*, John Heuss suggested that one of the places to begin to change a modern parish so that its true function as a Christian Church becomes dominant is with a critical examination of its worship.

For the most part they [worship services] are too cold and impersonal. They suffer from professionalism. The worst thing about them is that they tend to generate a spectator attitude on the part of the people. Whenever this happens, the full power of worshiping, participating fellowship is destroyed. Simplicity and congregational participation should be the keynote. . . . I firmly believe that every effort a local parish makes to increase the meaningfulness of its worship and prayer life will do more than anything else to restore that parish to its true religious function. To teach people to worship and to pray and to make it possible for them to do these things is the true vocation of the Christian Church.<sup>2</sup>

Many things have changed in the decades since this was written. We have new prayer books and hymnals. Yet sadly, in many parishes today liturgy is a performance generating “a spectator attitude on the part of the people.”

### WHO ARE WE AS A PARISH?

The worship committee should have the discipline to establish basic considerations regarding the parish liturgy before making any changes. After the committee has done this foundation work, it is ready to evaluate the parish liturgy by asking:

- How does our liturgy reflect our congregation?
- What can you tell about the ministry and life of our community by attending this Sunday service?
- Would a visitor have an accurate picture of the membership composition and ministry of the parish?
- Could a visitor be changed and transformed by this worship?

Liturgy does not just happen. It is always a product of our life together in the Body of Christ. If it is careless, static, thoughtless, it probably accurately reflects the life of the parish. Where the diversity and integration of the committee result in an offering that is vital and expansive, you can be sure the parish itself is a loving community growing together as the baptized people of God, conscious and aware of what this means.

### WHAT ARE WE CELEBRATING?

The parish must know themselves as the baptized people of God, unique in this place and time. Christian Initiation is the primary liturgical rite of the Church. The Easter Vigil holds before us the centrality of Christian proclamation: that liturgy is always a celebration of the central paschal mystery, the dying and rising of Jesus Christ.

Louis Weil, in “The Structure of Christian Community,” writes:

The gathering of all the baptized on the first day of the week to celebrate the Eucharist was nothing less than a recapitulation of the meaning of the whole process of incorporation into Christ's body. The celebration of the Lord's death and resurrection — the paschal feast — recalled the community to its fundamental unity in Christ established through baptism.<sup>3</sup>

The place of the parish liturgy in this growth of awareness is the primary concern of the parish worship committee. This connection may not be apparent to those worshipping there Sunday by Sunday. Familiarity breeds inattention and we are inclined to experience it as successive parts rather than a comprehensive whole. Christians who have occasion to attend unfamiliar worship services may more easily recognize a dominant note of the liturgy that cannot be attributed to any one of its parts.

Many of our bishops, whether or not they are liturgically sensitive and educated, find themselves experiencing shock as they travel from

parish to parish each Sunday. They have moved from their own parish liturgy, which was familiar and which reflected themselves and their parish, to an exposure they find depressing. They are able to see, hear and feel things that had become invisible to them in the familiarity of their former parishes.

One bishop describes many liturgies in which he participates as “absolutely dead worship, worship which is perfectly marvelous in terms of what ought to be done, and yet is totally lacking in spirit and life. The furniture is in the right place, there are countless lay people proclaiming the word and doing other things that are their role. The Prayer Book is adhered to faithfully. And yet there is no sense of availability to the Paschal Mystery.”

### THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

With the Easter Vigil as the touchstone, liturgies can be integrated throughout the year in such a way that a season is emphasized while maintaining a continuity of worship patterns. Without disrupting this continuity, special services can be planned which will enhance and support the celebration of the season in the parish. For instance, concerts by the choir in Advent and Lent provide opportunities for them to perform special music at length without intruding on the shape of the Sunday Eucharists. Such musical offerings can become a tradition, with the parish sharing these occasions with the community.

While considering the seasons of the Church Year the committee should study carefully the options provided for eucharistic prayers, prayers of the people, forms of confession, and canticles, as well as the obvious differences in hymn selection.

The ancients used the term “Paschal Mystery” for all the saving acts of God in ages past and in human lives now. What God has done in the death and resurrection of Jesus recapitulates this mystery, and humans are drawn into it explicitly through the waters of baptism. The reality that the Paschal Mystery is the core of our life and liturgy will be most readily demonstrated if the Easter Vigil is the central point

with our planning moving forward and backward from that. Our calendar makes this shape evident with the restoration of Eastertide — the Great Fifty Days.

We are celebrating redemption — our own and that of the newly baptized. The Lord's life is now our life.

The lectionary readings for this period [Eastertide] were chosen with the continued catechesis of the baptized in mind. The Easter season is the time to teach what baptism and Eucharist mean. It is the time to open the mysteries of the Church to the minds of the faithful, especially the newly baptized, in the context of the Lord's dying and rising. For it is that event — the Paschal Mystery — which produces the Church.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, we have recovered the primary purpose of Lent as final preparation in the Christian way of life for those to be baptized. In participating in and supporting this preparation the members of the congregation renew their own faith and reaffirm it at the Easter Vigil.

With the Easter Vigil as the cornerstone we know that Pentecost is not separated from Easter but is the celebration of the gift of the Spirit to the Church as part of the Paschal Mystery.<sup>5</sup> The season after Pentecost and the readings lead us to the knowledge of what it means to be the Church. This leads us to Advent with its renewed expectation and anticipation of the celebration of the life of Christ.

Our current liturgies have recovered many practices which link all liturgies to the Paschal Mystery. As was true in most Protestant and Roman Catholic parishes, the pastoral offices in the our Church had become matters of concern to the individuals and “nuclear families” only, with little understanding that they were, primarily, services of the whole worshiping community.

Baptisms were performed privately rather than in the context of regular Sunday worship. Weddings were by invitation only and fellow parishioners seldom attended unless they were personal friends of the

families involved. Funerals were also private affairs, though perhaps of more concern to Church members than the other offices.

The liturgies now provide for and strongly suggest that at baptisms, weddings and funerals the Holy Communion is integral to the services. Indeed, these rites are all cast as the Liturgy of the Word of a service of Holy Eucharist. Thus such occasions become a major part of the life of the whole worshipping community. This helps families to understand the close links that should be between them and the larger family of Christ and are rites affecting the whole community.

### DESIGNS FOR PARISH WORSHIP COMMITTEES

No particular design for forming a parish worship committee will fill the needs of every parish. We suggest the concept for such a committee and some goals for it to pursue, but we stress that the particular form it takes in any parish should be one best suited to your local needs and resources. The size of the parish, its location, its available worship space, its musical resources, its liturgical customs of the past, are all factors to be considered. The leadership style of your clergy and the part played by laity in parish life are also considerations affecting the formation of such a committee.

### VESTRY OR PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEE

Several large parishes place the work of a worship committee under the responsibility of the vestry or a larger parish council that has oversight of most aspects of parish life. This makes a worship committee a permanent part of the parish structure and gives it more visibility. The ways parishes form worship committees varies widely, yet each seems to work well in its own situation. Each parish should choose a model which fits into its own structure in such a way as to make clear the importance of worship for the parish community.

### COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

Obviously, certain individuals in the parish should always be either members of the committee or closely associated with it. Such persons as the director of acolytes, parish musician, head of the altar guild, and director of Christian education will have the responsibility for implementing plans and their contributions to the study and planning will be valuable. It is important to remember, however, that the benefit of lay involvement in the liturgical planning is largely to be derived from the participation of ordinary, non-vested lay worshipers and they should have an equal place in the committee with its other members. The advantages of having a committee will be lost if there is undue deference to the necessarily limited background and experience of those with special staff responsibilities. In many instances parishes have found that it is difficult for those who regularly have highly visible roles in the liturgy to entertain new perspectives.

The membership should be chosen to achieve a reasonable cross-section of the parish in such areas as age, number of years in the parish and in the Episcopal Church/Anglican Church of Canada, which service regularly attended, conservative or liberal leanings on parish matters. Suppression of viewpoints never strengthens a group, and committee members grow and learn from working together on common tasks. It is well to keep a checklist of viewpoints represented in the parish which should be considered. The committee will then be intentionally sensitive to varying feelings, although plans which are well thought out should not be vetoed because they are not totally congruent with the prejudices of each group. An insistence on unanimity will so limit the committee as to result in inaction.

The most important qualification for membership is commitment to the parish and a willingness to study and work together to deepen one's knowledge of liturgy and its role in the life of the Church.

## SIZE OF THE PARISH WORSHIP COMMITTEE

The size of the parish worship committee depends upon its purpose and tasks. If its purpose is to help the parish through a period of liturgical change, it should be a representative group and fairly large. Thus, most segments of the parish membership could be heard from, and ministered to, by members of the committee.

If the purpose is to develop a long-range worship program, it is best to make it smaller and made up of members chosen for their interest and ability rather than for leadership already demonstrated. It is seldom practical that each of the diverse elements in a parish have someone on such a committee, which makes it imperative that each member of the committee be intentional in seeking to understand and to be sensitive to the various perspectives represented in the parish.

Such small committees often work through sub-committees, either on an ad hoc or a more permanent basis, for carrying out specific liturgical projects: seasons and Holy Days, parish occasions, pastoral offices.

## COMMITTEE TENURE

While it is beside the point to write constitutions and by-laws for parish worship committees, it is well to have an understanding about the tenure of its members. A long-range planning group, as suggested above, needs to be in existence longer than other kinds of committees if its members are to share in a common study of worship.

It is best for the length of term to be clearly understood so no one considers himself or herself a life member and provision is made for inclusion of new members. If committee membership rotates, a significant number of parishioners have the opportunity to participate in planning the worship life of the parish. Once having served, a member will usually maintain a heightened interest in liturgy.

Some parishes have committees with short tenures and limited purposes — single projects such as the Christmas celebration or the Great Fifty Days. The difficulty with such short-range committees is that there is lack of integration of the single season or event with the broad sweep of the Christian Year. The short tenure limits the opportunity given to members to appreciate the basic principles of worship in relation to the life of the parish. Such limited tasks are probably best performed by a sub-committee, some of whom have helped work out the long-range program. Otherwise, the priest has the full burden of developing goals and objectives for the parish worship program.

## CHOOSING A CHAIRPERSON

Whoever chairs the parish worship committee, the Canons of the Church give the clergy specific responsibility for the oversight of worship in congregations under their care. Many clergy therefore believe that they ought to chair the parish worship committee. How this is worked out in any specific parish will depend on the leadership style of the clergy. As a rule of thumb it is usually best for clergy to encourage lay people to be the leaders. Sharing the leadership of the committee does not mean the clergy have abrogated their responsibility. A primary goal of both clergy and committee is to communicate well enough that neither is surprised.

Committee plans should be formulated and presented carefully so that the rationale is clear. The response of the clergy can then be an objective decision and, if necessary, a clerical veto explained on the basis of a violation of basic doctrines of the Church, or eccentricities that could harm the faith and devotion of the communicants.

The transition to a new rector is often particularly noticeable in parish worship. It is less noticeable where the worship is well planned with the involvement of a lay leadership constantly renewed. The primary contact of most Anglicans with the Church is through services of worship in the parish. When the worship falls apart or is done poorly, the results can be devastating.

One rector who chairs his parish worship committee finds that its members became too dependent on him for ideas although they are good at developing an idea once he has put it forward. How much better it would be for the committee to feel free to generate new ideas rather than to depend on the rector to be the well-spring of creativity.

## DUTIES OF THE COMMITTEE

The worship committee exists to advise the rector on matters of public worship. It must always be understood that the parish priest has final responsibility in this area and is, in turn, accountable to the bishop. The duties of the committee will vary with the rector's length of service in the parish, the particular skills of the priest and musicians and parish resources, and needs and concerns in the life of the parish. In some parishes the committee will actually plan the details of the regular and special services. In other places the committee will be more of a policy-setting organization. Both are valid approaches which must ultimately reflect the needs of the particular parish.

If your parish is having difficulty setting an agenda, the following are areas of concern for all congregations:

A. Assessment of Present Services. They can be observed and videotaped for review. Are you following the rubrics? Is the congregation participating fully in the spoken and sung parts? Does the ceremonial tend to make the liturgical text more understood? Or does it obscure everything? How effectively are you using your interior worship space? Is there a sense of a gathered community of people and clergy? Or is there the sense of a hierarchy of those in vestments in active roles presiding over a passive congregation in street clothes? Is the music of both the choir and the congregation appropriate to the occasion and of good quality? Or is the music ostentatious, irrelevant to the occasion, or trite? What is the overall impression of the service?

B. Service Planning. Does your parish take advantage of the liturgical richness available (especially the Proper Liturgies for Holy Week and the Great Vigil of Easter), Daily Morning and Evening Prayer, the Book of Occasional Services, and the Lesser Feasts and Fasts? Is the schedule of Sunday and weekday services realistic or does it need to be re-thought? What sort of variation between contemporary- and traditional-language services would work best in the parish?

C. Relationship to the Parish. There should be an integration of the entire parish into the worship of the community which requires an intentional awareness on the part of the parish worship committee of the life of the parish and its members. This includes careful preparation of the Prayers of the People and recognition of events in the lives of members of the community, such as affirmation of new ministries, blessings of homes, welcoming of new members, and acknowledging members who are leaving the parish.

## TRADITION AND PARISH WORSHIP

It is important for the parish worship committee to identify the local traditions and take a fresh look at them to determine which are important and which are simply nostalgic and serve as barriers to effective renewal. Sometimes parishes are sentimentally attached to traditions of their recent past (10 to 100 years ago) which do not "speak" to the members today, of any age.

The tradition of most Episcopal and Canadian Anglican parishes in the 1920s was for the principal service on Sunday to be Morning Prayer, with sermon, collection of alms, and much music by the choir. The Holy Eucharist was celebrated only once a month at the principal Sunday service, although some parishes had an early service of Holy Communion every Sunday for those who were especially devout. Usually it had no sermon and no music. In the 1990s the principal Sunday service is the Holy Eucharist with a full Ministry of the Word and music. We think of this reversal as one of the first fruits of liturgical renewal.

Worship committees need to look beyond the local tradition of their own parishes, to the growing liturgical spirituality of the whole Church in all parts of the world and in all denominations.

## TRAINING THE PARISH WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Before engaging in planning of liturgy, the committee should work together in study to provide a basis for some common understanding of its purpose, goals, and procedures. This common study is essential for a new committee or for one seeking to revitalize itself. It is an important ongoing process for the committee in incorporating new members and recalling its responsibilities.

A bibliography of important publications is suggested as a basis for this study (Appendix A). If not already available, the parish could provide these in its library for individual and collective study by committee members. These selections range from reference books through comments in paragraph form which can easily be read and appreciated by anyone, either individually or in group study.

There is always a danger that the training may become too academic. Certainly the committee needs to have a background that reading about liturgy provides. An equally important factor is to understand the parish. From its study the committee will be able to identify some general principles and standards. It is then ready to employ these to evaluate the parish worship. To make the critical examination recommended by John Heuss, the committee should first ask two questions: Who are we? What are we celebrating?

Before giving attention to any specific liturgies, these questions must be asked about the parish in general. They must be asked again with reference to each liturgy celebrated. In some parishes the training is a continuing process, with thirty minutes or so of each meeting devoted to some study of liturgy. In others, an orientation into the subject of worship, its principles and its practice, is given when the committee is formed and repeated for new members as they are added. We suggest each gathering of the committee should give its members

some new insight into the meaning of worship so that training becomes a part of its life. Membership on the committee should also inform and strengthen each member's own spiritual life.

## THE WORSHIP COMMITTEE AS A PLANNING GROUP

Some parish worship committees serve as a central planning group that works with the rector on all phases of the parish worship program. They seek to clarify the worship goals and policies of the parish and work out ways to achieve them. Other members of the congregation are invited to serve on specific sub-committees.

## PLANNING CHRISTIAN INITIATION IN THE PARISH

Our Churches have programs to give increased attention to our practices of Christian Initiation. The committee should refer to the material being developed on the catechumenate and preparation of parents and godparents, as well as material on confirmation, reception and reaffirmation. Associated Parishes has booklets on these subjects, as listed on the last page of this booklet.

Writing in *Crossroads*, December 1985, the Rev. Leonel Mitchell says:

Baptism, not Confirmation, is the principal sacrament of Christian initiation, as the Prayer Book says it is, then we need to devote more time and energy to planning Baptism than we do to planning Confirmation.

We hope that every parish worship committee will heed these words. This would mean the committee would commit itself to some serious study of the history of baptism in the Church, how it was performed in the early church, and how that changed in medieval and modern times. The committee should learn what the BCP and BAS

teach about it and how well present parish practice follows the teaching.

What sort of instructions should parents and godparents receive in preparation for infant baptism? What part do they take in the liturgy? Who should give the instruction?

The parish could develop a catechumenate for adult candidates for baptism. The parish worship committee could engage in preliminary discussions and could encourage the parish to participate in the study.

The shape of baptismal services should be planned, for participation by the whole congregation. The first step in planning any service is to read carefully the introductory section(s) before each service (variously titled prefaces found only in BAS, and “Concerning the Service” in both books), the rubrics appearing throughout the service, and the concluding section (“Additional Directions”). For example, the matter of when and how often baptisms take place can be addressed by the worship committee.

BCP directs, under “Concerning the Service” (BCP 298):

Holy Baptism is appropriately administered with the Eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday or other feast.

BAS directs, under the preface “Holy Baptism” (BAS 146):

The service should take place when a congregation gathers for the principal Sunday eucharist, ideally on days that are particularly appropriate for baptism — Easter (especially at the Vigil), Pentecost, All Saints, the Baptism of the Lord — and with the bishop present.

And under “Additional Directions” (BCP 312, BAS 163):

[Holy] Baptism is especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil, on the Day of Pentecost, on All Saints Day or the Sunday after All Saints Day, and on the Feast of the Baptism of [our/the] Lord (the

First Sunday after [the] Epiphany). It is recommended that, as far as possible, Baptisms be reserved for these occasions or when a bishop is present. [BAS adds:] (If for pastoral reasons baptism is celebrated between Pentecost and All Saints’, the Transfiguration of the Lord and Holy Cross Day or the Sundays after them are suitable days.)

Whatever the parish custom has been, the parish worship committee can explain the reasons for these provisions and encourage parish conformity to the mind of the Church.

The relationship of this basic sacrament to the office of bishop needs to be understood and shown. Wherever possible candidates for baptism should be presented at the time of the bishop's visitation to the parish. Not all baptisms can be reserved for the bishop's visit or the Easter Vigil, especially in larger parishes. However, to use the five days suggested makes occasions for baptism available throughout the year and exposes more members of the parish to the significance of the sacrament.

To help in planning a specific service of Holy Baptism, we would suggest use of the checklists found in Marion J. Hatchett's excellent book, *A Guide to Practice of Church Music*.<sup>6</sup> Various lists outline all the allowed alternatives in each service so nothing is overlooked and all can be done “decently and in order.”

## EVALUATION AS PART OF PLANNING

Continuing evaluation is a necessary component of planning and the part most often ignored. There is a tendency to believe that once the planned event has occurred, the planning process is completed. We are in fact often lulled into believing that the planning is an end in itself and the event an anticlimax.

There should be regular sessions and established processes to discover whether the results desired are in fact the impressions received. It is important to include in this process members of the

parish who have not been involved in the planning. Simple questionnaires can be used to elicit comments which are spontaneous. The questions should be carefully framed to encourage spontaneous responses, rather than providing pre-conceived multiple choices. As a caveat, remember that no liturgy pleases everyone. Some negative comments should not dissuade the committee and clergy from repeating the experience. If the planning process has been well-informed and responsibly pursued, its basic concepts can be successfully defended. No matter how well planned and executed, however, any liturgy can be improved by careful attention to criticism.

## CONCLUSION

Examples have been provided of a few of the many relevant considerations of what a parish worship committee might do in assisting its parish to become a part of the mainstream of liturgical renewal. The worship of any Christian community is the heart of its life. It is there that the baptized come, full of the troubles Jesus predicted would be theirs in the world. It is there that the community as a whole, and its individual members, receive new life. It is from there that new life is taken out into the world.

The worship of the parish is so vital that it deserves the best planning we can give it. Establishing and maintaining a parish worship committee is the best way to approach such planning. No one form of committee fits all parishes, but each parish should have some kind of functioning parish worship committee. It ensures that care will be given to a continuum in the celebration of the Feasts and Seasons with their central themes supported and reinforced and related to the life of the parish. In planning liturgies we must always remember the interrelationships of times and seasons in our lives:

Humanity itself exists in a temporal frame of which the turning of the seasons is a particularly eloquent sign.<sup>7</sup>

[I]t is clear that the Advent/Epiphany complex is a time of beginning that carries with it a strong note of eschatological

expectation. In ritual cycles, the beginning and end times meet, and the liturgical year is no exception.

The notion of a "New Year" is always in fact more ambiguous than we suppose, and we recognize a number of points at which the year turns. The civil New Year's Day is January 1 now. . . . In addition, there are many other points from which the year is measured, the fiscal year, the academic year, the liturgical year, the years of our lives measured from the day of our birth. Any of these is likely in certain respects to be considered an end time and a new beginning.<sup>8</sup>

## ENDNOTES

1. A. G. Hebert, *Liturgy and Society* (London: SPCK, 1935), 38.
2. John Heuss, *The True Function of A Christian Church* (New York: Trinity Parish 1962), 8.
3. Louis Weil, "The Structure of Christian Community," in *Theology in Anglicanism*, ed. Arthur A. Vogel (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1982), 118-119.
4. *Celebrating Redemption--The Liturgies of Lent, Holy Week, and the Great Fifty Days* (Alexandria, VA: Associated Parishes, Inc. 1980), 16.
5. Ibid, 18.
6. Marion J. Hatchett, *Guide to the Practice of Church Music* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1989).
7. Thomas J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Pueblo, 1992), 87.
8. Ibid, 80-81.

## Appendix A: BASIC READING LIST

- Galley, Howard. *The Ceremonies of the Eucharist*. Cambridge: Cowley, 1989.
- Hatchett, Marion J. *Guide to the Practice of Church Music*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995.
- Hovda, Robert W. *Strong, Loving and Wise: Presiding in Worship*. Washington: Liturgical Conference, 1983.
- Kavanagh, Aidan. *Elements of Rite*. New York: Pueblo, 1982.
- Mitchell, Leonel. *Praying Shapes Believing*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1991.
- Price, Charles and Weil, Louis. *Liturgy for Living*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1984.
- Schmemmann, Alexander. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's, 1970.
- Searle, Mark. *Liturgy Made Simple*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1981.
- Smith, George Wayne. *Admirable Simplicity: Principles for Worship Planning in the Anglican Tradition*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1996.
- Stuhlman, Byron D. *Prayer Book Rubrics Expanded*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1987.
- Weil, Louis. "The Structure of Christian Community," in *Theology in Anglicanism*, ed. Arthur A. Vogel. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1984.

### Electronic Resources

- The Rite Brain: A Liturgical CD-ROM for the Episcopal Church*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1996.

## Appendix B: BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Commentaries and Reference Books

- Davies, J.G., ed. *The New Westminster Dictionary of Worship*. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1986.
- Guilbert, Charles M. *Words of our Worship*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1989.
- Hatchett, Marion J. *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995.
- The Study of Liturgy*. Ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, Paul Bradshaw. Rev. ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Kavanagh, Aidan. *On Liturgical Theology*. New York: Pueblo, 1985.
- Marshall, Paul. *Prayer Book Parallels*. 2 Vol. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1989-1991.
- Middleton, A. Pierce. *Old Wine in New Skins: Liturgical Change and the Setting of Worship*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1988.
- Schmemmann, Alexander. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's, 1970.
- Standing Liturgical Commission. *The Occasional Papers of the Standing Liturgical Commission*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1988.
- The Study of Liturgy*. Ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, Paul Bradshaw. Rev. ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Talley, Thomas J. *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Pueblo, 1992.

### Pastoral Offices

- Associated Parishes. *The Burial of the Dead*. Alexandria, VA: Assoc. Parishes, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage*. Alexandria, VA: Assoc. Parishes, 1987.
- Confession and Absolution*. Ed. Dudley, Martin and Rowell, Geoffrey. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990.
- Hyde, Clark. *To Declare God's Forgiveness*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1984.
- Stuhlman, Byron D. *Occasions of Grace*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1995.

### Music and Worship

- Barrett, James E. *The Hymnary: A Table for Service Planning*. Missoula, MT: Hymnary Press, 1986.
- Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy. *Music in Catholic Worship*. Washington: Natl. Conf. of Catholic Bishops, 1972.
- Church Publishing Incorporated. *Hymnal Studies One: Perspectives on the New Edition*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Hymnal Studies Two: Introducing the Hymnal 1982*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1982.
- Fesperman, John. *Hymnal Studies Four: Organ Planning: Asking the Right Questions*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1984.
- Glover, Raymond, ed. *The Hymnal 1982 Companion*. 4 vols. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1990-94.
- Hatchett, Marion J. *Guide to the Practice of Church Music*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Hymnal Studies Five: A Liturgical Index to the Hymnal 1982*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Hymnal Studies Eight: A Scriptural Index to the Hymnal 1982*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1988.
- Keiser, Marilyn. *Hymnal Studies Three: Teaching Music in Small Churches*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1983.
- Rowthorn, Jeffery W. "Look What They've Done to Our Hymnody," in *Liturgy: The Song of All Creation*. Vol. 6 No.3. Ed. Rachel Reeder. Washington, DC: The Liturgical Conference, 1987.
- Schmidt, Dennis. *Hymnal Studies Seven: An Organist's Guide to Resources for The Hymnal 1982*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1987.
- Weil, Louis. "The Musical Implications of the Book of Common Prayer," in *The Occasional Papers of the Standing Liturgical Commission*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1988.

### Parish Worship Committees

- How to Form A Parish Liturgy Board*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications 1987.
- Mitchell, Leonel L. *Planning the Church Year*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1991.

### Principles of Christian Worship

- Adams, William Seth. *Shaped by Images*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1995.

- Collins, Mary. *Renewal to Practice*. Washington: Pastoral Press, 1987.
- Hovda, Robert W. *Strong, Loving and Wise: Presiding in Worship*. Washington: Liturgical Conference, 1983.
- Huck, Gabe. *Liturgy with Style and Grace*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Program, 1984.
- Kavanagh, Aidan. *Elements of Rite*. New York: Pueblo, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Praying Shapes Believing: A Theological Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Meaning of Ritual*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1988.
- Searle, Mark. *Liturgy Made Simple*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1981.
- Smith, George Wayne. *Admirable Simplicity: Principles for Worship Planning in the Anglican Tradition*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1996.
- Weil, Louis. "The Structure of Christian Community," in *Theology in Anglicanism*, ed. Arthur A. Vogel. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1984.

### The Holy Eucharist

- Associated Parishes. *The Holy Eucharist Rite Two: A Commentary*. Alexandria, VA: Assoc. Parishes, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Parish Eucharist*. Alexandria, VA: Assoc. Parishes, 1977.
- Children in the Parish Eucharist*. New York: Episcopal Church Center, 1987.
- Crockett, William R. *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation*. New York: Pueblo, 1989.
- Guzie, Tad. *Jesus and the Eucharist*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1995.
- Myers, Ruth A., ed. *Children at the Table: A Collection of Essays on Children and the Eucharist*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1995.
- Porter, H. Boone. *Sunday: The Day of Light*. Washington: Pastoral Press, 1988.
- Shepherd, Massey H. *Holy Communion: An Anthology of Christian Devotion*. Greenwich CT: Seabury, 1959.

### The Book of Common Prayer

- Barnett, James M. *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995.

- Meyers, Ruth A., ed. *How Shall We Pray? Expanding Our Language about God: Liturgical Studies Two*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Prayer Book for the 21st Century: Prayer Book Studies Three*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1996.
- Haskel, Marilyn L., and Morris, Clayton L., ed. *As We Gather to Pray: An Episcopal Guide to Worship*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1996.
- Smith, George Wayne. *Admirable Simplicity: Principles for Worship Planning in the Anglican Tradition*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1996.
- Stuhlman, Byron D. *Prayer Book Rubrics Expanded*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1987.
- Sydnor, William. *The REAL Prayer Book: 1549 to the Present*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1979.

### Christian Initiation

- Associated Parishes. *Holy Baptism*. Alexandria, VA: Assoc. Parishes, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Catechumenate*. Alexandria, VA: Assoc. Parishes, 1991;
- Eastman, A. Theodore. *The Baptizing Community*. Rev. ed. Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1991.
- McElligott, Ann E. P. *The Catechumenal Process*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1990.
- Merriman, Michael W. *Baptismal Mystery and the Catechumenate*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1990.
- Mitchell, Leonel L. *Worship: Initiation and the Churches*. Washington: Pastoral Press, 1991.
- Myers, Ruth A., ed. *Baptism and Ministry: Liturgical Studies One*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1994.

### The Church Year and the Lectionary

- Associated Parishes. *Celebrating Redemption: The Liturgies of Lent, Holy Week, and the Great Fifty Days*. Alexandria, VA: Assoc. Parishes, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Great Vigil of Easter: A Commentary*. Alexandria, VA: Assoc. Parishes, 1977.
- Borsch, Frederick H. *Introducing the Lessons of the Church Year: A Guide for Lay Readers and Congregations*. Rev. ed. . Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995.

- Fuller, Reginald. *Preaching the New Lectionary The Word of God for the Church Today*. 2d rev. ed. Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Three-Year Lectionary," in *The Occasional Papers of the Standing Liturgical Commission*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1988.
- Liturgical Conference. *From Ashes to Easter: Lenten Renewal for the Churches*. Washington DC: Liturgical Conference, 1979.
- Merriman, Michael W. "The Liturgy in Easter Season" in *The Occasional Papers of the Standing Liturgical Commission*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1988.
- Mulligan, Frank J. *A Lector's Guide to the Episcopal Eucharistic Lectionary*. Wichita: St Mark's Press, 1986.
- Stevenson, Kenneth. *Jerusalem Revisited — The Liturgical Meaning of Holy Week*. Washington: Pastoral Press, 1988.
- Talley, Thomas J. "The Passion of Witness: Prolegomena to the Revision of the Sanctoral Calendar," in *The Occasional Papers of the Standing Liturgical Commission*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1988.

#### Out of Print Resources

- Babin, David E. *The Celebration of Life: Our Changing Liturgy*. Wilton CT: Morehouse Publishing, 1969.
- Burson, Malcolm C., ed. *Worship Points the Way*. New York: Seabury, 1981.
- Cassa, Yvonne and Sanders, Joanne. *Groundwork: Planning Liturgical Seasons*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1982.
- Diekmann, Godfrey. *Come Let Us Worship*. New York: Helikon, 1961.
- Dix, Gregory. *The Shape of the Liturgy*. London: Dacre Press, 1945.
- Evans, Barry. *Prayer Book Renewal*. New York: Seabury, 1978.
- Hatchett, Marion J. *A Manual of Ceremonial for the New Prayer Book*. Sewanee TN: St. Luke's Journal of Theology, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sanctifying Life, Time and Space*. New York: Seabury, 1976.
- Hebert, A.G. *The Parish Communion*. London: SPCK, 1937.
- Heuss, John. *The True Function of A Christian Church*. New York: Trinity Parish, 1962.
- Holmes, Urban T., III. *Young Children and the Eucharist*. New York: Seabury, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Confirmation: The Celebration of Maturity in Christ*. New York: Seabury, 1981.

- Howard, Thomas. *The Liturgy Explained*. Wilton CT: Morehouse Publishing, 1981.
- Micks, Marianne. *The Joy of Worship*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982.
- Mitchell, Leonel. *Liturgical Change*. New York: Seabury, 1975.
- Neville, Gwen K. and Westerhoff, John H. L, III. *Learning Through Liturgy*. New York: Seabury, 1978.
- Porter, H. Boone. *Keeping the Church Year*. New York: Seabury, 1977.
- Pregnall, William. *Laity and Liturgy: A Handbook for Parish Worship*. New York: Seabury, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Liturgy and Learning Through the Life Cycle*. Cincinnati: Forward Movement, n.d.
- Rowell, Geoffrey. *The Liturgy of Christian Burial*. London: SPCK, 1977.
- Searle, Mark. *Liturgy and Social Justice*. Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1980.
- Shepherd, Massey H. *At All Times and in All Places*. Greenwich CT: Seabury 1953.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Liturgy and Education*. New York: Seabury, 1965
- Walhof, Karen, ed. *Worship Blueprints, Planning Ideas for the Seasons of the Church Year*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979 et seq.