

LUTHERAN WORSHIP AND TEENS: HOW PROPER WORSHIP EDUCATION
WILL HELP TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to answer the following questions: Will better education about Lutheran worship help keep teens in church in the long run? Will educating our youth at a young age about Lutheran worship help edify their worship and thus keep them in the church in the long run? How can pastors become involved in educating youth about worship? How can pastors help make an edifying worship service for teens and thus for everyone? This paper will answer those questions first by taking a brief overlook at the history of liturgical worship and how the Lutheran church has gotten to where it is today with public liturgical worship. Understanding why the majority of WELS worships the way they do will go a long way in reaching the goal. Then it will address how teens view worship today and how there is a lack of understanding about Lutheran liturgical worship through the use of reported surveys by WELS teens. Finally, this paper will address how churches and pastors within our synod can better educate the youth in Lutheran liturgical worship.

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INTRODUCTION

It is the age-old question and the age-old problem. It is a problem that has plagued the Christian church for almost its entire history. It is a problem that will most likely linger around until the church militant becomes the church triumphant. The problem: teenagers are not staying in church. The future leaders of the church militant do not seem like they want any part of the battle. Why are they leaving? Why are they putting behind what once was a regular part of their life? It seems that anybody who is involved in their church has their own reason as to why that is. Some say that teenagers simply do not care about going to church once they get confirmed. They have the “Once I’m confirmed, I’ve ‘graduated’ from the church” mentality. They think that they now have everything they need to know from catechism class and so they do not need church anymore. Another reason could be that going to worship wasn’t a priority for their family and so they just stopped attending. They would go so that their child would not get marked down on their report card for church attendance or so their child could write their sermon summary for the pastor. But once all of that was done, the importance of going to church is no longer there.

Many will put the blame on the lack of leadership or a lack of a youth group. One parent looks at what their church is doing for the youth, or what they are not doing, and they compare it to what other churches are doing. They wish that their church would have an active and vibrant youth group like other congregations. They want their teens to be able to go to youth group activities like a game night, a lock-in or they want their youth group to attend the WELS International Youth Rally every other summer. They think if their church had all of that, then their teens would be more willing to stay in church.

Are these the real reasons as to why the youth are leaving the church? Possibly. There certainly could be some merit in the fact that there is that “graduated from church” mentality. There certainly are families that do not consider attending public worship a priority. There certainly can be something to a church’s youth group or lack thereof. But what if the reason is simpler than that? What if the root of the problem is that they do not understand Lutheran liturgical worship? Could it be that the reason they are leaving is because they do not see worship as meaningful or personal for them? Or put it another way, they do not understand why we do certain things in worship and thus their worship experience is not edifying to them. Maybe they do not understand worship because they do not find it meaningful to their lives.

Maybe they think that worship is primarily for adults and they are just there because their parents made them. Perhaps they feel that “going through the motions” each and every week does nothing for them. They want worship to be like what they experienced at the WELS Youth Rally but they are frustrated because it is not. They do not recognize that the only difference between their church and youth rally worship are the instruments and setting. They do not understand because they have not been educated in what worship is all about.

Lutherans have a reputation of Christian education and teaching the youth about the teachings and doctrines of the Bible and rightfully so. A correct understanding of the chief doctrines of Scripture is very important because their eternal welfare is at stake. But why are our churches not putting a strong emphasis in worship education? Teenagers are told again and again, “Go to church. You have to go to church.” But do they know why? Is it something they want to do or do they attend church because they have to keep the Third Commandment? Do they understand how important public worship is? Is public worship personal or edifying for them?

Pastors, not just in WELS, but in almost every Christian denomination, are scrambling to find ways to keep teenagers coming to church. They put together a youth group, organize teen outings, teen Bible studies, etc. Those ideas are all well and good but if the teenagers are not understanding and not finding worship edifying, all the work for the youth group might possibly go toward the wayside.

Why put so much focus on the youth and worship education? The answer is quite logical. For the most part, public worship is a strong suit for pastors. They have years of practice, experience and knowledge of worship. They understand the flow of a liturgical worship service. They know why their church worships the way they do. On the other hand, some pastors may not be able to connect with youth and teenagers all that well, whether it be because of his social skills or he does not have the means and funding to do so. In this instance, it might be better for pastors to play to their strengths and reach out to them through public worship.

Regardless of whether a congregation has trouble reaching out to its young people or not, properly educating the youth about worship is important. Worship is to be a meaningful and personal event, and if the youth do not understand what is going on in worship, then the worship service cannot be meaningful or personal. Will the Means of Grace still work in public worship even if one does not understand liturgical worship? Absolutely! The Means of Grace still work

and strengthen saving faith. However, it is certainly possible for the pastor to become a hindrance to public worship. To just sit idly by and assume that everyone, including the youth, understands what is going on would be grossly irresponsible. It is the responsibility of the pastor to make sure that public worship is understood and edifying for all people. That is why proper education to our youth about Lutheran liturgical worship will not only help make public worship more edifying for our youth, but as a result of the edification, the youth are more likely to stay in church because they understand the importance of public worship.

The question has been asked, “Why just focus on the youth and worship education? Why not focus on worship education to all age groups?” While that question certainly is valid, the reason that this paper specifically focuses on the youth is because the youth are at a crucial stage in life. The older they get, the more independent they become. That is something that we cannot avoid nor should we. When our young people become more independent, the more they are attacked by the outside influences of this world and they are vulnerable to follow the evil influences of this world. The only way that teenagers will be able to combat the evil of this world is by continuing to receive nourishment from the Means of Grace. Where do our people receive the Means of Grace the most? Public worship! But if they do not understand why their WELS church worships the way they do, worship most likely will not be edifying and thus they are less likely to return. That is exactly what is happening. Our teens are leaving the church.

There’s the sound of pounding feet outside our homes and churches these days – the sound of teenagers running away from the Christian beliefs that parents and the church have taught them. Some studies estimate that less than one-third of our students who are active Christians while they’re in high school will still be active when they graduate college. Christian churches everywhere are losing about two-thirds of their kids during and after high school.¹

Those are daunting statistics! Teens and young people are not taking their spiritual welfare seriously. Souls are at stake! This must be taken seriously. This paper will attempt to help pastors and congregations that are dealing with the age-old problem of the youth leaving church by pointing to a simple solution: proper education of Lutheran liturgical worship, consistency in worship and doing worship well.

WHAT IS PUBLIC WORSHIP?

¹ WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship, *Can We Stop the Bleeding? A Call to WELS Congregations to Address Teen Spiritual Losses* (Made available on June 15, 2015) 2, 3. *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File*, (accessed November 30, 2016).

Before this paper goes into further detail about the youth and worship education, an important and perhaps obvious question must be answered: What is worship? First, worship is something that God commands. In the Garden of Eden, God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, which was their way of worshipping God. God's Third Commandment that he gave to Moses on Mount Sinai is, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God."² The apostle Paul encourages Christians to continue meeting together and to continue worshipping God. "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."³ The writer to the Hebrews also makes this same plea. "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."⁴

Worship is something the believer wants to do. Yes, attending public worship is a law matter but the motivation behind attending public worship ought not be a law matter. Rather, the believer wants to attend worship because it is there that the worshipper is strengthened in their faith through the Means of Grace. It is in public worship that the worshipper not only is assured of the forgiveness of sins, but they receive the forgiveness of sins through the pastor's proclamation of sins forgiven and through the receiving of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It is in public worship that the troubled conscience of a sinner is calmed because they are reminded that Christ paid the price for sin once and for all. These are wonderful things that happen in public worship. These are life changing things that happen in public worship. Therefore, when the believer goes to public worship, their attitude is the same as the psalmists. "How lovely is your dwelling place LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Blessed are those

² Ex 20:8-10. All Bible quotations in this paper are taken from NIV® Copyright 2011.

³ Eph 4:3-6

⁴ Heb 10:24-25

who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.”⁵ “I rejoiced with those who said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD.’”⁶

Public worship is ascribing worth to God. When a believer attends public worship, what they are saying is this: “In this world, nothing is more important than my God. My God has saved me from eternal damnation not because of anything I have done, but he has done this simply because he loves me. Because of that, I am setting aside a portion of my time, I am blocking out the craziness and the distractions of this world and I am going to praise my God and hear what he has to say to me because God is the only way to eternal life.” “We worship God by proclaiming the great things God has done in Christ. This is what Christ commissioned the Church to do, and this is how the Church demonstrates its opinion concerning the Savior’s worth. By using the means of grace the Church adores Christ. All proclamation, therefore, is praise, and all praise is proclamation.”⁷ It is no wonder there are so many proclamations of the greatness of God and of his grace throughout Scripture.

I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.⁸

“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.”⁹

Another way that God is ascribed worth is through the use of the fine arts. Even when Israel’s worship space was a traveling tent, the use of the fine arts was on full display.

The amount of gold listed here as “29 talents, 730 shekels, or about 40,940 ounces troy weight.” At \$500.00 per ounce, that would translate into \$20,470,000, an enormous sum in that day. The silver, though amounting to only about 141,000 ounces would be valued at about \$7,000,000, figuring silver at \$50.00 per ounce. But it was one thing to give that

⁵ Ps 84:1-2, 4

⁶ Ps 122:1

⁷ James P. Tiefel, *The Purpose of Public Worship* (January 8, 2015) 8. *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online, Course WR3071Ti* (accessed on December 1, 2016). This document is available in Appendix B.

⁸ Ps 34:1-6

⁹ Luke 1:46-50

much and quite another matter to transform it into carefully crafted pieces of furniture, sockets, hooks, pillars, etc.¹⁰

Of course, this quote does not mention all of the different animal skins that were collected, as well as all the blue, purple and scarlet linen that also made up the tabernacle as listed in Exodus 26. When Solomon's temple was built, the use of fine arts was even more impressive.

Throughout 1 Kings 5-6 and 2 Chronicles 2-5, Solomon orders the finest wood, stone and other precious metals to be brought in from very specific places to build the temple. Even then, he recognizes that not even the finest of material to make the finest of the arts is enough to ascribe worth to God. "The temple I am going to build will be great, because our God is greater than all other gods. But who is able to build a temple for him, since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him? Who then am I to build a temple for him, except as a place to burn sacrifices before him?"¹¹ In echoing the words of King Solomon, no church, regardless of how grand and beautiful it may be, can ascribe the worth that God is deserving of. But in liturgical churches, a lot of thought goes into the building of churches in an attempt to ascribe worth to God. The fine arts also are used as a teaching mechanism. More about that will be discussed later in the paper in the section about why most WELS Lutherans worship the way they do.

Public worship is a gathering of believers. Worship was never intended to be an isolated event, although it certainly could be at an appropriate time. Public worship is usually intended for the gathering of a group of believers. Jesus says in Matthew, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."¹² There are two different groups of people who gather together to give praise and proclaim worth to God in public worship. First, there are the public ministers. The very first people who were called by God specifically for leading the public worship of Israel was Aaron and his sons. "Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests."¹³ Since then, God's people have always had people specifically called to lead public worship. Today, most commonly, the pastor leads worship, but in some rare instances, the public minister could be a staff minister, an elder, a seminary student or another believer within the same fellowship called by the congregation to fill the role of a public minister

¹⁰ James Falwell, *Liberty Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1982) 187.

¹¹ 2 Chronicles 2:5-6

¹² Mt 18:20

¹³ Ex 28:1

for that day. The second group of people that gather together to give praise and proclaim worth to God are the universal priests, which is all believers. Christ made all believers universal priests in his Great Commission. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”¹⁴ These are the two groups of people that actively participate and give worth to God in public worship.

When putting all of these factors together, the following serves as a good working definition for what worship is: “Universal priests and public ministers gather at public worship to glorify God by proclaiming the gospel in Word and Sacrament to summarize and solidify truth by means of ritual and the fine arts.”¹⁵

HISTORY OF WORSHIP

If a pastor is going educate his youth on worship, it would be wise to know the history of worship. This history will be thorough but not overly extensive. Worship has been something that God intended from the very beginning of time. When God had created the world and placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God gave them this command: “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”¹⁶ For Adam and Eve, this was their way of worshipping God.

The tree of the knowing of good and evil was neither intended nor needed for food. It was meant to serve an altogether different purpose. Luther depicts this purpose in his usual vivid manner: “But this tree of the knowledge of good and evil was Adam’s church, altar, and pulpit. Here he was to yield to God the obedience he owed, give recognition to the Word and will of God, give thanks to God, and call upon God for aid against temptation.”¹⁷

Of course, this form of public worship did not last all that long. Adam and Eve would soon fall into sin and thus they were kicked out of the Garden of Eden, forced to provide for themselves and forced to find another way to worship God.

¹⁴ Mt 28:19-20a

¹⁵ James P. Tiefel, *The Purpose of Public Worship*, 11.

¹⁶ Gen 2:16-17

¹⁷ Carl J. Lawrenz, John C. Jeske, *A Commentary on Genesis 1-11* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2004), 111.

The Altar

Not a lot is known concerning a prescribed way of worship after the fall into sin. However, the Bible reveals that the giving of offerings was a way of worship. “We must assume therefore that such offerings originated as a spontaneous expression of humble faith and sincere gratitude toward the LORD, acknowledging him as the gracious giver of every blessing.”¹⁸ The first time the Bible mentions the giving of offerings is with Cain and Abel. “In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.”¹⁹ With the offerings of Cain and Abel, no altar is mentioned. When Noah offers his sacrifice, an altar is mentioned. “Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.”²⁰ It was not commanded by God that Noah should use an altar for his sacrifice. That command comes later in history with the people of Israel. But throughout the Old Testament, from Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, etc. altars were used in giving a sacrifice to God.

Prior to the tabernacle, altars were usually built impromptu, using whatever stones and material were available because the occasion called for an altar. In Genesis 8, the Bible says that Noah built an altar to the LORD because he was moved out of thankfulness to finally be out of the ark. In Genesis, the Bible says that Abram built an altar because the LORD had appeared to him and promised him to give him and his descendants the land of Canaan. In Genesis 26, Isaac built an altar and worshiped God because the LORD had appeared to him as well and reaffirmed that promise that he had originally gave to his father, Abraham. In Genesis 35, Jacob built an altar when he had returned home and made peace with his brother Esau. In Exodus 20, Moses built an altar on Mount Sinai as God was giving him the law.

It was not until the days of the tabernacle that the altar would actually be prescribed by God. There were two altars that were used in the tabernacle. The first one was the altar of burnt offerings. “Build an altar of acacia wood, three cubits high; it is to be square, five cubits long and five cubits wide. Make a horn at each of the four corners, so that the horns and the altar are

¹⁸ Carl J. Lawrenz, John C. Jeske, 176.

¹⁹ Gen 4:3,4.

²⁰ Gen 8:20.

of one piece, and overlay the altar with bronze.”²¹ The other altar would be the altar for burning incense. “Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense. It is to be square, a cubit long and a cubit wide, and two cubits high—its horns of one piece with it.”²² Both the altar of burnt offerings and the altar for burning incense would be present in the temple as well.

The two altars served very different purposes in the public worship life of the Israelites. The altar of burnt offerings was a reminder of the price of sin. The blood of the animals that were sacrificed on that altar were to remind the people of Israel that blood is to be shed for the payment of sin. “The bloody offerings were types of the perfect offering which the promised Messiah would make in order to atone for the sins of all people.”²³ “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us.”²⁴ Concerning the altar of incense, “The daily burning of incense by the priests symbolized the daily prayers of God’s people to His throne of grace. The prayers and offerings of His believers are as sweet smelling incense to God.”²⁵ “May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.”²⁶

The use of altars continued into New Testament times as God’s Word was now being preached to the Gentiles but the use of the altar was drastically different. Instead of the bloody sacrificing of animals, the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was placed upon the altar which would serve as a reminder of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ which those Old Testament sacrifices on their altars only symbolized. Because of the remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice, Christians did not hesitate to keep using the term altar. Throughout the years, the Catholic Church retained the use of the altar in its churches, but the use of the altar in Catholic Churches began to be misused and abused. When the Catholic Church affirmed its teaching of transubstantiation, the message that the altar communicated became different from what it should have been. “The Roman Catholic view [of the Lord’s Supper is] that the elements in the Lord’s Supper are employed as an unbloody sacrifice in the Mass as well as for distribution to

²¹ Ex 27:1,2.

²² Ex 30:1,2.

²³ James Mumm, *Old Testament Worship and Symbols of the Coming Messiah* (July 22, 2015) 3. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, (accessed November 20, 2016)

²⁴ Eph 1:7-8.

²⁵ James Mumm.

²⁶ Ps 141:2.

communicants.”²⁷ So when the Catholic Church celebrated the mass, the message of the altar was essentially the same message that was communicated to the Old Testament Jews, that a sacrifice is taking place for the forgiveness of sins. This is still a practice in the Roman Catholic Church today. It still communicates a message that people are making an offering or sacrifice to God which is simply not true. “The Lord’s Supper is God’s gift to us, not our offering of an unbloody sacrifice to him.”²⁸ The altar in the Catholic Church communicates that Christ’s sacrifice was not enough, but that many more sacrifices are needed which again is simply not true. It is not a Scriptural message that it communicates.

The Lutheran use of the altar communicates a scriptural message to the people gathered together for public worship.

First, the altar was an ever-present reminder that God redeemed the world through the sacrifice of his only Son, the Lamb of God whose offering of himself, typified by the many Old Testament sacrifices, was completed on the altar of the cross. To assign a central position to an altar and to make it the focal point in a church building is to call attention to the centrality of the vicarious atonement in God’s revelation to man and in Lutheran theology. Secondly, the common practice in Lutheran worship of using the altar in both communion and non-communion services as the place at which to offer prayers and praise to the Lord of heaven and earth marks the altar as the symbol of God’s presence among his people in Christ Jesus. Thirdly, to call a piece of liturgical furniture an altar and then to use it as the place upon which to put the elements employed in a sacramental meal, moreover, as the liturgical furnishing at which to speak the Words of Institution and as the center from which to distribute the Supper is to employ the altar as a table as well as to say that the Sacrament of the Altar is a unique meal in which, according to Christ’s institution, his body and blood sacrificed for sin are physically present with the bread and wine in the Sacrament.²⁹

One aspect of the altar has not changed in Lutheran liturgical worship. The altar still serves as the place where prayers are offered up to God and they rise up to him like incense, as mentioned in the psalm. But the one aspect that has changed is that the altar in Lutheran liturgical worship communicates and points to the sacrifice that has already taken place, the sacrifice to end all sacrifices, the sacrifice of Jesus giving his body and blood both on the cross and in the Sacrament for the forgiveness of our sins. In short, the altar in Lutheran liturgical worship reminds the worshippers of what God does for us, not what we do for God as the Catholics misunderstand it.

²⁷ Fred L. Precht, *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 198.

²⁸ Fred L. Precht, 198.

²⁹ Fred L. Precht, 199.

Confession of Sins

Here lies the most humbling and humiliating part of the worship service: the confession of sins. “The Confession of Sins is an invariable introductory office which provides a helpful preparation for each day’s worship.”³⁰ What makes the confession of sins in worship unique is that it goes contrary to human nature. No one likes to confess when they have done something wrong. It hurts one’s ego and pride. But coming before God and confessing our sins is something that God want us to do. He pleads with his people to come before him, confess their sins and receive his forgiveness. When Adam and Eve fell into sin by eating the forbidden fruit, God actively sought them out. “In solicitous love he sought them out to lay bare their guilt and to make them fully aware of it. In this way he meant to prepare them for the announcement of the new program of his faithful love. God did this, although there was nothing to compel him to do so except the love of his own heart.”³¹ In Genesis 6, God wanted the people of Noah’s time to confess their sins and turn away from their wicked ways. So, God waited one hundred and twenty years for the people of Noah’s time to turn from their wicked ways and repent of their sins. In 2 Samuel 12, God sends Nathan to King David to send him a message of law so that David would repent. “Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan replied, ‘The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.’”³²

Confession of sins would become a normal part of public worship. This was evident in the sacrifices and offerings that the priests would make and present on behalf of the people. The details behind the sin offerings and guilt offerings are listed in Leviticus 4-7. Of course, as mentioned before in the section about the altar, all of the offerings and sacrifices only pointed to the ultimate sacrifice, God’s Son, Jesus Christ who shed his blood to earn forgiveness of sins for the whole world of all time.

Unfortunately, public confession of sins would become abused by the Catholic Church. When the Lutheran Reformers were practicing public worship, they realized something needed to change about the confession.

The Reformers appreciated the spiritual values in a preparatory confession. They could not use existing forms because of their doctrinal impurity. In parts of Germany, in

³⁰ Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), 256.

³¹ Carl J. Lawrenz, John C. Jeske, 142.

³² 2 Samuel 12:13.

Sweden, and later in England, entirely new forms were developed which well illustrate the principles and methods of conservative liturgical reform in the sixteenth century. Recognizing the principle of the priesthood of all believers, the Confession was made a congregational instead of a priestly act. It was addressed to God alone, and all references to intercession by the Virgin and the saints were omitted.³³

One can see how these principles are still in place today in modern Lutheran liturgical worship today. The Confession is still a congregational act in which the believer confesses their sins in thought, word and deed to God alone. In the Confession, the believer looks to God alone for mercy, forgiveness and peace.

Absolution

The request of the believer for God to look upon them with mercy, grace and forgiveness does not go unanswered. Not only that, the answer is always the same. God has forgiven all sins! What a wonderful and awesome privilege for the presiding minister to be able to proclaim those words to troubled souls bothered by their sins. To announce God's full and free forgiveness is the ultimate good news. Never should a person leave public worship in doubt as to whether or not their sins are forgiven. This message of full and free forgiveness needs to be proclaimed every time public ministers and universal priests gather together for public worship.

God wants his people to know that they are forgiven, fully and freely. God proclaimed forgiveness to Adam and Eve in the garden when he promised to send the Savior who would crush the devil's head. God's messenger Nathan proclaimed God's full and free forgiveness to David after his many sins in dealing with Bathsheba and Uriah. God wants his people to know that they are forgiven, fully and freely.

Why can the presiding minister say with full confidence that God has forgiven all sins? It is because of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, giving up his perfect life and shedding his precious blood. All the presiding minister does is point to what Jesus has done. C.F.W. Walther puts it in a very simple way: "What does the Lutheran preacher do when he announces for forgiveness of sins and absolves? Nothing more than that he informs the people: This is the situation with you. Christ suffered as your Mediator and God now accepts you in faith."³⁴ This is the gospel that Jesus has entrusted to his people to proclaim when he gave them the Great Commission.

³³ Luther D. Reed, 257.

³⁴ Fred L. Precht, 344.

This is news that God's people cannot afford to miss. Again, C.F.W. Walther puts it in a simple way: "At absolution we say nothing but what has happened. This is the precious truth that forgiveness of sins has been acquired. If we would truly believe in absolution, with what joy would we attend church whenever it is pronounced."³⁵

Songs of Praise and the Use of Music

When God's people recognize the goodness of God, their response is to give thanks to God. The Bible is full of examples of people responding to God's goodness by ascribing praise to him. Often times, the praise that is ascribed to God takes the form of music and song. The Christian faith and music will forever be connected. After all, Martin Luther considered music to be of utmost importance right behind doctrine. The first recorded song of praise in the Bible is the song the Israelites sang to God when God drowned the Egyptians in the Red Sea, thus freeing Israel from slavery to Egypt once and for all. "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: 'I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.'"³⁶ David sang a song of praise in response to God delivering him from the hand of Saul. "The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior— from violent people you save me."³⁷

Of course, the Bible contains a collection of 150 songs in the form of the book of Psalms. Not all psalms are psalms of praise but a good number of them are. As temple and synagogue worship progressed throughout history, the use of psalms would become a normal part of public worship. Since the complete Psalter was most likely completed in the third century B.C., it served as the "Old Testament hymnal" and prayer book for the second temple and synagogues after the exile.³⁸

The use of psalms continues today in Lutheran liturgical worship. It is the opportunity for the congregation to share in the responsibilities of proclaiming the Scriptures.

³⁵ Fred L. Precht, 344.

³⁶ Ex 15:1-2

³⁷ 2 Sam 22:2-3

³⁸ Robert G. Hoerber, *Concordia Self-Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 780.

The New Testament also has a number of songs to take note of. For example, when it was revealed to the Virgin Mary that she would be giving birth to the Messiah, she broke out in what Christians call “Mary’s Song” or the *Magnificat*. “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed.”³⁹ When Simeon finally saw the Messiah with his own eyes, he broke out in what Christians call “The Song of Simeon” or the *Nunc Dimittis*. “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”⁴⁰ Both of these songs still have a place in Lutheran liturgical worship today. In WELS, the *Magnificat* is often used in Evening Prayer inside Christian Worship hymnal and the *Nunc Dimittis* is often used after the reception of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. The reason for the use of the *Nunc Dimittis* at the end of the communion liturgy will be explained later in this paper.

Prayer

Prayer at its bare bones is talking to God. It only makes sense to talk to the one who is being ascribed praise! What a wonderful opportunity that Christians have, to talk to the creator of the universe. There is no one more important than God and Christians have free and ready access to him! God wants his people to talk to him. “Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”⁴¹ “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”⁴² Anytime and any place is good to call upon God, but if there was ever a specific time and place to call upon God and pray to him, it is during public worship.

Prayer and public worship will always go together because prayer is a form of worship. God has always intended that his people come and talk to him and maintain a relationship with him in public worship. Even in early history after the fall into sin, “At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD.”⁴³ When Abram received the promise that his offspring would receive the Promised Land, Abram worshipped and called upon God’s name. “From there he

³⁹ Luke 1:46-48

⁴⁰ Luke 2:29-32

⁴¹ Ps 50:15

⁴² 1 Peter 5:7

⁴³ Gen 4:28

went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.”⁴⁴ The Israelites called upon the name of the LORD when they gave thanks to him for saving them from the Egyptians. “In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble.”⁴⁵ King Solomon prayed to God at the dedication of the temple. “Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven and said: “LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.”⁴⁶

Jesus even instructs his people how to pray and how not to pray in worship. “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”⁴⁷ He then follows with teaching his disciples the prayer most commonly and most regularly used in public worship, the Lord’s Prayer.

The apostle Paul gives advice on how to pray and what to pray for in public worship, or any situation in life. “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”⁴⁸

These principles and guidelines have helped the church in prayer during public worship, especially when it comes to the Prayer of the Day and the Prayer of the Church. Those two prayers will be looked at in more detail later in this paper.

The Word

The reading and remembrance of God’s Word is always to be at the heart and center of Christian Worship. After all, as the apostle St. John says in his Gospel, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may

⁴⁴ Gen 12:8

⁴⁵ Ex 15:7

⁴⁶ 1 Kings 8:22-23

⁴⁷ Mt 6:5a,7,8.

⁴⁸ Eph 6:18

have life in his name.”⁴⁹ The apostle Paul also shares in this truth when he says, “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.”⁵⁰ Simply put, the Word of God must be preached in public worship because not only does it keep the pastor in line and make him accountable with what he preaches, but God’s Word saves people! People need to be reminded of the two main messages of God’s Word: the law and the gospel. People need to be reminded of God’s holiness, how God demands perfection from each and every person and how each and every person has failed to live up to God’s standard of perfection. But people also need to be reminded of and comforted by Jesus who has fulfilled those standards for all people through his perfect life and innocent death. People need to be reminded and that they will live forever because Jesus has conquered death through his glorious resurrection. People need to be reminded of the fact that Jesus will return to take all his people from this earth and will bring them into his glorious, heavenly kingdom forever. Without the law and gospel, how can worship be worship? It is through his Word that he communicates to his people.

People have always been reminded of God’s Word when they worship him. Whenever Adam and Eve walked past the that tree in the middle of the garden, they were reminded not only of God’s holiness, but they were reminded of the words and promises of God, where if they abstained from eating the fruit of that tree, they would live forever. When Noah had built an altar to God and was worshipping him, God comforted Noah with his words: “Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”⁵¹ As time went on, more formal worship practices were established with the people of Israel, as well as a more formal reading and remembrance of God’s Word was established. “The synagogue service regularly had readings from the Law and the Prophets. Luke (4:16-21) tells how our Lord himself one Sabbath entered the synagogue at Nazareth, chose a passage from the Book of Isaiah, expounded on it to his fellow townsmen.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Jn 20:31

⁵⁰ Ro 10:17

⁵¹ Gen 8:21-22.

⁵² Luther D. Reed, 288.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”⁵³

It would be from Jewish temple and synagogue worship that the early Christians would form their own worship service with the readings from the Scripture. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”⁵⁴ “The twofold lesson of the synagogue was continued in the early services of the Christians. Soon selections from the Epistles were added, and a little later passages from the various Gospels. The next step reduced the lessons from the Old Testament to one which, with the New Testament Epistle and Gospel, gave a threefold Lesson.”⁵⁵ These practices from the early church have continued in modern Christianity and modern liturgical worship. More about the theme of the lessons will be mentioned later.

The sermon is part of the proclaiming of God’s Word in public worship. An expounding on a section of the Word of God has been in place perhaps just as long as the reading of the scrolls in the temple and synagogues. As mentioned above, Jesus expounded on the Scriptures that he read in the synagogue at Nazareth when he said, “Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” The apostles Peter and Paul expounded on the Scriptures many times when proclaiming the truths of Christ to people. Sermons give the preacher an opportunity to get personal with his audience and touch on one or two key truths in a text (or at least they should be touching on one or two). It is the joy of the preacher to be able to share the truths that they discovered in their own study of the text with their listeners.

The Sacraments

The Sacraments are not meant to be administered only during public worship but in modern times, Baptism and Lord’s Supper are administered most often during public worship. There are no clear cut examples in the Bible where Baptism and Lord’s Supper are administered

⁵³ Luke 4:16-21.

⁵⁴ Acts 2:42

⁵⁵ Luther D. Reed, 288.

in public worship but there are a lot of good reasons as to why they are administered during public worship. When Jesus gave his Great Commission, he gave the command to baptize and to teach everything he had commanded them. It just so happens that most people learn of everything that Jesus has commanded in public worship. So it makes sense why so many baptisms are administered during public worship. Concerning the Lord's Supper, Jesus instituted this holy supper not during a worship service but during the Passover meal. In the early Christian church, it seems that people received the Lord's Supper during a meal. "So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers."⁵⁶ Public worship is a very appropriate time for the Lord's Supper to be distributed because as St. Paul says, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."⁵⁷ Not only is worship a proclamation but it is also a time when believers receive the forgiveness of sins, which is also what happens in the Lord's Supper. Hence, public worship is a fitting and appropriate time for believers to receive the Lord's Supper.

What a rich history and heritage that Lutheran liturgical worship has. Even though there would be many changes that would take place throughout history, many things would stay the same and Lord willing, these things will remain in Lutheran liturgical worship: the singing of hymns and other songs of praise, many prayers and petitions to God, and of course the high points of the worship service, the Means of Grace in both Word and Sacrament, the ultimate proclamation of the gospel. Teaching our young people about the history of our worship will help them gain a greater appreciation for why most of WELS worships the way they do.

WHY LITURGICAL WORSHIP?

Why do most WELS congregations use liturgical worship? Why do most WELS congregations use a certain order of service or ritual week in and week out? God created mankind to be comfortable with routine and familiarity. From the very beginning, worship has always involved some sort of ritual. Adam and Eve's worship ritual was remembering God's command of not eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge and the promises that came along with that. Cain and Abel's worship ritual was presenting God with first fruits of their labor. The Israelites' worship ritual was laid out in the Mosaic law. Most Lutheran's worship ritual is

⁵⁶ 1 Cor 11:20-21

⁵⁷ 1 Cor 11:26

following the liturgy. Are Lutherans bound to worship liturgically? The Formula of Concord answers that question. “We believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the authority to alter such ceremonies according to its own situation, as may be most useful and edifying for the community of God.”⁵⁸ However, there are good reasons as to why Lutherans worship liturgically.

The first reason Lutherans worship liturgically is for the sake of order and edification. Worship must be orderly, not for God’s sake but for the sake of the people. That is why God laid out an orderly worship ritual in the Mosaic law. That is why St. Paul addresses the idea of good order and edification in worship in his first letter to the Corinthians.

For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying? You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified.⁵⁹

Again, this is not for God’s sake that worship be orderly, but rather it is for the sake of the worshippers that worship by orderly. When there is an order to worship, the service is clear cut and more easily edifying for the worshippers who attend.

The second reason Lutherans worship liturgically is because it honors the church’s tradition and beliefs. Everything that is done in liturgical worship is essentially a confession of what the church believes.

In every way the liturgy points the worshiper away from himself and his culture and toward his Savior on the cross. The liturgy always presents sin as damning guilt, Christ as atoning mediator, God as justifying Father, conversion as free gift and means of grace as Spirit’s tool. The liturgy carries the worshiper through Christ’s birth, appearing, victory over Satan, passion and death, resurrection, ascension and the commissioning of his church. The liturgy offers to the believer what Christ told the church to offer, his body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins. The liturgy does not care so much how people feel about Christ, how they choose Christ and what they do for Christ. It cares instead that Christ felt enough love for the people to choose to give up his place in heaven and come down to suffer and die.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert, *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000) *Formula of Concord, Epitome, Art X, p. 515.*

⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 14:13-17.

⁶⁰ James P. Tiefel, *Liturgical Worship for Church Planters* (1990) 13. *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File*, (accessed December 4, 2016).

The hymns and songs of praise that are sung in worship confess what the church believes. Both the confession and absolution are statements and confessions that the church believes in. The readings from Scripture are what the church believes in and confesses. Everything a church does in liturgical worship is a statement of what the church believes in.

A third reason Lutherans worship liturgically is because it protects both church and worshipper from false worship. “If the structure of Christian worship were left to the whim of the preacher or anyone else, then it would only be a matter of time before those whims would turn away from the sound words of Scripture, since there is nothing good in our flesh. Everything depends on the Word of God.”⁶¹ If one were to look at Evangelical/non-liturgical churches and the way they worship, one might notice that the Word of God is lacking and thus presents an opportunity for the devil and false doctrine.

Given the presuppositions, it is little wonder that Evangelical worship is informal, casual, breezy, laid back, non-traditional (although often including the nostalgic), encouraging of no commitment and including music in popular styles. Evangelical worship intends to make people happy, to put them at ease, to allow them to feel good. When they feel good, they will be eager to give themselves to Christ and so to gain his power for becoming what they want to become. Evangelical churches are not non-liturgical only or even primarily because they are evangelistic but because a non-liturgical style matches their theology. Their style is their substance!⁶²

THE ORDER OF LUTHERAN LITURGICAL WORSHIP

Understanding the order of the Lutheran liturgical worship service will help edify one’s experience in worship as well as help them take home the main theme of the worship service. The order of service in Lutheran liturgical worship is designed to have two high points within the service: the proclamation of the Gospel, and the reception of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

Gathering Together for Worship⁶³

The service begins with the opening hymn which does not necessarily have to fit in with the theme of the worship service. The main job of the opening hymn is to help bring the worshippers together as well as to help the worshippers get into the right mood and frame of mind for worshipping God. After the opening hymn comes the invocation. The invocation does two things. First, as the sign of the cross and the names of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are

⁶¹ Burnell F. Eckardt Jr., *Why? A Layman’s Guide to the Liturgy* (Malone, TX: Repristination Press, 2005), 7.

⁶² James P. Tiefel, *Liturgical Worship for Church Planters*, 11, 12.

⁶³ The headings for each subsection under “The Order of Lutheran Liturgical Worship” are based from a handout entitled “The Lutheran Liturgy” found on Seminary Online in WR3071Ti. Full handout is found in Appendix A.

mentioned, the invocation reminds the believers of the name into which they were baptized. Second, it signifies that the worship service begins with the blessing of the triune God who is being worshipped.

Since the worshippers are coming before God, the next part that follows is the confession of sins. As mentioned before, the confession is unique because no one likes to confess when they have done something wrong. It hurts one's ego and pride. But coming before God and confessing our sins is something that God wants us to do. He pleads with his people to come before him, confess their sins and receive his forgiveness. It is appropriate to come before God at the beginning of the worship service and confess sins because the worshipper is reminded that they are sinful guests in the house of the most holy God. Forgiveness is an absolute need for the worshipper and that is what the worshipper requests for when he/she confesses their sins and looks to Jesus for grace. Of course, as mentioned before, the request of the believer for God to look upon them with mercy, grace and forgiveness does not go unanswered. Not only that, the answer is always the same. God has forgiven all sins! What a wonderful and awesome privilege for the presiding minister to be able to proclaim those words to troubled souls bothered by their sins. To announce God's full and free forgiveness is the ultimate good news.

What follows is the worshipper's response to hearing the good news of forgiveness and grace from God. The gathering of public ministers and universal priests join together in a song of praise which proclaims who God is and what he does. Most of the time, some version of the *Gloria in Excelsis* is used but another hymn of praise and proclamation may be used as well. Depending on when in the church year the worship service falls, some hymns are better selections than others.

The Service Of The Word

Following the song of praise comes the Prayer of the Day. It is at this point that everything is pointing to the first high point of the liturgical worship service: the Gospel of the Day. The Prayer of the Day does just that. This prayer is carefully crafted to fit the theme of the Gospel. "The Collect is a brief but significant prayer which the church appoints in this place for each Sunday or festival. It is usually related in thought to the Gospel or the Epistle for the Day and its chief function is to prepare the mind for the liturgical lessons."⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Luther D. Reed, 278, 279.

Once the prayer is spoken, portions of God’s Word are read. The first lesson almost always comes from the Old Testament with the exception of Easter when the first lesson comes from the book of Acts. Accompanied with the first lesson is the Psalm of the Day. This is the opportunity for the universal priests to share in the proclaiming of God’s Word. The theme for the first lesson and the Psalm of the Day is set by the Gospel of the Day. The second lesson is almost always taken from the epistles. “The Epistle is the word of Christian law, but law with the breadth and elevation of the New Testament in it.”⁶⁵ In other words, the epistles focus on the work of Jesus and Christian living. Again, the theme of the second lesson is set by the Gospel of the Day. The Verse of the Day further hammers home the theme that the Gospel has set for that day.

Now comes the first high point of the Lutheran liturgical worship service: the Gospel of the Day. The Gospel is preceded by the congregation standing out of respect for the Gospel and proclaiming “Alleluia!” The singing of “Alleluia” is more than just variation in the service itself, but there is meaning behind the singing of “Alleluia.” The worshippers respond with “Alleluia” because they are happy that they are going to hear the very words and works of Jesus, the one who saved the world from sin. “Our use the Triple Hallelujah before the Gospel is a related use, since we know that our hearing of the words of Christ in the Gospel is nothing less than a hearing of the Resurrected One speaking among us. Such knowledge gives abiding joy, and thus it is fitting to rise in anticipation of the Gospel and to sing Hallelujahs.”⁶⁶ During Lent, however, the “Alleluias” are omitted. “This serves to make the anticipation for Easter, and the joy of Easter, all the greater. The joy of Christ’s resurrection can scarcely be better expressed than by simple Hallelujahs.”⁶⁷

After the singing of “Alleluia” the Gospel of the Day is read. This is the lesson that establishes the theme for the day’s worship service. The Gospel of the Day is the first high point of the worship service, hence the pomp that goes along with the reading of the Gospel. Before the lesson is read, the pastor announces the reading and the congregation responds by saying or singing, “Glory be to you, O Lord!” When the lesson has been read, the congregation responds by saying or singing, “Praise be to you, O Christ!” The reason being for these two responses is

⁶⁵ Luther D. Reed, 295.

⁶⁶ Burnell F. Eckardt Jr., 37.

⁶⁷ Burnell F. Eckardt Jr., 38.

that the words that are about to be read or that have already been read are the very words and works of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, the most important person who has ever stepped foot on this earth. It is fitting to respond with “Glory be to you, O Lord!” and “Praise be to you, O Christ!” because it is in the Gospel that the worshippers gathered hear how Jesus has saved them. It is in the Gospel that the worshippers gathered hear how Jesus defeated sin, death and the devil. It is in the Gospel that the worshippers gathered are comforted with beautiful gospel truths.

It is interesting to note that the Gospel, the most important reading, is placed last, after the Epistle.

From the earliest times the Gospel has been given pride of place in the readings at the Divine Service. It is always read last. The congregation rises for it. More ceremony attends it. It is read by the presiding minister. Some of the Reformation church orders maintain the tradition of the salutation before the announcement of the Gospel of the Day and, in most cases, acclamations both precede and follow the reading.⁶⁸

After the Gospel, the congregation joins together in the singing of the Hymn of the Day. The Hymn of the Day is selected from a group of well-known hymns that, just like the first lesson, the psalm, and the second lesson, echo the truths that were just proclaimed in the Gospel of the Day.

The sermon comes after the Hymn of the Day. Despite what many people think, the sermon is not the high point of the Service of the Word. The high point, as mentioned before, is the Gospel. Even if the Gospel of the Day is not being preached on in the sermon, the sermon most likely will contain truths that the Gospel of the Day contain since the other lessons are based on the theme that the Gospel of the Day establishes.

After hearing the entirety of the message that God’s Word has proclaimed on that particular day, the congregation joins together and confesses the one truth Christian faith, using either the Apostles Creed or the Nicene Creed. The creed sometimes is said right before the sermon. “Where the creed comes before the sermon, we express the conviction that the sermon should be rooted in the Gospel as we have confessed it, and that it should not deviate from this faith.”⁶⁹ The creed could also be said after the sermon. “Where the Creed comes after the

⁶⁸ Fred L. Precht, 413.

⁶⁹ Burnell F. Eckardt Jr., 38.

sermon, this former conviction is simply assumed to be the case, which, by some reckoning, actually makes the conviction a stronger one. . . In either case, to confess the Creed immediately upon hearing the Word is to imply that faith comes by hearing, that is, to acknowledge the power of the Word to create the faith we confess.”⁷⁰

It is the church’s reply to God’s Word, the public acceptance and confession in summary form of the faith of the whole church. Every use of it is in a sense a renewal of our baptismal covenant. Its brief but comprehensive statements encompass “the whole dispensation of God.”⁷¹

Expressions of Fellowship

After the proclaiming of God’s Word, the congregation is moved to respond to the goodness of God. There are two ways in which the worshippers gathered together do just that. The first way the congregation responds is through their offerings of thanksgiving. The offering is not an intermission of the worship service but rather it is another portion of the worship service in which the universal priests have an opportunity to take part of in worshipping their God. “These gifts, representing the first fruits of creation and symbolic of the offering of the substance of bodily life . . . are offered as a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord that by means of them he might accomplish his purpose to bless his people.”⁷²

The second way the congregation responds to the goodness of God is through the Prayer of the Church. It is during this time that the congregation prays for the ministry of the church, for the well-being of their fellow believers as well as the well-being of society and the world. “In rising above small, local, and selfish considerations, the Prayer of the Church reveals the true mind of the church. There is in it no mere repetition of the thought of the day or of the sermon, no narrow expression of individual needs or desires. It is directed to God in humility and trust and its sincere purpose is to be heard of him.”⁷³

The Order Of the Sacrament

If the Lord’s Supper is being offered, it is here that the worship service begins its ascent to the second high point of the service: the distribution and reception of the Lord’s Supper. The Order of the Sacrament begins with the Preface in which the minister invites the worshippers to

⁷⁰ Burnell F. Eckardt Jr., 38.

⁷¹ Luther D. Reed, 302.

⁷² Fred L. Precht, 417.

⁷³ Luther D. Reed, 316.

lift up their hearts in thanksgiving because Jesus is offering his very own body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.

The congregation then joins in singing the *Sanctus*. These are the words sung by the angels in Isaiah 6 when they were in the presence of God. How appropriate it is that the congregation sings these exact same words as Jesus, the Son of God and God himself becomes physically present with his people in, with and under the bread and the wine.

Next comes a very important part of the communion liturgy: the words of institution. These are the very words that Jesus spoke when he instituted the sacrament on Maundy Thursday. When these words are spoken during the communion liturgy, it is a confession that the church believes what Jesus says to be true, that this bread is the body of Christ and that the wine is the blood of Christ, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins. The Formula of Concord insists that these words should always be said during the order of the sacrament, not because it is through these words that the bread and wine become Christ's body and blood, but because it is through those words that the believer receives the blessings that come from the Lord's Supper. "In addition, we believe, teach, and hold with one accord that in the use of the Holy Supper the words of Christ's institution may under no circumstances be omitted but must be spoken publicly, as it is written, 'The cup of blessing that we bless . . . ' (1 Cor. 11 [10:16]). This blessing takes place through the pronouncement of the words of Christ."⁷⁴

The distribution of the sacrament is one of the most beautiful things in the worship service. God's people come forward, in the very presence of God, and receive the very body and blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son and God himself, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins. The Lord's Supper is more than just an assurance of the forgiveness of sins, but rather when believers partake of the sacrament, they are physically receiving forgiveness of their sins. What a wonderful and beautiful way that God comes to his people.

After the distribution, the Song of Simeon is sung. These words of Simeon were spoken when he finally was able to see and touch the promised Messiah. Simeon could now depart in peace because the Savior was physically in his presence. Appropriately, the congregation sings these words of Simeon because they too have seen and touched Christ through the sacrament.

⁷⁴ Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert, *Formula of Concord, Epitome, Art VII, p. 505.*

The congregation can now depart in peace because they too have been physically in the presence of Christ.

After a prayer of thanksgiving, the presiding minister speaks the Aaronic blessing to the congregation. The Aaronic blessing has been God's way of blessing his people and putting his name on his people for over 3,500 years. What a special privilege to be part of that blessing!

THE PROBLEM: THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND!

What a rich heritage! What a rich history that Christian worship has! There is so much thought and meaning that goes into Lutheran liturgical worship. One cannot help but appreciate the richness of this style of public worship. When a person recognizes that the worship service is controlled by two main things, the Gospel and the Sacrament, worship becomes more edifying. When a person is able to catch the theme that the Gospel sets forth throughout the service, worship becomes more edifying. When a person understands why the congregation stands and sings "Alleluia!" before the Gospel, worship becomes more edifying. When a person understands the connection between the Song of Simeon and the end of the distribution of the Lord's Supper, worship becomes more edifying. But, are our teens understanding this? Do they understand that the two high points of the worship service are the Gospel and the Sacrament? Do they catch the theme that the Gospel sets forth throughout the service? Do they know why they stand and sing "Alleluia!" before the Gospel? Do they know why they sing the Song of Simeon after the distribution of the Lord's Supper?

For this paper, a survey was sent out to different youth groups and catechism students throughout southeastern Wisconsin. This survey by no means speaks on behalf of all WELS youth but good information can be collected from this survey. The survey consisted of ten questions:

- 1.) In a sentence or two, explain why you attend worship services?
- 2.) On a scale of 1 to 10, with ten being the most certain, how familiar are you with the order of service in the hymnal?
- 3.) Why do we sing a song of praise after the pastor announces the forgiveness of sins? If you do not know, please type, "I don't know."
- 4.) What is the point of the Prayer of the Day before the reading of the first lesson? If you do not know, please type, "I don't know."
- 5.) Why do we sing psalms in the worship service? Or why do we have psalms printed in the hymnal? If you do not know, please type, "I don't know."

- 6.) Why do we sing "Alleluia" before the reading of the Gospel? If you do not know, please type, "I don't know."
- 7.) What do you think is the "high point" or the most important part of the worship service?
- 8.) How often do you understand the main point of a sermon?
- 9.) Why do we collect an offering after the sermon? If you do not know, please type, "I don't know."
- 10.) Why do we sometimes sing the Song of Simeon after the Lord's Supper is distributed? If you do not know, please type, "I don't know."

This paper will now look at these questions and provide some of the answers from the teenagers who participated in this survey. It should be noted that some of the participants of this survey were not WELS members, but were participating in the WELS school through School Choice. Those surveys will be disregarded.⁷⁵

1.) In a sentence or two, explain why you attend worship services?

- Because it is comforting to worship with others believers.
- To listen to God's Word and strengthen my faith. Plus, I can do worship with my family and congregation.
- To praise and ask him for forgiveness of sins.
- I go to church because I love to hear God's Word. I also love to grow my faith.
- I attend worship services because we should be worshipping with other Christians.
- I am a WELS Lutheran about to be confirmed in my faith.
- Because you need to in order to grow your faith.

Analysis: This question was one of the better answered questions in the survey. A lot of the teenagers mentioned wanting to grow in their faith and become closer to God. A few mentioned the positives of worshipping with other believers. In some answers, however, there was a hint of legalistic reasons as to why they attended worship, that they had to if they wanted to grow in their faith. There was one response that had the "...so I can 'graduate' from church" feel to it. "I am WELS Lutheran about to be confirmed in my faith." To this one participant, it seems that worship is something that they go to so that they can be confirmed. But what happens after they get confirmed? That is a dangerous mindset to have for worship.

⁷⁵ To view the full results of this survey, visit this website: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-PSBGJ7VF/>

2.) On a scale of 1 to 10, with ten being the most certain, how familiar are you with the order of service in the hymnal?

The average for the twenty-three responses was about a seven. Although this survey by no means speaks for all WELS youth, it does seem that there is a good familiarity with the orders of service in the Christian Worship hymnal. Whether they know the point of the liturgies is another thing.

3.) Why do we sing a song of praise after the pastor announces the forgiveness of sins? If you do not know, please type, "I don't know."

- Because we are thanking him for forgiving our sins.
- To thank God for forgiving our sins... I don't know.
- I don't know, maybe to praise God that he sent his Son for us to die and forgive our sins.
- Because we praise God for forgiving our sins and telling us about his word.
- Because it's a beautiful thing to remember what our Savior did for us.
- We are professing that we know our sins are forgiven.
- I don't know (x4)

The Song of Praise, or the *Gloria in Excelsis* seems to be pretty well understood. The Song of Praise is sung as a response to the announcement of full and free forgiveness of sins through Jesus. However, there are still a few who do not understand the point of the Song of Praise or the *Gloria in Excelsis*.

4.) What is the point of the Prayer of the Day before the reading of the first lesson? If you do not know, please type, "I don't know."

- To ask him for blessings on our worship.
- Because we pray to God for all the things he gives us and the people he has blessed.
- To pray for things that are a little more personal, and to pray for the church.
- To acknowledge those who are hurt and are having troubles. We want to pray that they will be ok.
- It has to do with the first lesson and to help us pay attention.
- I don't know (x14)

The purpose of the Prayer of the Day is not as obvious with the youth. The purpose of the Prayer of the Day is to ask God for the blessings that are bestowed on his people based on the Gospel lesson. Among the participants of this survey, it seems that they are mixing up the Prayer of the

Day with the Prayer of the Church. Still, of the twenty-three responses, fourteen do not know why the Prayer of the Day is prayed by the pastor.

5.) Why do we sing psalms in the worship service? Or why do we have psalms printed in the hymnal? If you do not know, please type, "I don't know."

- We sing psalms because it's just like thanking God and they are in the hymnal because they are kind of like a hymn.
- To praise God for everything he has ever done or did.
- To use some of the words God gave us in the Bible.
- To praise God with singing.
- I think that we have psalms because they are very important they talk about what God does for us and the law and gospel.
- Because they are songs from the bible and so they are right there when we sing them.
- I don't know (x12)

A few understand that the psalms were the songs that believers would sing in the Old Testament. Those few also understand that this is their opportunity to share in the responsibilities of proclaiming God's Word in worship. However not all of the psalms that are sung praise God for everything that he has done. Some psalms are penitential psalms and others are different kinds of lamenting psalms that are not specifically giving praise to God. Again, and unfortunately, twelve out of the twenty-three participants do not understand why psalms are sung in worship and others do not quite have the right idea.

6.) Why do we sing "Alleluia" before the reading of the Gospel? If you do not know, please type, "I don't know."

- We sing alleluia because it's saying that we believe in God and how he gave us the Bible to believe in him.
- Because we praise God for his Son and not just the law that is in the Bible.
- To tell God these words are true.
- Because we are praising God for his word and forgiving our sins.
- To send praises to God before the gospel.
- Because we are happy for the God's Word.
- Because we are praising God for sending us his son, because without him there is no gospel.
- I don't know (x9)

The singing of “Alleluia” is more than just a simple song of praise to break up the monotony of the readings and a few participants were on the cusp of understanding the singing of “Alleluia” before the Gospel of the Day. The worshippers are indeed happy for the Gospel because without the Gospel of Christ, no one is saved. But still, nine out of twenty-three teenagers simply do not know why “Alleluia” is sung before the Gospel and still other’s ideas are not quite on the spot.

7.) What do you think is the "high point" or the most important part of the worship service?

- The sermon (x11)
- The Gospel (x4)
- Confession/Forgiveness of Sins (x3)
- Prayer (x3)
- The blessing (x2)
- Lord’s Supper
- Confession of Faith
- Opening Hymn

As was anticipated, most think that the highest, most important part of the service is the sermon. They do not understand that the sermon is just a servant to the Gospel, since the sermon simply echoes the truths proclaimed in the Gospel. There were four who understood that the high point of the worship service is the Gospel of the Day, and one person even recognized that the Sacrament is the other high point of the worship service. Other than that, the answers were all across the board. Most of the youth do not seem to understand that everything is based on the theme that the Gospel of the Day presents.

8.) How often do you understand the main point of a sermon?

- I always understand the main point of a sermon (4%)
- I almost always understand the main point of a sermon (64%)
- I sometimes understand the main point of a sermon (32%)
- I almost never understand the main point of a sermon (0%)
- I never understand the main point of a sermon (0%)

It seems that there is good understanding of the main point of a sermon which is encouraging. While the teenagers that participated in this survey seem to almost always understand the main

theme of the sermon, there are 32% of the participants who could use a little help in knowing how to listen to a sermon.

9.) Why do we collect an offering after the sermon? If you do not know, please type, "I don't know."

- We give some to the people who don't have churches where they live and it goes to the pastors.
- To give it to God, but in other words to pastors, missionaries, and people that are needy.
- To give God thanks for giving us people to give the service.
- To give gifts to God.
- To show our thankfulness.
- We want to gather offerings as a form of praise, sacrifice, or offering.
- God blesses us with money so we want to give back for him and his people.
- Because we just heard that we are forgiven so we are happy and have gratitude.
- I don't know (x9)

One thing is clear here: teenagers know what the offerings are going towards. Some of them know that offerings are given out of thankfulness to God. The offering is the people's response to what they heard during the proclamation of God's Word through the lessons and the sermon. Nine of the twenty-three do not know why an offering is collected after the sermon and others do not mention the motivation behind the giving of the offering.

10.) Why do we sometimes sing the Song of Simeon after the Lord's Supper is distributed? If you do not know, please type, "I don't know."

- Because we are telling God that we are ready to go home to heaven.
- To tell him why we love him.
- To thank God for refreshing us with the Lord's supper.
- We are thanking Jesus for dying on the cross.
- I don't know (x17)

Granted this is a harder concept to understand but singing the Song of Simeon after the Lord's Supper is more than just a nice song to sing. Think to what was said earlier about the Song of Simeon. These words of Simeon were spoken when he finally was able to see and touch the promised Messiah. Simeon could now depart in peace because the Savior was physically in his presence. Appropriately, the congregation sings these words of Simeon because they too have seen and touched Christ through the sacrament. The congregation can now depart in peace

because they too have been physically in the presence of Christ. That is beautiful! However, our young people are not understanding that and thus are probably not edified by the singing of this song.

This survey says that while there are areas of public worship that are well understood, the worship service as a whole is not very well understood. The root of this problem comes from a lack of worship education throughout WELS.

I think there is a general lack of understanding of Lutheran liturgical worship among all age groups in the WELS. It stems from a lack of worship education. Our people and sometimes our pastors all know what we do, but so often they don't know the reason. Understanding our worship philosophy (why we do, what we do, in the way we do it) would be beneficial for any worshiper.⁷⁶

It is hard for worship to be edifying if the worshippers do not understand what they are doing and why they are doing it. Pastor John Bortulin uses an illustration to prove this point.

The first time I took my wife [then girlfriend] to a football game she hadn't a clue; so she didn't very much appreciate it. With worship—a lack of understanding can lead to a view that we are “simply going through the motions.”⁷⁷

As mentioned before, there is such a rich history behind the things that take place in Lutheran liturgical worship. There are such deep meanings and symbolism behind the songs, the themes and the rituals in Lutheran liturgical worship. The problem is simple. If worship is not understood, it cannot be very edifying. If worship is not edifying, it becomes less personal. If worship does not become personal, worship loses its meaning for the worshipper. If worship loses meaning for the worshipper, they are less likely to come back, and thus that age-old problem that was mentioned at the very beginning of this paper continues. The greatest youth group in the world will not be enough to keep the youth in church if the most important thing they do on a weekly basis, attend public worship, has no meaning to them. If that is the case, then the youth group just seems to be a cheap, sappy and lame attempt to keep the teenagers in church.

SOLUTION

What can WELS do to help teenagers have a more edifying worship experience? Should WELS churches abandon liturgical worship because they do not understand it? Should WELS churches adopt an “easier” way to worship? Past experience has shown that changing the

⁷⁶ Rev. Jonathan Schroeder, email interview, December 2, 2016. Full e-mail interview available in Appendix C.

⁷⁷ Rev. John Bortulin, email interview, February 22, 2017. Full e-mail interview available in Appendix D.

worship format does not necessarily help. “In Evangelical churches which are nearly all non-liturgical, they estimate 80% of the youth who grow up in the evangelical churches drop out by their sophomore year of college. There are no silver bullets.”⁷⁸

WELS churches do not need to change their style of worship for the sake of teenagers. However there are steps that congregations can take in order to help their youth understand worship more so that worship is not only more edifying, but because it is more edifying, they are more likely to remain in church during and after their teen years. Worship is most edifying when it is done well. “I think more important than educating our teens is ensuring that our pastorate understands and can communicate our liturgical worship philosophy. That will lead to excellence in worship.”⁷⁹

Excellence in worship can be done even in the small things, such as the music chosen in worship, the design and layout of the service folder, etc. Once a week, pick a certain part of the liturgy and have a brief explanation printed in the bulletin explaining why the congregation uses this in worship. This is a very easy way to educate others about liturgical worship as it is happening. When it comes to doing music well in worship, pick hymns that are easy and familiar to sing. Pick hymns that get young people and everyone else excited to sing.

We can also instruct our young people about Lutheran liturgical worship while they are in catechism classes. Lutheran liturgical worship has such a rich history and such deep and meaningful symbolism. Share it with the youth! They very well could appreciate it. Take a period or two and discuss the concepts and theology behind Lutheran liturgical worship. Or perhaps, spread your worship education throughout the year as you go through the Catechism.

I regularly challenge students in catechism and Adult class: “Why We Do, What We Do” needs to be able to be answered. It’s also my experience that students are ready and willing to learn this. One of the ways we address this is by connecting the catechism to the Divine Service—specifically: making connections from the Divine Service in our teaching.

e.g.—when teaching about baptism, talk placement of font, invocation, sign of the cross, the nunc dimittis and the benediction

⁷⁸ Rev. Jonathan Schroeder

⁷⁹ Rev. Jonathan Schroeder

e.g.—when teaching ten commandments, talk about “examining one’s life in light of the Ten Commandments, especially in view of the Table of Duties...[As employer, employee, parent, child...]

e.g.—when teaching keys and confession connect to confession and absolution

e.g.—when teaching 2nd Article tie in the Gloria.⁸⁰

Don’t be afraid to ask them if there is something about worship that they do not understand.

The Scriptures are inexhaustible. The Service as we have it in the Lutheran church is rooted in Holy Scriptures and too is inexhaustible. Teach, teach, teach from early on what is happening and why it is happening. Sometimes when I teach our teen Bible study I simply make them ask a question about worship, something they don’t understand, and use that as a springboard. From such conversations has led to the ability to teach, in the context of the liturgy, such key concepts as the power of the means of grace, baptismal living, Closed communion, etc.⁸¹

Perhaps our synod can print a very small and simple pamphlet that explains Lutheran liturgical worship to the layperson. One of the sources for this paper was a brief booklet explaining the liturgy in a simple way. Northwestern Publishing House could produce something like that to go along with catechetical material, if it does not print something like that already.

Another major thing that could help our teens in worship is teaching them how to properly listen to a sermon. Granted, there is no need to teach them terms like malady, virtue, propositional statement, etc. But very simply, we tell them to catch five things in a sermon: 1.) How the introduction transitions to the main point of the sermon; 2.) the exposition of the text; 3.) law application; 4.) gospel application; 5.) how this affects our lives. Those are five things that can be easily attainable in listening to sermons.

Another way for the youth to better understand Lutheran liturgical worship is by getting them involved in the worship service. Have them serve as ushers, have young men serve as guest lectors, or see if it is possible to form a youth choir. By helping them get involved, they not only feel that they belong but they will gain a greater appreciation for worship.

CONCLUSION

⁸⁰ Rev. John Bortulin

⁸¹ Rev. John Bortulin

Is this ultimate answer as to how we can keep our teenagers in church? No, but it very well could be the beginning of solving the age-old problem. Maybe a better understanding of Lutheran liturgical worship will help everything else fall into place when it comes to teen ministry. “Excellence in worship and in preaching, and establishing solid spiritual mentoring programs will have more impact on retention of teen worshipers.”⁸²

While there are many ways to help teenagers and their understanding of Lutheran liturgical worship, there is no one sure fire way that will clear everything up. There is no silver bullet to assure that worship will be edifying for every single teenager in the WELS. There will be instances where nothing can be done to help edify one’s experience in worship. Odds are the age-old problem will continue to be the age-old problem. However, there is plenty our synod can do to help the problem become less of a problem. There is so much to teach about worship. Let us share it with them! These are the future leaders of the church. Let us teach them the best we can! To God alone be the glory!

⁸² Rev. Jonathan Schroeder

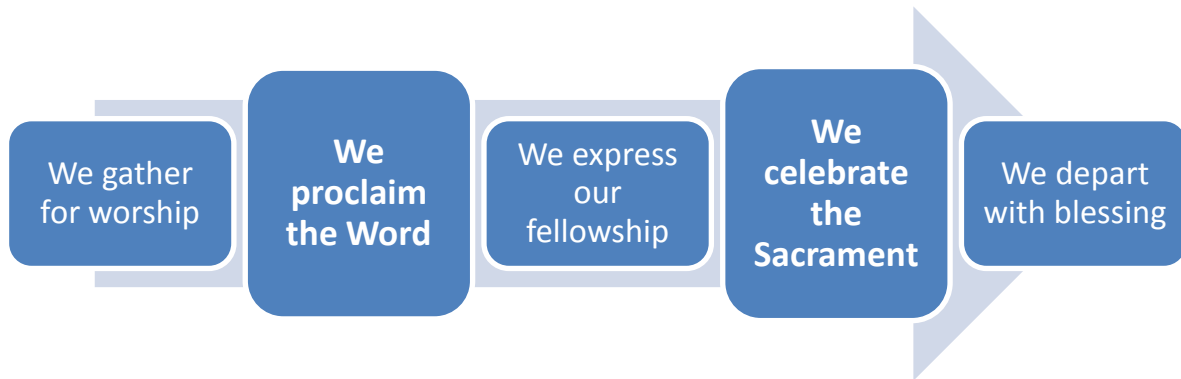
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Appendix A

This document was prepared for WR3071Ti, a class taught at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. This document was found on the Seminary's academic webpage called Seminary Online. Because you have to be enrolled in the course to view this document, it is made available in this appendix.

THE LUTHERAN LITURGY



We Gather for Worship

Hymn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Brings people together worship•Begins to set the mood of the service
Invocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•A reminder of Holy Baptism•The words of Baptism and the sign of Baptism
Confession Absolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•We acknowledge our sins and confess them•The servant of the Lord forgives our sins
Lord, Have Mercy <i>Kyrie</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•A prayer for forgiveness•A prayer for mercy in the day of trouble
Glory to God <i>Gloria in excelsis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•A song of praise to Christ proclaiming who he is and what he does•Replaced by <i>O Lord, Our Lord</i> or <i>This Is the Feast</i>

We Proclaim the Word

Prayer of the Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•This prayer asks the Lord to grant the blessings offered in the Word on this day.
First Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•A reading from the OT that matches the focus of the message of the day's Gospel.
Psalm of the Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•An OT hymn that complements the Gospel theme.
Second Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•A reading from one of the Epistles either focusing on the Gospel or part of a set of readings from an epistle
Verse of the Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Alleluias announce the reading of the Gospel.•Standing and acclaiming highlight the day's Gospel
GOSPEL OF THE DAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The reading of the words and works of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.•The pinnacle of the Service of the Word.
Choral Anthem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The choir enhances and applies the truths of the Gospel.
Hymn of the Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Selected from a set of excellent hymns, this hymn enables the congregation to proclaim the truths announced in the Gospel.
Sermon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The pastor explains and applies the truths proclaimed in the Gospel and the other readings.
Nicene Creed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•We confess that we accept and believe the truths of God's Word

We Express Our Fellowship

Prayer of the Church

- We pray for fellow Christians and all people
- Lord's Prayer

Offering

- We support ministry to fellow Christians
- We support ministry of fellow Christians

Preparation for the Sacrament

- We prepare to celebrate the Sacrament

We Celebrate the Sacrament

Preface	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•After he greets us, the minister invites us to lift up our hearts and give thanks to the Lord.
Holy, Holy, Holy <i>Sanctus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•We sing with the angels in the throne room of God as we anticipate the coming of the Savior in his body and blood.
Thanksgiving Prayer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Long omitted from the Lutheran Liturgy, this prayer answers the invitation to give thanks in CWS Divine Service II.
Lord's Prayer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Historically, the Lord's Prayer was part of the Thanksgiving Prayer. It stood alone in TLH and was removed in CW. CWS Divine Service II restores it.
WORDS OF INSTITUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The words and works of Jesus at the institution of his holy meal.•The pinnacle of the Service of the Sacrament.
Peace of the Lord	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The minister extends peace to those who will find peace in the Sacrament.
Lamb of God <i>Agnus Dei</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•We pray to the Lamb of God to have mercy on us and grant us peace.
Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•We receive the Savior's true body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.
Blessing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The minister extends the Savior's blessing to those who have communed.

We Depart with Blessing

Song of Simeon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•We pray the Lord to grant us peace as we depart.
Thanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•We conclude our thanksgiving.•Thank the Lord and Sing His Praise in SWS.
Prayer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•A prayer of thanksgiving for the Sacrament
Blessing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The blessing giving to Aaron extending the blessing of the Holy Trinity.

Appendix B

This document was prepared for WR3071Ti, a class taught at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. This document was found on the Seminary's academic webpage called Seminary Online. Because you have to be enrolled in the course to view this document, it is made available in this appendix.

The Function and Form of Christian Worship

The Purpose of Christian Worship

- A. To worship God is to ascribe worth to him (Anglo-Saxon: *weorthscripe*).

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing (Revelation 5:12).

- B. The highest worship of God is to believe in him, that is, to fear, love, and trust in him above all things. Giving God my confidence indicates what I think and feel he is worth to me

Here you have the meaning of the true honor and worship of God, which pleases God, and which he commands under penalty of eternal wrath, namely, that the heart know no other comfort or confidence than in him and does not suffer itself to be torn from him, but for him risk and disregard everything upon earth (*Large Catechism*, First Commandment:16).

1. The Christian confesses what God is worth at the time of his baptism

I believe in God the Father Almighty...
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord...
I believe in the Holy Spirit...

2. Christians confess what God is worth as they gather for public worship.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty...
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ...
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life...

3. This worship of God is created and empowered by the Holy Spirit working through the Means of Grace.

No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3)

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or doing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, nor come to him. But the Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel (*Small Catechism*, Third Article).

C. Christians demonstrate what God is worth to them, that is, they worship him, by living according to his will.

1. Essentially, worship is the Christian life.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1-2).

2. This worship impacts not only our relationship with God but also with our neighbor.

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:37-39).

3. God calls on Christians to offer this worship in order that he might bring blessings to his Church and his world.

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbor for his good, to build him up...May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:1-2, 5).

D. Christians also demonstrate how much God is worth to them when they assemble for public worship.

1. Gathering for public worship has been the habit of the Church since creation.

a. After the Fall

At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD (*qara' beshem yahweh* - Genesis 4:26).

b. In the tabernacle and temple

Moses assembled the whole Israelite community and said to them, "These are the things the Lord has commanded you to do: For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord (Exodus 35:1-2).

c. In the New Testament Church

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:42).

2. It is the duty and delight of Christians to come together for public worship.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:25)

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord, Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, O Lord Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you (Psalm 84:1-4).

E. Neither the purpose nor the pattern of Christian public worship is prescribed on the pages of the Bible.

1. The Old Testament ceremonial laws concerning worship were abrogated when Christ came.

The law was put in charge until Christ came that we (namely, Israel) might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law (Galatians 3:24-25).

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ (Colossians 2:16-17).

How, then, should Sunday and other similar church ordinances and ceremonies be regarded? Our people reply that bishops or pastors may make regulations for the sake of good order in the church, but not thereby to obtain God's grace, to make satisfaction for sin, or to bind consciences, nor to regard such as a service to God or to consider it a sin when these rules are broken without giving offense...The same applies to the regulation of Sunday, Easter, Pentecost, or similar festivals and customs. For those who think that the Sabbath day had to be replaced by Sunday are very much mistaken. For Holy Scripture did away with the Sabbath, and teaches that after the revelation of the gospel all ceremonies of the old law may be given up (AC, XXVIII:53, 57-59).

2. It is problematic at best to use passages that describe "worship" in the New Testaments to gather a paradigm for public worship.

a. Neither the word worship nor any of the words translated as worship in the New Testament are used in connection with public worship in the New Testament.

"It is particularly conspicuous that the terms descriptive of the Old Testament worship are in part adopted to signify the redemptive work of Jesus and in part, after being reinterpreted and stripped of their concretely ritualistic sense, are applied to Christian conduct in general or to special services within the church; but they are deliberately not used in speaking of the particular worship in which the congregation sings, prays, listens to the Word, and celebrates Holy Communion" (Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, p. 17).

- b. Words which the New Testament uses for public worship have more to do with assemble than with worship.

synagw and synerchwmai: Mt 18:20; 1 Cor 5:4; Acts 4:31.
klasis tou artou (breaking of bread)

- c. To use the word *worship* for the gathering of believers around the means of grace may imply that this gathering is a First Commandment function. We are left with the reality, however, that the words the Church has come to use for the Christian assembly are words connected to the concept of worship: *leiturgia* (*service to state*), *cultus*, *officium* (*public service*), *Gottesdienst*, *divine service* (man serving God). Efforts to explain this apparent anomaly are often artificial and confusing.

- 3. The New Testament's timeless principles govern the purpose and pattern of public worship. First century applications of those principles may or may not guide the purpose and pattern of our public worship.

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you (John 15:12).

Greet one another with a holy kiss (2 Corinthians 13:12).

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (Romans 14:19).

We should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood (Acts 15:20). [Jerusalem conference: how they applied the timeless principle.]

The Apostles commanded to abstain from blood. Who does now observe it? And yet they that do it sin not; for not even the apostles themselves wanted to burden consciences with such bondage; but they forbade it for a time to avoid offense (AC XXVIII: 65).

There is nothing pertaining to the church and its activity which has been prescribed as to outward form, no form for the worship service, the sermon, the prayers, the liturgy, the singing; also no time, no frequency, no duration, no prescribed order of worship ("Are There Legal Requirements in the New Testament," August Pieper, translated by Carl Lawrenz in WLQ, Vol 86, No. 1, p. 37).

- 4. Our *quia* subscription to the Lutheran Confessions does not obligate us to imitate the practices commended by the confessional authors.

Falsely are our churches accused of abolishing the Mass; for the Mass is retained among us, and celebrated with the highest reverence. Nearly all the usual ceremonies are also preserved, save that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns, which have been added to teach the people (Augsburg Confession, Art. XXIV: 1).

So in our churches we willingly observe the order of the mass, the Lord's day, and the other important feast days. With a very thankful spirit we cherish the useful and ancient ordinances (Apology VII & VIII: 33).

We hold one communion every holy day and, if any desire the Sacrament, also on other days, when it is given to such to ask for it (Augsburg Confession, Art XXIV: 34).

We believe, teach, and confess that the congregation of God of every place and every time has the power, according to its own circumstances, to change such ceremonies in such manner as may be most useful and edifying to the congregation of God (*Formula of Concord*, Epitome, Art. 10).

F. Inevitably, the function of Christian worship flows from the believer's desire to use the means of grace. All other aspects of public worship--praise, prayer, confession, etc.--flow from that primary longing.

1. It is the Savior's will that the Church puts into use the Word and the Sacraments.

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19).

Do this in remembrance of me (Luke 22:19).

2. The Savior desires us to use his Word without adding to it or subtracting from it and to administer his Sacraments according to his institution.

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples" (John 8:31).

In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good (1 Corinthians 11:17).

3. To use the Word and the Sacraments is not a legal requirement, but a joyful response to the grace of God.

Gospel, baptism, and the Lord's Supper are not legal ordinances. The administration of Word and Sacrament enjoined upon the Church and each Christian—we mean the enjoined actions of preaching, baptizing, and of celebrating the Lord's Supper—is likewise not a legal ordinance...After we have come to know the gospel in faith, preaching, baptism, and celebrating the Lord's Supper become for us Christians not a duty—for duty is a legal concept—but an inner spiritual compulsion" ("Are There Legal Requirements in the New Testament," August Pieper, translated by Carl Lawrenz in WLQ, Vol. 86, No. 1, p. 40).

I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1).

4. What is found in the Means of Grace is the life of the Church

a. Where the Means of Grace are, there Christ himself is present

Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them (Matthew 18:20).

For all of you who have been united with Christ in baptism have been clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27).

This is my body...This is my blood (Matthew 26:26, 28).

“It is through these ordinances that Christ imparts himself to the world...they are Means of Grace through which the Savior—none other than the Mediator of the New Testament—actually gives and powerfully effects what the law of the Old Testament demanded in vain. These are the words of life. They are themselves Spirit and life, the New Testament, grace and truth, the power of God, salvation, blessedness” (“Are There Legal Requirements in the New Testament,” August Pieper, translated by Carl Lawrenz in WLQ, Vol 86, No. 1, p. 40).

- b. Where the Means of Grace are, there is the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven” (John 21:21-23).

Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven (Acts 2:38).

This is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for the many for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:27).

- c. Christ commissions his Church to use the Means of Grace because he desires to bring blessings to his Church and his world.

Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you (Exodus 20:24).

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:5-6).

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).

- 5. In the Church’s experience, all aspects of the ministry of the gospel are at the same time similar and dissimilar.

- a. Essentially, public worship and other aspects of the ministry of the gospel are the same in that they all proclaim the great things God had done in Christ.

- b. Practically, public worship and other aspects of the ministry of the gospel are different as to objective and scope.

-- evangelism: clarify

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him (Acts 8:34-35).

-- discipline: specify

When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him (2 Corinthians 2:7-8).

-- education: broaden

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

[Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately (Acts 18:26).

-- counseling: personalize

After he took him [the man who was deaf and mute] aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (Mark 7:33).

-- public worship: summarize and solidify

The worship of tabernacle, temple, and synagogue
The worship of the first century church

The dominant material in which art appears in worship is the Word. From beginning to end, this Word is the creational agent for the salvation-event in worship. The question regarding the form of this Word, the question regarding the vessel into which this Word is poured, is decisive for what art in worship really is. This question is subdivided into two: the one regarding the text and the other regarding the melody of this Word. Here we must note that these two seek each other and may again enter into a mysterious union, so that the melody, on its part, becomes a symbolic vessel for the text (Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, p. 263).

- c. In the practice of the orthodox Christian Church and the confessional Lutheran Church, public worship has been essentially the carrying out of the Great Commission through the vehicles of ritual and the fine arts.

[The presentation that details the role of ritual, art, and music in gospel proclamation to the creature's whole being is in *Ritual and Art in Public Worship*.]

- d. While there is no biblical prohibition against changing the objectives of the various aspects of the gospel ministry, the Church makes these choices carefully.

6. The Church calls and appoints public ministers to assist, guide, and participate in its public worship of God.

a. Public worship in all its aspects is the work of the people.

b. For the sake of order and edification the people appoint individuals to act on their behalf and in their place (representative ministry).

For when I preach, when we come together as a congregation, this is not my word or my doing; but is done for the sake of all of you and for the sake of the whole church...So also they all pray and sing and give thanks together; here there is nothing that one possesses or does for himself alone; but what each one has belongs to the other (LW, Vol 51, p. 343).

c. We speak, therefore, of presiding ministers, preachers, assisting ministers, music ministers, etc.

d. It is a biblical and confessional principle that no one may serve in gospel ministry without being properly called.

Concerning church order they teach that no one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly called (AC XIV).

G. We worship God by proclaiming the great things God has done in Christ. This is what Christ commissioned the Church to do, and this is how the Church demonstrates its opinion concerning the Savior's worth. By using the means of grace the Church adores Christ. **All proclamation, therefore, is praise, and all praise is proclamation.**

I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips...Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together (Psalm 34:1, 3).

I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles...The LORD redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him (Psalm 34:4-6, 22).

Therefore our task is simply to praise and thank him, first, by receiving and believing in our hearts that from him are all things and he is our God; and secondly by coming out with it and freely confessing it with our mouths before all the world in preaching, praising, lauding, and thanking. This is the only true worship, the true priestly service, and the sacrifice, beloved and acceptable, as says St. Peter in 1 Peter 2 (WA 12, 308).

In some of these expositions of the rhythm of proclamation and acclamation in the liturgical songs of the congregation, use has been made of the Latin terms *anabasis* and *catabasis*: God speaks to us—in the liturgical assembly the word of God is heard in the *catabasis* of proclamation; we speak to God—from within the same liturgical assembly we respond to God in the *anabasis* of acclamation, though the two terms are not seen as mutually exclusive but as actions that share elements of both concepts (Robin Leaver, "Music as Proclamation and Acclamation," *Liturgical Ministry* 80, Spring 2001, pp. 73-82).

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).

1. It is more difficult to speak of public worship as having sacramental and sacrificial dimensions.

The congregation's Spirit-effected response to the gift of salvation, conveyed in Word and Sacrament, is itself Word. Also where this response involves a physical gesture, this gesture is not mute, but vital through the words accompanying it. This responding, confessing, thanking, and glorifying word of the congregation will always recall the great and saving deeds of God's might; it will acknowledge, laud, and glorify them prayerfully, and in this manner also proclaim and present them to others. It is precisely the priestly service of the congregation that thus becomes a proclamation of the wonderful deeds of God (Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, p. 122-124).

"[Theodore Kliefoth] warns against two common misunderstandings of this distinction [sacramental/sacrificial] in Lutheran circles. On the one hand, even though the sacramental function of the service may be distinguished from its sacrificial function, they cannot ever be separated. They often occur simultaneously, like the preaching of the word and the faithful hearing of it, for, as Melanchthon had already noted (Ap XXIV, 75), the same ritual act can have more than one purpose. On the other hand, the sacramental function of the service is not performed exclusively by the pastor, nor is the sacrificial function performed only by the congregation. Thus the members of the congregation act sacramentally when they proclaim God's Word to each other communally in sacred song. Likewise the pastor acts sacrificially when he leads the congregation in prayer" (John W. Kleinig, "The Liturgical Heritage of Theodor Kliefoth," p. 9).

2. In reality, what we have often called sacrificial sections can also be considered sacramental, and what has been called sacramental can also be considered sacrificial.

- a. Sermon

The sermon is an address made to people, but at the same time it is an offering made to God. It is both sacrament and sacrifice...Luther called preaching the highest form of sacrifice because right preaching always praises the Lord (Gerlach and Balge, *Preach the Gospel*, page 2).

Here [1 Peter 2:9] he refers to the office of preaching which is the true office of sacrifice ...for by preaching the grace of God is praised, and that is to offer praise and thanksgiving, even as Paul boasts in Romans [15:16] of sanctifying or offering the gospel" (WA 12, 308).

- b. Hymns

Hymns are a response to God. We sing our hymns to God who has rescued us. As we praise and thank him, we repeat the great things he has done for us. Hymns enable the believer to exercise his ministry. In hymns the universal priesthood is in action. As the believer addresses God, he lays the Word of God close to the heart of his brother by singing of the great things God has done (Bruce Backer in *Lutheran Worship*, p. 94).

Both as a parish pastor and a seminary teacher, preaching occupied a central place in my ministry. I see the writing of hymn texts as only another form—rhyming, rhythmic, more compact—of the proclamation of the gospel. Hymns are the church's sung testimony to God's mighty acts of grace and judgment toward us and our world, attested

in Scripture and attaining their fullest expression in Jesus Christ. This is why, if I were to have told the “stories” behind the texts that follow, there would have been a monotonous recital of: “This was triggered by such-and-such a passage of Scripture (*The Word Goes Forth*, 4-5; GIA, 1993).

c. Confession

Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful, and that I have disobeyed you in my thought’s words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in Jesus my Savior, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

d. Creedal statements

Apostles’, Nicene, Athanasian

e. Prayers

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven and said, O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below--you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way...Now Lord God of Israel, keep for your servant David my farther the promises you made to him (1 Kings 8 - Solomon’s prayer at the Temple dedication).

H. The patterns and descriptions of public worship in the Bible match the concepts of *All proclamation, therefore, is praise, and all praise is proclamation.*

1. Public worship after the Fall

At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD (*qara' beshem yahweh* - Genesis 4:26).

2. Public worship in temple, tabernacle, and synagogue

Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:44).

It is good to praise the Lord and make music to your name, O Most High, to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night, to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp. For you make me glad by your deeds, O LORD; I sing for joy at the works of your hands (Psalms 92:1-4).

Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods (Psalms 96:1-4).

3. Public worship in the New Testament congregations

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:42).

If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified (1 Corinthians 14:16-17).

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:16-17).

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:19-20).

Magnificat (*Song of Mary*)

Benedictus (*Song of Zechariah*)

Gloria in Excelsis (*Song of the Angels*)

Nunc Dimittis (*Song of Simeon*)

Christ Jesus, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking on the form of a servant,
being made in human likeness (Philippians 2:6-7).

4. Public worship in the churches of the Reformation

For among Christians, the whole service should center in the Word and Sacrament (LW, Vol. 53, p. 90).

**The purpose of Christian public worship is to praise God
by proclaiming the gospel in Word and Sacrament.**

Universal priests and public ministers gather at public worship to glorify God by proclaiming the gospel in Word and Sacrament to summarize and solidify truth by means of ritual and the fine arts.

January 8, 2015

Appendix C

The full e-mail interview with Pastor Jonathan Schroeder.

Do you think that there is a lack of understanding among the youth about Lutheran liturgical worship? If so, why?

I think there is a general lack of understanding of Lutheran liturgical worship among all age groups in the WELS. It stems from a lack of worship education. Our people and sometimes our pastors all know what we do, but so often they don't know the reason. Understanding our worship philosophy (why we do, what we do, in the way we do it) would be beneficial for any worshiper.

How could a lack of understanding about liturgical worship affect a teen worshiper's experience?

I am not sure that it's a lack of understanding liturgical worship that causes youth to leave church. See the comments I attached from my Keynote at worship conference 2005:

Much ink has been spilled positing that reaching the unchurched of North America necessitates contemporary worship forms. The reality in my community differs greatly from that demographic assumption. Ask the unchurched in my community and they will tell you that contemporary worship falls at the bottom of the list of ministry approaches found most appealing.

This is my community. Can I tell you that the same numbers would hold true in your community? Of course not. But you can go and ask them. Making assumptions about demographic segments leads to knee-jerk reactions.

Of course, this research begs the question: Are the churches in your area with contemporary worship growing? And if they are indeed growing, does that not speak to the effectiveness of contemporary worship?

That question is based on the assumption that the worship forms of a congregation have the greatest effect on attendance. That is a large assumption. The truth is, growing churches in our community tend to do a lot of things well, not just worship. Perhaps their greatest asset lies in their ability to foster relationships. Perhaps their greatest asset is that by the time I have found a new mover in the community, Crossroads Baptist has delivered a cake, and two neighbors from the subdivision have dropped by to invite them the church. Growing churches tend to do a lot of things well.

What the research shows is that the unchurched in my community don't come to church for the first time because of worship forms, either contemporary or traditional. Do we need to punt liturgical worship "For the Lost?" In no way.

What about the other part of the clarion call: “For the Youth!” Must we abandon liturgical worship to save the next generation of churchgoers? Will contemporary worship keep them coming?

Living in the Bible Belt means that at any time, day or night, I can choose from three channels that carry nothing but religious programming. A large evangelical congregation in my town is called SonRise. SonRise has grown and prospered. It is successful and popular. Their worship is completely contemporary, with a praise band, and the like.

As the camera panned across the congregation at SonRise, it came to the section where all the teenagers were. Across the board, they were doing the Teenage Slump. This is a teenager’s way of communicating intense boredom. They manage to look like every bit of skeletal structure has been removed from their body. The Christian Contemporary Music being played by an enthusiastic praise band made not a lick of difference.

Not long after that a young lady from my congregation returned home from college for the weekend. Eva attended school at the University of Washington, in Seattle. She told me about this new worship that was very popular among the college students. So popular that hundreds of college kids packed into this church every Sunday night. They didn’t have seats for them all.

Of course, I had plenty of ideas of how one might get hundreds of college students voluntarily into one place, none of which would have fit in the realm of dignified worship. So I asked more about it, and I was amazed.

Every Sunday night, hordes college students gathered at St. Mark Episcopal Church. Not for high-tech worship, or garage band music; not for coffee shop talks or a praise band. They light candles and listen to a men’s choir chant Compline, that ancient liturgical service of Prayer at the Close of Day.

This is, of course, anecdotal. But it illustrates the danger of making demographic assumptions about The Youth. Do we need to abandon liturgical worship to reach out to the youth of America today? No. Contemporary worship is no silver bullet to win the hearts of the young.

In my community, contemporary worship forms hold the greatest appeal for neither “The Unchurched!” nor “The Youth!”. Rather, the demographic segment to which it most appeals is the segment we might call Churched Baby-boomers. Not the youth, not the lost, but baby-boomers who already belong to a church.

See also my comments for footnote 106 in my symposium paper on Worship and outreach:

In Evangelical churches which are nearly all non-liturgical, they estimate 80% of the youth who grow up in the evangelical churches drop out by their sophomore year of college.¹⁰⁶ There are no silver bullets.¹⁰³

How can our church body better instruct youth/teens about Lutheran liturgical worship so that worship is more edifying for them?

I think more important than educating our teens is ensuring that our pastorate understands and can communicate our liturgical worship philosophy. That will lead to excellence in worship.

Any additional comments/thoughts about this subject?

In my opinion, excellence in worship and in preaching, and establishing solid spiritual mentoring programs will have more impact on retention of teen worshipers.

Appendix D

The full e-mail interview with Pastor John Bortulin

Do you think that there is a lack of understanding among the youth about Lutheran liturgical worship? If so, why?

From my experience, this is not just a problem of the youth but for parishioners of all ages. I regularly challenge students in catechism and Adult class: “Why We Do, What We Do” needs to be able to be answered. It’s also my experience that students are ready and willing to learn this. One of the ways we address this is by connecting the catechism to the Divine Service—specifically: making connections from the Divine Service in our teaching.

EG—when teaching about baptism, talk placement of font, invocation, sign of the cross, the nunc dimittis and the benediction

EG—when teaching ten commandments, talk about “examining one’s life in light of the Ten Commandments, especially in view of the Table of Duties...[As employer, employee, parent, child...]

EG—when teaching keys and confession connect to confession and absolution

EG—when teaching 2nd Article tie in the Gloria

How could a lack of understanding about liturgical worship affect a teen worshipper’s experience?

Illustration—the first time I took my wife [then girlfriend] to a football game she hadn’t a clue; so she didn’t very much appreciate it. With worship—a lack of understanding can lead to a view that we are “simply going through the motions.” The Catechism is key, here, too. First teach them the words, then what the words mean. Teach them the language of worship, then what that means and why. Not to be overlooked is the rituals involved in worship: standing, sitting, kneeling, position of hands, etc.

How can our church body better instruct youth/teens about Lutheran liturgical worship so that worship is more edifying for them?

See above

Any additional comments/thoughts about this subject?

The Scriptures are inexhaustible. The Service as we have it in the Lutheran church is rooted in Holy Scriptures and too is inexhaustible. Teach, teach, teach from early on what is happening

and why is happening. Sometimes when I teach our teen Bible study I simply make them ask a question about worship, something they don't understand, and use that as a springboard. From such conversations has led to the ability to teach, in the context of the liturgy, such key concepts as the power of the means of grace, baptismal living, Closed communion, etc.