

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

"Take and Eat. Amen!"
1988

My vicarage gave me an experience that has had a profound effect on me. The pastor and I would go to see Irene, a 103-year-old saint of God who, for all intents and purposes, was comatose. Irene would spend 24 hours a day, 7 days a week propped up in a wheelchair or laid gently in her bed. My first impression was that she was gone, and all that was left behind was the barely-breathing shell of a body.

The very first visit with Irene changed my life forever. As I was beginning to wonder about the pastor's sanity for attempting to bring the Sacrament to someone who obviously could not respond or understand what was going on (to my very green theological and liturgical mind), he leaned in to Irene's ear and said (quite loudly), "Irene, would you like to take communion now?" Her head slowly came up, her eyes opened wide, and she said clearly and confidently, "Yes!"

And she spoke every word of the communion liturgy right along with the pastor; his parts and hers. She came alive for 10 brief minutes each month, alive for the life-giving Body and Blood of our Lord. When the Sacrament was completed, Irene closed her eyes, bowed her head, and disappeared into her pseudo-coma for another 30 days until we returned.

Rev. Gregory Schultz
St. Peter Lutheran Church
Campbell Hill, Illinois

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

"Take and Eat. Amen!"
1988

My vicarage gave me an experience that has had a profound effect on me. The pastor and I would go to see Irene, a 103-year-old saint of God who, for all intents and purposes, was comatose. Irene would spend 24 hours a day, 7 days a week propped up in a wheelchair or laid gently in her bed. My first impression was that she was gone, and all that was left behind was the barely-breathing shell of a body.

The very first visit with Irene changed my life forever. As I was beginning to wonder about the pastor's sanity for attempting to bring the Sacrament to someone who obviously could not respond or understand what was going on (to my very green theological and liturgical mind), he leaned in to Irene's ear and said (quite loudly), "Irene, would you like to take communion now?" Her head slowly came up, her eyes opened wide, and she said clearly and confidently, "Yes!"

And she spoke every word of the communion liturgy right along with the pastor; his parts and hers. She came alive for 10 brief minutes each month, alive for the life-giving Body and Blood of our Lord. When the Sacrament was completed, Irene closed her eyes, bowed her head, and disappeared into her pseudo-coma for another 30 days until we returned.

Rev. Gregory Schultz
St. Peter Lutheran Church
Campbell Hill, Illinois

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

"The Stirring Liturgy of the Word" - October, 1999

Regarding the importance of remaining a liturgical church, allow me to impart a timely personal anecdote. This afternoon, at the bedside of 97 year old Clarence -- a man who is, at times, unable to examine himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup -- the liturgy of the Word stirred enough of a response that for the first time in several months he was able to receive the Holy Communion.

I don't know about how all of you approach matters of casuistry on this one, but if I am unable to be assured that a potential communicant is able to "reckon" the Lord's Body [His real sacramental presence, not the Body of the Church, as some maintain] I will withhold the Sacrament and administer a blessing not unlike that which is bestowed on the un-confirmed baptized who come with mom and dad on Sunday morning.

Today, however, after singing an hymn or two [*Holy God We Praise Your Name* and the *Agnus Dei*,] speaking the confession/absolution from the ol' TLH page 15 and a few devotional thoughts on the Lamb of God and our Good Shepherd, I asked Clarence if he desired to receive the Holy Supper. There have been times in the recent past where this brother was unable to even respond. Today was different. In the nursing home setting, too, I find it most helpful to use that order of divine service which was ingrained in these saints of God from of old. Today, the fruit of that liturgical life which surrounded Clarence in days gone by, helped him worthily receive the very body and precious blood which have sustained him thus far, and will strengthen him for life everlasting.

Praise and thanks to our gracious Lord for so great a treasure as our Lutheran liturgy...Old TLH, included!

Pastor Bradley W. Ketcham
St. John Lutheran Church, Audubon, Iowa

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

"The Stirring Liturgy of the Word" - October, 1999

Regarding the importance of remaining a liturgical church, allow me to impart a timely personal anecdote. This afternoon, at the bedside of 97 year old Clarence -- a man who is, at times, unable to examine himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup -- the liturgy of the Word stirred enough of a response that for the first time in several months he was able to receive the Holy Communion.

I don't know about how all of you approach matters of casuistry on this one, but if I am unable to be assured that a potential communicant is able to "reckon" the Lord's Body [His real sacramental presence, not the Body of the Church, as some maintain] I will withhold the Sacrament and administer a blessing not unlike that which is bestowed on the un-confirmed baptized who come with mom and dad on Sunday morning.

Today, however, after singing an hymn or two [*Holy God We Praise Your Name* and the *Agnus Dei*,] speaking the confession/absolution from the ol' TLH page 15 and a few devotional thoughts on the Lamb of God and our Good Shepherd, I asked Clarence if he desired to receive the Holy Supper. There have been times in the recent past where this brother was unable to even respond. Today was different. In the nursing home setting, too, I find it most helpful to use that order of divine service which was ingrained in these saints of God from of old. Today, the fruit of that liturgical life which surrounded Clarence in days gone by, helped him worthily receive the very body and precious blood which have sustained him thus far, and will strengthen him for life everlasting.

Praise and thanks to our gracious Lord for so great a treasure as our Lutheran liturgy...Old TLH, included!

Pastor Bradley W. Ketcham
St. John Lutheran Church, Audubon, Iowa

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

"He makes the mute speak ..." - August, 1998

Many times, I have heard of such things happening, though never to me. But it did happen in August of 1998. A faithful member had a substantial stroke, leaving her with serious difficulties in communication. Lydia was in the rehab floor when I came to bring her the Lord's Supper. She had been baking muffins, but was still having trouble speaking. Her husband and a couple children were around, and I encouraged them to stay. As I usually do in home communions, I followed the simplified version of the Divine Service in the Pastor's Little Agenda. It follows pretty much Divine Service 1 from Lutheran Worship.

Because of her difficulty in participating verbally, I was tempted to abridge the service. However, I did not do so, thanks be to God. Though Lydia could hardly speak, she could sing the canticles loudly, clearly, and with gusto. The joy that brought to everyone present, including Lydia, was so evident. I don't think there was a dry eye there. She was so happy she could participate so well in what was one of the most meaningful things for her -- receiving Christ's Body and Blood.

That was the last time in this earth she was able to do so. A second and more severe stroke took her to be with the Lord less than a week later. But for family and friends who were there, that afternoon was nothing short of miraculous. It was God and the Divine Liturgy which gave Lydia her voice back.

Pastor Robert C. Franck
Mount Olive Lutheran Church
Duluth, Minnesota

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

"He makes the mute speak ..." - August, 1998

Many times, I have heard of such things happening, though never to me. But it did happen in August of 1998. A faithful member had a substantial stroke, leaving her with serious difficulties in communication. Lydia was in the rehab floor when I came to bring her the Lord's Supper. She had been baking muffins, but was still having trouble speaking. Her husband and a couple children were around, and I encouraged them to stay. As I usually do in home communions, I followed the simplified version of the Divine Service in the Pastor's Little Agenda. It follows pretty much Divine Service 1 from Lutheran Worship.

Because of her difficulty in participating verbally, I was tempted to abridge the service. However, I did not do so, thanks be to God. Though Lydia could hardly speak, she could sing the canticles loudly, clearly, and with gusto. The joy that brought to everyone present, including Lydia, was so evident. I don't think there was a dry eye there. She was so happy she could participate so well in what was one of the most meaningful things for her -- receiving Christ's Body and Blood.

That was the last time in this earth she was able to do so. A second and more severe stroke took her to be with the Lord less than a week later. But for family and friends who were there, that afternoon was nothing short of miraculous. It was God and the Divine Liturgy which gave Lydia her voice back.

Pastor Robert C. Franck
Mount Olive Lutheran Church
Duluth, Minnesota

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

"Yes and Amen" - January, 1997

[From Al's funeral sermon] -- The last two words that I heard Al speak were "yes" and "amen." Last week, with Emily, his wife, in the room, we spoke the words of the liturgy. As is often the case with the sick and dying, they are not able to say all the words. Therefore, I spoke the words of the confession of sins as I did earlier during this memorial service:

"O Almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto Thee all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended Thee and justly deserved Thy temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray Thee of Thy boundless mercy, and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being."

Having said that for Al, I then asked him, "Is this your confession? If so, declare it by saying 'yes.'" The second to last word I heard Al say was, "yes." He then heard the words of God's complete and total forgiveness by virtue of Jesus' suffering and death for the sins of the whole world.

The other day, having heard the words of forgiveness, Al listened as the Apostles' Creed was confessed and a psalm was read. Following a prayer which commended him into the hands of the Lord, we prayed the Lord's Prayer. He was only able to mumble along and if you listened to him, you could not make out what he was saying. The words were being prayed faster than he was able to keep up. So when we got to the end, "... for Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, forever and ever," I stopped and did not finish it.

Then it was, from the mouth, the heart, and the soul of this man on his deathbed that he said the last word I heard him speak, a simple, strong "amen." Let it be so. This is most certainly true. Loudly, clearly, and distinctly, "amen."

Pastor Michael L. McCoy
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

"Yes and Amen" - January, 1997

[From Al's funeral sermon] -- The last two words that I heard Al speak were "yes" and "amen." Last week, with Emily, his wife, in the room, we spoke the words of the liturgy. As is often the case with the sick and dying, they are not able to say all the words. Therefore, I spoke the words of the confession of sins as I did earlier during this memorial service:

"O Almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto Thee all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended Thee and justly deserved Thy temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray Thee of Thy boundless mercy, and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being."

Having said that for Al, I then asked him, "Is this your confession? If so, declare it by saying 'yes.'" The second to last word I heard Al say was, "yes." He then heard the words of God's complete and total forgiveness by virtue of Jesus' suffering and death for the sins of the whole world.

The other day, having heard the words of forgiveness, Al listened as the Apostles' Creed was confessed and a psalm was read. Following a prayer which commended him into the hands of the Lord, we prayed the Lord's Prayer. He was only able to mumble along and if you listened to him, you could not make out what he was saying. The words were being prayed faster than he was able to keep up. So when we got to the end, "... for Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, forever and ever," I stopped and did not finish it.

Then it was, from the mouth, the heart, and the soul of this man on his deathbed that he said the last word I heard him speak, a simple, strong "amen." Let it be so. This is most certainly true. Loudly, clearly, and distinctly, "amen."

Pastor Michael L. McCoy
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

"Train up a child in the way he should go ..." (Proverbs 22:6a)

Art is now home and is preparing to depart this vale of tears. He had a brain tumor that began impairing his speech as well as immobilizing his right side, particularly his arm and leg. Just before he was taken in for surgery I spoke the words of the liturgy to him. Most of the tumor was removed but not all of it. Two weeks of physical and speech therapy were fruitless. Six weeks of radiation ceased after only two weeks.

In addition, he has receptive and expressive aphasia. He is not able to make all the mental connections to sort through all that you say to him and his eyes have a confused look about such simple questions as, "Do you live in Emmett, Idaho?" Likewise, he is not able to say a single word, although he will moan in pain when he is moved. His right leg and arm remain motionless. The right side of his throat is such that he is not able to swallow and he now receives food and water through a stomach tube.

He is able to recognize the familiar. When I visit him I wear my clerical. When he sees it and hears my greeting of, "The Lord be with you, Art" his eyes begin to tear. What am I able to share with him? No sermon. No devotional reading. Only, and I mean only, the liturgy.

When I start with the invocation, he closes his eyes and moves his left hand over to the position of prayer ... namely with folded hands on his chest. But the right hand doesn't move and the left hand reaches for it. After a few seconds of not finding his right hand, Art's left hand settles onto his chest.

We only have the Divine Service of the Word, for Art is not able to receive the Sacrament. Art must fast for four or five months before attending the Wedding Feast. Until then, the Lord keeps Art in His baptismal grace which is sufficient.

The liturgy is short, less than ten minutes. Art's eyes have been closed all this time. After the benediction I think he is asleep. He is not. His eyes open and his left hand returns to his side. This is the way it has been for my visits with him and his wife to date. Likely, in the weeks ahead, he will fall asleep during the blessed words of the historic liturgy that he has heard for a lifetime -- words which convey the Word of the Gospel, that is, forgiveness of sins, salvation and eternal life.

(Art entered Paradise on 30 July ANNO DOMINI 2001)

Pastor Michael L. McCoy
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Emmett, Idaho

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

"Train up a child in the way he should go ..." (Proverbs 22:6a)

Art is now home and is preparing to depart this vale of tears. He had a brain tumor that began impairing his speech as well as immobilizing his right side, particularly his arm and leg. Just before he was taken in for surgery I spoke the words of the liturgy to him. Most of the tumor was removed but not all of it. Two weeks of physical and speech therapy were fruitless. Six weeks of radiation ceased after only two weeks.

In addition, he has receptive and expressive aphasia. He is not able to make all the mental connections to sort through all that you say to him and his eyes have a confused look about such simple questions as, "Do you live in Emmett, Idaho?" Likewise, he is not able to say a single word, although he will moan in pain when he is moved. His right leg and arm remain motionless. The right side of his throat is such that he is not able to swallow and he now receives food and water through a stomach tube.

He is able to recognize the familiar. When I visit him I wear my clerical. When he sees it and hears my greeting of, "The Lord be with you, Art" his eyes begin to tear. What am I able to share with him? No sermon. No devotional reading. Only, and I mean only, the liturgy.

When I start with the invocation, he closes his eyes and moves his left hand over to the position of prayer ... namely with folded hands on his chest. But the right hand doesn't move and the left hand reaches for it. After a few seconds of not finding his right hand, Art's left hand settles onto his chest.

We only have the Divine Service of the Word, for Art is not able to receive the Sacrament. Art must fast for four or five months before attending the Wedding Feast. Until then, the Lord keeps Art in His baptismal grace which is sufficient.

The liturgy is short, less than ten minutes. Art's eyes have been closed all this time. After the benediction I think he is asleep. He is not. His eyes open and his left hand returns to his side. This is the way it has been for my visits with him and his wife to date. Likely, in the weeks ahead, he will fall asleep during the blessed words of the historic liturgy that he has heard for a lifetime -- words which convey the Word of the Gospel, that is, forgiveness of sins, salvation and eternal life.

(Art entered Paradise on 30 July ANNO DOMINI 2001)

Pastor Michael L. McCoy
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Emmett, Idaho

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

"... and when he is old he will not depart from it"

As a pastor who supervises a Deaconess Intern (and knowing full well that she is not a pastor and not training her to be one), I have had an occasion to teach her the value of the historic liturgy while at a saint's deathbed.

The dying man could barely remember where he was, and who I was, but when I began to recite the creed, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, etc, he joined me and recited them perfectly. Then he began to call me by the name of the pastor who confirmed him back in the 1930s. He felt great peace from the wonderful Word planted into his deep memory. Had he been afflicted with a "contemporary" type of church all his life, I wonder what, if anything, would have been planted into his deep memory?

Rev. Jack Kozak
Akron, Ohio

"The Pastor is the Pastor" - Fall, 1986

I particularly remember one such, a lady who suffered from Alzheimer's. As I spoke those familiar words, sang those hymn verses learned in catechism so many years ago, this dear soul, nearly non-functioning in her mental abilities, would begin singing along, saying the words, and remembering something precious from her faith-life. Not to take anything away from that, she truly thought I was her old Pastor Dautenhann, gone to glory many years before. When I told her that I was not her old pastor, she stopped remembering and withdrew back into the deep layers of that "onion" you mentioned. Needless to say, I never corrected her again and all was well. I can also recount other settings with aged saints in their extremity, who, upon hearing the words or the hymn verses, spoke or sang them with me, or just smiled a smile of blessed recognition.

Pastor Don Pritchard,
Zion Lutheran Church, Pleasant Plains, Illinois

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

"... and when he is old he will not depart from it"

As a pastor who supervises a Deaconess Intern (and knowing full well that she is not a pastor and not training her to be one), I have had an occasion to teach her the value of the historic liturgy while at a saint's deathbed.

The dying man could barely remember where he was, and who I was, but when I began to recite the creed, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, etc, he joined me and recited them perfectly. Then he began to call me by the name of the pastor who confirmed him back in the 1930s. He felt great peace from the wonderful Word planted into his deep memory. Had he been afflicted with a "contemporary" type of church all his life, I wonder what, if anything, would have been planted into his deep memory?

Rev. Jack Kozak
Akron, Ohio

"The Pastor is the Pastor" - Fall, 1986

I particularly remember one such, a lady who suffered from Alzheimer's. As I spoke those familiar words, sang those hymn verses learned in catechism so many years ago, this dear soul, nearly non-functioning in her mental abilities, would begin singing along, saying the words, and remembering something precious from her faith-life. Not to take anything away from that, she truly thought I was her old Pastor Dautenhann, gone to glory many years before. When I told her that I was not her old pastor, she stopped remembering and withdrew back into the deep layers of that "onion" you mentioned. Needless to say, I never corrected her again and all was well. I can also recount other settings with aged saints in their extremity, who, upon hearing the words or the hymn verses, spoke or sang them with me, or just smiled a smile of blessed recognition.

Pastor Don Pritchard,
Zion Lutheran Church, Pleasant Plains, Illinois

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

The Church Lives!

This was the ancient church's claim to fame, even among the heathen. "See how they love one another!" There was then such a caring for the poor and the sick, for the lonely and helpless, as the world had never known before. For the ancient civilization was a civilization without mercy, just as our world is threatening to again become a world without mercy. But all that loving activity would never have happened without the Lord's Supper. For all loving service proceeds from the altar. So it was in the early church, when the deacons and deaconesses brought the consecrated bread and wine to the sick, the lonely, the helpless, those who could not come to church. With this they brought along the congregation's gifts of love, and thereby the comfort, the help, and the fellowship of the Christian brotherhood.

When in the 19th century there was a revival of the Christian diaconate, we again see such loving service going out from the altar. In Neuendettelsau the deaconess houses became places of renewed liturgy and renewed celebration of Holy Communion.

You have only to attend a divine service in Bethel [a well-known home for the handicapped at Bielefeld, Germany] to realize why Father Bodelschwingh [its founder] maintained the Lutheran liturgy with such great faithfulness.

Father Bodelschwingh
Bethel, Bielefeld, Germany

Noted by Hermann Sasse in:

"The Church Lives!"

A Sermon on Acts 2:42-47 for the First Sunday After Trinity."

We Confess the Church, pages 134-135

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

The Church Lives!

This was the ancient church's claim to fame, even among the heathen. "See how they love one another!" There was then such a caring for the poor and the sick, for the lonely and helpless, as the world had never known before. For the ancient civilization was a civilization without mercy, just as our world is threatening to again become a world without mercy. But all that loving activity would never have happened without the Lord's Supper. For all loving service proceeds from the altar. So it was in the early church, when the deacons and deaconesses brought the consecrated bread and wine to the sick, the lonely, the helpless, those who could not come to church. With this they brought along the congregation's gifts of love, and thereby the comfort, the help, and the fellowship of the Christian brotherhood.

When in the 19th century there was a revival of the Christian diaconate, we again see such loving service going out from the altar. In Neuendettelsau the deaconess houses became places of renewed liturgy and renewed celebration of Holy Communion.

You have only to attend a divine service in Bethel [a well-known home for the handicapped at Bielefeld, Germany] to realize why Father Bodelschwingh [its founder] maintained the Lutheran liturgy with such great faithfulness.

Father Bodelschwingh
Bethel, Bielefeld, Germany

Noted by Hermann Sasse in:

"The Church Lives!"

A Sermon on Acts 2:42-47 for the First Sunday After Trinity."

We Confess the Church, pages 134-135

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

Te Deum Laudamus

In the ten years I have served in hospital chaplaincy, it never ceases to amaze me how often people find comfort in the familiar liturgies and prayers of the Church.

One of my spiritual care responsibilities is in hospice care. I had been regularly visiting a hospice patient who was Lutheran. While this woman's pastor was on vacation, she requested that I bring the Lord's Supper to her. When I arrived at her home, one of her children told me that mother would probably not be able to receive communion because she was not making any sense in the things she was saying, and continually "jabbered" a prayer. As I drew near to her bedside and listened to what she was saying, I felt a knot in my throat as I said to her children, "Your mother is not jabbering, she is reciting the *Te Deum* from our Matins Service." I offered to pray the *Te Deum* with her. Embarrassingly, I had to use the hymnal while she recited from her spirit. Her family also looked on with amazement as their mother recited the Lord's Prayer and the words of institution with me.

What a fitting way to conclude the earthly life of this woman of faith. This incident also got her children telling stories, remembering how their mother made them do their memory work before they could do other things, even their homework from school. The stories brought about tears, but also great comfort as they witnessed the tangible benefit of memory work.

Rev. John A. Fale
Director of Spiritual Care
Faith Regional Health Services
Norfolk, NE

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

Te Deum Laudamus

In the ten years I have served in hospital chaplaincy, it never ceases to amaze me how often people find comfort in the familiar liturgies and prayers of the Church.

One of my spiritual care responsibilities is in hospice care. I had been regularly visiting a hospice patient who was Lutheran. While this woman's pastor was on vacation, she requested that I bring the Lord's Supper to her. When I arrived at her home, one of her children told me that mother would probably not be able to receive communion because she was not making any sense in the things she was saying, and continually "jabbered" a prayer. As I drew near to her bedside and listened to what she was saying, I felt a knot in my throat as I said to her children, "Your mother is not jabbering, she is reciting the *Te Deum* from our Matins Service." I offered to pray the *Te Deum* with her. Embarrassingly, I had to use the hymnal while she recited from her spirit. Her family also looked on with amazement as their mother recited the Lord's Prayer and the words of institution with me.

What a fitting way to conclude the earthly life of this woman of faith. This incident also got her children telling stories, remembering how their mother made them do their memory work before they could do other things, even their homework from school. The stories brought about tears, but also great comfort as they witnessed the tangible benefit of memory work.

Rev. John A. Fale
Director of Spiritual Care
Faith Regional Health Services
Norfolk, NE

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

For the Young and for the Old ...

Dear Pastor M____:

I recently read the appendix to your book, *A Little One Amidst the Shadows*, about the parishioner who found great comfort in the liturgy while terribly ill in the hospital. If I recall correctly, that took place at about the same time as an incident in my own home. We had just moved to Boise a few weeks previously, and I had just been installed at a congregation that uses the liturgies of *The Lutheran Hymnal*.

One night, as I tucked my two-year-old son into bed, he said, “Father?” He never calls me that, but I said “Yes?” He said, “No!” And to my puzzled look, he recited, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shalt be. We’re all done. Amen.”

Well, the “We’re all done” wasn’t quite right; but it startled me because he had learned that version of the *Gloria Patri* by sitting in the pew, just in the few weeks since the move. The juxtaposition of these two incidents, my son and your hospitalized member, is quite striking to me. At the same time that a squirming two-year-old was learning the words by sitting in the pew during worship, an elderly man was comforted in the midst of affliction by the same words. The theology of the liturgy we sing is glorious; it strikes me that it has great pedagogical value as well, since it reaches both toddler and senior citizen for their benefit.

Further proof of this comes Monday through Thursday as I teach religion to the first and second graders at our school. The lesson for the day takes place within “A Form for Opening and Closing Christian Schools,” TLH p. 50. We begin with the Invocation as the children [love to] make the sign of the cross, and continue by singing the opening versicles and *Gloria Patri*. After the catechesis (the religion curriculum for the day), we close with the *Lord’s Prayer*, *Benedicamus* and *Benediction*. We’ll be adding the *Creed* soon. Far from being “too adult” for these children, this is a treasured part of the day; by framing the lesson, the liturgy also teaches the children that the lesson is different from the rest of the academics of the day. If I forget a part, they are sure to admonish me.

It is saddening to hear some say that the liturgy simply can’t reach children; I fear that such a statement carries the prejudice of the speaker more than the fact of the matter. The liturgy truly is gift that declares the Gospel to all generations.

Pastor Tim Pauls
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and School

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

For the Young and for the Old ...

Dear Pastor M____:

I recently read the appendix to your book, *A Little One Amidst the Shadows*, about the parishioner who found great comfort in the liturgy while terribly ill in the hospital. If I recall correctly, that took place at about the same time as an incident in my own home. We had just moved to Boise a few weeks previously, and I had just been installed at a congregation that uses the liturgies of *The Lutheran Hymnal*.

One night, as I tucked my two-year-old son into bed, he said, “Father?” He never calls me that, but I said “Yes?” He said, “No!” And to my puzzled look, he recited, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shalt be. We’re all done. Amen.”

Well, the “We’re all done” wasn’t quite right; but it startled me because he had learned that version of the *Gloria Patri* by sitting in the pew, just in the few weeks since the move. The juxtaposition of these two incidents, my son and your hospitalized member, is quite striking to me. At the same time that a squirming two-year-old was learning the words by sitting in the pew during worship, an elderly man was comforted in the midst of affliction by the same words. The theology of the liturgy we sing is glorious; it strikes me that it has great pedagogical value as well, since it reaches both toddler and senior citizen for their benefit.

Further proof of this comes Monday through Thursday as I teach religion to the first and second graders at our school. The lesson for the day takes place within “A Form for Opening and Closing Christian Schools,” TLH p. 50. We begin with the Invocation as the children [love to] make the sign of the cross, and continue by singing the opening versicles and *Gloria Patri*. After the catechesis (the religion curriculum for the day), we close with the *Lord’s Prayer*, *Benedicamus* and *Benediction*. We’ll be adding the *Creed* soon. Far from being “too adult” for these children, this is a treasured part of the day; by framing the lesson, the liturgy also teaches the children that the lesson is different from the rest of the academics of the day. If I forget a part, they are sure to admonish me.

It is saddening to hear some say that the liturgy simply can’t reach children; I fear that such a statement carries the prejudice of the speaker more than the fact of the matter. The liturgy truly is gift that declares the Gospel to all generations.

Pastor Tim Pauls
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and School

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

Many tusend tak

I have personally known people who seemed "out of their minds" due to various illnesses (including Alzheimer's), who upon my entry into their room would quit their babbling or screaming, and say, "Hi, Pastor!" as soon as I called out their name ("My sheep hear my voice"). I would explain that I had brought Holy Communion, would they want to take it. Invariably, there would be either a nod of the head, or some verbal response as, "OK," or "yes."

Now...I learned through the years that God only seems to give us just a window of time in which this person's faith is demonstrated to me, his or her pastor, so we usually go straight to the Confession and Absolution. And I always say, "Is this your sincere confession?" (as the old Pastor's Pocket Agenda has it), and again ... there is some response. Then we go to the Lord's Prayer, the Words of Institution, and then I commune them.

It has forever amazed me how this happens over and over again. I can't help but think of Luther's explanation to the 3rd Article in the Small Catechism, "in which Christian faith He daily keeps me and all believers..." HE keeps our faith. HE!

Let me just share two examples in my ministry at St. Mark here in Phoenix. I had a very old gentleman Manny Gutierrez, a life-long Lutheran originally from New Orleans, LA, who was in his failing years of life. His daughter was the only caregiver. She called me one day and said, "Pastor, if you're going to give Dad Holy Communion, you better come now, because he's fading fast." When I got there, she said, "He's not responding, he's not talking. He was choking, and I gave him just a teaspoon of ice cream to see if it would soothe his throat. Boy, was I sorry I did that! I thought he was going to choke to death before you even got here. I don't think there's any use in trying to give him Holy Communion." I said, "Well, we can always pray together and share the Word."

We went back into his bedroom. I woke him up, calling his name very loudly (he was hard of hearing), "Manny! Manny!" He clearly said, "Yeah!" I said, "This is Pastor Dan. I've brought you Holy Communion. Would you



like to receive Holy Communion?" He again clearly said, "Yeah." I did my usual shortened version as I said above. He said "Yeah" when I asked him "Is this your sincere confession?" (His daughter was moved to tears. She told me later, he hadn't been talking or responding for days!) Then when we gave him the Body and Blood of Christ (and I only gave him a very small portion of the wafer), he chewed it, drank it, and NOT ONE BIT of choking! Again, his daughter was overcome with tears, as was also I, by now. It wasn't maybe two or three days later, on Thanksgiving Day that he went home to Jesus. I have to believe that he understood BY FAITH all that was going on.

My second example, Melvin Roe, who got Alzheimer's. He was put in an Alzheimer's facility here in Phoenix, and the last time I saw him, right before I came, he had been belligerent with his wife and was yelling. I walked in the door and said, "Hey Melvin! What's going on?" He very enthusiastically said, "Hi Pastor!" His wife said, "Do you know who this is?" He said, "Sure, it's Pastor Dan!" She whispered behind her hand, he didn't even know who I was before you came. Again, I told him I had brought him Holy Communion, we did the shortened version. He responded by nodding his head when I said, "Is this your sincere confession?" (His wife burst into tears.) He then took Holy Communion. And again ... very suddenly soon thereafter, the staff found him dead in his bed early in the morning.

I can't help but firmly believe that God has a way of keeping us in the faith. The only point I'm making is that God has often (and I'm not naive to say that this is true ALL the time) a way of keeping even the senile and demented in the faith so that they EVEN can receive one last time the very Body and Blood of Christ, which means so much to all of us. By the way, that day that I left, Melvin said to me, as he always did, "*Many tusend tak*" (my spelling, sorry I don't know Norwegian) for "*Many thousand thanks*."

Pastor Dan Moriarity
when serving as Associate Pastor
at St. Mark Lutheran Church
Phoenix, Arizona

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

The Liturgy in Africa

After trying many "indigenous" and "contextualized" worship approaches with the African work (which did not work) the pastors of the churches and myself decided to translate and try a page 15 Order of Service out of the TLH. For the African brothers and sisters, this Worship Service was as if the gates of Heaven had been opened. As I think back, why should I have been so surprised that the Service fit so well? The page 15 Service of TLH contains the historic liturgy of the Church. This Service is lifted directly from Scripture. And where that Word is present, and that Word of Promise connected to the Sacraments present, so is our God present, and so is the voice of our Savior present. He is present, with the Gifts which only God can give to us, the Gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Those precious and sweet Gifts, which meet the "real" needs of people, are found no other place apart from Word and Sacrament.

Rev. Phil Grovenstein

Pastor at
Peace in Christ Lutheran Church
Jackson, New Jersey
(former missionary pastor in Sierra Leone)

Note:

The quote above is an excerpt from an essay by Pastor Grovenstein. The entire essay ought to be read by both pastor and parishioner, particularly those interested in mission work at home and at a distance. The essay may be read in its entirety at ...

<http://www.scholia.net>

With the understanding that no changes are made to the essay, permission to copy and use it has been granted by Pastor Grovenstein.

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

The Liturgy in Africa

After trying many "indigenous" and "contextualized" worship approaches with the African work (which did not work) the pastors of the churches and myself decided to translate and try a page 15 Order of Service out of the TLH. For the African brothers and sisters, this Worship Service was as if the gates of Heaven had been opened. As I think back, why should I have been so surprised that the Service fit so well? The page 15 Service of TLH contains the historic liturgy of the Church. This Service is lifted directly from Scripture. And where that Word is present, and that Word of Promise connected to the Sacraments present, so is our God present, and so is the voice of our Savior present. He is present, with the Gifts which only God can give to us, the Gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Those precious and sweet Gifts, which meet the "real" needs of people, are found no other place apart from Word and Sacrament.

Rev. Phil Grovenstein

Pastor at
Peace in Christ Lutheran Church
Jackson, New Jersey
(former missionary pastor in Sierra Leone)

Note:

The quote above is an excerpt from an essay by Pastor Grovenstein. The entire essay ought to be read by both pastor and parishioner, particularly those interested in mission work at home and at a distance. The essay may be read in its entirety at ...

<http://www.scholia.net>

With the understanding that no changes are made to the essay, permission to copy and use it has been granted by Pastor Grovenstein.

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

Preparing for Death

Thou hast also said, my Lord Jesus: "This do in remembrance of Me." My God, what a dear remembrance that can be! How ardently it can comfort my soul! Yes, my Lord Jesus, when I eat and drink at Thy table, may I there cling to both the remembrance of comfort and of giving thanks to Thy name. First, I keep in comforting remembrance and celebrate in my heart all the glorious high festival days of the entire year, consider all of Thy benefits, dedicate myself to Thee, and comfort myself therewith.

1. At Thy table I celebrate a joyous Christmas. For Thy holy supper assures me that Thou hast truly taken my flesh and blood on Thee and made friends with me in a way that is much closer than with the holy angels. For Thou hast not taken upon Thyself the nature of angels, but human nature (Heb. 2:16).

2. At Thy table I also celebrate the dear Passion week. For Thy supper assures me that Thou hast become the true guilt-offering for my sin. Yes, here I eat the true paschal lamb, namely, Thyself, Lord Jesus, Who wast sacrificed and slaughtered for me (I Cor. 5:7).

3. At Thy table I celebrate also a joyous Easter. For since I am partaker of Thy body and blood and am Thy member, therefore I believe and hope that, just as Thou hast risen from the dead and live, so also I, as a member of Thy body, will not remain in the grave, but will rise again, live and reign (I Cor. 15:22).

4. At Thy table I also celebrate a joyous Ascension. For as Thou dost testify to me through this repast that I am in Thee and Thou in me and that I am a member of Thy body, so will I also surely celebrate an ascension someday with my body and there live eternally, since Thou, my Lord and my Head, livest (I Cor. 15:23,51).

5. At Thy table I celebrate also a joyous Pentecost. For Thy supper assures me that Thou wilt dwell in my heart, uniting me with Thee through Thy Holy Spirit, and therefore wilt seal unto me my salvation, that Thy Spirit will ever remain in me as the pledge of my eternal inheritance (Eph. 1: 14), that He awakens life and comfort in me, kindles peace and joy, and beareth witness to my spirit that I am Thy brother and eternal joint-heir (Rom. 8:16-17).

6. At Thy table I celebrate also the festival of the holy Trinity, and comfort myself that I should henceforth ever be a temple of God, and the entire holy Trinity comes to me and wishes to make abode in me (John 14:23). Yes, that after this life I will possess eternal salvation, and will see the Lord my God face to face (I Cor. 13:12).

7. At Thy table I also celebrate the festival of All Saints, and comfort myself in the lovely unity and fellowship which we, Thy dear saints, have with Thee, Lord Jesus, through faith, and through Thee with the Father and the Holy Spirit. As Thou hast said: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6:56). And again: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also might be one in us" (John 17:21). Yes, my Lord, we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (I Cor. 10: 17). O my Lord, how my soul rejoices at such heavenly companionship! How joyfully I hasten to Thy table, and know assuredly that I together with all dear saints shall inherit all Thy treasures and blessings and will possess them eternally.

8. Yes, my Lord Jesus, Thy holy Apostle also says: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (I Cor. 11:26). Therefore at Thy table I also celebrate the festival of Thy holy second coming, and rejoice at Thine appearing, when Thou wilt return visibly, and wilt abrogate this holy Supper together with the entire office of the ministry, and wilt take me unto Thee, that I may be where Thou art (John 17:24), since Thou hast prepared for me another, eternal, heavenly meal in Thy Father's Kingdom, where I together with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all Thy saints shall sit at the table and shall eat the Bread of life for all eternity (Matt. 8:11). O how longingly I consider this at Thy table and sigh from the depths of my heart: Lord Jesus, come; yes, come quickly, my Savior, and do not delay long! Amen. (Rev.22:20)

Preparing for Death

an English Translation of

*Handbüchlein zur Vorbereitung auf den Tod,
oder Heilige Sterbekunst*

by Pastor Martin Moller (1547-1606)



Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

Today you will be with me in Paradise - part 1

In the Michigan District back in 1957 I had just been installed and the Dist. Mission Board asked us how big our first unit building should be. So our tiny congregation (27 communicants) met and decided to take a spot canvass of the area of about 22,000 people from which we were to draw. We reported back the statistics from these samples of our prospects and the Mission Board told us how big to build.

At one of the small homes in one block there was a young couple who gave a rather cold shoulder to our canvassers. So we recorded the information and filed it, thinking there would probably not be any point in using our time following up at that home.

Six (6) years later I was sitting at my desk in the church office and the phone rang. "Pastor, some people from your church visited us a few years ago, and we've passed by your church every day going to work but never dropped in. But my daddy is in X Hospital now and not expected to live. He's never gone to church. Never even was baptized. We're ashamed to ask you to do this, but would you visit him in the hospital? I'm afraid he's not ready to die."

Of course, I dropped everything and went to the hospital. I told him the simple story of sin and grace, of Law and Gospel. Then I asked him whether he thought he was a sinner. He said yes. "Do you want forgiveness for all your sins?" I asked. "Yes!" So I explained to him how Christ gives him forgiveness in Baptism. "Do you want to be baptized into Christ to receive the forgiveness He earned for you on that cross?" As firmly as the sick man could, he said "Yes!" So I asked the nurse for a towel and some water in a pan. She got me the towel and some sterilized water, and, with the nurse and the daughter as witnesses, I baptized him then and there. Six hours later the Lord took him to Himself. Of course, I had the funeral. Then, over the next year, the Lord also "added to the church" not only the man himself but also a total of ten more of his family members and descendents.

Rev. Raymond Mueller (Em)

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

Today you will be with me in Paradise - part 1

In the Michigan District back in 1957 I had just been installed and the Dist. Mission Board asked us how big our first unit building should be. So our tiny congregation (27 communicants) met and decided to take a spot canvass of the area of about 22,000 people from which we were to draw. We reported back the statistics from these samples of our prospects and the Mission Board told us how big to build.

At one of the small homes in one block there was a young couple who gave a rather cold shoulder to our canvassers. So we recorded the information and filed it, thinking there would probably not be any point in using our time following up at that home.

Six (6) years later I was sitting at my desk in the church office and the phone rang. "Pastor, some people from your church visited us a few years ago, and we've passed by your church every day going to work but never dropped in. But my daddy is in X Hospital now and not expected to live. He's never gone to church. Never even was baptized. We're ashamed to ask you to do this, but would you visit him in the hospital? I'm afraid he's not ready to die."

Of course, I dropped everything and went to the hospital. I told him the simple story of sin and grace, of Law and Gospel. Then I asked him whether he thought he was a sinner. He said yes. "Do you want forgiveness for all your sins?" I asked. "Yes!" So I explained to him how Christ gives him forgiveness in Baptism. "Do you want to be baptized into Christ to receive the forgiveness He earned for you on that cross?" As firmly as the sick man could, he said "Yes!" So I asked the nurse for a towel and some water in a pan. She got me the towel and some sterilized water, and, with the nurse and the daughter as witnesses, I baptized him then and there. Six hours later the Lord took him to Himself. Of course, I had the funeral. Then, over the next year, the Lord also "added to the church" not only the man himself but also a total of ten more of his family members and descendents.

Rev. Raymond Mueller (Em)

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

Today you will be with Me in Paradise - part 2

In another Michigan congregation I once served there was a faithful and earnest Christian woman who was married to a very hard-shelled unbeliever. She could never get her husband to go to church with her, but she was clearly a humble and faithful member of Christ. Her infidel husband got very sick and had to go to the hospital. He had been baptized and raised in a German-Russian Lutheran family, but scoffed at Christianity most of his adult life. However, now he was facing the Eternal Judge - and he knew it.

So his wife phoned me and asked whether I would try once more to reach him for Christ. Of course I would, and I dropped everything and went to the hospital to see him. His breathing had already become labored. So I asked him whether he remembered what I knew he had once memorized in German. (I had my German catechism with me.) When he heard those familiar words his eyes began to light up. I continued by reciting several of the Ten Commandments, especially the Third Commandment about "despising God's Word," etc. His eyes began to water a bit, and I asked him whether he now realized that he was "a poor, miserable sinner." Between labored breaths he said, "Yes." Then I recited to him a verse my old German prof in the "bunk" in Fort Wayne had required our class to memorize: *In Christi Wunden schlaff ich ein* ("I fall asleep in Jesus' wounds" - #585 in TLH). His eyes opened wide. So I led him through the Confession of Sins and Absolution (English, TLH pp. 15-16.) He, too, lived another six hours and died - in the Lord.

Addendum: The widow asked me if I would conduct his funeral, and she wanted it in the church. I phoned an elder and explained how this former scoffer had been re-converted on his death bed, and the elder had no objections. (This was a farming community where everyone, including the nearby German Baptists who also had come from Russia, knew all about everybody else.) So I said, "Yes, your husband died as a member of Christ's church, and we will hold his funeral in the place where Christ regularly gives His forgiveness to His people." Needless to say, the central theme of my funeral sermon was about the full and free grace of God in Christ.

Rev. Raymond Mueller (Em)

Why the Historic Liturgy of the Church?

Today you will be with Me in Paradise - part 2

In another Michigan congregation I once served there was a faithful and earnest Christian woman who was married to a very hard-shelled unbeliever. She could never get her husband to go to church with her, but she was clearly a humble and faithful member of Christ. Her infidel husband got very sick and had to go to the hospital. He had been baptized and raised in a German-Russian Lutheran family, but scoffed at Christianity most of his adult life. However, now he was facing the Eternal Judge - and he knew it.

So his wife phoned me and asked whether I would try once more to reach him for Christ. Of course I would, and I dropped everything and went to the hospital to see him. His breathing had already become labored. So I asked him whether he remembered what I knew he had once memorized in German. (I had my German catechism with me.) When he heard those familiar words his eyes began to light up. I continued by reciting several of the Ten Commandments, especially the Third Commandment about "despising God's Word," etc. His eyes began to water a bit, and I asked him whether he now realized that he was "a poor, miserable sinner." Between labored breaths he said, "Yes." Then I recited to him a verse my old German prof in the "bunk" in Fort Wayne had required our class to memorize: *In Christi Wunden schlaff ich ein* ("I fall asleep in Jesus' wounds" - #585 in TLH). His eyes opened wide. So I led him through the Confession of Sins and Absolution (English, TLH pp. 15-16.) He, too, lived another six hours and died - in the Lord.

Addendum: The widow asked me if I would conduct his funeral, and she wanted it in the church. I phoned an elder and explained how this former scoffer had been re-converted on his death bed, and the elder had no objections. (This was a farming community where everyone, including the nearby German Baptists who also had come from Russia, knew all about everybody else.) So I said, "Yes, your husband died as a member of Christ's church, and we will hold his funeral in the place where Christ regularly gives His forgiveness to His people." Needless to say, the central theme of my funeral sermon was about the full and free grace of God in Christ.

Rev. Raymond Mueller (Em)