

LITURGICAL COMMISSION & FOOTPRINTS OF GOD

How does the Anglican Liturgy move us for mission?

There is so much in mission liturgical vocabulary that we sometimes need to do better. These subjects, Liturgy and Mission, are taught differently in academics; sometimes, we must see a correlation between them. Is there a synergy between liturgy and mission that can spur the churches to think differently, or should these two subjects be kept separately? At the recent Lambeth Conference, the five marks of the mission were propagated as the new way to bring back vitality and joy, but how is it linked to the weekly Sunday services?

Does liturgy have no role in mission and evangelism, or, to reverse the question, does mission and evangelism have no role in liturgy? Is liturgy a dead ritual that implies faithless and routinised worship? The church today is at a crossroads trying to find its right footing in understanding Anglican Liturgy and the thrusts of Church planting, so let's discover more about them and how they may coexist within our worship.

Understanding Liturgy & Mission?

Liturgy means "the work of the people," and it comes from the idea of working for society's common good. In other words, worship should be related to the work the people do within a community. The early church adopted a pattern of living together, and when they left the place where they congregated, they went out on a mission.

Liturgy prepares us for how we live in the world and ends with the command to go into the world. James K.A Smith says it reminds us that "the capital L in the Liturgy of Sunday worship should generate lowercase liturgies that govern our

existence throughout the week." In other words, our worship should influence the practices of our everyday lives (which means our daily mission).

Mission comes from the word "Missio," which means "sending" or "being sent." If we are sent to do a mission, then we are senders. Mission does not begin with us; it starts with God, who sends the Church into the world. As Winfield Bevins writes, "The missional heart of God forms the foundation of the church's mission in the world. Mission flows from God, who imitates and sustains the mission.

In this way, the mission is directly connected to our worship. Our mission is not just doing something for God but begins and ends with a rich, joyful worship of God. The question that summons us is, why don't more Christians understand this vital connection if worship and mission belong together? Robert Webber says, "It is interesting that people who are experts in worship seldom connect worship with mission, and people who are experts in mission seldom connect mission with worship." Is this true, and how much is evident in our weekly Sunday services (and throughout the week?)

Justo L Gonzalez refers to *lex orandi, lex credenda*, which loosely translated means "the rule of worship is the rule of belief." In other words, he says that the phrase runs in both directions: doctrine shapes (or should shape) worship and worship shapes (and does shape) doctrine. An example of this is the Nicene Creed, which is both recited in the church and has been incorporated into our worship. Our theology is, therefore, imbued into our worship and vice versa. Theology without worship is meaningless. Our worship

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should be more than just teaching or a platform to convert people. Our worship and teaching should be incarnational in a world God sent his Word made flesh. In a sense, that is what we usually mean by “mission.”

With this in mind, the synergy in the direction of the Church follows three paths: clockwise and counter-clockwise, worship-theology-mission and mission-theology-worship. Justo L Gonzalez sets out the framework to say, " That theology shapes worship, in turn, shapes mission, which then shapes theology And mission shapes worship, which in turn shapes theology, which then shapes worship." When a progressing Church begins to move in this direction, the understanding of Liturgy will start to be appreciated by many. In a research paper on Liturgy and Mission, Slavko Krajnc affirms that liturgy is the source from which the Church draws strength and dynamism to bring the world the good news of salvation. He supports his thesis with the constitution in the sacred liturgy "*Sacrosanctum Concillium*" and by two encyclical letters of Pope John Paul II, namely "*Redemptoris Missio*" and "*Ecclesia de Eucharist*". He highlights that the Eucharist is "the font from which all the power of the Church flows" and the summit towards which activity of the church is directed and through that is also the core of missionary activity of the Church.

He gives an example by saying that after Pentecost, the style of worship changed. The power of the spirit breaks the confines of space and reaches out. Here, we see a tension of two dimensions: one side creating an intimate space for God's presence for oneself and the community, which is a necessary part of faith; on the other side, reaching out. He says there is no

mission without exodus—reaching out of our everyday life spaces. Our everyday liturgy should always keep this in mind and move away from a “feel-good worship” which focuses on the redeeming grace of God on oneself only, apart from the community consciousness.

Liturgy, its role and the question of mission

Liturgy is the fount of mission. The Eucharist is the source and summit not only of Church life but also of her mission. “An authentically eucharistic Church is a missionary Church” (Benedict XVI.2007. 84). Most of our major events begin with the Eucharist as a gathering, a time to express unity, hear God's words and his commission, and be empowered by the Eucharist and commission to go out into the world to love and serve all people.

Several Anglican Churches have Holy Eucharistic services every Sunday, if not daily, or a mid-week Holy Communion service and many are encouraged to receive communion. The communicants express their lives in worship and prayers to others and express the mysteries of Christ and the fellowship of the body of Christ. The Liturgy allows us to express and make known to others and visitors to our services the good news of salvation. From the songs, prayers, preaching and participation in the Eucharist, everything we do in church shapes how we live outside the church. The active involvement of laypersons in the liturgy demonstrates the possibilities of testimony- life-changing experiences and mission. Even now, many churches are using vernacular languages to reach out. Thus, within our Anglican Churches, the wide use of vernacular languages, practices, and culture has been imbued into the

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liturgy, and our way of worship has drawn many to know Christ and make him known. At the same time, there is a need to renew liturgy to reach all people. This has been successfully done in some churches, and they have experienced a transformation in their understanding of God. The worship itself has inspired them to reach out.

Within the diocese, the new brochure on Church planting directs us to look at their mission statement-

*“We are a Church, moving towards **making Christ known through church planting, mission, social concerns, environmental care, intentional discipleship and building up family units with love, grace and fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.**”*

This issue requires various communities to create a liturgy reflecting our mission. Can we find a way to add this to our weekly services so that we bring all our concerns, hopes, and aspirations to God and worship may arise like sweet-smelling incense into the heavenly throne of God? How can we make this a focus within our worship and preaching so that it becomes our daily work—liturgy?

Conclusion

The liturgy calls the participants to do something for God and respond in love for God and mankind. Thus, we conclude that the liturgy is missionary in its most profound reality. Therefore, for our congregation, especially the young people who are constantly searching for new expressions of worship, the liturgy of the sacraments and sacred mental sanctification should cover every event in their lives so that they are given access to the stream of

divine grace which flows from Pascal mystery of the passion death and resurrection of Christ the font from which all the different divine services draw their power from the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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