

# Transformative Public Worship: An oxymoron? Or achievable possibility?

## 1. To get us thinking: The 'Mystery Worshipper' questions (with thanks to *shipoffools.com*)

- What was the name of the service?
- How full was the building?
- Did anyone welcome you personally?
- Was your pew comfortable?
- How would you describe the pre-service atmosphere?
- What were the exact opening words of the service?
- What books did the congregation use during the service?
- What musical instruments were played?
- Did anything distract you?
- Was the worship stiff-upper-lip, happy clappy, or what?
- Exactly how long was the sermon?
- On a scale of 1-10, how good was the preacher?
- In a nutshell, what was the sermon about?
- **Which part of the service was like being in heaven?**
- **And which part was like being in... er... the other place?**
- What happened when you hung around after the service looking lost?
- How would you describe the after-service coffee?
- How would you feel about making this church your regular (where 10 = ecstatic, 0 = terminal)?
- Did the service make you feel glad to be a Christian?
- What one thing will you remember about all this in seven days' time?

## 2. An accidental liturgist: a bit of my story

### 3. Style & Content

#### *Content: What do we actually do in church?*

- **Prayer**
  - Confession
  - Intercession
  - Thanksgiving
- **Bible reading**
- **Sermon/Teaching/Exhortation**
- **Creeds/Statements**
- **Lord's Supper/Holy Communion/Eucharist**
- **Testimony**
- **Music**
  - Songs
  - Reflective/Mood music
- **Meditation/Silence**
- **Drama**
- **Announcements/Notices/Practical information**
- **Broad purposes**
  - Building up
  - Encouraging
  - Expressing our response

#### *Style: How we do what we do in church?*

- **Venue/space**
  - Messy/tidy
  - Cold/warm/in between!
  - Simple/decorated
  - How we use it
    - eg fixed furniture (static)
    - movement
    - colour
  - what 'works' in the space!
- **Participation level**
- **Formality**
  - Robes
    - simple
    - ornate
  - Casual dress
    - sloppy
    - smart
  - Ritual (eg procession) or not
- **Music**
  - Musicians
    - one
    - many
  - Singing
    - Led
      - Choir
      - Singer
    - Not led
  - 'Classical'
    - hymns
    - psalms
  - 'Contemporary'
    - 1970s time warp!
    - written last week

## 4. Avoiding Liturgical Lotto!

Note the Service structure (Headings) in APBA

- Gathering in God's Name
  - Confession? (sometimes at this point)
- The Ministry of the Word
- The Ministry of Prayer/The Prayers of the People
- [In Holy Communion
  - Preparation
  - Confession and Absolution
  - The Greeting of Peace
  - The Great Thanksgiving
  - The Breaking of the Bread and the Communion]
- The Sending Out of God's People

## 5. Issues to consider when planning

- **Bible readings**
  - How many?
  - At least 2 (OT & NT) is a good Anglican principle!
  - Together or separate?
  - Does the order matter? (eg always OT before NT?)
- **Sermon**
  - where in the structure?
    - at the conclusion (eg to maximise impact)?
    - part way through (eg to allow for response)?
- **Confession**
  - whether to include it at all
  - early — as preparation
  - after the sermon — as response
  - the sometimes missing essential: absolution/declaration of God's forgiveness
- **Prayers**
  - Where in the structure?
  - Can they connect with Bible readings?
- **Music**
  - Focus on God as we begin
  - Responsive songs when there's something to respond to

## 6. Some worthy aims

- The congregation wants to be there — and looks forward to it!
- People go home feeling glad to have been present
- People are moved to think about God's word for themselves
- People are moved to respond in faith
  - love for God
  - love for each other

## 7. What can I do that will make a difference?

- **Bible Readings**
  - Using suitably gifted people
  - Preparation
  - Training
    - ***How to Read the Bible Aloud*** Clifford Warne & Paul White (out of print, but see *bettergatherings.com*)
    - Matthias Media ***Reading the Bible Aloud***
- **Prayers**
  - Write your own? Or use the work of others?
  - Our Prayer Book heritage
  - APBA
  - Other sources
    - Liturgy Commission material <https://www.anglican.org.au/liturgy-worship>
    - Common Prayer
- **What next? What can I take away today?**