

Worship is the highest activity of the human spirit.¹

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Keywords

Worship	‘worth’ + ‘ship’	Attributing or ascribing value to something
Liturgy	‘public’ + ‘work’	The work or activity of the people in worship
Eucharist	thankful/grateful	The Great Thanksgiving
Ministry	service/attendance	e.g. Ministry of the Word, Ministry of the Sacrament
Sacrament	‘sacred’ + ‘mystery’	Baptism and Eucharist
sacramentals		Things associated with the sacraments
altar	‘high’	A table for sacred/holy things – a table for things that are sacrificed ...
table	flat slab/plank	e.g. “The table of the Lord” (1 Cor 10.21)

¹ A New Zealand Prayer Book | He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa, 1989, p xvii.

Cornerstone

*The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.*²

The main thing is our worship of God, and as Stephen Covey would say: "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." Our liturgy helps us do that. It is the vehicle by which we praise God. The structure of our worship - the things we choose to do and say - describes who we are and who we think God is.

With this in mind, a key question to ask ourselves when preparing liturgy is: what does this say about us and God? Anglican liturgy provides a structure in which to answer that question. It invites us to worship, confess, forgive, speak, listen, learn, wonder, pray and so on. It enables us to do that as individuals and as part of the body of Christ (the Church).

*Liturgy describes the People of God. Liturgy expresses who we believe we are in the presence of God. Liturgy reveals the God whom we worship. Liturgy reflects our mission.*³

The Road to Emmaus

The Anglican liturgy broadly reflects the narrative of Luke 24:13-35. I urge you to consider that story through the lens of the liturgy. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- What day of the week does the story take place on?
- How does Jesus arrive?
- What does Jesus do on the road?
- What happens in Emmaus on arrival?
- How is Jesus revealed?
- What happens next?

The trajectory might simply be this: a shared journey, revelation through the Word, revelation through the Sacrament, return to the world to proclaim Good News.

Sound familiar?

Holy Space

*"Let them make a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst"*⁴

Holy spaces are places of assembly and an encounter with God.⁵ Over the course of our greater faith history, we have seen a progression (of sorts) from stones, to tents, to temples, to homes, to civic buildings, and so on. Most cathedrals reflect a basilica structure (a Roman civic building/royal palace/courtroom). Our job is to create a space that enables divine encounter within whatever structures we have.

When describing holy places you may hear the language of a 'thin space' or a 'liminal space'. These terms describe a particular *closeness* to the divine. It is our responsibility to help create such spaces.

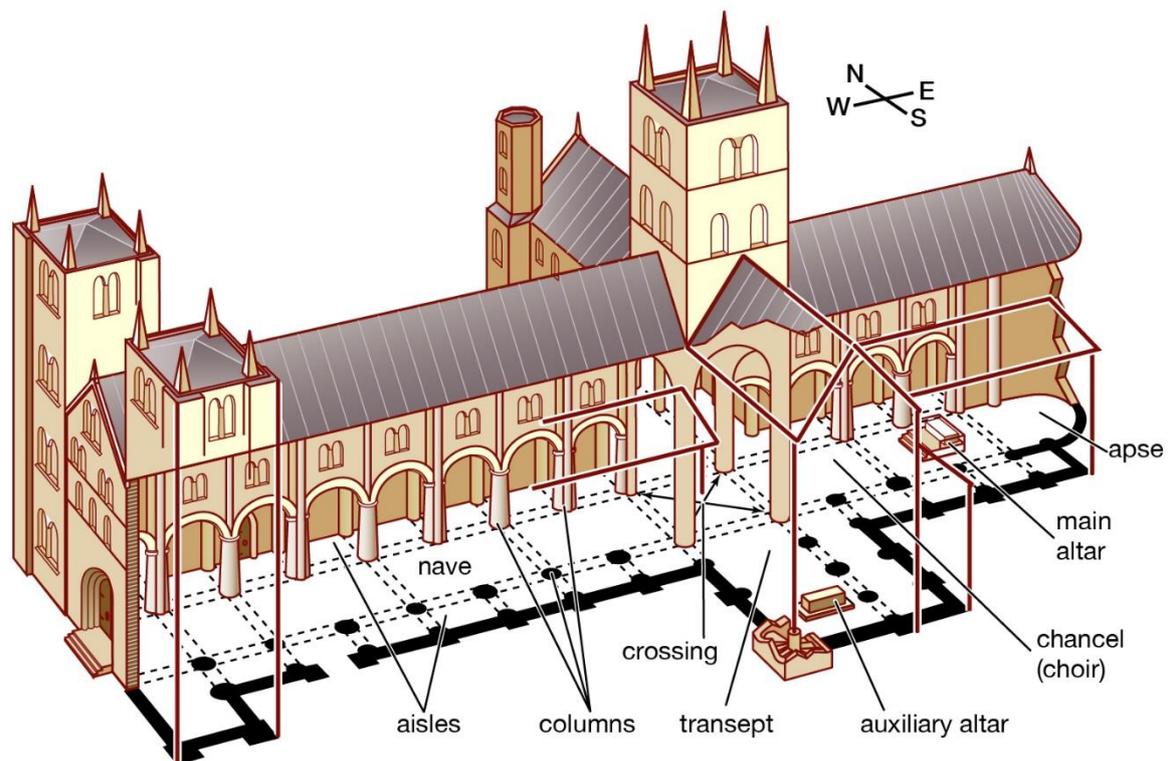
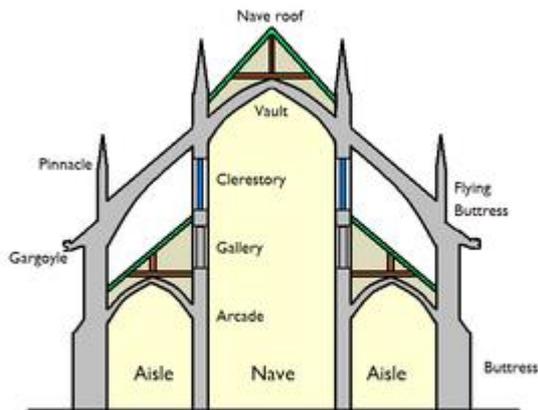
² Stephen Covey, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, 1989.

³ ANZPB, p xv.

⁴ Ex 25:8

⁵ Richard Giles, *Re-pitching the Tent*, 1999, p 29.

Liturgy, music, sacramentals and posture (physical and spiritual) all contribute to this. Therefore, they can all detract. As servants, we want to enable access to the Master, rather than get in the way. Having said that, the church building dictates much of what we do and how we do it.



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Holy Things

*Meaning occurs through structure, by one thing set next to another.*⁶

Sacramentals are all those *things* associated with the sacrament. They are the *things* of worship that help to add meaning and value to what we are doing together as God’s people. We can reverence God by treating the sacramentals (candles, chalices, patens, processional cross, etc) with respect.

⁶ Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 1998.

At the same time, we must remain mindful of the distinction between reverence and idolatry (“Touch ye not the Holy Snuffer of St Stephen, lest the LORD strike thy right hand in the day of his wrath ...”). Remember, “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”

The Table of the Lord

I urge you to think again about the liturgy in terms of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. These two halves are complementary, but distinct. So, how does your worship communicate that? Here are some questions to consider:

- What would you expect to see on the altar during the Ministry of the Word?
- Therefore, what might be unexpected?
- What would you expect to see on the altar during the Ministry of the Sacrament?
- Likewise, what might be unexpected?

PHASE	KEY SYMBOLS
The Ministry of the Word is about Scripture: proclamation, reflection and explanation.	The Bible
The Ministry of the Sacrament is about communion and thanksgiving: participation in the story of God.	The Bread and Wine

Candles

Altar Candles

There are normally two significant candles on an altar. As you face the altar from the nave (where the congregation is sitting), the one on the left is called the ‘Gospel candle’ while the one on the right is called the ‘Epistle candle’. The Gospel candle reminds us that Christ is the Light of the World. It is said that the “Gospel candle never burns alone”; therefore, candles are lit from right to left and extinguished from left to right. Does it really matter? No, not really. But now you know.

Paschal Candle

The Paschal Candle is the largest candle in the church. It is often replaced every year and first lit on Easter Eve. It represents the Light of Christ and particularly God’s victory over sin and death. It is lit throughout Eastertide and up until Pentecost. Thereafter, it is lit for baptisms and used to light the candle presented during baptisms. (The symbolism is beautiful and great material for a sermon.)

The Holy Scriptures

God’s Word is fundamental to our faith. The ‘Word of God’ is always about both the Bible and Jesus. When we are celebrating the Ministry of the Word (literally attending to the Word of God) we should be trying to communicate the priority of the Bible.

So, where is the Bible? Is it open or closed? Does it ‘compete’ with anything on the altar? At the conclusion of the Ministry of the Word, where does it go? Is it open or closed?

The Offertory

There are many ways to prepare for the Great Thanksgiving Prayer. What I offer here is a basic template for traditional Anglican preparation of the altar and sacramentals. Flexibility should come in the form of understanding what and why you are flexing.

Traditionally, the altar is not laid until “The Preparation of the Gifts”. That means the preparation of the elements (pictured below) would normally happen on the credence table, and then be transferred to the altar during the Offertory.

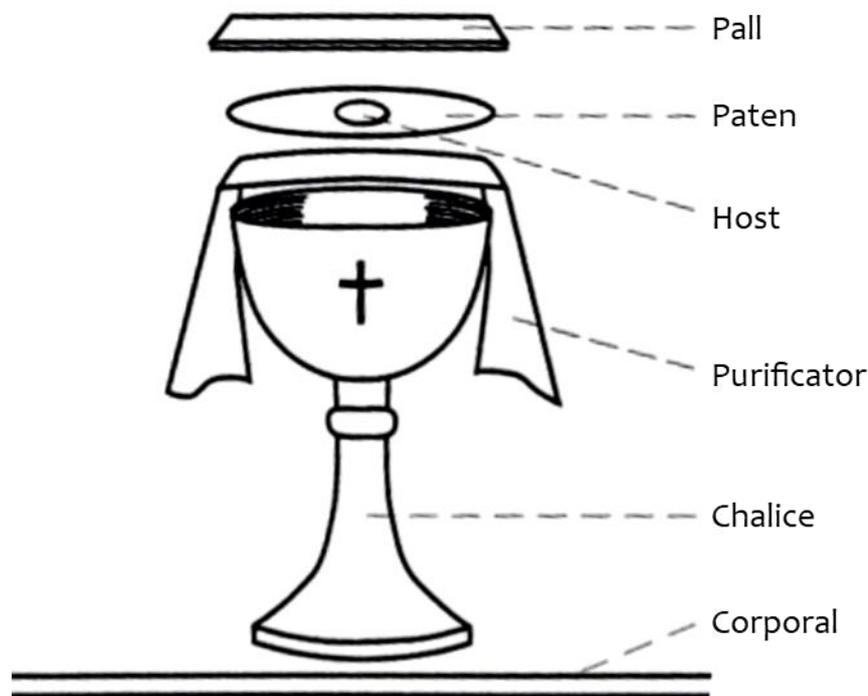
Lavabo (“I shall wash”)

*⁶ I wash my hands in innocence,
and go around your altar, O Lord⁷*

Before attending to the altar, some priests request a ritual/symbolic washing of the hands. This is an old tradition which leans on Psalms 26 and 50⁸ respectively. There are (at least) two separate rites associated with this: one before the service and one during the preparation of the altar. We are concerned here with the Eucharistic lavabo. There are several moments at which this could happen, and it could be repeated. The simplest approach is to respond to the presiding priest’s request. Most priests make this request before touching anything on the altar or receiving anything from the credence table.

Sanitiser is used by some as an alternative to lavabo. The practices are not mutually exclusive.

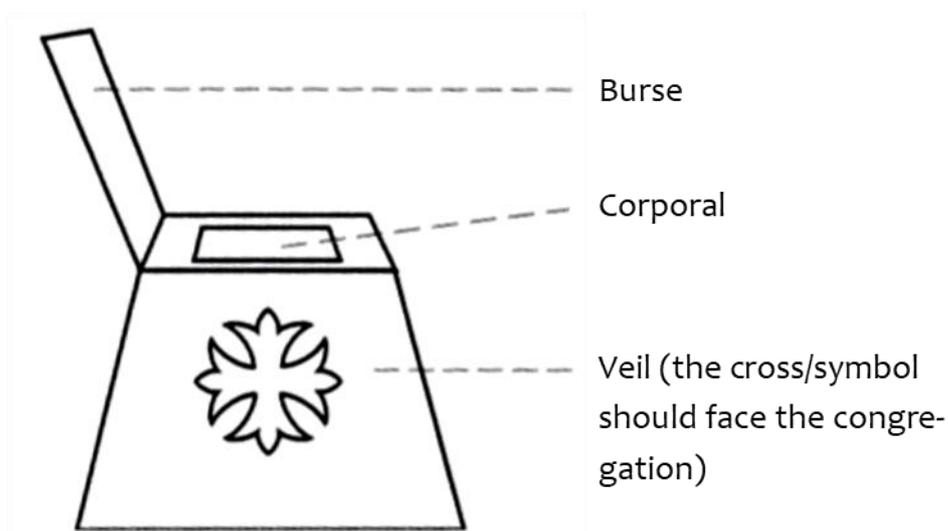
The Central Elements



Pall	covering/cloak	A cover for the Host (bread of Eucharist)
Paten	plate/shallow dish	A small plate that holds the Host
Host	guest/visitor	The bread that becomes the body of Christ
Purificator	cleaner	White linen cloth
Chalice	mug/cup	Baptism and Eucharist
Corporal	body	Cloth to catch the crumbs of the ‘body’ (laid on altar to allow folding inwards).
Credence Table	belief/believer/faith	Small table in sanctuary where elements associated with Eucharist are placed.
Sanctuary	holy place	The space around the altar
Offertory	presentation	The liturgical space in which congregational gifts and Eucharistic elements are received/prepared

⁷ Psalm 26.6 (see through to v 12)

⁸ “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”



Burse	purse	Hinged flap for corporal/purificatory (not a holy sandwich board)
Veil	covering/veil	Ornate covering for chalice, host, etc

The burse and veil are not necessary. In part, they are a practical solution to the problem of bats/pigeons roosting in the sanctuary. In another respect, they are beautiful artworks intended to glorify God. Either way, they are fundamentally secondary to the Host (bread) and wine. Therefore, they should not compete for attention.

Ablutions

‘Ablutions’ refers to the ritual ‘tidy-up’ that occurs after Communion has been shared. It is not a substitute for the use of boiling water after the service, but rather a symbol that communicates the sacredness of what has happened. For those who hold a high view of Communion, the paten and chalice contain traces of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, therefore they are worthy of **considerable** respect.

Once the elements have been cleaned, give some thought to how they are arranged. Different arrangements communicate different things. I propose two basic alternatives:

1. Once cleaned, display the chalice and empty paten to communicate what has taken place. (implicit here is the decision to not re-dress/re-appoint the chalice and paten as though they are about to be consecrated.)
2. Transfer all the elements to the credence table where the ablutions can be completed. The Lord’s table is then empty. It is time to go ...

Recommended Reading

If you wish to find out more about the practice of worship and liturgy you will find a good range of books recommended on our website: <https://www.wtanglican.nz/ideas/#worship>.

Thoughts and Questions

