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What is Praxis?

Praxis was formed in 1990, sponsored by the Liturgical Commission, the Group for the Renewal of Worship (GROW) and the Alcuin Club to provide and support liturgical education in the Church of England.

Affiliation

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Contact praxis@praxisworship.org.uk

For general enquiries, affiliation and programme information, contact Praxis, 19 The Close, Salisbury, SP1 2EB, 01202 296886, praxis@praxisworship.org.uk

The Worship Transforming Communities Conference

Three days in July

From across England and from further afield, including Europe, Ireland and America, 250 delegates gathered together for a conference that was in the planning for two years. It was offered as part of the on-going commitment to the renewal of worship. The worshipping life of the Church of England is at an exciting, yet challenging, juncture and the conversations and discussions at the conference underlined this. Before the conference, I suggested that there was a degree of 'liturgical fatigue' in the Church of England, due in part to the overwhelmingly creative energy which was expended in the production of the *Common Worship* library throughout the past fifteen years. However, I was proved wrong, or at least my terminology needs to be corrected. There is neither shortage of liturgical creativity nor apathy, but the direction needed to be re-defined and collectively determined at a large gathering such as we had in Birmingham. All of our keynote speakers and the majority of the seminar workshops achieved the task that was set: to begin new conversations and renew the creative energy in the liturgical world for the future.

The central task now is to continue to renew the creative energy replenished in Aston and to equip worshipping communities to provide missional liturgical worship that refreshes and feeds people and attracts new people of all ages to savour the mysteries of God. Two new initiatives will start this process – the redesigned and relaunched *Transforming Worship* website and the next gathering of diocesan liturgical committee delegates in February 2014.

✉ *Christopher Woods, National Worship Development Officer*

Welcoming the Conference to Birmingham

One of the most enjoyable things in cathedral life is the opportunity to offer hospitality to visitors. So we were thrilled that the National Liturgy Conference chose to come to Birmingham. It gave us the chance to share what we believe is great about our small Cathedral and our huge city.

Having visitors requires effort, and behind anything that appears effortless is exacting organisation. It is also exposing – there are shortcomings that we're aware of and having visitors highlights them. The two large Conference services, of contrasting style, formed part of a demanding week, following the ordinations of deacons and priests and they helped me to see again, very clearly, that our Cathedral volunteers, staff and musicians are exceptionally talented and generous. They share a real sense of calling to the task of hospitality, welcoming in the name of Christ and enabling community.

Worshipping in a heat-wave with all the windows flung open – open to the siren noises of the city – felt like worshipping without walls. As the evening commuters rushed past, a great wave of joyful singing washed out from the building: City and Cathedral were exposed to one another.

Afterwards, I was told that while I preached on the burning bush and the fire of God, the beautiful Burne-Jones 'Last Judgement' window lit up, blazing red in the evening sunshine. Our visitors saw this great master-piece at its best.

We hugely enjoyed hosting the Conference.

Thanks for your visit. Come again soon!
 ✉ *Catherine Ogle, Dean of Birmingham*

Affirming the way forward

Some eight years ago the Liturgical Commission turned its attention to formation. How can we assist those who lead worship to do so to the best of their ability? If we believe that liturgy forms Christian community then forming those who lead the liturgy is crucial. From that sprang *Transforming Worship* and all that that has meant – the new web site is upon us! *Worship Transforming Communities* was both the culmination of those eight years work but also the springboard for the next ten years.

The conference seemed to me to achieve both these aims, well served by the keynote speakers. Ed Foley got us off to a remarkable start. Liturgy speaks not only to the Christian community but to wider society – none of us was left in any doubt by the end of his lecture. Then Nick Holtam spoke from his own experience at St Martin-in-the-Fields; from triumphs and challenges we saw how a church in one of the world's most public squares could speak through the liturgy. Will Todd and Michael Symmons Roberts took us into words and music. Good text and music rose to the top of our agenda: that is the key issue as we look to new texts for the rites of initiation. Jessica Martin, from her experience as a don in English Literature at Cambridge, and as a parish priest, gave a moving testimony of how and what the liturgy ought to be achieving. The speakers themselves, and those who offered sharp and sometimes penetrating questions, helped arm us with the sort of tools that we need as we look to the new baptismal texts.

Most encouraging of all was the sheer number who attended, the best attendance of any of the national liturgical conferences over the years. The conference was all and more than we could ever have hoped for. I hope that it will inspire those who returned to their dioceses (I think virtually every diocese was represented) to help form the formers so that our liturgy can truly transform communities.

✠ *The Bishop of Wakefield, Chair of the Liturgical Commission*

Conference keynotes

Worship and the Public Square: Ed Foley

'Jesus got himself crucified because of the way he ate!' So said Ed Foley at the beginning of the conference. He was quoting Robert Karris's, *Eating your way through Luke's Gospel*, whilst raising an interesting question about what we might think we are doing in our contemporary liturgy.

Foley's thesis is that worship is public theology. It is as such that worship transforms communities and also that communities transform worship. For him, Jesus' table ministry is emblematic. It is not just focussed on gathering disciples but it also challenges marginalization. Jesus subverted table etiquette and inverted a Jewish pattern of table exclusivity.

Having set out a strong transformative expectation of worship, Foley turned to the word *leitourgia* and challenged the adequacy of 'liturgy' equating to 'the work of the people' as simplistic etymology. Foley finds in Septuagint and New Testament use of the word *leitourgia* a basis to understand liturgy as, 'work done publicly for the people'. This is missional and not solely ritual, highlighted by examples such as those found in Romans: the word *leitourgia* being used of Paul's collection for the Saints (15.27), the duty of state officials (13.6) and of Paul's own service to the Gentiles (15.16). In Foley's understanding mission is not a noble recruitment strategy of the Church but is essential to who we are. This represents God's love for the world, so liturgy can't be simply for the body of Christ.

Finally, Foley turns this around following Karl Rahner's notion of the 'liturgy of the world'. This is to say that, 'the world is filled with the grandeur of God'. Foley argues that if we want others to take our ritual gifts seriously, then we need to take their ritual gifts seriously. This is mission in reverse if you like. It is about the Church being tuned to the liturgy of the world. It is in this reciprocal liturgical art or discipline that we are best equipped for the task of public theology. Maybe this requires a great humility of us. What sticks in the memory from Will and Kate's great wedding in 2011 is not primarily the church's ritual. A sense of the Bishop of

London's sermon may be remembered but also the kiss on the balcony of the Palace, the RAF fly past, the getaway in an Aston Martin.

And so Foley challenges his hearers to recognize in the talk of God and Church in the public square a reflection of what matters outside the Church and what society receives from the Church in our worship, weddings, funerals, and other encounters. In turn, sensitivity to this will make our ritual practice a relevant public theology and vital formational force.

Liturgists are often compared to terrorists in a joke about who you can and cannot negotiate with. At the beginning of a three-day liturgical conference Ed Foley's words provided a strong dose of humility. He also provided a reminder that what we do and what we ritualize matters as much as what we say. And it is only in hearing how society speaks of God, and in seeing how public ritual operates, that we can enter into any meaningful dialogue with people beyond our own cloisters. This was a valuable and well-received contribution to a conference that sought to explore 'worship transforming communities'.

Ed Foley, a Roman Catholic priest and a professor at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, has 21 books to his credit. His most recent work was as general editor of *A Commentary on the Order of Mass: A New English Translation* (The Liturgical Press, 2011).

✠ *Tim Stratford, Archdeacon of Leicester*

Worship Transforming Communities: Nicholas Holtam

Nicholas Holtam gave an inspiring interpretation of the theme of the whole conference. In a relationship that is a two-way street he showed how it is possible for worship to transform the communities in which it is set, and for the worshipping community to be transformed by the wider community with which it is engaged. To do this he used a collection of stories drawn from his experience as Bishop of Salisbury and Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields in London.

Bishop Nick spoke of three works of art commissioned by Salisbury Cathedral.

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Placed at the centre of the nave, but aligned with its main doors, stands the William Pye font and water feature, dedicated in 2008. From here can be seen the 1981 Prisoners of Conscience Window at the east end. In the space between are opportunities for prayer, contemplation and worship in which God challenges us to let the oppressed go free. Outside, on the Cathedral Green, stands the statue of the Walking Madonna, also dating from 1981. She is walking away from the space dedicated to her name towards the city. Nick noted how easy it is to miss the meaning of the human response to God as we are directed to consider it in the liturgical dismissal.

It was from St Martin's that the BBC made its first broadcast of an act of worship, a seemingly innocent venture that had drawn concern that, 'no one would know who was listening to it' and that 'men might listen to it with their hats on!' It was a shaky start to the fine broadcasting tradition that developed, one that demanded the Church rethink its relationship with the world. The Bishop spoke movingly about many of his experiences at St Martin-in-the-Fields, adjoined to Trafalgar Square. If the concept of *Worship Transforming Communities* is about the relationship between the worshipping community and the public space in which it is set, then St Martin's spoke of that, sometimes explicitly, sometimes unconsciously.

Those unconscious expressions occur in the unintended paradoxes in the ministries to which the parish is drawn. St Martin's is the parish church for the Ministry of Defence, yet Martin is the patron saint of pacifists, and Dick Shepherd, who is commemorated in a crypt chapel, was the founder of the British Pacifist Union. While St Martin's is the royal parish church, it has developed a very strong ministry to the homeless. In microcosm, the Church holds the same tensions faced by all Christians who would be open to the needs of all without fear or favour.

Another example of the way in which St Martin's becomes the meeting point between the Church and the public square is in the range of events it supports on Good Friday. The day begins with all-age worship, usually with a congregation

of about 60 to 80. The classic *Three Hours Devotion* begins at noon (usual congregation 600) and ends on the portico fronting Trafalgar Square. St Martin's traditionally then supplies back-up for a Passion Play set beneath Nelson's Column, bringing the graphic story of the Passion very much into the public domain. In the evening there is a concert, often for a crowd in excess of 800, each paying up to £40 for ticket to hear Bach or Mozart. Thus it meets the needs of very different 'markets,' cultures and expectations, all keeping Good Friday.

Bishop Nick concluded by recalling a recent visit to a Wiltshire country parish celebrating 700 years of ministry. In a service followed by a lunch, stories were told of how the church had played its part in the joys and sorrows of the community. The PCC had decided not to hold a celebration of the Eucharist so as not to exclude those from beyond the regular congregation.

As Sam Wells, the Bishop's successor at St Martin-in-the-Fields has remarked, 'When habit and meaning are still there, so is the prospect of renewal'.

✠ Robin Lodge, *Chair of Praxis South West*

Aspiring to be Musicians in Worship: Will Todd

Will Todd is a musician and composer of both church and secular music.

His recent compositions include an opera, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; a jazz setting for Evensong, arising from comment by the Vicar of St. Oswald's, Durham, and commissioned by the church; his *Mass in Blue* and *The Call of Wisdom*, sung in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Thanksgiving Service in St Paul's Cathedral. Will composes in several genres but his overall style is that of jazz/blues.

Will started by telling us that it is essential for singers to have 'warmed up' their voices before singing; the difference in quality achieved is enormous. After we had 'warmed up', he took us on a guided tour of some of his compositions. We heard his *a capella* setting of *Vidi speciosam* (I saw the fair one) (the responsory to the first lesson at Mattins for the Assumption of the BVM, probably better known in the

setting by Tomás Luis de Victoria). His *Mass in Blue* is a four part setting of the Latin Mass accompanied by Big Band, Jazz Trio or String Orchestra; a crossover of two genres. Lasting 40 minutes it is probably rather long for liturgical use. *Lighting the Way*, for voices and piano, and described as a song for pilgrims, was commissioned for the Lighting the Way festival in Durham Cathedral in 1999. When Peter Kashouris, Vicar of St. Oswald's Durham asked, 'How can we make an evensong event that young people will come to and be part of?', the result was a setting of Evensong (BCP) for four parts and a jazz trio, *Durham Jazz Evensong*.

In 2012 Will was commissioned to write a piece for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Service where it was sung by a choir of children. The work, entitled *The Call of Wisdom*, uses words from Proverbs 8, paraphrased by Michael Hampel, of St Paul's Cathedral and is for upper voices or four parts and organ.

He has also composed a setting for Psalm 150 premiered in Ely Cathedral on 7 September 2013.

During his presentation Will emphasised that music does not have to be confined to 'traditional' settings; jazz and other music has its place in worship as well. Traditional themes can be used as the basis for improvisation. He showed how imaginative use of different styles of music has the possibility of giving worship a boost. Much of his music would be beyond the capabilities of many parish churches. However, it could be suitable for a large gathering where a multiplicity of talents might be available, and his team is available for workshops across the country.

✠ John Chamberlin, *Secretary of Praxis North*

Poetry and liturgy - irreconcilable differences: Michael Symmons Roberts

I listened to Symmons Roberts as a life-long worshipper who enjoys poetry and who has experienced many styles of liturgical writing over the years, some poetic, some not! In my teens I took for granted the 17th century theology and language of the *Prayer Book* (as many

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still do) and at university, I found the 'simpler' language of *Series 2* threatening at first but then liberating. The *ASB* texts never inspired me – I understood, but was underwhelmed. The move towards *Common Worship*, has, at least for me, provided much that is beautiful and inspirational and therefore 'accessible,' but also some material that is not. I'm disappointed with many of the texts in *Patterns for Worship*: their almost exclusively biblical symbolism is hardly 'accessible' to those relatively 'new' to church in an all-age worship situation. I do warm, however, to many of the *Additional Collects*, preferring their originality and brevity to the lengthy *CW* texts that too often re-work the *BCP*. All this, of course, is only my perspective, from my own background, but it raises the question, is it ever possible to have the one set of liturgical texts that enables transformative worship for all?

Michael Symmons Roberts was passionate when speaking about 'accessible' liturgical language. These texts, he said, have to be spoken by many people; they must stand the tests of context, of place and of time; the beauty of the words should reveal, not obscure, the spiritual meaning of the text, and empower the transformation of worshippers and their spiritual formation as Christians. As a Roman Catholic, Roberts spoke of struggling with some of the phrases in their new liturgy which, for him, failed these criteria. Difficult language in liturgy, he said, is not necessarily bad; while the words should be intelligible for all, they must still do justice to the complexity and mystery of the person of God and of those who worship.

Sixty years ago, the poet David Jones regretted the 'thinning of language' in our culture: Christian imagery, he said, was losing its meaning and power. Roberts reflected on the changing meaning of words over time: theological words such as 'grace' now mean different things in church and on the streets. How should our liturgies respond to that? Maybe there's a case to be made for ceasing to use such 'confusing' words in our worship for a while, rather than spending time 'explaining' their Christian meaning to congregations who, we assume, can't

understand? (I remember a funeral in my own family, when the vicar spent so much time explaining the meaning of words and concepts in the service that he failed to lift up our hearts.)

Symmons Roberts controversially raised the 'spectres' of simplification and accessibility in liturgical language. 'My gripe', he said, 'is with those who liturgically under-estimate the abilities of worshippers.' If human beings are difficult and mysterious to ourselves and to each other, why should the poetry and prose of liturgical language be 'less' than we are? When liturgies lose their 'beauty,' they also lose something of their meaning and power. So those who write liturgical texts today need great skills to call out new responses to liturgical words from a new generation. Can our liturgies introduce 'new' words that have the power to bring 'old' meanings alive, words that liberate today's worshippers whilst 'yielding their symbolic riches slowly'?

Questions from the audience related mainly to 'accessibility'. I was left pondering whether one set of liturgical texts can ever really fit all worshippers. My instinct is that it can't, and that a beautiful but 'mixed' economy that patronises no-one is the only way forward. May our liturgical writers rise to the challenge!

✍ *Anne Horton, Rector of Woodhouse, Woodhouse Eaves and Swithland*

Liturgy for Occasions and Occasional Liturgy: Jessica Martin

The last main address of a conference might be regarded as the graveyard slot, particularly if the conference takes place in very hot weather. But if that was the case in Birmingham, Jessica Martin redeemed the time superbly. *Liturgy for Occasions and Occasional Liturgy* was thoughtfully illustrated by her experience as Priest-in-Charge of three parishes near Cambridge, illustrations which demonstrated some much-appreciated liturgical humanity. This liturgical humanity was particularly obvious in Jessica's honesty: beginning with an account of her experience presiding at a regular Taizé liturgy in one

of her parishes, she acknowledged not only the anxiety which is often felt when people stop coming to services, but also the difficulty of helping a group which prays together to demonstrate mutual trust. Among occasional worshippers, community is inevitably hard-won. Jessica was realistic about the demands on younger worshippers: their busy lives militate against weekly or even monthly attendance, not least because Sunday has become a day replete with family, sporting and work commitments. It was refreshing that she did not seek to defend the development – after all, if something matters, it will become a priority – but rather to subvert it by making every service a special occasion. It was noted that the phenomenon of the 'floating population' of worshippers impedes liturgical formation, but need not prevent it: even occasional worshippers can develop some memory, and congregational response – a practice which strikes the newcomer as bizarre – 'performs' unity. But perhaps the most striking of Jessica's observations was that a lack of liturgical literacy means that everything is taken personally in a way which is not always helpful: penitence is resisted because claims about sinfulness are regarded as a personal slight, while the lack of genre-awareness means the Liturgy of the Word becomes 'a message from Radio God' for the individual rather than a means of corporate hearing. A conviction that liturgy is formational shone through Jessica's words, and if anything was missing it was an expression of the hope that such formation might lead to a culture in which worship becomes not an occasion but a way of life. Nevertheless, as one who presides at worship in a culture which desires that which it has made alien, I returned home inspired to respond to that challenge not with frustration but with gracious joy.

✍ *Liam Beadle, Vicar of Honley*

Conference questions & workshops

Question times

The Conference was enlivened by opportunities to debate the keynote addresses.

Angela Tilby chaired a question session with keynote speakers Ed Foley and Nick Holtam, taking questions that had been prepared by small groups of conference participants after the lectures earlier in the day. Time constraints, and the fact that the speakers had plenty to say in answer to each question, resulted in few of the carefully prepared questions being put.

Nevertheless, the speakers used wisdom and experience in tackling the challenges placed before them – and amiably agreed to disagree on some points.

Of particular interest was the imperative to engage with contemporary society – something which some individuals have an innate gift for, but which has to be learnt by church communities. We need to hear the stories of the communities around us. By way of example, Nick Holtam praised the way in which the Bishop of Liverpool handled the Hillsborough enquiry, and Ed Foley recounted how he had sensitively led a memorial for his nephew, drawing on themes from Tolkien.

The speakers also responded to concerns about the way in which buildings and church finance hamper our furtherance of the ‘table ministry’ of Jesus – acknowledging that we cannot pretend to be Jesus, nor is our context the same as his. Ed Foley humbly reminded us that every Eucharist celebrated is flawed because of the divisions that exist in Christ’s Church.

Despite reformulated plans necessitated by a false fire alarm, under the guidance of the Spirit, or possibly by subtle pre-arrangement, Christopher Irvine oversaw a helpful series of questions directed at Will Todd and Michael Symmons Roberts. Predictably, Michael’s linkage of the word ‘accessible’ with public toilets was challenged, and he graciously conceded that accessible need not mean banal, and agreed that in formulating ‘accessible’ texts we are trying to communicate the full riches of the Christian tradition to as many people as possible. Experience with children, even in areas of multiple deprivation, shows that complex and multi-layered texts can fascinate and attract, despite low literacy levels.

Both speakers were asked to comment on prayer and the creative process. Will revealed that he sometimes receives

unexpected, or un-looked-for, ideas for music, which are valuable and welcome gifts. Michael said that he prays for help, poem by poem, even line by line, though he would not claim that his work is therefore ‘inspired’.

Will was asked how his work relates to music in local churches. Acknowledging that at times excellent resources had been put at his disposal, he emphasised that a competent singer with the skill to lead others can achieve good results with an ‘ordinary’ congregation.

The issue of clergy-musician cooperation was raised, and the tension that can arise where musician and clergy know and understand different kinds of music to the exclusion of others. It was suggested that while breadth of training could be improved, ultimately a bridge must be built on which both parties can stand.

✍ Ian Tarrant, Rector of Woodford St Mary

Sue Wallace: Exploring Ancient Future Liturgy

I am convinced that our society has rejected neither Christianity nor its rich symbolism. In fact, there is much evidence to suggest that today’s society is fascinated with Christian symbolic expression. To engage with this, we, the liturgists, need to be ever more mindful and visionary in the way we communicate the eternal truths revealed through our liturgical offerings. In some instances this may mean speaking a new language, a language of visual effects, multi-media expression and twenty-first century culture.

By taking us on a journey through the history and vision of *Transcendence, an Ancient Future Mass*, Sue Wallace introduced the group to practical ideas for engagement with modern culture in order to try and enhance the traditional liturgy for a new generation, the disaffected and those merely looking for something more.

Our liturgy is missional! Worship transforms communities: our communities can also transform our worship. This was a common theme running through the conference. Our sacramental liturgies hold within them deep mystery and encounter with the living God. For many of us this encounter is transformative. As Sue outlined so very well, embracing modern, contemporary, multi-media approaches to ancient liturgical imperatives may just make this encounter transformative for many

others too.

✍ Rob Parker-McGee, Curate of Gornal and Sedgley

Perran Gay: Singing congregational liturgy

‘He who sings once, prays twice’ preached St Augustine, and this certainly was Perran Gay’s driving force in his workshop *Singing congregational liturgy creatively*. Perran’s warm and welcoming style certainly put his audience at their ease as he shared some greatly needed ‘pearls of wisdom’ on getting congregations singing. Perran’s experience as Precentor of Truro has given him insight into both the large-scale diocesan occasions as well as transitional ministry within a vacant country parish. His thoughts on both examples are simple:

- Choose suitable (i.e. manageable) repertoire.
- Do not be afraid to introduce and rehearse it.

How many times have any of us been in churches where an unknown hymn appears, or where we feel excluded as everyone else knows the melody of the *Sanctus* and we grapple at picking it up? Perran gave practical tips – coupling old tunes with new texts, printing melody lines in the order of service for hymns and sung parts of the liturgy. He called on us to be ‘creative with the familiar’. In Truro, for example, he frames verses from the hymn ‘O come, all ye faithful’ around the Gathering and Penitential acts at the First Eucharist of Christmas. Simple, but inspired!

Perran ended by sharing with us examples from a myriad of sources (including a great deal of liturgical resources from the *Laudate* hymnal), which put his thoughts into action, producing a vocally uplifting end to an excellent workshop. If only the whole conference had heard this!

✍ Benjamin Phillips, Vicar of Towcester

Martin Poole: Public Space Worship

Martin Poole, a parish priest and a leader with *Beyond*, a Fresh Expression from Hove, presented a fascinating workshop on reflective spirituality within the public square. Speaking as a practitioner who felt his theology in the gut, he began by drawing upon the ‘Baby in the Stone’ sculpture created for the portico at St. Martin-in-the-

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Fields, which images that key verse from John's Gospel, 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us'. Language is instinctive and both Creation and Incarnation begin with God speaking. Yet where words are inadequate, art can take over.

Beyond began in 2008, taking spirituality out into the public arena to engage with modern culture, particularly in Brighton and Hove. Their aim is to be a creative Christian presence in the community and to help Christians to think differently. The group now runs ten events each year in public areas of the south coast conurbation. Their target is anyone interested in seeing spirituality in everything; 'de-churched' people alienated from traditional church; and churchgoers who want to explore the interface between art and faith.

Before full-time ministry, Martin was an actor and television producer. This has given access to suitable materials and props but much can be done by anyone prepared to do a little research and work collaboratively.

Perhaps the best known of *Beyond's* events is the annual Beach Hut Advent Calendar on Hove sea front in December, featured on BBC Breakfast TV one Christmas Day. Now in its sixth year, it makes use of 24 of Hove's 450 beach huts to express twenty four takes on the Christmas story. The owners of each hut may be offered help from local artists, but there is no control of content, although they may be invited to think in terms of a (Christian!) Christmas carol. Some huts are taken on by local churches, but all are invited to take part. The Easter Path offers an alternative Stations of the Cross event using art installations in shop windows. Guided tours are offered with a meditation at each station and some focus words are posted on the shop windows.

Martin offered some thoughts and principles for anyone wishing to try this style of ministry. It is important to believe that being creative is to share in the nature of God. Worship should always give us a chance to do this: people need to be encouraged to participate in their own way. All responses should be accepted, even the negative ones. When identifying sites, look around for crosses, memorials, or shops, that might form a basis for a station. Ideas come easily but it takes time and focus to make them work. Consider carefully the nature of the target audience. The post-modern environment is not a problem.

People still understand spiritual concepts like self-denial and harvest but we need to create ways for them to make connections without alluding to ecclesiastical structures or its language. Asked whether *Beyond* was a post-modern church, Poole replied, 'Not really, but we focus on what we are good at.' It is God's job to pick up the pastoral threads!

✉ *Robin Lodge, Chair of Praxis South West*

Ros Furlong: Reading in Church

It was good to have a special workshop focussing on something that happens in every single parish church – the reading of Scripture. Ros Furlong is from St Helen's, Bishopsgate in London, a church which has a strong Bible teaching ministry. For the first part of the workshop we were encouraged to think about why the reading of the Bible in church is important. At one point we had a discussion about how, and to what extent, the Bible is the 'Word of God'. We then moved on to consider how we could best encourage good reading in church. Amongst other things, we discussed the merits of following the reading in a pew Bible or on a printed sheet. Several of the points made were, in one sense, fairly obvious. For example, ensuring that people read the passage in advance and check on the pronunciation of words. Yet, despite being obvious, I welcomed the reminder of encouraging lesson readers to do this. Ros shared with us a simple A4 hand-out she had produced for lesson readers and, although it would need some local adaptation, I was grateful for it and intend to give a copy to all my lesson readers.

✉ *Colin Randall, Chester Diocesan Worship Adviser*

Evening liturgy

As someone who was brought up on a strict diet of Choral Evensong, I probably am not the best person to review or account for Tuesday's Evening Liturgy at Birmingham Cathedral – however, for me, it was an eye-opening experience into how modern resources (both musical, liturgical and technical) can be used in creative and inspiring worship. The large projector screen was utilised alongside our orders of service, with a time-lapse video loop of Birmingham Cathedral churchyard acting as a suitable reminder of the need

for saying the Daily Office in the midst of a bustling and chaotic world. The versatile, first-rate group of musicians who accompanied the musical portions of the liturgy are to be commended for both their exquisite playing and their excellent feel for extemporisation (especially during the intercessions). We joined in singing hymns, songs and canticles representing the breadth of the charismatic tradition, from Hillsong ('Mighty to save') to Taizé with Berthier's 'O Lord, hear my prayer' as a response during the intercessions, to the Catholic renewal movement and Bernadette Farrell's setting of the *Magnificat*, culminating with the Townend/Broadening collaboration 'Christ be in my waking' as our final hymn. For me, it was a powerful and joyous expression of the twenty-first century church at worship. Thanks to Tim Lomax for leading, and to the Liturgical Commission and Birmingham Cathedral for opening one delegate's eyes to a modern and beautiful evening liturgy.

✉ *Benjamin Phillips, Vicar of Towcester*

Conference Eucharist

The Eucharist for the National Liturgical Conference held in Birmingham Cathedral was an imaginative offering. Re-entering the space that had been the venue for the informal act of evening worship led by Tim Lomax the evening before, the reorientation of the building was striking. The nave of the Cathedral was arranged collegiate style, with five or six rows of north and south facing chairs on either side of a central aisle, the overspill being accommodated further back in the side aisles. The liturgical movement of the service was then from west to east, with the two sacred ministers, the Bishop of Wakefield and the Precentor of Birmingham, occupying seats set centrally at the west of the Cathedral until the Peace, and then moving in procession to the chancel for the Liturgy of the Sacrament. In a relatively small space, visibility was an issue and the space did feel a little cramped. The only raised area at the West was the ambo, from which the lessons were read and from which Dean of Birmingham preached. The music was a great mix of ancient and modern, organ-led, and with a rousing responsorial congregational setting of the service led ably by the Cathedral Choir.

✉ *Tom Clammer, Precentor of Salisbury*

Christopher Woods

The Bishop of Wakefield writes:

For the past three years, almost, Christopher Woods has been secretary to the Liturgical Commission. Now he is moving on to become priest-in-charge of St Anne's, Hoxton. I shall particularly miss Christopher as my closest colleague in my role as Chair of the Commission. Christopher has brought with him intelligence, enthusiasm and that unalloyed freshness which can only come from those whose birthplace is across the Irish Sea!

His task has been very challenging. Reduced resources within the Church of England's Central Secretariat have meant that we now only have a half-time post available to us. This meant that Christopher had to find for himself another matching half-time position, as Chaplain and Liturgy Tutor at Westcott House in Cambridge. Apart from the pressures of travel, the sheer strain of trying to keep two jobs going should never be underestimated. Despite this, Christopher has been a model secretary to the Commission and has helped us organise some road shows within the formation programme.

One of the things I have really appreciated has been Christopher's humour and his care for me and Commission members. He has been a good pastor, and my guess is that it is love of that role that has drawn him back to parish ministry rather more swiftly than we might have hoped. I am sure that Sue Moore, with whom he has worked most closely, would echo all that I have said. We wish Christopher well in his new work and I, for one, hope very much that he will retain his interest in liturgy. We shall all be the gainers in the Church of England if he does.

Grove Books

W215 Connecting Worship & Vision, Matthew Swires-Hennessy, Associate Minister of St Peter's Farnborough

When a church enters into a period of discerning vision, worship is often not the first place to be looked to for inspiration.

But linking the discernment process with the worshipping life of the church can help to root it in both the mission of the wider church and the local context. This booklet explores how worship can inform the vision-setting process, and in turn, how a church's vision and values can inform its worship.

W217 Eucharistic Consecration in Common Worship, Colin Buchanan

Back in 1998 Colin Buchanan wrote a Grove Booklet on eucharistic consecration, dealing with the theological principles involved, and doing so deliberately before the *CW* Order One texts had been agreed. It sold out, but could hardly now be reprinted; instead the new booklet very specifically reviews the actual texts in Order One (and the two new Additional Eucharistic Prayers). This will be published in November 2013.

Alcuin/GROW Joint Liturgical Study 76 Gaudentius of Brescia on Baptism and the Eucharist, Dominic Keech, Assistant Curate in Wantage

This adds to the series another Study in patristic authors on liturgical matters – in this case by a lesser known fourth-fifth century Italian theologian with a valuable witness to give us. This is scheduled by SCM-Canterbury for October (£7.95).

Forthcoming Praxis events

Now thank we all our God

Thursday 17 October 2013
Diocese of Winchester/Praxis South
Old Alresford Place, Winchester

A training day for all who plan or lead worship with children on the Additional Eucharistic Prayers and other aspects of good practice.

Speakers: Mary Hawes and Jo Spreadbury
Contact ian.knight@winchester.anglican.org

Commemorating the First World War

Wednesday 30 October 2013
Praxis South

10.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m. Southwark Cathedral

This topical day will help to focus our

attention on a four year period of national importance, in which the Church must become involved.

Speakers: June Osborne, Guy Wilkinson and Gilly Myers

Contact peter@furber.me.uk

The celebration of the Eucharist, ancient and modern

Thursday 23 January 2014

Praxis South West

Venue and time to be announced. Please note the change of date for this event.

Speakers: Paul Bradshaw and Tom Clammer

IALC

International Anglican Liturgical Consultation

Dublin, 28 July to 3 August

The theme was 'Rites of Healing and Reconciliation.' Several areas emerged as warranting further work and perhaps forthcoming Consultations which would produce agreed statements to assist provinces in their continuing work in the area of rites of healing and reconciliation:

- ministry of healing
- other ministry with the sick and dying;
- theological issues about sin and forgiveness.

Liturgical practices, both historical and contemporary, in the three categories noted above, will be explored in the forms of texts (lament, blessing, commissioning alongside confession and absolution), the use of gesture, posture, space and ritual action, the role of music and silence, the forms taken by 'amendment of life' (penance), and insights from anthropology and ritual theory.

The meeting also gave time to considering the place of the IALC in the life of the Anglican Communion. It has enjoyed input from many exceptional liturgical scholars but due to reductions in the funding of academic programmes fewer professional liturgical scholars are able to attend meetings. IALC also values the participation of 'pastoral liturgists,' those Anglicans who put good liturgical theology into practice in local contexts, and those who have a role in developing new or revised resources or prayer books in their own provinces.

✉ Colin Buchanan

Reconciliation of a penitent

The International Anglican Liturgical gathering in Dublin this summer included in its purview rites for 'The Reconciliation of a Penitent'. This is a title stemming from post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism, and adopted in some Anglican provinces in place of 'the confessional' or 'penance'. *Common Worship* provides it not in *Pastoral Services*, but (for guessable reasons) in *Christian Initiation*. For Dublin I wrote a background paper, about the Church of England position in the 16th and 17th centuries, abolishing 'the confessional' or 'auricular confession', and retaining solely an emergency provision for people approaching death.

However, 'reconciliation' was raised to a different level by our guest preacher, Harold Miller, the Bishop of Down and Dromore (including the east side of Belfast). He spoke of four days of riots recently experienced on the streets of Belfast, and the great need of true 'reconciliation', that of communities. This confirmed my own reading of 'reconciliation': it is a very large concept. Now, suppose someone with scruples about some fairly private sin comes to see a presbyter for 'comfort or counsel' (words in the *Prayer Book* 'warning exhortation', quoted on page 266 of *CW Christian Initiation*) – is it not footling to call this 'reconciliation of a penitent'? Page 266 calls it, in grand terms, 'a corporate action of the Church'. But, I submit, we have here three different levels of misuse of language:

(a) If it be true that any sin breaks a person's fellowship with 'the Church', then, as we are all sinners, the whole Church is in some way 'dis-integrated', and there exists no whole healthy body to which the individual is to be reconciled. The 'warning exhortation' is concerned with the 'quieting of his conscience', i.e. his knowing God's forgiveness, not with some metaphysical understanding of the sundering of the body of Christ.

(b) 'Reconciliation' in the New Testament is properly large-scale and brings two entities at odds with each other together – see Rom.5.10-11, 2 Cor.5.18-20, and especially Eph.2.16. The reconciliation of God and his people is a great cosmic work achieved once for all at Calvary – and it has two parties to it. It is stretching the language of trivial sin (or mere scruple) to placard dealing with it as 'the reconciliation of a penitent', and it runs the danger of not having the big word available for the riots in Belfast – or the return of the truly prodigal son.

(c) The third misuse covertly admits the above is largely pretence. No parish advertises that the reconciliation of penitents is available at 6pm on Saturdays, or on request; no parish has a 'reconciliatory box' in which this can be achieved; no clergy think they are recognized 'reconciliators'; no legal appeal is made to the 'seal of the reconciliatory'; and no penitent admits sins committed 'since my last reconciliation'. Rightly or wrongly, and however fading the use, it is the 'confessional' which is in view.

So we might as well call it the 'confessional'.

✉ Colin Buchanan is a former Bishop of Woolwich

Moving forward

How we do our worship is a shop window on the Church. In an age when film companies spend billions of pounds on the latest blockbuster, our worship needs to be engaging, relevant and well-led. Worship is not the same as entertainment. Yet if it is to engage and attract people to offer their hearts and minds to God then worship, in the words, actions and music it uses, needs to convey something about the God to whom it points and in whose mission we participate.

Many people remember the part the Liturgical Commission played in producing the *Common Worship* texts offered over a ten year period. But what does the Commission do now? Part of its work is still involved with producing new and revised texts such as the recent Eucharistic Prayers for Use when Children are Present. Yet increasingly the Commission is extensively engaged in helping clergy, Readers and musicians to equip themselves effectively for the task of leading worship.

Best practice needs to have a solid foundation. The Liturgical Commission is actively working with the Ministry Division on the content of the worship modules for the new Common Awards. Once these are completed, the Commission will also be hosting a consultation for all those involved in teaching the new materials, so that good practice can be shared across the training institutions.

The importance of good worship needs to be owned locally. After the task of introducing *Common Worship* had been completed the role of the Liturgical Committee in many dioceses became unclear. The Liturgical Commission believes that these groups still have an essential part to play, offering consultancy on liturgy and worship to parishes and providing input on worship for IME 4-7 and CME. Following on from the National Worship Conference, the Liturgical Commission will be hosting a day aimed at relaunching worship committees as a presence in every diocese. Every diocesan bishop is shortly to be invited to send one or more delegates to this day.

Specialist help needs to continue to be accessible and available. Those who can remember the roadshows on presidency and on ordination services will remember their popularity. Yet since 2010, when national staffing for liturgy and worship was reduced from 1.5 staff to 0.5 staff, such roadshows have not been really practicable. Instead the Liturgical Commission is now working more closely with the Praxis regions to deliver training and development days on key texts and issues as they arise.

We need to be able to sing as well as speak our praises. The Liturgical Commission is currently strengthening its links with both RSCM and the Music and Worship Foundation and will carry links to events and courses they, and other groups offer, on the new *Transforming Worship* website.

Finally, pictures speak more than a thousand words. Do look out for the links to some new training videos on the *Transforming Worship* website as well.

✉ The Ven Dr Anne Dawtry, Convenor of Formation Group for the Liturgical Commission