

USES OF *EMBODIED LITURGY*

In Academic Courses and Parish Setting

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Academic courses

This book originated as a course taught in an Indonesian university. The students were church music majors in the faculty of performing arts. Some were already involved in church music programs in congregations. Pastors were also invited to attend the course. The ratio of students to pastors was about even throughout the two weeks of this intensive course.

It is unlikely that this unique context could be replicated elsewhere. But I see the book having several potential uses in seminary and undergraduate situations.

It could be used as supplemental reading in a general course on Christian worship to remind students that liturgy is an embodied activity.

It could be used as the main textbook in a course that focuses on the body in worship with supplemental reading drawn from the Bibliography.

The book incorporates yoga material. It would be possible to ignore this material other than as a side interest. However, it would be far more interesting to bring a yoga teacher into the classroom to lead students (and the teacher) through some or all of the sequences and suggested meditations. This would have the advantage of engaging students with their bodies as they think about the uses of their bodies in worship. This was the purpose of these exercises in the course I taught.

I will provide on this web site a syllabus for a full term course based on this book that focuses on embodied ritual and incorporates yoga practices.

Parish discussion groups

The book in whole or in part could serve as the basis for discussion of parish liturgical practices and personal worship habits. Maximally there are 24 different topics in 12 chapters in the book. For a six-week parish course I would divide the chapters as follows:

First session. Chapter 1

Second Session. Chapters 2, 5

Third Session. Chapters 3, 4, 6

Fourth Session. Chapters 7, 8

Fifth Session. Chapters 9, 10, 11

Sixth Session. Chapter 12

I do not envision cramming these discussions into a 45-minute Sunday adult forum. The chapters are full of information and raise issues that will require longer times for discussion.

Parish Day Retreat

I have used material from the book in a day-long parish retreat in which I was a guest presenter. The retreat began with Morning Prayer, included a Noon Office, and ended with Vespers, led by the pastor. The material from the book used in the retreat included Chapters 1 and 2 in the morning (with a break) and 12 in the afternoon (with a break between parts A and B). I also did the yoga sequences with those retreatants who were willing and able to participate. Again, a yoga teacher could be brought in for the morning session. The response to the retreat was very positive.

Discussion Questions for Each Part of Each Chapter

1A Discussion is built into Chapter 1A. Overall question: How do you experience worship in and with your body?

1B How do you experience the Trinity in the liturgy of your church?

2A How do you experience the times of day and seasons of the year in your body? How does this match with the liturgical orders of the church?

2B How do you experience the earthly signs of the sacraments (water, oil, bread, wine) in everyday life? How does that experience relate to the reception of these earthly signs in the sacramental celebrations?

3A How do you respond to the biblical and liturgical witness of nakedness before the Lord? Is nakedness a symbol that is worth recovering in our modern Western churches, for example, in Baptism?

3B In what ways do you experience the importance of getting dressed up in our society? Should this also apply to participation in public worship?

4A What rituals do you experience in everyday life or in special events? How does how the performance of these ordinary rituals shed light on how we do liturgy?

4B In what ways do you experience liturgy as a playful activity?

5A What special events do we celebrate with meals? Can we still see the meal as the form of the Lord's Supper?

5B Can we see the meal---the Lord's Supper---as the reason for the Sunday assembly, to which we add words in the form of readings and songs?

6A What practices of fasting and feasting do you observe in everyday life? Do you observe special times of fasting? What are the main feasts in your lives?

6B In what ways do we still inflict corporal punishment for offences in our society? How can we express repentance and amendment of life through activities that engage us bodily?

7A In what ways are our youth impacted bodily in the process of growing up in our society from infancy through adolescence? How are youth engaged bodily in the life of the church?

7B Share your own stories of the impact of illness and healing on your own body. Have you experienced the ministry of healing in anointing and the laying on of hands?

8A What is the ritual process of getting married in our society? How are the bodies of the couple engaged in these rituals?

8B How are the bodies of the deceased dealt with in our society? How do we honor the bodies of the deceased?

9A How does our culture impact the way we present our bodies and interact with others in society? How does that affect our behavior in church in worship and in interactions with others?

9B What kind of art do we display in our worship spaces? How should Christ be visually represented for liturgical purposes?

10A Can you connect the work of the Holy Spirit in your bodies with your breath? If so, how would you describe "Spirited" singing?

10B How wide should the spectrum of songs be in worship? What are the limitations in the selection of music for parish worship?

11A How could dance be used in worship in a way that involves the whole congregation? Why might dance be used and in what ways?

11B Is there a role for liturgical drama within our liturgies? How does the liturgy itself display dramatic elements?

12A In the light of the categories of liturgical performance and style in this chapter, how would you characterize the style of worship in your congregation? How are you engaged bodily in the worship you usually experience?

12B What impact do the physical limitations of its members have on worship and service in and through the church? What role do you think the church should play in promoting the bodily health and wellness of its members?

Bonus question: Has studying this book made a difference in how you will engage in worship?