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WW '72: INTRODUCTION

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: A WORKING MODEL OF THE GOSPEL

As I promised last month in [Essay 87](#), I begin with this month's Essay a serialization of my 1972 book carrying the same title as these electronic postings, *A Worship Workbench*. That volume was first published in that year by National Lutheran Campus Ministry in USA and Canada, and was reprinted no fewer than five times, the most recent in 1983. And as I noted in [Essay 87](#), I'll be revising terminologies and datings and indeed whole chapters as we go, for this web page, to bring the 1972-through-1983 hard-copy into the sensibilities of the Electronic Age. But I still think the burden of my argument from thirty years ago bears considering again today.



These are times when the traditional ministry of the church is, at worst, under attack, or, at least, undergoing an identity crisis. What is to be the role of ordained clergy in the new Age of Change? Are they to serve the Christian community as change-agents? As resource-brokers? As counselors? Teachers? Activists? Administrators? The competition of claims upon the minister's time and energy is enormous.



These chapters are written in the conviction that at least a percentage of the minister's time and energies might be devoted to the building up of a worshiping congregation.

Chapter One constitutes a defense of that conviction in view of the fact that, even today, human beings remain irrepressibly "religious".

Chapter Two examines the meaning of worship, from the standpoint of the Christian revelation on the one hand, and of the human religious impulse on the other.

Chapter Three consists of a new look at the old "Tradition," in an effort to determine what use it might be to us today.

Chapter Four asks the question, "What's New?" in an effort to determine those elements that make a particular worship form relevant or "contemporary".

Chapter Five looks at the arts and activities of human beings as languages for communication and as raw materials for liturgy and for life.

Chapter Six moves to the workbench and offers practical suggestions for constructing and designing acts of worship in the forms of today.

Chapter Seven examines the role of the worship committee, council, and congregation in introducing worship changes in the parish.



This is meant to be a practical book, a set of nuts-and-bolts guidelines and blueprints. It is written out of the experience of almost fifty years of ordained ministry, in parish, on campus, and in seminary settings. It is written in the hope that my own experience as pastor, chaplain, worship leader, workshop leader, and teacher will be helpful to others as together we struggle through one of the most exciting periods in the history of the Christian church.

It is written out of the conviction of a very personal witness in which the experience of congregational worship – of all things! – has been the single-minded focus of most of the author's energies as a ordained minister, and the intellectual, emotional, social, political, and cultural highpoint of his week. If you are not yet able to make that kind of profession, co-worker, perhaps the shop-talk that follows may be useful to you.

The gathering of the Christian congregation in worship each week should be, and can be, a working model of the Gospel. When Christians are asked, "What is the Good News all about?" we should be able to respond, "Come with me on Sunday morning and see!"

This book is dedicated to the realization of that conviction in every congregation of believers.

I dedicate my words as well to those Families of Faith in whose company I met the Lord of Life:

- + Concordia Lutheran Church, Buffalo, New York
- + St. Paul's, Blossom, New York and St. John's Elma, New York
- + St Paul's Lutheran Church, Fort Plain, New York
- + St Mark's Lutheran Church, Williamsport, Pennsylvania
- + The Lutheran Campus Ministry, Syracuse, New York
- + St Luke's Lutheran Church, Leeds, United Kingdom
- + Immanuel Lutheran Church, Amherst, Massachusetts
- + The Lutheran Campus Ministry in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada
- + Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada
- + St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada
- + Christ Lutheran Church, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada



— *Paul F. Bosch*

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