

MODULE FIVE – Eucharistic Shape and Music

6/2014

This module aims to clarify the shape of Eucharistic liturgy and to examine the place of music within this shape and to see how it can help or hinder what liturgists of all denominations have been trying to do in their recent reforms.

Introduction

The Eucharist is the Church's response to Christ's request to 'do this in remembrance of me' and 'this' being, to share a meal of bread and wine, remembering what Christ has done for us. The variations and formulas that have evolved to surround this act, have resulted in a range of interpretations that historically have been at odds, and only recently have begun to draw together the common threads providing a clearer 'shape' that is easily felt by those taking part.

The Eucharist has been likened to a simple piece of sculpture, beautiful in its simplicity and clarity of communication. Over the centuries, the sculpture has been lovingly adorned and added to, the original shape being lost and therefore its original message obscured. Recent liturgical reform has intended to remove these additions and restore the original 'sculpture' to its former state.

In all church traditions, liturgical reform has used the early historical identity of the Eucharist on which to base their work. In 1945, the Anglican scholar, Dom Gregory Dix published *The Shape of the Liturgy*, a ground-breaking piece of work that drew attention to the pattern or shape of events during the Last Supper. This liturgical thinking has led to an emphasis on shape and structure in all subsequent work.

Along with words, music has taken a great part in adorning the Eucharist, adding to the blurring of its shape and detracting from its main emphasis. Dom Gregory Murray says of this situation;

'Once the liturgy is consciously adorned with beauty, there is always the danger that its beautiful externals may come to be mistaken for the liturgy itself. So that what begins as a praiseworthy attempt to emphasize the holiness of the act of worship can in fact defeat its object by distracting attention from that act of worship.'

Music and the Mass p.32

Today, we have the benefit of much liturgical research and in the Church of England, the many years of experimental work through Series 1,2 and 3, the ASB and now Common Worship. The Church of Scotland, The Methodist Church, The United Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic Church have all produced new service books in the last ten years. We are now in a situation where we have undergone difficult change and are ready to move forward in the knowledge that our liturgical forms are based on a search for truth, simplicity and mission.

Music and Liturgical Shape

In Module One, we have already discussed how music is able to lift our words and focus our attention, enable us to express ourselves as one, raise our physical contribution and capture our emotional response in worship. Now we need to look closely at where music can contribute to the liturgical work that has been shaping our new services. Music has the power to diffuse and blur what liturgists now believe to be a clear shape. Sometimes the music we use comes from an older form of service and is transplanted straight into the new form, confusing what liturgists have intended.

Given the new services, we need to know what the liturgists' intentions are. Are they self-evident? Perhaps we need to remove all music and look at the words alone. Maybe attending a 'said' service would be a good idea, especially for musicians who are normally busy and involved in playing or singing.

Those who attend 'said' services of Holy Communion could leave comments on the website for us all about how they experienced the rhythm and shape of the service. It is important that real experience of a worship situation takes precedence over study of the texts at home.

Attending a said service, you will immediately be aware that there are two sections commonly named **Liturgy of the Word** and **Liturgy of the Sacrament** which contain central themes and provide the main structure of the service.

The following list provides an overview of the Church of England Common Worship service of Holy Communion with some comments on the 'actions' involved. All titles are taken from Common Worship Holy Communion Order One.

Preparation

Hymn/Entrance Song

The Greeting

greet each other in the Lord's name

Prayer of Preparation

confession of sins

Prayers of Penitence

Kyrie

plea for help and mercy

Gloria in excelsis deo

responsive praise

Collect

keep silence and pray a collect

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

proclaim and respond to the word of

God

Gradual Psalm or Hymn

Second Reading

Gospel Acclamation

acclaim the Word as received from God

Hear the gospel...

Gospel Reading

This is the gospel...

Sermon

reflect on God's word

Creed

the people affirm their faith

Prayers of Intercession (with response)

pray for the Church and the world

Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Peace	exchange the peace
Preparation of table	prepare the table
Taking of the bread and wine	
<i>Hymn</i>	offering of the gifts
<i>Eucharistic Prayer</i>	pray the thanksgiving eucharistic prayer
<i>Sanctus</i>	join the celestial choirs
<i>Memorial acclamation/Amen</i>	collective affirmation
<i>Lord's Prayer</i>	praise, petition
Breaking of the bread	
<i>Agnus Dei</i>	litany of petition
Giving of the bread and wine	receive Holy Communion
<i>Motet/Communion Song</i>	
<i>Hymn</i>	
Prayer after Communion	thanksgiving

Dismissal

<i>Hymn</i>	
Blessing	depart with God's blessing

All items above in italics may use music and you will be familiar with these. You will also be able to see this list in the attached leaflet 'Music at Holy Communion' where there are columns to give each item a rating as to its importance as a musical setting. These have been left out so that you can put your own in! There are some liturgical hints on the back – if needed. When you have ticked which items you think are most important, download the version that I have ticked and see if you agree!

[Embed Adobe Leaflet 'Music at Holy Communion - unticked'](#)

[Embed Adobe Leaflet 'Music at Holy Communion - ticked'](#)

You could compare and discuss your views on the use of hymnody and your selection online with others.

Some background reading



Before continuing with these notes, you need to have a clear picture of the historical structuring of the 'shape' of the Eucharist and what historical sources have been most used to get to this point. For a clear picture of the historical development from the first century to today, read Chapter 9 in [Common Worship Today – an illustrated guide to Common Worship](#). This is published by Harper Collins and can be found on Amazon. There are reference copies in the library at Sarum College, Salisbury if you live locally.

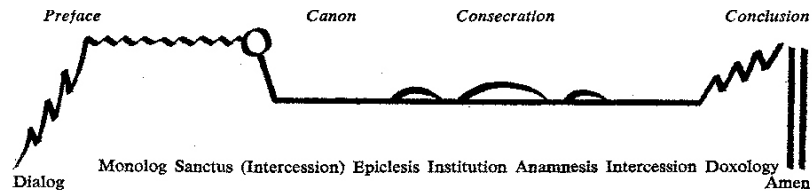
Putting Music Back

Using your knowledge of historical development and recent priorities, along with your experience of worship using words only, you can start to think about where you might introduce music.

*Where did it feel that you wanted to sing?
Where did your emotions tell you that you wanted to sing?*

Where would music help to define, focus, dignify or highlight certain words?

There is a descriptive diagram in Gelineau's 'Voices and Instruments in Christian Worship' (p.40) that gives a visual image of the dramatic 'shape' found in the Eucharistic Prayer.



Making a sketch like this of the whole service, you could identify and see the places of heightened action and response. Most people would identify these as the reading of the Gospel and the Sanctus. Would you agree?

This module finishes by unpacking the two main constituent parts of the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Sacrament. These may well have different names in different traditions. At this stage you don't need to get too hung-up in the terminology but recognise what you are familiar with and relate it to your own experience.

Liturgy of the Word

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading	proclaim and respond to the word of God
<i>Gradual Psalm or Hymn</i>	
Second Reading	
<i>Gospel Acclamation</i>	acclaim the Word as received from God
<i>Hear the gospel...</i>	
Gospel Reading	
<i>This is the gospel...</i>	
Sermon	reflect on God's word
<i>Creed</i>	the people affirm their faith
Prayers of Intercession (with response)	pray for the Church and the world

Music is able to contribute to the 'elevation' of the Gospel reading by preparation and increased physical contribution at this point. After the Old Testament reading/s, the Gradual Hymn or Psalm raises us to a higher level of expectation and this is added to by a sung Gospel Acclamation, taking us to the reading itself. Those who have sung an acclamation during a Gospel Procession - the Word being brought into the body of the people (Christ the Word enters the World and proclaims the good news), - may have felt the raised hairs on the back of their necks as they respond to the ritual action.

This could all be speculative and may only happen infrequently! Some discussion would be useful on the website about how you have reacted to the use of different types of music at this point in the service.

There are three things to make a note of here:

- historical meaning of the term 'Gradual'
- use of Psalmody
- text of Gospel Acclamations

GRADUAL

By the end of the first millennium (1000AD), collections of chants were known to exist and to include an extensive range of 'Proper' chants for use during the Mass. The terms 'Ordinary' and 'Proper' refer to the following parts of the Mass:

Ordinary = Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus Benedictus, Agnus Dei

Proper = Introit, Psalm, **Gradual**, Alleluia, Tract, Sequence, Offertory, Communion

The Gradual takes its name from the physical place from where it was originally sung. A Cantor would begin the Gradual from halfway up the steps of the Pulpit (steps=*gradus*). The text would originally have been taken from the Psalter and would be sung by either solo voice with a short response for the (monastic) congregation. In monastic circles, the music became very florid and was sung by a soloist and 'chorus' which represented the response of the monastic congregation. Later, the Gradual was also used as the collective name (Graduale), for the book containing music for the Mass in places where choirs regularly sang.

In the fifth century, the form settled to a Respond sung by the choir followed by a Verse sung by one voice. After the Reformation, and the removal of ornate chanting, the liturgical position of the Gradual remained as the place for an optional hymn or metrical psalm.

PSALMODY

When used at this point, psalmody is the congregation's collective response to the Word of God. Because psalmody is taken from the lectionary, it plays an important structural role in the Liturgy of the Word, using texts that are chosen to directly relate to the surrounding readings. Interestingly, Emminghouse, in his book 'The Eucharist' says that the use of a hymn at this point... 'should really be a last resort ... there are no hymns that are truly suitable for this purpose! Even the strophic psalms available are not real substitutes.' (p.143.)

Further study of the use of Psalms at this point will be looked at in Module Seven – Using Psalms in Worship.

For now, you might like to discuss with other students your own feelings and experience about the use of psalmody, metrical psalms and responsorial methods at this point in the service.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

With the rubric (instruction) 'An acclamation may herald the Gospel reading', Common Worship opened the doors to what had hitherto been something that Roman Catholics had been doing for some time since Vatican Council II. The text of

the acclamations is always connected with the seasons or specific text to be read in the Gospel. The range of musical settings is very wide and styles vary enormously. Texts may pick up from the psalm or use other scriptural quotations. There is no doubt that singing at this point provides a platform for the Gospel reading and enables a procession of The Word from the chancel and into the middle of the assembly.

LITURGY OF THE SACRAMENT

Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Peace	exchange the peace
Preparation of table	prepare the table
Taking of the bread and wine	
<i>Hymn</i>	offering of the gifts
<i>Eucharistic Prayer</i>	pray the thanksgiving eucharistic prayer
<i>Sanctus-Benedictus</i>	join the celestial choirs in praise
<i>Memorial acclamation/Amen</i>	collective affirmation
<i>Lord's Prayer</i>	praise, petition
Breaking of the bread	<i>'fraction'</i>
<i>Agnus Dei</i>	litany of petition
Giving of the bread and wine	receive Holy Communion
<i>Motet/Communion Song</i>	
<i>Hymn</i>	
Prayer after Communion	thanksgiving

A background reading list is given below on the historical origins and differing structures for this core section of the Eucharist. You can read as much or as little about how we have arrived at this liturgical point depending on your appetite for such things. A minimum requirement would be the Grove booklets which are easily digestible!

The shape of this section will probably be familiar to you and there is now a fairly common use of music at the places above in italics. The 'Offertory' hymn covers quite a bit of movement in that a collection of money is often taken at this point but far more importantly, the elements of bread and wine are brought from the body of the people (the work of human hands) and brought to the table.

So then begins the Eucharistic Prayer, the 'preface' which includes a mutual greeting and explanation to the people why they are doing this. This may be intoned by the vicar or priest and by presenting to the people the incarnation, passion and redemption through Christ and by the Holy Spirit we are led to exclaim our feelings of praise and wonder through singing the words of the *Sanctus-Benedictus*.

The *Sanctus-Benedictus* is basically a short acclamation intended to be said or sung by everyone present. As you probably know, this does not always happen and the extended musical settings that occur can diffuse the shape of the prayer and 'drive a wedge' between the preface and the prayer.

It will be interesting to read people's views on the use of music at this point. The style, language, length, delivery and levels of participation found in musical settings

of the *Sanctus-Benedictus* can differ enormously. I think there will be an ongoing thread on this subject on the website!

There follow a number of acclamations that appear in different versions of the prayer which have all been set to music. These tend to be short and either responsorial or simple enough to be sung by all present with ease. Generally these are recent additions and so have not been set by classical or later composers. They are more likely to be by contemporary liturgical musicians.

The *Amen* at the end of the prayer is often referred to as the Great Amen! As we saw in Module One, this is an important moment when all present affirm what has taken place with conviction. There are many settings in which there is music provided at this point and often the vicar or priest will intone from the words 'through him, with him, in him' which provides the pitch for the people.

The *Lord's Prayer* is said in most places as musical settings can divide a congregation into those who can sing these words and know the setting and those who can't or won't sing or do not know the setting. In the UK Diocese of Salisbury, the use of the setting by Rimsky-Korsakov has been widely encouraged but generally this most universal of prayers is said.

The *Agnus Dei* was originally conceived in the 7th century as a prayer to accompany the fraction or the lengthy process of breaking the loaves of bread for distribution. Its structure lends itself to a congregational response at 'have mercy upon us' and 'give us your peace'. However, in many places, this prayer has been moved to a later place when the choir have communicated and are back in their stalls. The supplicant making their humble petition should really do this before the act of receiving the bread and the wine.

What do you think about this?
What happens in your church?

Further music that may be used at this point usually features a choir item and/or hymnody. The popular use of Taizé or Iona chant is a useful resource for this moment. Many choirs will sing a Motet and a more subdued communion hymn will follow. Some liturgists feel that the people should be involved at this point yet practical issues come to bear. The process of making your way to the altar, receiving the bread and wine and getting back to your seat can be hindered by carrying word sheets or music.

In the Modules that focus on repertoire, you will come across a wide range of material that provides music for the sections that you have explored in this module. You can of course continue to find out more about how people engage through their music in the Eucharist and by further reading. Please do share your views and experiences online and find out what others think.

Next Stage

You have now worked through this module and probably found that you need to discuss this material with others on the course. Please use the online forum for this. You can leave a question or comment on a 'thread' or start a thread which will then be added to by other students and tutors.

As this is an important module in the course, you will now need to produce a piece of written work which considers the subject in relation to your own experience in your church:

Don't forget, this need not be an academic piece of writing, more a working out in your own words, how these ideas relate to what actually happens where you worship and how they might change or confirm the choice of music in the Eucharist celebration of your church.

Take your time to read some or all of the following recommended material. Discuss, explore and satisfy yourself that you have understood and grasped the key issues before moving on to your next chosen module. If you have any questions, email the course director.

Recommended reading material:

[Communion in Common Worship, Jeremy Fletcher, Grove Books
Grove W159](#)

[Making the Eucharistic Prayer Work, David Kennedy & David Mann,
Grove Books, W103](#)

[Music and the Mass, Dom Gregory Murray, Kevin Mayhew, 1977
ISBN 0905725352](#)

[Using Common Worship-Holy Communion, Mark Beach, CHP
ISBN 0715120034](#)

[Eucharistic Origins, Paul Bradshaw, CHP
ISBN 0281056153](#)

[The Eucharist, Essence, Form, Celebration, Emminghaus, TLP, 1997
ISBN 0814610366](#)

[Holy, Holy, Holy, Cocksworth, DLT, 1997
ISBN 0232521875](#)

Robert Fielding

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