



Imaginative Use of the Arts: Music and Audio: Ten Steps Toward Responsible Innovation

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For approximately a quarter of a century Christian churches all over the world have been involved in a liturgical reform movement. One can point to the second Vatican council and Pope John XXIII for the launching of this movement, but the fact that so many Protestant churches are now involved demonstrates its significance. Many of these churches were due to publish new hymnals, so provisional materials of a “contemporary” nature were printed in an effort to sense the receptivity of congregations to the new materials. Eventually some of the contemporary made its way into permanent books of worship. The resource has yet to be tapped to its fullest extent.

Reluctance to use contemporary culture—art emerging from our secular surroundings—is familiar to those who follow the history of reform movements. Both cultural revival movements and religious reform movements are rooted in a need to revitalize and renew, and both incorporate new cultural expressions as well as older forms which have fallen into disuse or misuse. Our current religious reform has provided material of a contemporary nature, as well as reviving older traditional material both from our American heritage and from indigenous cultures around the world. While this has enriched public worship in most churches, it has also caused a certain amount of chaos. But renewal always comes through struggle and confusion. Savonarola, Luther, Huss, Calvin, Knox, the Wesleys, Edwards: all were the subject of enormous controversy, yet each one contributed much to the revitalizing of our worship forms. Marot, Freylinghausen, Zinzendorf, Nettleton, Sankey, Bliss, Havergal, Draesel, Teilhard de Chardin: radicals all, without whom our worship would be impoverished indeed. The best historical explanation for the recurrence of reform is the inevitable need for theological and ecclesiastical reorientation from generation to generation, and the religious excitement generated by the changes.

Rather than ignoring such changes, hoping that they will go away, our task is to wade through the prolific outpouring of new materials and discern what is of lasting quality and what is doomed to extinction. This is the price we

pay for living in an age of reform. We all can influence the results of this process through our involvement and insistence on careful planning and execution. I would like to suggest ten steps toward responsible innovation, a process we have used at Reformation Lutheran Church. Except where otherwise noted, numbers refer to the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW).

Step One: Historical Integrity

The first step is to determine what has been done in the past, that which provides some precedent we can defend historically. The easiest formula in this category is the *Chorale Service of Holy Communion* found on page 120 of the LBW. This order follows the tradition of Luther's German Mass in which parts of the liturgy are replaced with hymns. For example, the Hymn of Praise would be 166, "All Glory be to God on High" (Decius); the Creed, 374, "Wir Glauben all an einen Gott" (Luther); and the Agnus Dei, 111, "Lamb of God, Pure and Sinless" (Decius). At our church in Minneapolis we have used this formula to create an Easter Chorale Service.

Hymn of Praise:	166	All Glory Be to God on High
Gospel Verse:	135	The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done
Offertory:	534	Now Thank We All Our God
Sanctus:	31	Now Let All the Heavens Adore You (st. 3)
Post Communion Canticle	300	O Christ, Our Hope, Our Heart's Desire

Hymns for Communion can be selected from the following: 398 (or use tune 286), 197 (or use tune 412), 132, 144, 200, 202, 305, 309, 419, 443, 453, 457. All of these hymns conform to the definition of "Chorale" and are mostly of sixteenth century vintage.

Step Two: Beyond Luther

The next step would be to further assert our own creativity and use hymnal resources not available to Martin Luther. Instead of utilizing chorale tunes we could select a different style such as: American hymn tunes (for Lent), carol tunes (for Advent), traditional European tunes (for Epiphany?), Gospel hymn tunes (for Pentecost), hymns from minorities and third world traditions (for World Communion Sunday) or twentieth century hymns (for commemoration of modern day saints?), etc.

Here is a possible outline for Epiphany: Traditional European hymn tunes

Hymn of Praise:	75	Bright and Glorious is the Sky (Danish)
Gospel Verse:	55	Good Christian Friends (German)
Offertory:	456	The King of Love (Irish)
Sanctus:	391	And Have the Bright Immensities (English)
Post Communion Canticle	211	Sent Forth by God's Blessing (Welsh)
	or 339	O Lord, Now Let Your Servant (Finnish)

Hymns for Communion could be selected from the following: 474 (Swedish), 198 (French), 526 (Welsh), 326 (Norwegian), 364 (Dutch), 518 (Silesian), 524 (Scottish).

This procedure creates a uniformity of sorts which by itself tends to hold a liturgy together. Here is an idea for Lent: American hymn tunes

Hymn of Praise:	463	God who Stretched the Spangled Heavens (Holy Manna)
Gospel Verse:	507	How Firm a Foundation (Foundation)

Hymn of Praise:	463	God who Stretched the Spangled Heavens (Holy Manna)
Offertory:	499	Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing (Nettleton)
Sanctus:	537	O Jesus, King Most Wonderful (Hiding Place)
for the Words of Institution	127	It Happened on that Fateful Night (Bourbon)
Post Communion Canticle	448	Amazing Grace (New Britain)

The area of American hymn tunes is the greatest contribution this hymnal has made to the repertoire of the English-speaking churches. Here are some others: 217 and 360 (Distress), 220 (Tender Thought), 246 (Kentucky 23rd), 331 (Land of Rest), 344 (Windham), 332 (Battle Hymn), 420 (Kedron), 92 (Were You There), 423 (Beach Spring), 243 (Pleading Saviour), 359 (McKee), 290 (Lord, Revive Us), 212 (Break Bread Together).

For Advent one would simply look at all the traditional carols and select them as they correspond with the mood of that portion of the liturgy. This leads us to the next step which deals with the text of the liturgy.

Step Three: Textual Variation

A more adventurous step would be to substitute other Biblical texts for the spoken parts of the liturgy. Great care must be exercised here to avoid clutter, verbalism and outright heresy. The great texts from scripture which comprise the spoken narrative of our liturgy have survived for a very good reason. However, there can be an interesting juxtaposition of a uniform text with a uniform musical style. For example, texts from the fortieth chapter of Isaiah make a wonderful context for the Advent season.

Invocation:	Isaiah 40:3-5
Confession:	Isaiah 40:6-8
Absolution:	Isaiah 40:28-31
Intercessions:	Isaiah 40:12
Preface:	Isaiah 40:21-22
Dismissal:	Isaiah 40:9-11

When these texts are woven around the carol tunes already selected, a refreshing, delightful change is created for the Advent season. Other Biblical sources can be used, such as texts from Paul's Letter to the Romans for Easter, or his letter to the Ephesians for Pentecost. Other books which have strong liturgical character are John's letters, Hebrews, Matthew's Gospel, Philippians and Revelation.

Step Four: Beyond the LBW

Next, you would seek out non-LBW liturgical resources. There are a few that have stood the test of time (fifteen years or so) and have remained in use. One is the Chicago Folk Mass by Art Gorman, published by Kjos Music Com-

pany. Another is the old 4th setting from the Contemporary Worship Series of the Lutheran Church. This setting is now available in the collection *Songs for a New Creation* published by Augsburg. This setting also contains seasonal suggestions for substitutions after the manner of the Chorale Service in the LBW. One could reach out beyond the Lutheran tradition to embrace a rainbow of cultural expressions from Black Spirituals to Hispanic hymns to polka masses to traditional gospel to contemporary Christian music. The art of paraphrase (after the manner of Luther, Watts and Zinzendorf) is still alive and well. *Songs for a New Creation* contains some thirty paraphrased psalms and canticles, something members of the congregation might want to try for themselves. These psalms are metered, rhymed and set to familiar melodies much like the Spanish Alabado, the psalms of Marot, the Unitas Fratrum and Isaac Watts.

Step Five: Liturgical Variation

Step five is to select an outline which corresponds in spirit to the ordinary of the mass. An example would be the church year calendar. For textual material I have chosen the first chapter of John's gospel. Hymn numbers are from *Songs for a New Creation*.

A Service of Beginnings

- Invocation: "In the beginning was the Word"
John 1:1-5 Hymn #4 Children of the Light
- Part One: Advent "There was a man sent from God"
(Confession/ Absolution)
John 1:6-8 Hymn #41 Benedictus
- Part Two: Christmas "The Word became Flesh..."
(Gloria in Excelsis)
John 1:9-14 Hymns: Carol sing
- Part Three: Epiphany "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."
(sermon)
John 1:24-28 Hymn #30 We Have Passed Through the Waters
- Part Four: Lent "Behold the Lamb of God" (Communion)
John 1:29-31 Hymn #58 Lift High the Cross
Hymns for communion: 92, 101, 98
- Part Five: Easter "You shall see greater things than these"
(Post Communion)
John 1:43-51 Hymn #55 Christ Arose on Easter Day
- Part Six: Pentecost "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove" (Dismissal)
John 1:33-34 Hymn #5 My Lord, What a Mornin'

Step Six: Occasional Celebrations

Certain festivals of the church have their own liturgical form. Since these forms are used

infrequently, they have not taken on customs and identities which lock them into static formulas. This means that they could be used just as they are, but it also means that there is more flexibility in their usage. Examples of this would be: Ash Wednesday, the Passion, the Maundy Thursday Service, the Tenebrae, the Easter Vigil, Epiphany, Transfiguration, Ascension, etc. One

idea which does have historical precedent would be to have the congregation participate in dramatizing these events, taking the part of the disciples (in the Last Supper) or the mob (in the Passion). There are many forms of dramatization which could be developed. This leads us to Step Seven where we can use short dramatizations of the Gospel lesson.

Step Seven: Proclamation

Moving away from liturgical innovation for a moment, we could take on the proclamation section of the service, the lessons and the sermon. Here we have some historical precedent in the mystery plays and the eighteenth century oratorios. In the 1980s you could call these pieces “mini-musicals,” usually containing three or four songs and a narration tying them together. The following is an example from John’s gospel, the story of the raising of Lazarus.

O Grave, Where Is Your Victory?

Song: Martha and Mary

There was a little house in Bethany
Where Jesus loved to rest awhile,
Down the road from old Jerusalem,
Maybe just a couple of miles.

There was Martha and Mary and gentle brother Lazarus
Jesus loved them so dearly, they brought him lots of happiness.

Mary loved to sit at Jesus’ feet
And listen to his stories well;
Martha was a very good cook, it seems,
And Lazarus had things to sell. (chorus)

So every time that Jesus came to town
He stayed with them in Bethany;
They’re the kind of friends we all should have
Some one to keep us company. (chorus)

Narration: John 10:22-39

Song: Lazarus is Dead (begin introduction)

Narration: John 11:7-16

Song: Lazarus is Dead Lazarus is dead: and we're going there to join him;
Lazarus is dead: and we all will surely die;
Lazarus is dead: they were plotting to destroy him;
Lazarus is dead: and we all were wond'ring why.

Narration: John 11:17-22

Song: Lazarus is Dead Lazarus is dead: Where is Jesus when we need him?
Lazarus is dead: It's as if he didn't care;
Lazarus is dead: We were always there to feed him;
Lazarus is dead: This is really hard to bear.

Narration: John 11:23-27

Song: Lazarus is Dead Lazarus is dead: He'll be in the resurrection;
Lazarus is dead: We will see him once again;
Lazarus is dead: He's apart of God's election;
Lazarus is dead: We'll be with him at the end.

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Narration: John 11:28-35

Song: Jesus Wept Jesus wept! Jesus wept!
O what sorrow when Jesus wept;
Vigil kept while Lazarus slept;
Jesus knelt down and wept.

Jesus wept! Jesus wept!
O such grieving when Jesus wept;
Vigil kept while Lazarus slept;
Jesus knelt down and wept.

Narration: John 11:38-40

Jesus wept! Jesus wept!
Heaven trembled when Jesus wept;
Vigil kept while Lazarus slept;
Jesus knelt down and wept.

Narration: John 11:41-44

Song: O Grave, Where is Your Victory?

Lo, I tell you a mystery, we shall be changed in a twinkling of an eye.
And the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised and we shall all be
changed!
O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?
But thanks be to God who gives to us the victory
Through Jesus the Christ, who gives to us the victory,
And thanks be to God....Thanks be to God!

Narration: John 11:45-12:11

Song: repeat of opening song, "Martha and Mary"

This composition would substitute for the Gospel reading and the sermon, and is available by writing to the author.

Step Eight: Involvement of Other Senses

If you have come this far with your congregation you have done very well. We at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation have done all of these things (not necessarily in this order) with no apparent consequences or attrition. This, of course, has been accomplished with the strong support of the pastor, organist and members of the parish choir. The only occasions where there has been negative reaction have been when these experiences are combined with visual change, e.g. graphics, projections, costumes, balloons, artists creating works on large flats as the service is evolving, large blackboards with words, symbols, etc. So far most churches have been able to accept appropriate seasonal *banners*, but not much else. This is, however, Step Eight, an attempt to involve senses other than hearing in our liturgical development. All Christian worship leans too heavily on verbal communication, and efforts to involve sight, smell and touch are very important. Bake the Communion bread in the church ovens before the

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service and let the smell waft its way up to the worshipers, then hold hands during the intercessory prayers.

Step Nine: Electronics

Traditional church structures are designed to sound good from back to front, not from front to back. Choirs which sing from the balcony always seem to sound better than choirs that sing from the front. Churches are built to facilitate congregational participation, not stage performances. Unfortunately, much of what has been presented in this article requires strong leadership from an individual or group operating from the *front* of the church. Improvements in the basic sound systems of our churches are required to make this sort of thing work. New construction has the advantage of being able to correct this and even provide projection surfaces in the chancel area for visuals.

With a good sound system, efforts which proved inadequate in the '60s (use of acoustical instruments to lead congregational singing, etc.) can be realized, especially where a delicate balance between a choir and string accompaniment is needed. It also opens the door to the use of two instruments which I dearly love and which have received no attention whatsoever. They are the autoharp and the accordion. Both are capable of a full range of harmonic sound and provide a rich blend when played together. The autoharp can also be used with a pipe organ, giving it a bit

of a shimmer and rhythmic crispness. There is a real revival of interest in the auto harp now because of folks like Brian Bowers and Stevie Beck, who appear regularly on the nationally syndicated (live) radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion." It is a marvelous instrument capable of the most sensitive, delicate weaving of melody and harmony, yet boisterous and powerful when used with old English carols and those rough American hymn tunes and gospel songs. The other instrument, the accordion, has certainly fallen into disuse, and except for Weird Al Yankovic, the world's most outrageous parodist, would probably not be heard from at all. There are, however, a large number of Christian hymns for which the accordion makes a wonderful accompaniment. These are mostly the fast 6/8 meter and 3/4 meter hymns and also those (mostly German, of course) which have a basic polka rhythm, such as LBW 412, "Sing to the Lord of Harvest." Many carols come out of traditions where the accordion is basic to the sound: English, Scottish, Irish, Swedish, Norwegian, Italian and Mexican. It is quite versatile and can be played in any key. The autoharp is limited to certain keys, mainly "C," "F," "G," "Am," "Dm," and "Gm." Any hymns that are set in those keys (many carols, of course) can be accompanied on this instrument.

The use of amplified instruments has increased along with improvements in their capabilities. Synthesized keyboards provide an exciting variation for accompanying solos, choral anthems and congregational singing. The addition of a bass instrument, and rhythm instruments (preferably not drum kits since most church auditoriums can't handle the reverberation, and they just sound bad) adds to this sound and makes possible performances of a multiplicity of current contemporary music. The youth of our churches have already become familiar with this music (sometimes referred to as Christian pop, though its stylistic range is as broad as rock music in today's culture), and can handle it

very well. Again, because of the prolific quantity of this production, great discernment is required to weed out the useless from the useful and encourage extensive planning and preparation, as we would for any other style of music. The fact that this is overwhelmingly keyboard oriented music gives it more utility than the predominantly string oriented music of the '60s and '70s. So, look for it to grow in quality and acceptability during the balance of the decade.

Step Ten: Grounding Our Connections

One of the chief problems of any reform movement is the privatizing of the religious experience, the cultifying of groups of "followers," etc. Our task in the '80s is to take the best of this drift toward closer cultural identity while maintaining our historical, stabilizing rituals. So, the final step in this process is to preserve the rituals we have inherited lest our innovation cut us off and we find ourselves adrift in a sea of options. This is very difficult to do, as many of us have discovered, but it is vital to the growth and nurture of Christian congregations everywhere. Ritual binds us together, not only as a contemporary church, but also as a Communion of Saints of every age, confident in the power of Christ to change and sustain his beloved flock.