

THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENT

1. Recent Movements of Liturgical Change

The three great centuries of liturgical change have been the 4th, due to imperial support, the 16th, due to the Protestant Reformation, and the 20th, due to two broad global movements:

1. Growth of the **revivalist/frontier tradition** spread globally by missionaries, and especially the enormous global growth of the Pentecostal movement (500 million in 100 years!)
2. **The Liturgical Movement (LM)**: In the Catholic Church and older, established Protestant churches, an international, trans-denominational movement of liturgical reform arose that has had a major global impact on worship. The combination of two centuries of entrenched polarization of confessional traditions and the theological drift in the wake of both evangelical revivals and the secular effects of the Enlightenment led some Protestants to turn back to history and tradition to find a basis for greater theological and liturgical identity, integrity, unity, stability, and beauty. Although this began as separate movements in Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed/Presbyterian, Congregational, and Methodist churches, liturgical renewal movements experienced the benefits of increasing cross-fertilization and more intentional cooperation in historical and theological scholarship via the ecumenical movement. This new liturgical cooperation opened many Protestant eyes to reconsider the biblical, theological, and historical foundations for traditions they had previously neglected or rejected.

2. Sources and Ideals of the Liturgical Movement

2.1 Historical research and retrieval

Beginning in the mid-19th century, scholars and pastors across a wide spectrum of Christian traditions became interested in researching liturgical history and retrieving/restoring features of earlier liturgies to renew the church's practice. In the 20th century, the greatest scholarly accomplishment of the Liturgical Movement has been a flood of high quality work reconstructing the history of Christian liturgy.

2.2 Theology

Behind the liturgical reforms lay definite theological motives and goals:

- Trinity: The LM clarified the Trinitarian basis and content of worship.
- Church: The LM opposed the individualism of worship and piety resulting from the evangelical revivals of the 1700s and 1800s and promoted worship that was more corporate/social in expression. For the LM, the active participation of the whole church in the liturgy was the privilege and duty of the whole people of God and the only proper basis for individual piety.
- Word and Sacrament
 - Word: The LM attempted to elevate both the quantity and quality of biblical content in liturgy in readings, sermons, and prayers.
 - Sacraments: The LM sought to develop a more holistic theology of baptism and eucharist that connects them to the whole work of Christ and the Spirit (especially resurrection and Jesus' second coming, rather than only his death) as well as to the whole of Christian liturgy.
 - Word AND Sacrament: The LM opposed the excesses and imbalance of both Catholic and Protestant worship, which often elevated Bible or eucharist to the neglect of the other.

2.3 Mission

Liturgical reformers believed that *a theologically substantive, participatory liturgy of word and sacrament ought to be the integrating center and source of the whole life and ministry of the church.*

- **Ecumenism and catholicity:** LM proponents believed that worship can become *a practical basis for the visible unity of the church*. The LM, therefore, increasingly sought sharing of resources and relationships in scholarship and ministry and sought to express and foster the unity of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church through shared worship practices.
- **Mission and ethics:** The LM aimed to foster *the link between worship and the rest of the church's life and mission*. By emphasizing daily worship patterned on the Lord's Day service, the LM was concerned to reform daily practice. Also, LM proponents stressed that the Lord's Day liturgy provides a pattern for the whole Christian life, and thus they worked to make explicit the ethical implications of the liturgy for the church's ministry to the world.

3. Historical examples

3.1 Catholic Church

The document on liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) from the **Second Vatican Council** (1962–1965) articulated a biblically-based Trinitarian theology of liturgy. The implementation of the Council's directives in the **1970 Roman Missal** went beyond its requirements in reforming the liturgy. The result was a liturgy was a *belated affirmation of many important liturgical ideals of the Protestant Reformation*, including the following:

- Common languages (i.e., no Latin).
- Liturgy said in audible voice for all to hear and understand.
- Altar tables moved forward to be free-standing and priests led liturgy facing the congregation from behind the table.
- New corporate, Christ-centered focus in worship to curb the proliferation of devotions to saints and the practice of individual devotions during the corporate liturgy.
- OT reading restored (after a 1000-year absence!)
- Three-year lectionary: Covered much more of the Bible.
- New emphasis on preaching.
- Prayers of intercession restored after the sermon.
- Three new eucharistic prayers that follow early church models from eastern churches and have a more Trinitarian shape and focus on thanksgiving and epiclesis.
- Communion administered weekly to the laity with both bread and wine.
- The centrality of the Lord's Day as the "original feast day" and the festivals commemorating the person and work of Christ receive precedence over saints' days.

3.2 Ecumenical initiatives

- The 1982 document *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* achieved a substantial convergence on theological and practical foundations for Christian liturgy.
- The *Consultation on Common Texts*, a North American ecumenical group of Catholic and Protestant scholars (led at one point by PCUSA scholar Horace Allen), produced the Revised Common Lectionary for Protestant churches to enable alignment of scripture readings and sermon themes in corporate worship each week.

3.3 Anglican/Episcopal churches

- In the 19th century, an **Anglo-Catholic party** emerged in the Church of England that used the *Book of Common Prayer* with older patristic and medieval ceremony (processions, gesture, incense, candles), eucharistic vestments, visual art/symbol, and Gothic architecture. This was a drastic change from the relative plainness of Anglican churches,
- Official **revisions of the Book of Common Prayer** began in the 1960s. Editions that appeared in the 1970s reflected a growing international consensus about the order and breadth of worship.

3.4 Reformed/Presbyterian churches

- **19th-century reformers** in American and Scottish Reformed & Presbyterian churches
 - John Nevin and Philip Schaff: Advocated John Calvin's strong theology of Christ's presence in communion and developed structured liturgies grounded in early church.
 - Charles Baird: His 1855 book *The Presbyterian Liturgies: Historical Sketches* made English translations of Reformation liturgies accessible again to English-speaking churches and showed how far later Presbyterians had drifted from their Reformation heritage of worship.
- **Church Service Society:** Minister and noted hymnologist Louis Benson organized the American Church Service Society to promote liturgical education and renewal in the PCUSA. Prominent members of the Society included New York minister and pastor-poet Henry van Dyke and Princeton Seminary theologian B.B. Warfield.
- **New directories of worship:** In the 1961 (the northern UPCUSA) and again in the 1980s (PCUSA), Presbyterian denominations changed their books of church order to confer official denominational approval sanction for the trend toward greater liturgical catholicity.
- **Liturgical service books:** Presbyterians produced many editions of books with resources for worship that reflected the growing international consensus. In America, this was the *Book of Common Worship* (1906, 1931, 1946, 1970, 1993), and in Scotland, the *Book of Common Order* (1940, 1979, 1994).

4. Is the Liturgical Movement Reformed?

- **Restoring Reformed worship:** Most of the theological ideals, motives, and practices of the LM restore the liturgical traditions of the early Reformation, particularly the Strasbourg/Geneva tradition.
- **Reforming Reformed worship:** Some practices advocated by LM proponents are relatively new to the Reformed tradition but consistent with Reformed theology and liturgical ideals.
 - Congregational responses in speech and gesture/posture: More active participation of the whole church.
 - Fuller liturgical calendar: Observing the whole year results in a more intentionally Christ-centered framework that covers the whole narrative of Christ's life and work.
 - Lectionary: Systematic reading of the whole Bible.
 - Visual symbol: Communicates biblical symbolism and thus teaches about the nature of the liturgical event.
 - Communion celebrated with a more celebratory tone: Jettisoning the fearful, somber medieval tone of communion for a liturgy that better embodies Reformed theology of the Lord's Supper in action, e.g., prayers of thanksgiving narrating biblical history; joy in Christ's resurrection and his presence with the church as the ascended Lord; hope in Christ's second coming;

5.3 Some problematic tendencies of the Liturgical Movement to avoid

- More focus on later church history rather than biblical principles and patterns to shape corporate worship.
- "Golden age" thinking: a tendency to treat the 4th-5th centuries as a sort of "golden age" ideal
- Distortions of texts due to liberal theology, e.g., omitting texts with hard doctrines like God's judgment on sin and abandoning biblical language to be gender-neutral in terms for people and for God ("Godself," even though the Bible only uses masculine pronouns for God).

Roman Catholic Novus Ordo Mass 1970	Lutheran Book of Worship (ELCA) 1978	Book of Common Prayer (ECUSA) 1979	Methodist Hymnal (UMC) 1989	Book of Common Worship (PCUSA) 1993
	(Confession & Absolution)			
Entrance psalm	Entrance hymn	(Hymn, psalm)		
Prayer of invocation				
Greeting	Greeting	Greeting	Greeting	Call to worship
		(10 Commandments)	Hymn of praise	Prayer of invocation
			Prayer of invocation	Hymn of praise
Confession & Absolution		(Confession & Absolution)		Confession & Absolution
				(Peace)
Kyrie	(Kyrie)	Kyrie, Gloria, or Trisagion	(Act of praise)	Hymn, psalm
Gloria	(Gloria or similar canticle)			
Salutation	Salutation	Salutation		
Collect of the day	Collect of the day	Collect	Prayer for illumination	Prayer for illumination
OT Reading	OT Reading	OT Reading	Scripture Reading	OT Reading
Psalms	Psalms	(Psalm, hymn)	(Psalm)	Psalms
Epistle Reading	Epistle Reading	Epistle Reading	(Scripture Reading)	Epistle Reading
Alleluia	Alleluia	(Psalm, hymn)	Hymn	(Hymn, psalm)
Gospel Reading	Gospel Reading	Gospel Reading	Gospel Reading	Gospel Reading
Sermon	Sermon	Sermon	Sermon	Sermon
	Hymn			
Nicene Creed	Nicene or Apostles' Creed	Nicene Creed	Apostles' Creed	Confession of faith
Intercessions	Intercessions	Intercessions	Intercessions	Intercessions
	(Confession)	(Confession)	Confession & Absolution	
	Peace	Peace	Peace	(Peace)
Offertory	Offertory	Offertory	Offertory	Offertory
Eucharistic Prayer: • Thanksgiving • Words of Institution • Lord's Prayer	Eucharistic Prayer: • Thanksgiving • Words of Institution • Lord's Prayer	Eucharistic Prayer: • Thanksgiving • Words of Institution • Lord's Prayer	Eucharistic Prayer: • Thanksgiving • Words of Institution • Lord's Prayer	Eucharistic Prayer: • Thanksgiving • Words of Institution • Lord's Prayer
Peace		Fraction	Fraction	Fraction
Agnus Dei				
Communion (with singing)	Communion (with singing)	Communion (with singing)	Communion (with singing)	Communion (with singing)
Post-communion Prayer	Post-communion Prayer	Post-communion Prayer	Post-communion Prayer	Post-communion Prayer
			Hymn	Hymn, psalm
Benediction & Dismissal	Benediction & Dismissal	Benediction & Dismissal	Benediction & Dismissal	Benediction & Dismissal