

1 **The Sunday Assembly: Foundational Reflections**
Session 5: Leaders in the Sunday Assembly

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2 **Introduction**

- "As it is with Christ, so is it also with the Christian assembly Just as in the body of Christ there are many members, so in the Sunday assembly there are many ministers." (including the assembly itself)
- "The assembly itself is an active, participative voice engaged in the liturgy ("work of the people"). Just like all other ministers, the assembly performs its function for the good of the whole."
- Leads and follows; speaks and listens

3 **Introduction**

- "Each kind of minister has particular functions that are needed for the whole."
- "Presiding and assisting ministers, cantors and choirs, lectors, ushers, and altar guild members are all servants of the assembly."
- "When leadership is ill-prepared and becomes sloppy, the worship of the entire body suffers."

4 **Leaders in the Assembly**

- The various leadership roles serve the assembly.
- "Presiding minister is an ordained pastor who presides at the service of Holy Communion": confession and forgiveness, preacher (perhaps), baptism at the font, presides at table in the great thanksgiving, words of institution, principal server for the meal.
- Assisting minister leads the prayers of intercession, read Scriptures, offering prayer, serving communion, announce the dismissal

5 **A Brief History of Assembly Leadership**

- Justin (mid 2nd century in Rome): presiding minister who "preaches, gives thanks at table, and enables the distribution of the collection for the poor, amid a liturgy that 'we all' do.
- Speaks also of a reader and several "deacons" (diakonoi)
- NT presiders: elders, house-owners and prophets—serve to "build up the church"
- Women were among these early presiding ministers. (NT and wall paintings)

6 **A Brief History of Assembly Leadership**

- Only later in Christian liturgy were the socially dominant ideas of patriarchy reflected in Church leadership. (It has taken until the 20th century to return to ancient inclusion of women in church leadership.)
- Paul: presiding minister "simply seated, peacefully and attentively presiding in the midst of an active assembly and thereby suggesting that the order of this meeting is profoundly and reliably centered in God."

7 **A Brief History of Assembly Leadership**

- Persecutions and internal disagreements changed the patterns of leadership—regularized by creating "bishop" (episcopos, or overseer), who began to be seen as the "successors of the apostles"
- As church grew (after 313 AD), bishop couldn't preside at all assemblies; council of "elders" (presbyters, later priests) who presided over local assemblies.
- Initially, a portion of the bread blessed at the bishop's table was taken to the other assemblies,

but soon became impossible.

8 **A Brief History of Assembly Leadership**

- "Frequently a single presbyter (priest, rector, pastor, minister—different names throughout history) was associated with a single parish and was then both its presider and single minister. The diaconate increasingly became only a transitional way-station for a person on the way toward becoming a presbyter. The other offices (except cantor) fell into disuse.
- In late middle ages, preaching had often fallen out of misuse (done by "friars", trained to preach).

9 **A Brief History of Assembly Leadership**

- "In the 19th and early 20th centuries, many Lutherans simply had no idea there ever had been a time when the pastor—or perhaps the pastor and the choir—did not do everything there was to do in a liturgy except sing the hymns."
- Not until the late 20th century did the early ministry offices mentioned by Justin slowly return: leaders of prayer, readers, miniksteers of communion, a cantor and choir, ushers or greeters or doorkeepers, acolytes, altar guilds or sacristans, and a presiding minister.

10 **A Brief History of Assembly Leadership**

- A "remarkable list!"
- Assisting ministers should be people with gifts for the office.
- Cantors and choirs should have musical abilities, but also a desire to serve and lead the assembly
- Presiding minister—engage in a call process, a person seminary trained, whose gifts fit what the congregation seeks.
- All ways of living common baptismal call.

11 **The Presiding Minister**

- "The task of the presider is a difficult task. She or he is to lead without dominating, serve without being servile, care about everyone in the room and yet not fill up the room with herself or himself. On most occasions it is the presider who is to preach a sermon that is responsible to the biblical readings of this meeting, attentive to real needs in the present time, marked by the genuine law of God, and full of the living and life-giving gospel of Christ."

12 **The Presiding Minister**

- "The presider is to do that Sunday after Sunday, in a lively way, and yet not let the sermon be centered on simply his or her own opinion. In addition, the presider is to pray at the table on behalf of the whole assembly, 'as much as he can,' as Justin says."
- Baptism: lead the assembly around the font
- Collection made for the wider mission of the church.

13 **The Presiding Minister**

- "Enable and encourage all the other assisting ministers; peacefully anchor the whole meeting, turning the attention of the assembly away from herself or himself and toward God."
- "It is a challenging task. It is also a wonderful task, a delight for those who are called to do it."
- Education, shaping and training should never be ended
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14 **The Presiding Minister**

- Issue of what to do when there is more than one pastor
 - There should never be more than one presiding minister.
 - Preferable for presider to also preach.

- Never take away ministries of trained lay people.
- One pastor may read the gospel and preach while another presides at table; however, unwise to split between Word vs. Sacrament (no "first half" and "second half" since it hurts the unity of Word and Sacrament).
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15 **Assisting Ministers and Their Training**

- "It is most useful for lay people to carry out these roles."
- "The assembly's sense of its own calling and vocation is strengthened when people regularly witness or participate in these leadership roles."
- "Good leaders benefit from effective training."
- "Each assisting minister has not merely a task but a ministry, and so should have ongoing formation and training in that ministry."

16 **Cantors and Choirs**

- The primary voice is that of the assembly itself; the assembly is itself like a minister; cantors and choirs' voices are secondary, encouraging and assisting the assembly.
- Reinforcement (primary role)--invite ALL to sing.
- Enhancement (secondary)--harmonies, descants
- Alternation
- Proclamation—difference between proclaiming and entertaining.

17 **Cantors and choirs**

- Ability to speak in context (appropriate to the congregation)
- Learning by the choir: not only musical (breathing techniques, posture, diction) but role as a minister (meaning of the music they are singing); choir should together reflect on the texts; contribute to spiritual growth of choir members.
- Learning by the assembly: context of music (newsletter, website, etc. for background)

18 **Cantors and choirs**

- Relationship to other worship elements—continuity with the rest of the service
- Translation of texts should be provided for the congregation.

19 **Placement of Musical Leaders**

- Sometimes challenging to determine optimal physical placement for musicians (especially if many)
- Priority of central signs (don't block places of Word or Sacrament)
- When musicians are in the assembly's view—able to see welcoming cantor; communication between cantor and congregation.
- When musicians are not in the assembly's view—especially in basilica architecture—music itself leads the assembly.

20 **Clothing for the Liturgy—the Alb**

- In early church, baptized adults were immediately dressed in a "tunica alba" (white alb) which they continued to wear each Sunday—washed and bleached clean.
- As infant baptism became norm, "tiny" albs—christening gowns.
- Even when styles changed, alb remained, although just for worship leader—became a surplice over a cassock (from monastic practice).

21 **Clothing for the Liturgy—the Alb**

- Use of the alb has been rediscovered in the last generation.
- Not a symbol of ordination, but a symbol of baptism and therefore is rightfully worn by all liturgical ministers.
- Some roles (such as presider or deacon) will have an alb as base liturgical clothing with additions such as stoles, etc.

22 **Clothing for the Liturgy—the Cincture**

- Although many have tried to apply a spiritual meaning to the cincture, it is simply a belt to prevent tripping over an alb that is too long.
- It should match the color of the alb (usually white) and not the color of the season.
- Can be worn by clergy and laity alike—anyone wearing an alb that wishes a "belt"

23 **Clothing for the Liturgy—the Stole**

- It is common practice among Lutherans (and others) for ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament to put on a stole over the alb. (Pastors wear over both shoulders; deacons over left shoulder).
- Origins to dress of what local leaders in the Roman empire wore, but spiritually may be seen as similar to Jewish prayer shawls or a towel of service worn by a servant.
- Stole differentiates presider from other albed ministers.
- Should be simple and in liturgical color of the season.

24 **Clothing for the Liturgy—the Chasuble**

- A basic garment of the ancient Mediterranean world used for traveling and adopted by the church because of its "great fullness and beauty."
- Poncho, coat symbolic of travelling—presider leads us as a journeying people.
- If worn, should be worn for both Word and Sacrament. Should be simple, liturgical color of season.
- Can stand for love that covers all (1 Peter 4:8)

25 **Clothing for the Liturgy--Miscellaneous**

- Used less often is a "cope"--caped vestment with single button.
- None of these things is required!
- Pectoral cross (most appropriate for a bishop)
- Some pastors cross their stoles (Greek letter X, chi, first letter of Christ), others tuck it in their cincture.
- Academic gown (university origins of preachers of the Reformation)

26 **Clothing for the Liturgy--Miscellaneous**

- Roman collar—origin in Roman court clothing and the ministers in a land where the prince ruled the church often took their clothing clues from what people wore at court.
- Old monastic cassock—a black robe with its origin in monastery practice and peasant clothing—appropriate to wear a surplice over it when leading worship (tippet or stole)
- Some pastors simply wear their "Sunday best"
- Again, none of these things are right or wrong.

27 **Conclusion**

Although none of these items of clothing are right or wrong, "the baptismal proposal of the alb is a

brilliant proposal, worthy of our attention in the present time. It underlines the baptismal vocation of the entire assembly, clothing at least several of the ministers of the assembly with a symbol of that vocation.... Then the presider's stole—or stole and chasuble—can call the presiding minister to serve among these other servants in the assembly, doing so in the specific ways of ordained ministry: gathering us around the font, preaching, praying at table, and calling us to turn toward the needy world."