

Christianity Poverty and Wealth In the 21st Century

LITURGY

MYRA BLYTH

Introduction

This report is the product of a sector study within the Christianity Poverty and Wealth project 21, sponsored by Aprodev. The sector study seeks to discern the relationship of worship in different socio-economic contexts to questions of poverty and wealth and to suggest some ways by which the relationship might be made more dynamic.

The report is tentative in its conclusions, because the geographical scope of the research is too narrow and the research methodology qualitative rather than quantitative. In spite of these limitations however, the group members went ahead with the project believing, that “a story based approach” complimented by the observations and reflections of a group of specialists could at least begin to signal some interesting and important issues on the relationship between worship and justice concerns, and the case be made for further in-depth research to be done by the churches and their development agencies.

The shape of the study was agreed between the five members of the Project 21 liturgy group. It has four sections plus introduction and conclusion.

Section 1

provides a person profile of the liturgy group members, particularly stressing the ideas and perspective on worship that each person brought to the study.

Section 2

consists of seven stories written up after conversations had taken place between two members of the project liturgy group and seven different local churches. The congregations participating in the survey spanned 3 continents Editorial comments after some of these stories have been added by the author of this report as a way of highlighting points of particular concern or interest. Often these points are picked up again and elaborated in the next section. The conversations with seven local congregations were conducted according to an agreed format. Sadly not all the members of the liturgy group were able to complete their field assignments so that at the time of writing this report, only 60% of the expected field work was done.

Section 3

provides a comparative analysis of the case studies, firstly in tabulated form and then explored in the light of current ecumenical discussions and trends. This section concludes with two practical proposals for strengthening the relationship between worship and justice issues.

Section 4

is a resource section, providing liturgies that have been written and used by Dorothy Macrae MacMahon. These liturgies demonstrate well the way in which the group believes worship can be both a celebration of all that is good and an act of protest against all that offends life.

Although the shape of the report was agreed by the group the final report has been drafted by one member of the group who has interpreted and extrapolated themes and ideas from the case-studies and the dialogue week, in a rather free way. However the document will continue to evolve as comments and reactions to this first draft come back from the group.

SECTION 1

An extended conversation

The exercise began with the group members, meeting together for one week in the Spring of 2000. At other times we spoke together by e-mail and held three telephone conferences. The members were: Dorothy McCrae- McMahan (Australia), Terry McArthur (USA), Jaci Maraschin (Brazil) Puleng Lenka Bula (South Africa) and Myra Blyth (UK). We were also assisted by Simone Ergas (staff member of the WCC).

Five liturgists, hidden away in a farm workers cottage in Oxfordshire England for four days was a unique opportunity to listen and share stories and experiences about the ways we see worship taking place in our respective parts of the world, and what we think is going on when people come together to worship.

Jaci Maraschin

is an Anglican priest and lectures in liturgy and aesthetics in the university of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Jaci was the provocateur in our group. He always insisted that worship is about aesthetics: it is concerned with beauty and the appreciation of beauty. Rationalism that wants to reduce faith to intellectual categories, and activism which reduces religion to socio-ethical categories are a hindrance to worship. The desire to express faith in a reasoned way, and the concern to live a Godly life may be by-products of worship but neither of these things constitute the primary purpose of worship. The essence of worship is “to praise and enjoy God”.

Very much in this line the theologian, Alexander Schmemmann, former dean and professor of liturgical theology at S Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological seminary devoted much of his life’s teaching and writing to the subject of worship as sacrament. In his book “For the life of the world” he argues that to appreciate the meaning of worship we must first understand the sacramental character of the world, and humanity’s place in the world. By sacramental he means that the world –in its totality as cosmos, or in its life and becoming as time and history is an epiphany of God, a means of God’s self- revelation, presence and power. Worship is based on an intuition and experience of the world as an epiphany of God,. In worship by means of matter: water, oil, bread and wine- the world is revealed in its true nature and vocation as sacrament.

For Christians of many traditions and persuasions this notion of “worship as epiphany” is key to their understanding .Susan White (2) notes that whilst this theme of epiphany is particularly characteristic of Eastern Christianity it is not exclusively so. The liturgical renewal movement, within the main stream historical churches of the west have always stayed close to this view Beyond the historic mainline churches, within evangelical and Pentecostal expressions of the faith many share the conviction that “the ceaseless praise of God is the ultimate human destiny, and that when we enter into worship we enter into a different dimension of time and space, a cosmic dimension, where we gradually attune ourselves with the ceaseless praises of the heavenly hosts.”

Without a doubt, the presence and witness of the Eastern Orthodox Churches within the modern ecumenical movement has meant that many protestants have been enabled to put aside the excessive iconoclasm of the reformation in order to appreciate more fully, the aesthetical dimension of worship. “Orthodox chants, prayers, and hymns and the glory of the physical surroundings often transport the worshipper out of space and time into a heavenly geography....[here the church attempts] to duplicate and

replicate the worship of God that takes place eternally in heaven and to participate in God's redemption of the world by revealing the true meaning of time and space in God's eternal purposes."(3)

The fear and frustration of some with this particular emphasis on the cosmic, timeless, and eschatological is that worship might simply become an invitation to run away from the harsh realities of the world as it is. This fear is a real and justified one, for history carries too much evidence of the church hiding away, but that said this frustration is not reflected in the results reached within this study. The congregations surveyed were largely of the view and the poorer congregations in particular that they draw strength and vision for the now precisely from worship situations which point beyond their immediate struggles rather than focussing on them.

Jaci, more clearly than any other member of the group was concerned to liberate worship from the heavy expectations that have been laid upon it by rationalism and social activism. For this reason he makes the controversial claim that "worship is nonsense"!

Dorothy Mcrae-McMahon,

is a minister in the Uniting Church of Australia. She has lived out her ministry in tough situations. Workers, human rights activists, socially excluded groups all turn to her. Dorothy speaks often about the importance of mystery and is sensitive to the sacramentality of life. Many of the liturgies in the resource section are directly the work of Dorothy and these elements can easily be traced. However Dorothy cannot rest content with the language of pure aesthetics. She looks for incarnation as well as epiphany, for action as well as insight. Many of the liturgies she writes are created for worship beyond the boundaries of the church in situations and contexts of direct social and political struggle. The energy in the liturgies in section 3 of this study (all of which are written by Dorothy) stems directly from the conviction that we are called to worship God at all times and in all places, including the most unusual spaces. Walter Bruggemann continually points out, worship must be shaped by our OT vision of the freedom of God. The God of Creation is not like the gods of Egypt tied to a local space, rather it is in the nature of God to continually move on and move out. (4) Dorothy's attentiveness to both the beauty of God and the freedom of God gave the possibility to hold in creative tension aesthetics and ethics within the experience of worship.

A typical example of this is the relationship that grew up between a group of squatters and Dorothy, together with members of Dorothy's congregation at Pitt Street.

There were a group of about 10 young people who lived near the church in a squat. Some of them were into prostitution, most were drug addicted and many had run away from abusive situations at home. They had set themselves up in an empty warehouse with minimal resources. We became friends with them and asked if they would like to come to church for tea, a chat or a service or anything. They said that they would not dare to come inside a church-"God might strike them dead!" We asked if they would like to do anything with them in their home? They thought for a while and then asked if we might say the odd prayer with them now and again. We agreed and did so at intervals, then one of them said, in over casual tones, "I don't suppose you ever have a mass in squats, do you?"

Several members of the congregation came one night. We sat with lighted candles in the squat and we shared the Eucharist with the squatters in a circle. We brought with us all the resources we could manage in cloths, robes, fine bread and wine on our best

communion plate. We went through a complete liturgy with us leading the responses and some of them mumbling along with us as they remembered things from past times.

As we gave them the elements, they wept with gratitude and their faces filled with wonder and joy. The members of the congregation returned to the church and on the next Sunday told the story to the rest of the congregation and said “brothers and sisters, we have seen the Christ! The Eucharist will never be the same again for us. We will never again take it for granted.

In Dorothy’s experience congregations need to be understood in their cultural context. This more than economic indicators explains to us why wealthy churches do or do not make connections within worship to the issues of poverty and wealth. Congregations “sustain a certain culture” which is re-enforced by the tendency to invite ordained clergy who will re-affirm this culture.

Terry McArthur

is a minister within the United Methodist Church, and has been on the staff of the WCC as worship consultant, for the past 10 years. Terry’s particular skill and experience as a liturgist includes a unique knowledge and understanding of the range of music which is enjoyed and endured within churches across every continent. One of his observations which is very relevant to this study, is the notion that “the theology of a people or community is in their rhythm and the sound”. In other words, as Jaci also was keen to point out: liturgies are sung across cultures and contexts, without variation. We all sing alleluia, Kyrie, sanctus, etc. What is significant or unique, is not the words, but how these words are sung.

Puleng Lenka Bula,

from Lesotho. She is a Mosotho woman, a theologian and ethicist committed to the pursuit of justice between men and women (gender justice) and to social and economic justice. Puleng is particularly concerned about the impact of globalisation on worship. This concern arises from her primary conviction that “liturgy is a process of spiritual formation, nurturing and building of community as the people of God”. As such its language and content is never “value free” or “neutral”. Worship liturgies need to be rooted in the context, content and issues that a community grapples with on a daily basis. “Passive liturgy” which ignores this reality and the hurt that the people of God face, particularly in this age of globalisation, will only serve to perpetuate the injustices between the rich and the poor.

Myra Blyth.

Is a Baptist Minister from the UK, just newly returned to her country after serving for the last eleven years on the staff of the WCC. Because worship is a basic human instinct, Myra believes the church will always be in “business”. However in a context like the UK, Christian worship will become an increasingly marginal and minority activity in an increasingly religious society unless the places and spaces created by the church for worship can engage with the ethos and aspirations of post modern culture.

The church community is not the centre of people’s lives, they belong to many communities of which the church is one. Of these many communities which make up individual’s lives the church occupies the least time within a week. Worship, a central activity of the church, however need not be limited to the more formal moments of corporate worship, but that requires much time and imagination going into the question of new ways of being church.

SECTION 2

Stories from seven Churches

The seven churches visited were asked after the service to respond in conversation to the following questions:

- What kind of community worships here?
- What part of worship means most to you?
- When do you celebrate the Eucharist, what means most to you?
- Does the worship here connect with the context in which you live?
If so, how does it do that?
- How does worship, in your experience, relate to the issues of poverty and wealth?

Story 1

is from an urban rich Presbyterian church in Arteora New Zealand. The congregation see themselves as comfortable rather than wealthy. Most of the people members are successful trades people, public bureaucrats or professional people. There are some young families but most people are middle-aged and over.

In worship, people like the singing best, are not very keen on long prayers and think that the sermon is usually rather boring. They don't like it when the preacher becomes "political", this is not appropriate in church.

For most people, most of the time, the Eucharist is about remembering a meal which Jesus had and which is re-enacted in memory of him and in obedience to him. It is a time of nourishment, but care is taken not to associate nourishment with ideas of sacrifice.. because that's very catholic not protestant. Its important to celebrate Holy communion carefully because it is so holy. The action of coming forward to the communion rail in some way re-enacts their commitment to the faith, it is a symbol also of coming forward in witness as they had mostly done at the time of their conversion.

Prayers of intercession are seen as the main point of connection in the worship with the wider community, and in the main this consists of prayers for parishioners who are ill or are in need. They feel this is a good thing to do. The issues of wealth and poverty is not seen by the members to relate directly to worship except at Christmas when they have and international aid appeal.

This story capture scenario which many urban rich congregations share The sentiments expressed leave us less rather than more hopeful of the church ever becoming a model in society of a place where issues of wealth and poverty are a matter of real concern.

Like all but one of the churches surveyed they rate music as the most important element in worship. What made the music so important? What did they sing? Why did other elements not rate as important? This is a question that needs careful reflection. Five of the seven churches named music as amongst the most important elements in worship, and the likelihood is that this was also true for the other two churches judging by the description of the worship if not by their specific answer to this question.

This congregation, together with one other is unenthusiastic about either the ministry of the word (preaching) or the sacraments (holy communion). Intercessions are but weakly understood, and solidarity entirely focussed on a once a year charity appeal!

A dynamic community usually depends on a combination of these factors finding prominence and importance and through that giving to the community a sense of worship being a dynamic living encounter with the living God beyond us and between us. What is it that sustains this congregation?

Story 2

is from an urban rich congregation in Australia, who see themselves as mostly educated people with wide interests. Many of them take part in voluntary work within the community. They are a mixed congregation in terms of age, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. The majority however are of European descent and are upper middle class. The preponderance of people are older, many of them women either widowed or single by choice.

In contrast to story 1 this congregation rate the sermon as the most important element in the worship. They like it best if it “has an edge” to it and so makes them think.

They like modern hymns, and appreciate silent as well as spoken prayers.

In the Eucharist, what moves them most is the sense of celebrating together with all people everywhere: with their own community and with people on the other side of the world, with people today and down through the centuries, and of feeling connected with the deepest things spiritual. Many loved the moment when the minister said: “The body of Christ is for you”, “the blood of Christ is for you” and “come, for all is prepared”.

When asked what relationship their worship has to issues of poverty and wealth many of them said things like:

-“Much of my attitude to life and how we should behave towards others and to social issues has been shaped by my years at this church and by a line of ministers who have preached in the prophetic tradition”.

-“Mostly intercessory prayer relates to the world, the sermon relates to actions in the community, notices and reports relate to actions by members, church activities in general are related to community action”.

-“real worship should open our minds to the issues, not make us safe and secure against the issues”.

There is a general anxiety that although they care, they have not done enough. They see what they are doing as “token”.

-“We are privileged here and need to remember how well off we are. We need to be mindful that excessive wealth is undesirable”

-“I suspect we are not always comfortable with God’s preferential option for the poor”

-“ I’m not sure we want to admit that we are the wealthy ones!”

-“I think that we sometimes pray for the poor, but then the rest of the time forget how lucky we are.”

This urban rich congregation differs from the previous story in almost every respect. The only external difference is that the church in story1 is Presbyterian and this church is Anglican. How much does confessional identity have any bearing on whether a church is more or less sensitive to the issues of poverty and wealth?

On balance confessional identity is hardly likely to be a significant factor in our study. However some traditions attract a larger percentage of people from poorer circumstances. Pentecostal and Baptist churches would be examples of this. It does not automatically lead to such traditions being more alert to the connections between worship and issues of poverty and wealth. Later stories will back up the impression that poorer congregations even more than wealthy have a tendency to use worship as an escape from rather than engagement with the hard realities of life.

If it is not confessional context which makes the critical distinction between these two wealthy congregations...what is it? What makes one group of wealthy Christians open minded, self critical, and alert to injustice and to need...whilst another see church having a quite different purpose, and certainly having little to say or do with public issues and ethical concerns?

Story 3

is from a church in Geneva Switzerland. It is an international community with more than twenty nationalities in the congregation. Many work at the Ecumenical Center so that a large proportion are ordained pastors or church professionals. Mixed among this are some refugees and people from business corporations with offices in Geneva. There are many children whose presence is felt sometimes with their accompanying noise.

The congregation is constantly changing with new people coming and others moving on all the time.

Worship usually follows the Lutheran order, so there is a weekly communion. The music is drawn from many parts of the world and the congregation prides itself in being able to sing in many languages. One particular feature is the use of repetitive songs during the distribution of communion. This music begins quietly but becomes increasingly vibrant and rhythmic.

The group interviewed mentioned several elements as being particularly important to them: first is the quality of the preaching and the liturgical leadership of the pastor. He combines informal openness with liturgical sensitivity. Second was the music, and in particular appreciation for the wide selection of songs from around the world and across the traditions. Third they mentioned communion and how this had become more and more important to them during the time of their involvement with the congregation. Special mention in this regard was made of the way in which Holy Week is intensively observed.

Issues of poverty and wealth are addressed through preaching and through the prayers of intercession. The offertory Hymn focuses on bread for all. There are also numerous projects which sometimes feature directly in the worship life. The focus of concern tends to be on those outside of the community

This third urban rich church, is certainly unusual in its international/ecumenical character but like the two previous churches it is wealthy and the congregation highly educated. The strong emphasis on the role of preaching and the Holy communion stands in contrast to the first congregation. Does the sacramental character of worship enhance the awareness of and connections with matters of poverty and wealth?

It seemed that this particular church was offering its members a fresh understanding of communion, and one which caused them to value it as special. The careful use of

music to heighten the sense of moment and mystery is interesting. In Ecumenical contexts repetitive responsive style music is often used in a charismatic way.

The line of greatest difference across these three rich communities was in their understanding and practice of Holy communion. In the first case it was about memorial, in the second the emphasis was on mystical union through bread and wine with Christ and each other, in the third its about justice and our personal commitment to the kingdom's cause. Only the third congregation mentioned this part of the service as being of particular significance and its carrying a strong ethical challenge.

Story 4

is a rich suburban community, United Methodist by tradition and situated Portage Michigan, on the edge of Kalamazoo city USA. It is a well off suburb, while Kalamazoo is an increasingly poor city.

When asked about the profile of the community the members interviewed answered not in terms of economic status but in relation to their political and theological outlook. This is a liberal church, they said, and then debated amongst themselves about exactly how liberal it actually is. One person explained the liberal posture with the comment: "We don't spank people here" meaning that people are accepted as they are. No-one is made to feel guilty or an outcast. Another describes the community as an inclusive church, and illustrates this with the fact that they will they marry people whom other churches will not. There is no established dress code so that people feel welcome regardless of their status. They feel that there is a good sense of community, folks enjoy being together as evidenced at the beginning, before the service proper begins, when there is much chatting. People obviously enjoy each others' company.

When asked about what is most significant for them in the worship the response focussed on the fact that worship is always changing and this is good. Everything at the front of the chancel is moveable. This is a congregation which delights in liturgical change. The most special parts of the service invariably involved many people either in drama or music or some symbolic action. This constantly changing environment creates a sense of excitement and anticipation about what might happen.

An unusually significant part of the service for many is the announcements. These were mostly given by lay people who carefully prepare their contributions. Although there are many announcements this liturgically is the time when the community reminds itself of what it is about and how they can be engaged.

As might be expected of a Methodist church, the congregation sings heartily, and the music is very well prepared and led.

No one mentioned the place of communion, and when asked specifically the only comment was that perhaps they should have it more often.

When asked about how the service engages with issues of poverty and wealth, they first of all cited the importance of preaching, but of course this varied from week to week depending on the lectionary reading. The pastors clearly do bring justice issues into their preaching and this is welcomed. The congregation are clearly and specifically invited to engage in societal issues and in practical mission work.

This is a community with many stories about collecting things and money for those less privileged. People are encouraged to give of their bounty and they have a sense of pride about their support towards other churches and for special projects. However despite all the activities of a social character, issues of poverty, wealth and justice do

not feel integral to the worship life. The focus seems to be more on action than on transformation, more on maximizing human effort than on developing a spirituality that is open and responsive to the gracious activity of God's Spirit.

From four rich congregations we now turn to three poorer congregations participating in the study. These stories highlight how the key characteristic common to poorer congregations is solidarity in community. At the same time there is in these poorer congregations a tendency to see worship as legitimate escapism. Escapism is not a feature of the church in story 5, but it does feature quite strongly in the other two. On the one hand these poor congregations have a strong sense of community born out of suffering and sustaining them in the midst of continuing hurt and brokenness. On the other hand two of the three congregations reject the idea that worship is related to issues of poverty and wealth. They don't want to talk about poverty and wealth in their worship because they know all about that. They don't want to bring the harsh reality of their daily lives into worship...they enjoy worship because it makes them feel happy and helps them to forget about their poverty.

Story 5

is an urban poor congregation. It draws together a group of people "who want to worship". They are "poor, small in number, large in spirit, and ever hopeful". They are proof of the truth in Dorothee Sollee comment that "hopelessness is a luxury only the rich can afford."

The parts of the worship which means most to them include: "seeing each other's faces", the weekly Eucharist, the closeness we feel to each other and because of this "knowing that we are not alone".

The part of the Eucharist which is most special to them was "thinking of the brokenness of the bread- like my life", and "of the brokenness of the world round about me" and "remembering that all around the world in all ages other folk have participated and are participating".

Story 6

is an indigenous aboriginal community, suburban in setting and many members semi literate. They see themselves as a small congregation which is grateful to God for having heard the Gospel and come together like a family. They were glad that they now have aboriginal ordained people who can be their ministers

They enjoy worship especially because it makes them feel happy to be with Jesus and each other and to forget about their everyday lives. They love to do a lot of singing (without hymn books) and prayer is central. Everybody can lead prayers and their prayers are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

They like the Eucharist because it is a special sharing and Jesus has died for them. They don't want stuff about poverty and wealth in their worship because they know all about that without bringing it into the worship. Sometimes they pray for things to get better.

Story 7

is a Latin American congregation of the Methodist church in Geneva. When asked what kind of community meets here, they replied: "We started out as a church for bureaucrats, but we are not that anymore". Life for many of the parishioners is very precarious. This can be illustrated by the way the people wait for the bus after the services. They do not go directly to the bus stop, but wait out of sight in the parking

lot, until they see the bus coming. They fear the police will see them and come and pick them up. For these people the police do not mean protection, but deportation. These are people trying to escape poverty, trying to send money to their families at home, trying to survive in a society which depends on their cheap labor but officially does not want them. The congregation is mostly made up of women.

After the service there is always a meal, because many of the people do not have places where they can relax. Sunday is their day off, but they have few places to go and few places to eat cheaply. The church provides a place for socializing.

The service, which included communion, was from the reformed church in Geneva. It was formally opened with a welcome and a psalm read by the congregation, followed by a song and prayer all lead by the worship leader. Then came testimonies and requests for prayer.

During this time one woman broke down sobbing and wailing. As if used to this kind of intense expression of anguish, the congregation held the woman and held her emotion. The pastor went and put his arm around the woman, but basically she was allowed to cry and express her hurt for about ten minutes. Then people began to express words of solace and encouragement and in this way helped her to move through her sorrow. It was time for the weeping to end and for the service to move on. There were gentle nudges, as people began to pray for the woman one after the other until she was able to gain control again and the requests for prayers could move on to others. All in all, the woman had the attention of the community for about 15 minutes. The community was not alarmed or embarrassed by this. They seemed to know how to hold the emotion and how to move through it. The worship leader concluded this section of the service by gathering up the prayers.

The ministry of the word began with a song and alleluia, the |gospel was then read and sermon preached. The theme was “shepherd Sunday”, so the preacher emphasized Jesus care both for each member of the congregation and for their families back home. This concluded with the singing of a favorite hymn.

The confession and forgiveness of sins, the Gloria and the offertory led into the words of the institution.

In response to the questions arising from this study about what is most important or special in the worship, members of the congregation said that the sense of community is the most important and meaningful thing about worship for them. That is what they come for, to express together their joys and their concerns. This is clearly demonstrated in the description of the service, where sharing constitutes the longest and most intense part of the service. They noted how their present context and experience has caused this focus to develop, because “when we were back home, we used t talk about going to church, whilst here we talk about joining the community”.

When asked how issues of poverty and wealth entered into the worship there was not much response...almost as if the question didn't fit. You don't bring in questions of poverty and wealth, they just are. A few identified that poverty issues sometimes feature within the sermon, and situations of concern back in the home countries are sometimes topics of concern for prayer. But the fact that they are there in Switzerland as illegals, trying to escape the poverty of their own countries is rarely mentioned. The common feeling was that Worship is not basically about these things.

Section 3 For reflection and action

The chart is a simple diagrammatic overview of the trends emerging from the responses received to the questions asked of seven local congregations. This section seeks to tease out some of the reasons behind these trends and some of the implications for worship in the future.

Summary of answers given by local congregations

Key: A= Important elements
B= Connections with poverty and wealth issues
C= Communion

	1 urban rich	2 urban rich	3 urban rich	4 suburban rich	5 urban poor	6 suburban poor	7 urban poor
Singing	A	A	A	A		A	
Praying	B	A	B		B	A	AB
Being together	B	A	B	B	AB	A	AB
Preaching		AB	A	B			B
Communion			AB		AB		

Music

The most commonly highly rated activity in worship is music. Five out of seven congregations cited this as amongst the most important elements. This response begs a number of important questions for our study, which the data gathered so far cannot provide. What kind of music traditions did they draw from; why do they consider music to be so important, what function does the music perform; and what is the interface between the music used and issues of poverty and wealth experienced in these communities.

Recent ecumenical discussions on music in worship, have increasingly noted that because in many churches the same words are sung the world over, whether it be Kyrie, alleluia or Holy Holy Holy, we cannot learn much about a what people actually believe from the basic liturgical text. But we can learn a great deal from the way they sing these words: in other words: the theology is in the rhythm and the sound . This is an important but largely unexplored area of research, which is not made easier as the commercialisation and global marketing of religious music grows to the point that local indigenous rhythm and sound are seriously “at risk”. Further study of local rhythms and sounds and imaginative efforts to promote indigenous music is a matter of some urgency.

Within the western/northern/industrialized world the evangelical music industry has transformed church music. Today hymn books are largely a thing of the past, organs have been replaced with bands, and hymns with a prolific production of renewal songs, which typical of popular revival music, is occasionally inspired, but too often

weak in tune and text. The plus of this revolution in religious music is that it is for many people more culturally relevant and accessible. However the loss is that we too easily and uncritically accept a poverty of ideas and artistry in both words and music. Because modern industrialized culture has been fascinated with power, so the common and all pervading idea which runs through much charismatic renewal music, is a fascination with God's power. In this context where power and success is so important, relatively little time and attention is given to the full range of human emotions and experience: suffering, pain vulnerability, generosity mutuality etc. In the music or the texts too little evidence of the light and shade, or subtlety and variety that make up this world. In the name of cultural relevance, we have replaced the astonishing creativity, diversity, subtlety and variety of the triune God, with an up front in your face, football terrace God.

Modern renewal music has crossed countries continents and cultures faster than any ideas of the previous missionary era. Just as the missionary movement followed the colonial trading routes to share the Gospel, so the religious music publishers have followed the investment routes of global businesses, ensuring that Christians in every continent are now swaying to the same tunes, and singing the same songs. Ironically the commercial world may unwittingly be helping a counter movement in favor of indigenous rhythm and sound because of course, there is profit to be made in that also. The growth of interest on a mass scale in African, Latin American, and Celtic sounds will arguably strengthen the quiet attentive efforts of liturgists and music lovers to help indigenous music to blossom and will sustain the hope that rhythm and sound may not be entirely hijacked by the insatiable appetite of the profit makers and trend setters.

The success of the modern ecumenical movement, and of contemporary liturgical movements, to acknowledge and affirm indigenous culture and music has been successful, far and beyond the possibilities of resources available. World church music as it is called is increasingly known and used in local congregations. The challenge is not only to share this music far and wide, but to enable its use to open people's eyes to the relationship of context and culture to faith. The stories behind each song and the rhythm and sound of those who originally sing the song needs to be carefully passed on...or as has happened to the spirituals of the black slaves...the cries of God's people will be anaesthetized into the sweet four part harmonies of a comfortable church music group.

As we gather Kyrie's from around the world, we can enter into the hopes struggles and spirituality of brothers and sisters far from us geographically, but one with us in the faith.

Consider in this regard the following scores:

Greek orthodox
Russian
South African
Brazilian
Sri Lankan

The Greek Kyrie consists of a penetrating un-harmonized but sometimes highly ornamented melody line, undergirded by a deep rich sustaining drone which is the abiding characteristic of Greek Orthodox liturgical music. Like the Russian Kyrie this prayer seeks to focus attention on the Cosmic dimension of God creator and redeemer.

The Russian Kyrie is sumptuous, rich and heavily harmonized, giving a strong emotional feel, which is highly attractive to many in the protestant world as well as within Orthodoxy.

The South African Kyrie, has close harmonies, and is strongly rhythmic, always somehow on the edge of dance.

The Russian and South African Kyries were both written and sung in the context of darkness and state oppression. There is in both a strength and richness of harmony that defies the circumstances immediately surrounding the worshippers. The tempo and rhythm of the Russian is very smooth, designed to soar the heights of God's Heaven, the African in contrast is much more defined rhythmically. It has an energy that transforms rather than transports the worshipper.

The Brazilian Kyrie has a Rumba rhythm strongly characteristic of the culture, and its melody is full of passion and drama. The melody repeats itself building in pitch and volume each time. There is a strong sense of lamentation.

The Sri Lankan Kyrie is quieter in mood, gaining tension through progression of pitch and ornamentation at the ends of phrases.

The nature of the God we meet in each of these Kyrie's is unique to the culture and context in which they are sung. By sharing these across traditions and countries we invite each other to expand our faith and horizons in the God who made us and nurtures us. When as a world church we share and receive music, so we share not only rhythm and sounds but also context and story. Part of our intercession and lamentation is to "sing with" those whose song we borrow. The tragedy is to forget where a song comes from, for a song separated from its source loses its soul.

For our purposes in this study it is important to underline the value of pursuing and promoting indigenous music. Songs born out of community are much more likely to engage with the issues of poverty and wealth that surround that community. Songs of struggle sacrifice generosity celebration inclusion and exclusion emerge naturally in communities...these songs can become for others a vehicle by which in song and prayer to connect with the rich and the raw edges of life

Prayer

Praying was an activity which most congregations recognized was ideally suited to connecting worship with issues of justice. However, only three congregations out of the seven showed any enthusiasm for this activity.

Corporate prayer, like music, is something which needs to arise from the experience and struggle of communities. Through public acts of grief and lamentation communities of faith are empowered to act prophetically. To grieve and lament is to announce that "all is not well" It is according to Bruggemann the first critical step in the process of dismantling oppressive regimes. (5)

By privatizing grief, and minimizing the role of intercessory prayer in corporate worship, grief and lamentation are stripped of their political and prophetic function. We seem too often to be content to act as if worship has no political dimension, and as if God is not interested enough in the world to intervene or even participate in its affairs.

Being Together

Second only to music the activity of Being together was identified by the churches interviewed as an important element in worship. Significantly this activity is seen most consistently across the seven congregations to relate to issues of poverty and wealth.

Clearly people enjoy each others company, and need company. Here they find comfort and consolation, laughter and energy, opportunities to share and to serve. All this is for Jaci a bi product of worship. For others in the CPW21 liturgy group it is an essential context out of which worship happens.

Sermons

Preaching was only considered to be important for the two urban rich congregations. Two other saw the importance of this part in the service for making connections with issues of poverty and wealth, but the signs are that preaching as a medium has run its course. What may still have a place is story telling, but any such creative alternatives to the traditional sermon were not mentioned amongst the congregations interviewed.

Bread and Wine

Communion, or the Eucharist was seen by two congregations as important for them, and very relevant to issues of poverty and wealth. For the others it had a rather low profile. This is a matter of real concern and interest in current liturgical discussions. More and more people from protestant traditions are looking afresh to the communion for inspiration and spiritual nourishment. Perhaps the demise of the sermon needs to be seen in parallel to this. As one commentator has written: "More than any other sacrament the Eucharist tells the gospel story. This preliterate medium may prove to be the most powerful available to Christians in an increasingly post-literate age. What people respond to and look for is story and spectacle. The Eucharist is both. The Eucharist offers a story shaped experience. For contemporary youth, truth is neither hard boiled fact, or universal principle, rather it embraces doubt and ambiguity. Truth is event-personal, passionate, transcendent. Youth un-apologetically upend Descartes "I think therefore I am" to "I am therefore I know"."

This commentator and others would argue that what follows from hearing the story is an invitation to tell our stories, and to give space and attention to hearing and valuing others' stories. The Eucharist is not the story to end all stories, but the unfolding story, in which we find ourselves living out our own particular story.

When Dorothy and her congregation took the Eucharist to the squatters house, an open ended and creative interaction can be seen between God's story and the human journey of those young people. They were not shoehorned into the Church, or even into God's story but through the event called Eucharist discovered themselves in the story. It was also the means by which the congregation started to approach the Eucharist and through it to approach others in a new way. Dorothy recalls how as she watched the growing interaction between her moderately affluent congregation and the squatters and other street people and disadvantaged groups, do things began to change:

- They changed their debate about the correct form Eucharist should take and concentrated instead on how to move to ways of being inclusive
- The gathering moment became liturgically very important in order to include those who were not there and some, who felt that they could not be there.
- They encouraged illiterate people to take part in the preparation of prayers and found ways of including their words and phrases as they were actually offered.

- They were able to respectfully receive bread broken by people who joined them in the circle for distribution of elements and who were smelly and dirty
- They moved to sung responses which were very simple in form rather than those which were their favorites.

CONCLUSION

Music and storytelling may hold the clue to worship. Now may be the moment for “newly emerging “churches, and for traditionally “non –liturgical churches ”to consider exploring the place of liturgy and ritual within their worship, so that they are able to offer people ways of participating in the Eucharist story in the church. Now may be the time for traditional, liturgical traditions to think again about how The Story interacts with all stories in an authentic way.

The possibility of worship becoming the place where issues or concerns arising from of poverty and wealth find focus and perspective depends on a whole range of factors, some of which have been alluded to in this study. Two messages in particular appear to stand out from this study arising from the observation in the seven congregations about the primary importance people give to music and to “being together”.

Two thesis -Two Proposals

1. People look to worship for an experience of: mystery and transcendence, they want to locate God and love God above and beyond their own immediate individual and collective reality. According to the congregations interviewed in this study, music is the primary activity in worship and is the way by which people expect to realize this goal.

Given this scenario our commitment as agencies and churches must be to ensure that indigenous songs and music are encouraged to thrive. In songs the stories and emotions of a community are gathered up, expressed and remembered. When the story-songs of a community interact with the story of God in an event shaped experience called worship, then the issues real to people’s lives rich and poor will serve both to inform the worship and in turn give form and meaning to the lives of the worshippers.

Churches and related agencies need to combine together in an effort to revive indigenous expressions of song and story. In this way worship will be renewed and the prophetic, sacrificial, missionary and inclusive dimensions to our life in God will be experienced in the worshipping community.

2. People expect from worship to experience a sense of solidarity in suffering and in celebration. They come to worship, because they enjoy being together. The relationships are meaningful to them, they find support and strength when they need it, and they find the challenge to be there for others in the community. This is how they most consciously connect with issues and concerns arising out of poverty and wealth.

In short, the worship experience is about of being part of the story rather than listeners hearer’s bystanders or voyeurs in someone else’s story.

Just as best practice in development means that the poor are empowered to speak for themselves, and oppressed communities are recognized to be the primary actors in

bringing about change, so in worship best practice means that empowerment participation and symbolic action will be key elements. When this is the case, worship becomes a transforming experience in which the worshipper moves from passive to active mode. Worship in this sense mirrors the process of transformation we look for in society.

Our commitment as agencies and churches is to nurture and support communities whose worship is part of the work of transformation in society, not a prelude to it.

Clearly the study showed that the economic circumstances of a congregation does not significantly change the expectations worshippers have. They go to church with the same aspirations and share similar views about their experience of worship. This may be because church overall does not attract the extremes of wealth and poverty. As Jaci noted at the start of our study, “the attempt to distinguish between wealthy and poor congregations is too sharp a distinction to make in the daily life experience of his Brazilian context. “I have to deal in Brazil with at least three categories, which are wealth, poverty and something else in between them, not to mention the extremes of wealth (for the beautiful few) and the extremes of poverty (for the ugly, landless, homeless and lifeless). The extremes don’t participate in our liturgies. The extremely rich worship gods in Banks and in very handsome resorts. The extremely poor usually go to Macomb and Candomble services or take refuge in spiritualistic tents”.

SECTION 4

FOR THE UPROOTED ONES Remembering refugees

*You will need for this service:
A large map of the world
Flowers or ribbons or small candles*

CALL TO WORSHIP

There is no place where you cannot reach:
God who made the heavens and the earth.
There is no journey which you have not travelled:
God who shared our life in Jesus Christ.
There are no people beyond your care:
God who is the Spirit, the Comforter.
Let us worship God!

HYMN

GATHER THEM IN

Let us “gather in” to our community of faith
some of the people who are uprooted
from their homes and countries around the world.
*(The names of countries where there are known to be refugees are read
and flowers are placed on the table for them, or candles lit,
or a ribbon attached to the map is linked with the congregation or the communion
table)*
As we gather together in this place,
we remember these people and the struggle of their lives.
We will remember them before our God.

IT IS NOT EASY TO WELCOME EVERYONE

Even when we hope we can do better,
it is not easy to welcome everyone that wants to live among us,
or need our prayers and concerned support, O God.
There are many reasons why we find it hard:
(the people say why it is hard)

OR

Voice 1

Sometimes we feel people are very different from us, in culture, in looks, in ways of relating, in their politics, in their religion;

Voice 2

Or we feel as though there is not enough
to share with them in work, in houses, in schools, in money, in services;

Voice 3

Sometimes we are tired
and cannot find the energy to give the care,
or the time that they may hope from us,
especially when they are far away.

***Forgive us, O God; if we have been less than generous.
We remember your grace in relating to us
and we long to be as gracious to others.***

ASSURANCE

Our prayers are heard.
We too are gathered into the love of God.
Thanks be to God!

READINGS

HYMN

SERMON

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

In response to the word, let us stand and affirm our faith:

*We are all held in the hollow of God's hand;
loved children of the universe,
born from the life which flows from God,
freed to the fullness of God's creation
with all its beauty and variety.*

*We are all worth dying for in Christ Jesus,
all called to risen life in Christ's rising.
The way of Jesus gives us footprints for our following
and all our trials and longings are known
in the frailty of Christ's birth among us
and the courage of Christ's walking with us.*

*We are all called to new things in the Spirit,
in the hope that stirs in unlikely moments,
the home we find In the wastelands of our wanderings,
the warmth that we touch in the coldness of our need
and the opening of our hearts to adventures in belonging
or the gathering in of those without a home.*

THE OFFERING IS RECEIVED

Dear God, receive our offering.
Guide those who use it that it may help to bring fullness of life
to those who live in need and long for our care.
Amen.

INTERCESSION

As they face this day, O God, find those who are lost,
separated from those they love,
crossing unknown borders,
without a country or home,
not knowing where to turn:

*Find them, God who always seeks for the lost,
and cover them safely as a hen covers her chickens.*

As they face this day, O God,
stand among the ones in refugee camps around the world,
in the hunger and despair,
in the crowds and the emptiness,
in the wet and the thirstiness:

*Be their hope and their strength
in the crying out for justice
and open the ears of the world to hear their cries.*

As they face this day, O God,
may those who live with us, uprooted from their homelands,
find a new home where their history is respected,
their gifts and graces celebrated
and their fear departed from them.

***May we be their home,
may we be the ones who open our hearts in welcome.***

As we face this day, O God,
sing to us your song of encouragement,
paint for us your bright pictures of a new world
where people need not flee from wars and oppression,
where no one lacks a country or a home,
and where we are all part of your new creation.

For we long to be your people, in spirit and in truth.

***We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ,
who knew the life of a refugee.***

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

HYMN

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Go in peace and grace.

And may God lift up new possibilities before us,
the face of Christ be seen in our neighbours
and the Spirit lead us into the celebration of a new community.

Amen.

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LITURGY FOR HOLY COMMUNION

GREETING

The peace of Christ be with you

And also with you.

CALL TO WORSHIP

(All standing)

We are always a broken body,

but we are the Body of Christ.

With the faithful who go before us,

we are the body of Christ.

In Christ is our unity.

In Christ is our wholeness.

Thanks be to God!

CONFESSION

As we come before God in confession,
let us reflect on the symbols at the centre of our life

(The bread and wine are brought to the table.)

(Silence)

In our failure to be the church of love and grace,

***we drink a common cup
and break the common loaf.***

In our sharing in injustice and violence
against the people of the world,

***we drink a common cup
and break the common loaf.***

In our lack of faith and courage
to follow the way of the cross,

***we drink a common cup
and break the common loaf.***

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

In our brokenness
and in our humanness,
the Christ is one with us.

In Christ we are set free.

In Christ we are enough to be the church.

Amen.

GLORIA

READINGS

Old Testament

Epistle

SENDING OUT OF THE CHILDREN

(The children gather at the front.)

We send you out together
as our loved children
to learn, to play,

and as part
of the family of God.

Amen.

THE GOSPEL

SERMON

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

In response to the word, let us stand and affirm our faith.

All:

The people of God have a human face.

We laugh,

we weep,

we wait in hope.

We lift our eyes,

and stub our toes,

we love,

and struggle,

we fail

we stand

and always we stand

on trembling ground.

***But God is God
and Jesus is the Christ
and the Spirit
will lift up our feet.
God is in the centre,
God is at our endings.
Nothing lies beyond
the love of God in Christ.***

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us bring before God
our prayers of intercession.
Come, Holy Spirit,
renew the whole creation.
Send the wind and flame
of your transforming life
to lift up the church in this day.
Give wisdom and faith
that we may know
the great hope to which we are called.

***Come, Holy Spirit,
renew the whole creation.***
Spirit of love,
set us free
to emerge as the children of God.
Open our ears
that we may hear the weeping
of your creation.
Open our mouths
that we may be a voice
for the voiceless.
Open our eyes
that we may see your vision
of peace and justice.
Make us alive with the courage and faith
of your prophetic truth.

***Come, Holy Spirit,
renew the whole creation.***
Spirit of unity,
reconcile your people.
Give us the wisdom
to hold to what we need
to be your church.
Give us the grace
to lay down
those things that we
can do without.
Give us a vision of your breadth
and length and height
which will challenge our smallness of heart
and bring us humbly together.
***Come, Holy Spirit,
renew the whole creation.***

Spirit of truth,
lift up your light among us.
May we ever be
a true reflection of the gospel
and lead the church
into honest encounter with itself
and the world it claims to serve.

***Come, Holy Spirit,
renew the whole creation.***

Amen.

OFFERTORY

Let us bring our offerings to God.

(The offering is received)

DEDICATION

THE EUCHARIST CONTINUES

BLESSING

May the Holy God surprise you on the way,
Christ Jesus take you by the hand,
and the Spirit lift up your life.

Amen.

Amen.

Dorothy McRae-McMahon
Uniting Church in Australia

THE SACRAMENTAL MEAL

I once saw a man eat a meal as though it was a sacrament.

He was from Zimbabwe.

For this service you will need:

Baskets of fruit, bread and nuts

OPENING SENTENCES

Food, food - costly, free, generous nurturing:

For all of us, for all

Food, food - unexpected gift, prepared with love:

For all of us, for all

Food, food - set before us as an invitation to gather around the table together.

Bread of life, bread for the world.

SONG

A TRUE STORY

He sat with his meal before him on the table, not a greedy meal, even though he had served himself from the buffet. I sat opposite with my meal before me, thoughtlessly gathered from the supply on the side tables, and opened my mouth to begin a conversation with him as a possible new friend. Then I saw that his eyes were fixed with wonder on his plate as he looked reverently at the food which was there. After some moments, he lifted his fork and slowly, carefully took a mouthful of food. He lifted his eyes and gazed thoughtfully into the distance as he chewed - with a deep and

solemn joy, a fleeting smile passed across his face at intervals as he savoured each taste, each fragment of food, as though he was storing it up for the future. After each mouthful was finished he surveyed his plate in wonder again and made a careful selection of the next mouthful until the food was gone. He sat before his empty plate in meditative silence and then respectfully left the table.

I knew I was seeing a man eating a meal as though it was a Sacrament. He was eating as one who had never seen such food before and knew that, after the Assembly of the World Council of Churches, he might never do so again.

I looked at my meal. It looked different. The world looked different. The sacred meal of Jesus Christ would always look different.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Many of us never look at our food, O God.
Sometimes we look at it as though we are due for it,
or consider that it is not as we wanted it to be.

(silent reflection)

Sometimes we wish we had more when we have enough
and do not notice the empty plates of others.

(silent reflection)

Sometimes we eat it quickly as though it has no significance
in order to hurry on to more important things.

Even when it is the meal at your Holy Table, O Jesus Christ,
we often take it for granted.

(silent reflection)

Forgive us, forgive us, O God.

Forgive us when we know not what we do.

Forgive us when we do not see or care.

Forgive us when costly meals become cheap for us.

(The Eucharistic elements are carried to the table)

ASSURANCE

Hear the word to us in Jesus Christ

I am the bread of life.

Take this bread, take this cup.

It is given for you, even you and all of you.

Thanks be to God!

READINGS

SONG

SERMON

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

(Baskets of fruit, bread and nuts could be carried and placed on the table between each section of the affirmation and then shared out among the people later)

In response to the word, let us affirm our faith:

***The bounty of God the Creator surrounds us with grace,
spread in generous measures of loving creativity,
poured forth for generation after generation
in hopeful abundance,***

*in an endless invitation to hospitality.
The feasting Christ walks in our scarce life
as though all of us might be part of the celebration,
as though each of us might be a guest at the banquet,
as though we might all be together at the table,
holding each other as precious,
dying before we will give up love
or life which is lived to the full.
The laughing Spirit moves in endless freedom
stirring, surprising, bestowing gifts as she moves
as though wisdom is foolishly faithful to hope,
eternal living for truth and will not settle for less,
as though we are worth the struggle
and we could really be the emerging children of God.*

*This we believe.
This is the wonder of our God.*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Who will we gather to our table,
the place of our prayers to God at this moment?
Who is not yet present at the feast of life
because of injustice, oppression, vulnerability and loneliness?
Who have we not noticed because their voices are silenced,
or because we do not think they are worth noticing?
(the people bring their prayers for others)
O God who calls us all to share the hospitality of your table,
as we remember these your loved children,
call forth in us the same generosity, the same grace, as we find in you.
*In the power of your Spirit, raise up in us a courage for justice,
a commitment to kindness
and the unity for which you long In your church.
In the name of the Christ,
Amen*

THE EUCHARIST follows

BLESSING

Go as those whose cup of life runs over.
Go as those who have received the bread enough for others.
And may the fruitfulness of the creation be spread before you,
Christ Jesus host your every meal
and the Spirit fill you with joy.
Amen.

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THE JOY OF WATER
A tribute to the Widows' Association of Harare

You will need for this service:

Jugs of water

A bowl of salt water

OPENING SENTENCES

Claim the joy of water for poor of the earth!

Let it flow and pour and sprinkle for all the people!

Call for the rivers to be shared

and the rain from the heavens

to gather in great ponds of mercy,

that all may know each day the gift of God in water.

(Bowls and jugs of water are carried to the table)

SONG

STORY

At the University of Harare for the World Council of Churches Assembly in 1998, the student residence in which some delegates stayed was cleaned by the normally unemployed women of the Widows' Association. Night and day they cleaned the corridors, the rooms and the bathrooms, working long hours for very little pay. They were welcoming women, kindly to the delegates as visitors to their city. Each day the delegates went off to their meals and the WCC meetings and left them to do the cleaning. One morning a delegate returned to get something from her room in the middle of the morning. As she approached the bathroom nearby, she heard unusual noises - ecstatic noises, sounds of happiness, with much laughter and some singing. She looked in the door and there were the cleaning women, clutching tiny fragments of soap, bathing and showering in joy and delight. They were lifting up their arms to feel the water flowing over their bodies, almost dancing under the showers and lying back in the full bath in bliss, encouraging each other in this wondrous moment of access to running water, hot running water! When they saw her, the sounds suddenly stopped and then they all laughed together, celebrating the moment and her recognition that they had "seized their day" against the odds.

GRIEVING

We grieve, O God, who gives us water for all life,
that so many of us have only hard-won drops to drink,
while others of us have access to water at every turn
and often waste it with careless abandon.

Forgive us, O God.

We grieve that we rarely even think of this,
that we take the water we have for granted
and have no care for others.

Forgive us, O God.

Connect our hearts with those whose tears of grieving
are shed in their need and fear for their thirsty children.

Let us dip a finger in this water and taste the tears of the world
sharing in its grieving and all its thirsts for justice.

(A bowl of salt water is passed among the people while a silence is kept)

ASSURANCE

Jesus Christ is our living water,
pouring forth grace towards us who grieve for what we have done.
Open your hearts to receive the life of Christ
and the renewing of grace for this day and the next.
We are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

READINGS

POEMS ABOUT WATER

SONGS AND PICTURES ABOUT WATER

DOXOLOGY

COMMITMENT

We will need the living water of God for our task in the world.
O God, we pray for this water, that we may be your faithful servants.

(Silent prayer)

As we are restored by your gifts, these are our hopes for the world:

(The particular hopes relating to work being done by the people are shared)

We will carry the love of God into the four corners of the earth.

***We are the people of God brought to birth in the rush of water,
washed and sustained day by day in the beauty of water.***

***We see the wonder of the rivers and streams,
and the endless waves of the mighty seas,***

***Our faces are lifted up to receive the gentle rain
and the miracle of the greening of the earth as it falls.***

***In all this, O God we give thanks for your endless gifts to us
and commit ourselves to move for the just sharing of them with others.***

Let us give to each other water for this journey

And commit ourselves to care for each other on the way.

(The people pour water into each other's cupped hands)

Praise to you, God of all creation!

Praise to you for the gift of water!

Amen.

MUSIC OR SONG

BLESSING

We are blessed forever by the poured out life of Christ.

Let us go and pour this blessing over the heads of all the people.

And may the streams of living water flow beside the road as you go,

The warmth of the love of God move within you

And the Spirit be found in the ripples of grace around you.

Amen.

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JUST WALKING BY

GREETING

The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

OPENING SENTENCES

The world lies by the roadside in its weeping struggling life:

and you stop and live in its pain, Jesus Christ

We sit on the edge of the road in rejection and fear:

and you join us as though we are your dear neighbours, Jesus Christ

There is no place separated from your love. There is no time when you pass us by.

Thanks be to God!

AS WE WERE WALKING BY

As we were walking by our neighbours, O God,
sometimes we were afraid to stop in case they asked too much of us.

(silent prayer)

As we passed some other neighbours, O God,
sometimes we were afraid to stop because people might think we were like them.

(silent prayer)

As we sat on the other side of the room from our neighbours, O God,
sometimes we could not believe that they had great good within them or love for us
and so we did not look for their good, or receive love from them.

(silent prayer)

Forgive us, gracious God.

Forgive us and wait with us as we see our neighbours again.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

In Jesus Christ our God never walks passed those who fail.

Even the wounds of our wrongdoings are bathed and offered
God's healing love.

From the Spirit have we all received, grace upon grace.

Amen.

READINGS

The Gospel: Luke 10: 25-37

Silent reflection

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

In response to the word, let us affirm our faith:

*The mind of our God is wiser than our minds,
searching among the depths of our life
with all its ambiguity and fears,
all its complex wanderings and lacks of understanding,
cutting through to truth
and the lost grounds of justice.*

*The ears of our God are tuned to all of us,
never missing fragile voices or whispers of desperation,
hearing the messages within our messages,
listening for the silent sounds of longing,
choosing the crying voices from within the louder sounds
lifting up the voices of humanness,
the voices of caring,*

*the voices of the little and the least.
The heart of our God feels for us,
carrying the feet of the Christ into the world,
to know the way of our wilderness,
a heart filled with costly love,
a heart which reaches out to touch us all
and spreads its love with the balm of healing,
lifting us to our feet and carrying us to a safe place
before we travel the road of life again.*

We believe in a God who is neighbour to us all.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Neighbour God, open our eyes to see our neighbours at this time,
those who lie beside the roadside of our life,
like unnoticed stones or dead leaves.

Open our eyes to see who are our neighbours now.

(silent reflection as a basket of stones and dead leaves is placed)

The cloth of compassion streams towards our life from the cross.

(A cloth is spread)

Let us name our wounded neighbours,
see their life as a rock or the dead leaf by the roadway
and place it gently on the cloth of compassion.

(the people name the neighbours and place the stones and leaves)

Let us cover the wounds of our neighbours.

(The cloth of compassion covers over the stones and leaves)

Bind up all our wounds, O God.

Make us neighbours to all who need neighbours.

Give us humble souls to recognise in others

the gift of being neighbours to us.

Amen.

BLESSING

Go onto the road of life in kindness,
and may Jesus be walking by your wounds
and stop to carry you into healing
and may the God of love and the Spirit of grace
flow forth in all you do.

Amen.

Dorothy McRae-McMahon
Uniting Church in Australia

DAY OF PRAYER AND CONCERN FOR OUTWORKERS

(can be adapted for other oppressed workers)

OPENING SENTENCES

L: The God of love opens our eyes to see the suffering of the people:

P: **And we will see.**

L: The God of justice opens our ears to hear those who cry out:

P: **And we will hear.**

L: In the power of the Spirit, we will know the truth

P: **And the truth will set us free.**

SONG

CONFESSION

L: It is hard to see and hear and know the truth about injustice:

Voice 1 :We have created societies where money is more important than people.

P: God, forgive us.

V2: We look at the images of glamorous models rather than the worn out lives of those who make their clothes.

P: God, forgive us.

L: We choose to forget the cost in the lives of Outworkers for the bargains we buy.

P: God, forgive us.

ASSURANCE

L: Today is a new day! Rise up and live with justice and love in the power of Christ.

P: Amen!

READINGS (Suggestions)

Isaiah 58: 6-12; Isaiah 25:1-10; Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 96

Luke 1: 46-55; James 5: 4

GRACE'S STORY (attached) and/or SPEAKER

OUR RESPONSE

L: This is the stretched out life of a woman Outworker.

(two people stretch out purple cloth across a table and down onto the floor)

Let us look at this cloth and imagine what her life might be like:

Voice 1:She is tired and committed to her family;

V2: She is afraid of her employer because she might lose her work;

V3: She is skilled and faithful;

V4: She is a person of dignity and loved by God.

L: Are there other words we would say about her life?

(People add words)

L: The labels we have brought are the sign that she has finished this piece of work.

They are our connection with her life.

They may tell us, if we wish to know,

how fairly she has been paid for this work which we now receive.

Let us place our labels on the edge of her life.

(the people place their labels on the end of the cloth)

L: Let us make our commitment:

P: We commit ourselves to search for the truth about injustice and to act in response to that Knowledge.

We will not Knowingly buy clothes

which are the products of exploitation.

We will stand with Outworkers in their struggle

and challenge those who are their oppressors.

L: We will send these labels to the FairWear office as a sign of our joining with others in a commitment to justice for the Outworkers of Australia and beyond.

PRAYERS

- L: We pray for all Outworkers who are exploited, exhausted, or harassed, who receive none of the work entitlements which we take for granted:
- P: We celebrate their growing empowerment.**
We pray for those who struggle for justice alongside the Outworkers, the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union, FairWear, Asian Women at Work, and other advocates:
- P: We celebrate their energy, courage and commitment.**
- L: We pray for all employers of Outworkers, industry bodies, for governments and policy makers:
- P: We celebrate those who are ethical, caring and just.**
- L: We pray for the Industrial Relations Commission as it decides on awards and conditions for working people:
- P: We celebrate its existence and the moments when it is the voice for the rights of the people.**
- L: We pray for ourselves, that we may be part of the transformation of the world:
- P: We celebrate the Good News which we find among us.**
Amen.

SONG

BLESSING

- L: Go in faith to renew the whole creation.
And may the goodness of God's creation
be found in the little and the least,
Christ be present in the longings in the face of our neighbour,
and the Spirit show us the way towards true peace.
- P: Amen.**

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CELEBRATION OF THE GOLDEN ONES (For people who feel marginalized)

WE ARE THE GOLDEN PEOPLE

We are the golden people of the world:
*lying below the surface of life's journey
in hidden beauty and value.*

We wait to be discovered and affirmed:
*as a stream of costly living,
flowing from the heart of God
(a golden cloth is placed)*

In us the Spirit dances and sings:
*found in the melody of possible music
which sounds its song and moves in everything.
We celebrate our being!*

SONG

REMEMBERING OUR WEEPING

*A bowl of tears is placed in the centre
The people say words which describe their weeping and a respectful silence is kept.*

IT'S NOT EASY

O God, it's not easy being who we are.
Others have a terrible power to take life from us.
They create so much fear anger and pain in us
that the claiming of our life and soul
often becomes an act of courage.
Our lives carry the marks of pain,
the gold in our soul lies crushed and bleeding.
Our spirits struggle as we journey.
(a red cloth is placed)
We long to walk this life in freedom and justice.

ASSURANCE

One day we will be free.
Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God.
One day we will take our just place in all the earth.
This will be so!

READINGS

Jeremiah 31: 10-13

Ephesians 2:13-22

SONG

AFFIRMATIONS

In the midst of the struggle for survival there have been times of affirmation, times
when we know that we are of God:
When life has blossomed, When there have been flowers along the way
Let us remember these times, name them and place a flower,
as a symbol of them on the cloths as pathways of our life:
(The people do so)

WE ARE NOT ALONE

Around our lives, whether hidden or revealed,
there are those who light small flames of loving support along our way. Let us name
those people and light a candle as a celebration of our good companions on this
journey:
(the people light the candles and say the names)
O God, may these people be our help
in the days and nights of fearfulness
and the moments of aloneness.
O God, centre of the universe the source of love and grace,
we pray that you too will be our hope as we claim our life in faith.
(The people gather in a circle)
This is our new day.
This is our night of celebration
and joy.

***Together we will claim energy and wisdom,
resources for our strength,
companions when the way is lonely
and the strong conviction that we,
and all others like us,
are indeed the people of beauty and grace.***

SONG

SENDING OUT (*Sung*)

Let us go into the world with courage,

Let us go with imagination into the creative life of God

Let us go with the freedom of the Spirit into a new future.

We will!

Amen!

Dorothy McRae-McMahon

Uniting Church in Australia

MYRA N BLYTH

9.14.00