



# Worship and Liturgical Resources

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

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### *Worship & Mission*

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### *Leader's Guide Revised: 06/07/2010*

#### **Notes for Leaders**

##### *Format*

These modules were prepared by the churchwide worship staff and have been reviewed by a variety of reviewers around the church. Some of the sections have been carefully worded in response to ongoing debates about worship in the ELCA and comments and questions that are regularly fielded by the worship staff. Therefore, conversation with the worship staff about the content of the module is strongly advised, especially where there is confusion or disagreement with the assertions of the text.

A full text is provided. For the most natural and engaging presentation, you may choose to use the script as a guide putting the points into your own words. Take some time to consider your leadership and presentation style. You may decide to create a PowerPoint presentation for visual support of the module or other such tools to support your presentational style.

Throughout the module, there is opportunity for the participants to discuss in small groups. Be prepared to assist people in forming those small groups and prepare for the movement between the large group and small groups when you set up the room.

Handouts have been developed that coordinate with the presentation. Be sure to make enough copies for all participants.

Consider your time carefully. You may need to edit the presentation text in order to get through the materials even with a full three-hour block of time.

### ***Physical arrangement***

The best arrangement will be a meeting space with moveable seating that facilitates the frequent formation of small groups for conversation. Ideally the room will not feel cramped nor overly large. A comfortable temperature and ventilation are helpful to aid concentration and participation.

If projection will be used, make sure that the projection can be seen by all participants.

### ***Group discussion***

Group discussions work best in small groups of 4 to 8 people. It may be beneficial for the same group to meet together throughout the event. If there are people from multiple congregations, encourage people to be in conversation with people from different congregations. You may decide to “count off” by the number of groups and then have like numbers gather together.

Be prepared to facilitate times of “reporting” from the small groups. Some groups may need encouragement to stay on task and focus their comments on the question at hand. You may consider a format for visually capturing the reports of the congregation on newsprint, white-board, or other visual media.

This module has been prepared with a broad range of participants not only worship leaders, planners, musicians, and pastors. If you know that there will be a number of people for whom much of this module would be a review, you may enlist their assistance with small group leadership.

### ***Fielding Questions***

Before leading the module, take some time to reflect about how you will respond to questions from the participants. You are not burdened with the task of knowing all the answers. Rather, concentrate on facilitating the discussion and urging conversation. Feel free to provide the contact information of the worship office during your presentation if you encounter a question to which you are uncertain about how to respond. Be prepared to stop unhelpful conversations in a way that validates diversity, points out places of commonality and redirects back to the topic at hand.

A good strategy for responding to ideas from the participants is to encourage other participants to comment, balancing both the positive aspects and challenges presented by the idea while also highlighting common concerns in diverging points of view.

### ***A Broad View of Worship: God’s action expressed locally*** Or ***Banishing the “traditional” vs. “contemporary” dichotomy***

This module intentionally does not engage the false polarization of worship into categories such as “contemporary” or “traditional.” These terms are variously defined throughout the church and carry with them a host of assumptions and judgmental attitudes. They tend to lead more toward arguments about differences rather than to conversation about commonalities. Therefore, the terms are to be avoided in favor of a broader view of worship that holds diversity together with our common theological assertions about worship and the patterns we hold in common.

This module sees worship through the lens of God’s mission, God’s unfolding purpose for the whole world, within the local community. Contextualization of worship may be expressed in a variety of ways that spring from careful reflection holding in tension God’s timeless action has been carried through the ages in the church’s worship and is expressed in timely ways in the local community. This perspective on worship gathers together the full variety of musical styles and levels of formality in ritual that can be described as “Lutheran Worship.”

## Resource Review

Before facilitating this module, it may be helpful to review the following resources:

*The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament* (1997) available online at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Learning-Center/The-Use-of-the-Means-of-Grace.aspx> Pay particular attention to Part 4: The Means of Grace and Christian Mission.

*Central Things: Worship in Word and Sacrament* by Gordon Lathrop (2005). Available as part of the Worship Matters series for \$9.99 at [www.augsburgfortress.com](http://www.augsburgfortress.com).

*Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission* edited by Thomas Schattauer (1999). This book contains essays by the worship professors of the ELCA and ELCIC. Available from Augsburg Fortress for \$17.60

*Renewing Worship 2: Principles for Worship* (2002) available online at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Learning-Center/Principles-of-Worship.aspx> or for \$15.00 at [www.augsburgfortress.com](http://www.augsburgfortress.com).

“Worship is Mission” by Craig A. Satterlee (January 19, 2009) at [www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=7032](http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=7032)

The Lutheran World Federation’s *Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture* (1996). This statement offers four categories from which to examine the relationship between worship and culture: trans-cultural, contextual, counter-cultural, and cross-cultural. Download the statement at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Learning-Center/LWF-Nairobi-Statement.aspx>

## Questions

If you have questions about the content or presentation of this module, contact The Rev. Jennifer Phelps Ollikainen, Associate for Worship Resources, 773.380.2577, [Jennifer.Ollikainen@elca.org](mailto:Jennifer.Ollikainen@elca.org).

These are resources in process and subject to review and improvement. As you use these resources, please contact the ELCA worship staff to report about how it went, what can be improved in the module, and what additional topics should be developed. We also love to hear about the diverse stories of worship renewal throughout the church that can be shared with others to spark more renewal throughout the church.

## **Presentation Outline**

Introduction

What is Mission?

What is Worship?

Worship and mission related and intertwined

Implications of an approach to worship as mission

- Worship is biblical.

- Sacraments enact God's purpose in Christ for the world.

- Worship is not just about me.

- Worship is responsible and responsive to the world.

Conclusion

## GETTING STARTED

1. Begin with worship, such as:
  - Song, Bible reading and prayer
  - Responsive Prayer (ELW page 328) [perhaps with scripture and a song added]
  - Morning or Evening Prayer

Be contextual and show flexibility and freedom with forms. For example, begin with the “Pattern” pages for daily prayer beginning on page 295 of the assembly edition of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* for the basic patterns of daily prayer.

You may also use *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* as a resource to find an appropriate reading for the day in the daily lectionary (begins on page 1121), the lectionary prayer for the week, and a song that utilizes biblical material. Keep in mind that the daily lectionary is in relationship with the Sunday Revised Common Lectionary readings. Feel free to choose a text from the appropriate week rather than being strict about the particular day. Be sure to check the Church Year calendar and propers for festivals and commemorations for the day!

2. Continue with introductions & logistics for the day, including:
  - Introduction of leaders and organizers
  - Thank local hosts
  - Information about registration
  - Restrooms
  - Meal or break information
3. In a way that is mindful of the time you have to spend with the group, get to know who is present: pastors, musicians, lay, worship committees, others. . .

# *Worship and Mission*

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## *Presentation Text*

### **Introduction**

Worship is part of the unfolding purpose of God for the whole creation.  
Let that sink in.

Worship is part of the unfolding purpose of God for the whole creation.

Placing worship in the context of God's action and God's purpose  
leads us in the church to take seriously the gathering each week.

Worship – that assembly drawn together by God around word and sacrament –  
gathered in prayer and song and praise of the gift of salvation.

Is part of God's intention, God's purpose –  
God's action brings us together so that we may experience  
God's means of grace as the gathered body of Christ.

For the whole creation –  
as a public witness  
seen by the world, enfolding the world, reaching past those immediately gathered.

Today we are going to explore how worship and God's mission are intimately  
intertwined.

We will talk more about what God's mission is.

We will talk more about what Christian worship is.

And we will talk about how worship and mission shape each other  
in terms of our actual worship practice in the congregation.

We will explore

- how an intentional approach to worship through mission  
shapes what we do in worship and how we do it.

- how this mission intentionality in worship challenges current practice

- and how we might be refreshed by worship renewal that takes seriously this  
relationship between worship and mission.

## What is the definition of Mission?

Mission comes from Latin, meaning “to send.”

When we talk about mission in the Christian church –  
we talk about it in various ways.

Mostly it has to do with what God is up to in the world –  
“mission” has the sense of movement  
God’s continual going into the world.

The Renewing Worship curriculum *With the Whole Church* (2005 –see resource list)  
defines mission as we just spoke about:

“The unfolding purpose of God for the whole creation.”

In this definition, we hear the movement as unfolding and moving forward  
and we know the object of that movement: the whole creation.

But this definition doesn’t describe the content of that purpose or its direction.  
What does that “unfolding purpose of God” look like?

We look to the Bible to paint a picture:

When Jesus begins his ministry, he proclaimed that the kingdom of God was here.

“...Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The  
time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the  
good news.” (Mark 1:14)

In Luke, we hear more about what that means as Jesus reads in the synagogue:

“[Jesus] unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news  
to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of  
sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s  
favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of  
all were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has  
been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:17b-21)

In his letter to the Romans, Paul proclaims Christ's part in God's unfolding purpose for us:

“But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’ they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.” (Romans 3:21-25a)

In the second letter to the Corinthians, our new way of life in God's unfolding purpose revealed to us in Christ is described:

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ...” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20a)

Christ entrusts us with the ministry of God's unfolding purpose  
and we pray continually to live into that call:

“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.”

It is a petition that calls for God's action in the world

God's unfolding purpose to be realized around us

meeting our brokenness, violence, hatred, sickness and death with life.

About this petition of the Lord's Prayer,

Luther explains in the Small Catechism:

“In fact, God's [kingdom/good and gracious will] comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come to us.”

So our prayer is not making God's mission happen –  
but that we are a part of that mission  
that unfolding purpose for the whole creation  
of the kingdom of heaven coming on earth.

So we know God's mission as God's action throughout history  
through the creation of the world, saving Israel from slavery  
through the stories and songs of judges, kings, and prophets  
through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ  
through the forming of the church -- through our lives today.



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***Reflection/Discussion: Gather descriptive language about mission***

*Break up the large group into smaller discussion groups. Have them create a list of descriptive language about God's ongoing mission for the sake of the world.*

What does the unfolding purpose of God for the whole creation actually look like? From your own experience as a child of God, what marks of God's unfolding purpose have you seen? Where have you noticed life from death, freedom from bondage, hope from despair, etc.?

For me - in my life of faith?

For us - in the congregation?

Beyond us - in our community?

Beyond the community - in the world?

Each group should make a list of real, tangible examples from the experience of the group. This list should be broad.

*After a time of discussion, bring the large group back together and have each group share some about their discussion. Collect a list of the marks of God's mission for the world on a board, newsprint, or other visual means. This will be a list to which you will refer back to later as you reflect about how worship is intertwined with these things.*

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[In the discussion that follows the reporting, you may want to collect some common themes that may come up. For example:

- The "Mission field" is the whole creation which pushes us outside of our zones of familiarity.
- God's perspective is broader than our human perspective. Therefore, we may not always understand God's mission as it unfolds around us.
- Participation in God's mission takes humility and confession of our sin. Human beings are more apt to like to be the center of their world.
- Our participation in God's mission is by God's grace and invitation – not our own will.]

## What is worship?

Now we turn to worship.

As Lutherans, we define worship

as primarily God's action in which God calls and empowers us to participate.

Worship is the assembly of believers

gathered by the Holy Spirit as the body of Christ

around the God's gifts of the means of grace:

the Word proclaimed and the sacraments.

The Augsburg Confession defines the church itself in terms of worship.

*[The Augsburg Confession was written as a statement of faith by the Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The ELCA's constitution "accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel." See <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Statements-of-Belief/ELCA-Confession-of-Faith.aspx>]*

Under the heading, "The church,"

The seventh article of the Augsburg Confession says:

"It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel."

So the church is defined by worship

and worship is defined by God's action in and amongst the gathering of believers.

God gathers the assembly, opening word and sharing meal, sending out.

In the pattern of the Holy Communion service in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, worship is described by the action of God:

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song.

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

Because of God's action in worship – God whose view is larger than our own – worship in one time and place is never an isolated event.

God's action reaches beyond the time of worship.

Craig Satterlee (preaching professor at Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago) uses an image based on early church writings:

Worship is a mighty river flowing through history into future  
connecting the church's worship  
as a single, continuing story of God's saving activity in Jesus Christ  
flowing through the history of Israel, Jesus Christ,  
the early church, all of Scripture and our lives today.  
The river moves through the world as we know it  
– not separated from it but nurturing everything around it.

Our lives as Christians and the work of the church  
flow through word and sacrament worship.

Worship is where we learn the language of faith from the Bible  
where we tangibly encounter the presence of Christ  
in word, water, bread, and wine.

Worship is where we are transformed by grace to be Christ's body in the world  
it is a time when connected to grace, we are connected to the action of that grace.

Worship is where we experience the gift  
of being a part of the body of Christ – the community.

And where, trusting in God's promise, we plead for the brokenness of creation.  
From worship, we are sent to be the body of Christ for the sake of the world.

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***Reflection/Discussion: Your experience of Worship***

*Break into small groups to reflect about the above description of worship. It may help to have the above paragraph printed on a handout or otherwise visually available.*

How does this description of worship challenge or support your experience of worship in your congregation? Which parts of the description resonate deeply? Which parts of the description feel foreign to your experience?

*After a time of small group discussion, gather the large group back together and invite participants to share their reflections as they are comfortable.*

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## How are Worship and Mission related and intertwined?

Christian worship once closed with the Latin phrase: *Ite missa est* (It is sent.)  
This is why Christians called worship “mass” – as a shortened version of the phrase.

*Missa* in the sending sentence in worship  
is the same Latin root as *missio* from which we get our word, “mission.”  
In the church’s language, at one time,  
mission and worship were so intertwined as to be called the same thing.

Even as we have talked today,  
I think you can hear that worship and mission are not easily separated.  
In fact, God’s mission in worship cannot be separated  
from the purpose of God for the whole creation.

The ELCA statement on the practice of word and sacrament,  
The Use of the Means of Grace, says this:

### Principle 51

“In every celebration of the means of grace, God acts to show forth both the need of the world and the truth of the Gospel. In every gathering of Christians around the proclaimed Word and the holy sacraments, God acts to empower the Church for mission. Jesus Christ, who is God’s living bread come down from heaven, has given his flesh to be the life of the world. This very flesh, given for the life of all, is encountered in the Word and sacrament.

*(If you have time, read this principle a few times and have participants call out what is striking to them about this principle. What words or phrases leap out? Why?)*

With our language, statements and definitions,  
we know that worship and mission are intertwined.

So then, why do we need to talk about it?

What is at stake?

What are the issues that bring us to this conversation at this time in the church?

Simply put – what is at stake is the disconnection between worship and mission.

Worship that is isolated from mission

becomes irrelevant and seemingly disconnected from the needs of the world  
and stops flowing into and out of our daily lives.

Mission disconnected from the means of grace soon loses focus.

Anybody can do good things in this world –

but what is behind our ministry as baptized children of God?

Without the connection to the transforming presence of Christ that we know in worship  
mission leads to works for the sake of ourselves

(a sure road to burnout!)

rather than as a grateful response to the grace of God

a never-ending source of joy.

In the introductory essay in a book edited by Thomas Schattauer

(professor of worship at Wartburg Seminary)

called *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission*,

the church's relationship between worship and mission are described in three ways:

Inside AND Out; Outside In; and Inside Out.

Let's talk more about each of these three approaches the church has had  
to the interplay between worship and mission.

These three descriptions are not as distinct as we will make them out to be today.

As we take each, in turn,

we will stretch them to the extreme to better see what is at stake – the dangers.

In truth,

all of our worship is all three: Inside AND Out, Outside In, and Inside Out.

### **“Inside and Out”**

The first description is “Inside AND Out.”

In this approach, churches tend to separate worship and mission.

Mission is mostly seen as what happens outside of worship

in the activities of the congregation or individuals.

Worship is what happens on Sunday morning empowering the members of the assembly  
to participate in God's mission outside of the worship space.

There is a clear distinction between

what is inside the church -- worship

and what is outside – mission.

With an “inside AND out” model taken to the extreme,

worship tends toward being exclusive,

for insiders who know the practice and insider language.

There is a high threshold of belonging in worship.

And the activities of the church are not connected with what happens in worship.

Imagine this kind of separation.  
Have you experienced it?

*[Use this story or another from your own experience.]*

I once attended a church for a while that had gotten into a lot of habits  
with worship and outreach ministries.

Announcements were about the community of the church – who is sick, for example -  
And even though members of the community participated in outreach ministries  
like volunteering at a local homeless ministry,  
there was never any mention of these activities of the church in worship:  
not in the prayers nor the announcements nor the sending rituals.

It was like these ministry activities were a secret!

It's not that their worship practice was wrong.

In fact, their worship was literally, “by the book” in this congregation.

Rather, it simply seemed disconnected.

The very life and joy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ seemed flat and lifeless.

What is at stake here is the separation  
of the means of grace in worship  
from our participation in God's unfolding purpose for the sake of the world.

If you take “Inside and Out” to the extreme, what is the danger?

Describe how this trajectory might look (in the extreme!) In worship? In mission activities?

*Have participants call out their thoughts. Be prepared to offer a few examples if participants are reticent to call out their thoughts.*

*Extreme trajectory examples:*

- *worship becomes rote or boring,*
- *worship is seen as a time of getting away from the world,*
- *worship may be described as going through the motions,*
- *worship assumes that everyone knows what is happening and how to use the “book,”*
- *worship becomes all about me/us,*
- *mission activities die,*
- *leaders become burnt-out (and no one is energized to help),*
- *people who look/act/speak differently may feel unwelcome,*
- *mission activities look like a hand-out rather than building relationships,*
- *it becomes difficult to see Christ in the one who is “other.”*

## “Outside In”

The second way of thinking about worship and mission can be described as “Outside In.”  
In this approach, mission overcomes worship.

Worship becomes a tool of mission in the congregation.

Worship is radically inclusive.

“No experience necessary” and no assumptions are made

(except maybe that visitors have no church history.)

Symbols may be limited because they are perceived as off-putting.

Plain speech and cultural expressions of music prevail.

Sacrament and ritual may be decreased.

Worship may look a lot like other secular entertainment venues.

Worship may become a platform for specific causes and world issues.

This moves toward a different kind of disconnect

wherein worship is overshadowed by mission.

Can you imagine this?

*[Use this story of one of your own.]*

I attended a church once that began a “seeker” worship service.

We had a fabulous praise band that could play just about anything.

The pastors wore street clothes – and led the sermon as a discussion from a bar stool.

Kids danced.

People brought their coffee cups.

It was informal, relaxed and comfortable.

Everyone sat down except the time of greeting each other at the beginning of service.

Over time, attendance dropped and new comers stayed only a few weeks before disappearing.

Now, again – it isn’t that what happened in worship was wrong.

But there are dangers to this approach

wherein worship is a primary tool for mission.

Have you experience this?

When “Outside In” is taken to the extreme, what are the dangers?

*Again, invite participants to call out descriptive answers. Be prepared to offer a few examples to begin. For example:*

- *worship gimmicks and themes overtake the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,*
- *the focus turns to the leaders and ourselves rather than to God’s action*

- *entertainment orientated.*
- *Outsiders are so comfortable that they miss what is unique about Christians,*
- *Loss of mystery in ritual that shapes our experience of the divine*
- *loss of connection with the church beyond the congregation in common texts and practice.*
- *may become a shallow expression of the gospel that does not invite people deeper into faith*

## **“Inside Out”**

And so we come to the third approach.

The approach that essentially, we’ve been leading to all of this time:

“Inside Out” – worship **is** the mission of God.

Worship and Mission are both inside – and both outside.

Worship is a place of encounter with the means of grace  
that awakens, strengthens and enlivens faith.

And mission flows through worship.

We both witness God’s grace and participate in it.

This third way recognizes that worship is

part of God’s unfolding purpose for the world in which we participate.

Worship both enacts and signifies this mission:

God gathers, God fills us with word and sacrament, God sends.

And this “Inside Out” worship has permeable walls:

worship is public – for “insiders” and “outsiders”;

worship is not just about me

– but reaches out to the whole world as the world reaches in;

worship is part of something beyond this time and place

it is part of the coming reign of God;

worship moves us and stirs us into an active response

to grace in service and witness;

worship has no dividing walls

between what is outside the place of worship and what is inside.

So what does this look like in our congregations and our places of worship?

What are the implications of a growing “Inside Out” approach to worship?



When we spoke about mission,  
we gathered a list of descriptors about what the mission of God looks like  
in our lives, in our communities, in our congregations and in the world.

*Refer to the list made in the first discussion time.*

Now that we have talked about the intersection between worship and mission,  
and as we prepare to talk more specifically about our worship practices,  
Let's imagine how this list is reflected (or may be reflected) in our worship practice.

*Encourage a few minutes of conversation in the large group about how the items on the descriptive list of God's unfolding purpose do – or do not – appear through our worship practices and experiences.*

After the break, we will look at 5 specific areas of worship practice that are strongly shaped by the relationship between worship and mission.  
(Many of which we have already touched upon. As you introduce these 5 areas, make brief connections to what has been said by the group if you can.)

- Worship is biblical.
- Sacraments enact God's purpose in Christ for the world.
- Worship is not just about me – it points beyond the self and this community.
- Participation by the whole assembly – all of Christ's body – is honored and valued.
- Worship is regularly renewed in order to be responsible and responsive to the world that the church is called to serve.

And as we move toward our discussion of these areas,  
we must recognize that they may create some challenges.

First,  
we need to examine worship through the lens of our common understanding  
of God's action rather than secondary descriptors of worship:

for example, level of formality, music style, paper vs. projection.

Many of these secondary things depend on the context of the congregation.

God's mission of salvation and life for the whole creation is first.

How we participate in that through our worship practice is important – but secondary.

Second,

we need to realize that the world and our culture is always changing necessitating on-going worship renewal.

We are never done!

We will never find the perfect worship answer for all time!

And in our current North-American culture,

is one with a lot of challenges for the gospel.

Cultural ideals like individualism, consumerism, and avoidance of deep relationships create challenges to those who shape worship that proclaims something greater.

Third,

we need to realize that worship is a primary location of faith formation.

Therefore, it should not be surprising that changes in established worship practice are often met with resistance and conflict.

Even more reason to move forward with intentionality and careful reflection so that worship renewal is paired with education and with pastoral sensitivity.

As we said earlier,

a lot is at stake!

Worship is part of the unfolding purpose of God for the whole creation.

*This is a good time for a BREAK. You may choose to sing a hymn as a way to end this section. Find appropriate hymns under the index headings of Evangelism, Witness, or Vocation.*

## ***Worship is Mission: Implications for Worship Practice***

Now we will move into actual worship practice.

What are the implications of a growing “Inside Out” approach to worship?

Before the break, we named these 5 implications.

There may be more – but this is where we will begin.

- Worship is biblical.
- Sacraments enact God’s purpose in Christ for the world.
- Worship is not just about me – it points beyond the self and this community.
- Participation by the whole assembly – all of Christ’s body – is honored and valued.
- Worship is regularly renewed in order to be responsible and responsive to the world that the church is called to serve.

We will examine each of these five points in turn.

### **Worship is Biblical**

When talking about worship or mission – we cannot help but speak of the Bible.

Worship is a primary location where we learn the language of faith.

We hear the stories of God’s action through history.

We sing the images of the prophets and poets.

We see the symbols and art that surround us in places of worship.

Our faith is grounded and formed by the living Christ we encounter in the Bible.

In the ELCA’s Book of Faith initiative,

the church has set upon the goals to

- 1 - Learn together about Lutheran approaches to Scripture,
- 2 - Enter fully into a conversation which is deep and broad, reaching across all ages and the many cultures that inform who are as a people of God and...
- 3 - Experience more fully the power of the Word.

That third goal speaks directly to our worship life.

Worship is a primary location where we learn the language of faith.

In fact, most of the New Testament letters were written to be read publicly.

The canon of Scripture – the agreed-upon list of books in the Bible –  
was formed as a kind of “approved reading list” for worship.

But as we consider what it means to understand worship as the mission of God  
we recognize that we live in a culture  
where we cannot assume biblical literacy.

Not everyone knows what a “Prodigal” is or the story from which the word came.  
Many have never met our Biblical ancestors:

Abraham and Sarah,  
Ruth and Naomi,  
Saul, David and Solomon,  
and so many more!

Many have no idea about Biblical symbols:

a serpent on a staff (from Moses in the desert),  
a protective mother hen (from the gospel of Luke),  
a tree of life (Revelation),...

*(ask the group for other Biblical images)*

This reality causes some to suggest that the amount of Scripture be diminished –  
or to limit the scriptural images and metaphors that can be used.

Yet, somehow that suggests that the Bible is inaccessible.

Rather, we should be more intentional about Scripture  
inviting those new to the faith into the living Word of God  
encountered in story and image, in the Good News!

But what does that mean for our worshiping assembly?

First, it means not diminishing the amount of Scripture proclaimed.

The Revised Common Lectionary, created and shared between many denominations  
suggests a rich feast of readings for every Sunday:

Old Testament, psalm response, New Testament, and Gospel.

The Revised Common Lectionary presents lots of scripture –  
set side by side with sung response and preaching  
time to reflect and encounter the living Word.

Using this kind of rich lectionary invites us deeper into the texts  
noticing the trajectory of God’s action through history to our own lives.

Scripture should be proclaimed clearly.  
Readers should be trained for their service to the assembly  
so that the emphasis is clearly placed on the Word.

And preaching is biblical  
connecting the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ  
to our very real needs and hopes.  
Preaching presents an encounter with God's living word for our lives.  
Preaching offers a time when we make explicit connections  
between God's unfolding purpose for the world  
and what it has to do with me, this community and the world.

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***Reflection/Discussion***

*Break into small groups to discuss:*

Describe the many ways the Bible shapes the worshiping assembly in your congregation. Does your congregation assume that most who enter worship are familiar with the biblical images and stories that define the worship space? (for example: windows, art, wall-hangings, paraments, etc.) In what ways can a congregation invite those new to the faith (and long-time members, too!) to learn more about how worship is shaped by Scripture?

*After a short time of discussion, gather back into the large group and encourage participants to share their ideas.*

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## Sacraments enact God's purpose in Christ for the world

For many of us, it is easy to think about the sacraments – baptism and holy communion –  
as solely a personal thing.

In baptism, *I* am named a child of God.

In communion, *I* receive the forgiveness of sins and the sustenance for my faith journey.

These things are true –  
but not the whole story.

Baptism marks us as children of God – public witnesses to the grace of God.

Baptism in worship proclaims the common dignity and equality of all

-- certainly part of God's unfolding purpose for creation!

And baptism is a sign of the public life of the baptized  
as they live in the justice and peace of God.

Baptism isn't a "one-time-and-done" event!

Baptism begins our life of Christian vocation

that enlists us in the work of God's unfolding purpose for the whole creation.

Yes, baptism is about the grace of God for me

– and about how my life reflects the grace of God to others.

Baptism takes place in the community of faith

as a public witness to God's inclusivity

and as a sign to the community.

It is now clear in our rite in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* that the community

has a responsibility for the care and nurture of the baptized.

The assembly is now asked,

“People of God, do you promise to support *names*

and pray for them in their new life in Christ?”

The assembly responds, “We do.”

The whole worshipping assembly then has a publicly spoken responsibility

to care for others who are growing in faith.

Baptism brings us into a community of care

Joined together – as the baptismal rite says –

“in giving thanks and praise to God

and bearing God's creative and redeeming word to all the world.”

Baptism is a profoundly public event.  
And when we see baptism as part of God's unfolding purpose in today's world  
we also must expect adult converts in this day and age.  
The church can no longer assume that infant baptism will be the norm.  
We must learn to expect adult converts –  
which means also thinking about how the community  
shapes and supports those new to the faith.

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***Reflection/Discussion:***

*Break into small groups to discuss:*

In what ways can baptism and baptismal vocation in daily life be connected in worship?  
Think creatively: When? How often? Who? Milestones? All-inclusive or vocation  
specific?  
(ex. Honoring the vocation of students at the beginning of the school year, medical  
professionals at on St. Luke day in October, interplay with the font at different times,  
connection to symbols, All Saints Sunday/funeral rituals, etc.)

How does a congregation reveal the wideness of God's mission and the expectation of  
adults curious about the faith, brought by the Holy Spirit, and desiring baptism?

*After a short time of discussion, gather back into the large group and encourage  
participants to share their ideas. On the "Resources" handout, there is a list of ELW  
rites and resources that provide a variety of ways for the assembly to lift up baptism and  
baptismal vocation in worship.*

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Holy Communion is a gift to every believer  
a tangible taste of the feast to come.  
But that feast is not a table for one!  
Holy Communion is about the community – and beyond.  
We are all fed at the same table with the same food:  
the young, the old,  
the rich, the poor  
the powerful and the marginalized.

As we take in the grace of God in Christ,  
Christ takes on our brokenness.

As we receive this meal in the body of Christ  
we share both the grace of God  
and the burdens of the world

– our brothers and sisters around this particular table and beyond.

Holy Communion reveals God’s desire for all creation  
to have food, shelter, clothing and community.

In worship, we are quickly sent from the table into the world.

Enlivened and sustained by the meal,  
we are free to respond to the hurt and hungry world in hopeful service.

Our sacrament of Holy Communion is a social image – communion and community.  
a profound sign of the unfolding purpose of God for the world  
as the table grows bigger, more diverse, and more abundant.

Holy Communion is regularly celebrated as a gift.

It is a special meal - but it is not reserved only for special occasions!

As we gather the stuff for the meal,  
an offering is collected connecting the meal to the needs of the world.

Customs may vary about the meal from congregation to congregation,  
particularly about the age and circumstances for admission to the meal.

*The Use of the Means of Grace*

simply states that “Holy Communion is the meal of the baptized.” (Principle 37).

That is, Holy Communion and Holy Baptism

are two parts of the same action of God’s grace.

*Try not to get stuck in the conversation of an open table vs. restricted access to the meal. This is an area of much discussion in some parts of the church, particularly whether those who are not baptized are welcome. The Use of the Means of Grace (Principle 37 and Application 37G) offers some discussion about the discussion to which you can refer.*



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## ***Reflection/Discussion***

*Break into small groups to discuss:*

When Holy Communion is seen from the lens of God's unfolding purpose for the sake of the whole creation, how are you or your congregation's worship practice challenged? In what ways might worship practice reflect around Holy Communion reflect the intent of the meal for the whole world?

*After a short time of discussion, gather back into the large group and encourage participants to share their ideas.*

---

### **Worship is not just about me, it points beyond me and this congregation.**

In a culture that is profoundly individualistic,

it is the church's challenge

to proclaim that God's unfolding purpose is about the body of Christ

many members living together, as one.

When we see worship from the lens of the missional community

we become less self-centered and more centered on the community

those who are in the worshiping assembly

and, indeed, the whole world.

It is about me – but it's not all about me!

Therefore, discussions about worship turn away from the trap of "what I like"

and toward a conversation about the expression of the whole community.

Even more, the congregation cannot be isolated

as if it is the only Christian church in the world.

Rather, this congregation is connected to the other congregations down the street

to the broader church, throughout the world.

The missional movement of worship is outward from self and congregation.

I encounter the grace of God in the assembly of God's people

And God leads us to participate to bringing that grace to the world and its brokenness.

God's grace shown to each of us in the assembly

flows through us to the world in need.

When worship and mission are intertwined,  
the world and all its need is fully present in worship  
and God is front and center as the one who transforms and brings life.

Worship is shaped and formed recognizing that God is the primary actor  
and the whole community (including the person I don't like)  
participates in God's action.

We are called to a difficult road of community – a community not of everyone like us –  
but a richly diverse community.

Young and old, rich and poor, those who speak different languages --  
All are welcomed by God.

What does this look like in worship words and actions?

Confession includes confession on behalf of the world, not just my personal sin.

Prayers include the needs of the whole world and personal concerns.

The prayer of thanksgiving at the table includes the sweep of God's saving activity  
from creation through to the consummation of all things.

We commune frequently for our own sake and for the sake of the world.

The time of sending at the end of service connects to whole mission of the church.

The church's ministries are present in worship.

Collections are gathered for those in need.

The sacrament is sent to members of the community  
who can't be physically present.

People and collections are blessed and sent out from worship to mission.

Announcements are made that make the connection between worship and ministry.

Worship is planned not by one dominant group –  
but by representatives that reflect the diversity of the community.

Worship in one congregation is connected to the larger body of Christ  
through common prayers, actions, biblical readings and creeds.

The larger body of Christ is present in the congregation  
through the use of music from other cultures,  
prayer for other communities, and more.

This is just the beginning.

In your small groups, let's think further about how Inside Out worship  
is not just about the individual  
but about the community within and outside the congregation.

---

***Reflection/Discussion:***

*Break into small groups to discuss the following questions. You may choose to prepare handouts that include these questions for each group.*

How many ways does worship in your assembly point out of the assembly in formal and informal action? (for example: bringing food pantry donations forward to the altar, sending out a work-camp group from worship, etc.)

How do you (or anyone in the assembly) know that you are a necessary part of the assembly in practice? (for example: singing together, greeting one another, spoken responses, receiving the meal, etc.)

*After the groups have had a chance to discuss these two questions, bring them back together in the large group and invite people to share their ideas.*

---

## **Participation**

When we approach worship with an “Inside Out” view,  
we are challenged to see how the full body of Christ  
– inside and outside the church  
are valued and honored.

This leads our worship practice to move toward greater participation of the community  
and recognition of the presence of Christ in every one.

The presiding minister, as a representative of the greater church,  
speaks on behalf of the church of Christ.

Often the prayers spoken by the presiding minister  
are the same prayers prayed by other congregations that same Sunday:  
for example, the prayer of the day and the prayer of thanksgiving at the table.

A lay assisting minister speaks on behalf of the assembly,  
giving voice to the prayers of the community, in particular.

A reader of the Bible comes from the assembly  
placing the word of God in the voice of many within the community over time.

Other worship assistants serve the community  
with care for the worship space and preparations for the community's worship.

The members of the assembly all have a role.

Everyone is necessary for worship

in recognition that God called the community together.

Everyone is invited to give voice to the proclamation of the good news

with words spoken together,

songs sung in praise together with the community,

assent to the prayers in the "Amen,"

responses to prayers,

gestures of Christ's peace offered to others,

and more!

But sometimes it can be a challenge to really see  
that everyone has a role in the worshipping community.

Children are seen as those who can teach the community something  
about spontaneity and joy rather than being seen as a distraction.

Newcomers - even those who don't look like or talk like the community –  
are welcomed as the presence of Christ – not as strangers.

You see, when worship is the mission of God,  
the world and the church are not two separate places.

They are intimately intertwined.

When someone new is drawn toward the worshipping assembly  
it is not just to receive but also to give.

When we understand that God in Christ by the Holy Spirit  
is living and active in the world as well as the church,  
those who take part in the community of Christ  
begin on a fresh journey together.

God is living and active through the church – yes!

And that church interacts with God who is already in the world.

What does this mean?

The church shifts focus away from making “members” just like us –  
to journeying together as disciples  
all with more to learn  
all with gifts to share  
all to reflect the light of Christ.

And because we are human and sinfully self-centered,  
it takes intentionality to be together on our shared journey.  
The community cares for each other  
– anticipating needs and being intentionally inclusive.  
That is, it is not the assigned task of some – but the community call to everyone.

And the ministry of each and every baptized Christian flows through worship.  
Strengthened by encountering the presence of God in worship  
we are all sent out to be the body of Christ in the world.

An “Inside Out” approach to worship suggest that  
at different times, in different seasons,  
various ministries of the congregation  
– and the vocations of the baptized outside the ministries of the congregation –  
may be prayed for and blessed.

Again, announcements made connect the ministry of the church  
as the mission of God flows out of worship.

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### ***Reflection/Discussion***

*Break into small groups to discuss:*

How many ways does the whole community, gathered by the Holy Spirit, participate in worship in your congregation? How is this participation honored and noticed? Where might you grow?

*After a short time of discussion, gather back into the large group and encourage participants to share their ideas.*

---

## **Worship is responsive and responsible to the world**

Worship is Responsible and Responsive to the world that the church is called to serve.

Worship is part of the unfolding purpose of God for the sake of the whole world. . .  
an ever changing world.

Culture changes:

communication styles change,  
prevailing music genres change,  
attitudes and values shift.

Some of these changes are in sync with the gospel.

For example, a radical sense of open accessibility to things  
shaped, in part, by the internet,  
might appeal to a Christian sense of accessibility to the grace of God by all.

But other changes are a challenge to the gospel:

For example,

a culture of consumerism leads radical imbalances of power based on resources  
challenges the gospel sense that a person's worth  
is determined by means of God's love not human accomplishment.

Worship as mission is both timely and timeless.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ does not change  
but the world into which it lives and is proclaimed does change.

So how do we manage this relationship between worship and the world  
in ways that are both responsive to the world  
and responsible

in the proclamation of the word and administration of the sacrament?

The Lutheran World Federation took up this question in the 1990's.

Their work culminated in a document called,

“The Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture”  
completed in 1996 at the meeting in Nairobi, Kenya.

*This statement is available for download on-line via the link on the resource list.*

It suggests that worship relates to culture in four ways:

Worship is: Trans-cultural, Contextual, Countercultural, and Cross cultural.

These four categories offer a helpful framework for examining our worship.

Let's briefly examine each of them.

### **Worship is trans-cultural.**

That is, there are elements of worship that are shared by Christian communities

across time and space.

The assembly is gathered, hears the Word of God, shares a meal and is sent in mission.  
The Bible is read.

There is prayer, particularly the Lord's prayer.

Although our practices around these things differ from place to place,  
they are signs of the unity of the Gospel.

If these things were not there –

You would be at a different event than Christian worship.

We all have different dividing lines between what is deemed essential and what is not.

*Ask, what other things may be trans-cultural elements of worship? Challenge participants who will reveal biases toward what must be included in worship (i.e. Holy Communion, Holy Baptism, singing (but not the type of song), confession and forgiveness as a necessity before Holy Communion, etc.)*

### **Worship is also contextual.**

That is, God is encountered in all the cultures of the world.

And those cultures are used to proclaim the Gospel in a particular time and place.

Think of it this way,

if you were planning worship in a community in which French was the primary language,

in what language would the Bible be read? (*Hopefully, people will say French!*)

Some things in worship are cultural elements re-defined in terms of the Gospel.

For example, the white robe received after baptism

has its roots in the initiation rites of ancient mystery religions.

Only the church gave the action new meaning

as putting on the light of Christ.

Other things in worship are shaped by culture.

For example,

the way people pass the peace of Christ in worship

depends on the cultural ways of greeting one another outside of worship.

If the culture is modest about touching preferring a bow or a nod,

then passing the peace may be very similar.  
Think of how distracting it would be from the intent of the gesture  
if you went for a full-on hug, ignoring the restraint of the culture!

Contextualization is a balancing act  
that keeps the essential parts of worship intact  
while making them recognizable and meaningful in a particular time and place.  
If you want to explore this more,  
the worship office has prepared a module titled, “Freedom and Flexibility”  
that explores this tension in great depth.

For now, we simply recognize  
that this is an important place for renewal in the congregation  
especially in our 20 year old denomination and our years-old congregations.  
Maintaining the renewal of worship is an on-going task that requires  
much intentionality and perseverance.

As we discussed before,  
worship is a primary location of faith formation.  
We must honor the practice that has formed the generations older than us  
while also renewing according to the changing world.  
Changes in worship practice – even good contextualization –  
can create conflict and unintended feelings of judgment.  
Maintaining the tension for the sake of the whole community is a challenge.

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***Reflection/Discussion***

*Break into small groups to discuss:*

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Imagine that your discernment for worship renewal suggests a change in a congregation's established worship practice. Say, for example, a congregation has, for years, sung "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" in its ritual of lighting the Advent wreath. Your discernment about the context of ministry suggests changing the practice, singing a more contemporary song of anticipation and hope. How would you go about introducing this change? Why? How would you communicate the core meaning behind the worship practice rather than the focus on the song? How would you continue to listen to the community and love them through this point of renewal?

*After a short time of discussion, gather back into the large group and encourage participants to share their ideas. There are no right answers in this discussion time. Rather, the point is to examine a pastoral approach in worship renewal.*

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### **Worship is also counter-cultural.**

There are some things in culture that are sinful, dehumanizing and contradictory to the values of the Gospel.

Name some...*(allow participants to come up with things from their experience. For example, consumerism was already mentioned, individualism, sexual exploitation, class systems, isolation of cultural groups, etc.)*

We can be both resistant to these things in our worship practice. And we can even intentionally counter-act them.

For example,

the profoundly inclusive image of the body of Christ that can say to no other member that it is not important, challenges the worshiping community to be inclusive in ways that are not regularly practiced in the rest of culture.

You can't "un-friend" a fellow member of the body of Christ!

Another counter-cultural practice may be as simple as time for silent meditation.

In our noisy and fast-paced culture,

most of us spend very little time in silence or not multi-tasking.

Yet, it is a discipline that allows us to listen for God

as Samuel did – in the voice of sheer silence.

### **Finally, worship is cross-cultural.**

That is, Jesus came to be the savior of all people.

And in the whole Christian church, Christ is manifest in many different ways culturally and denominationally.

The music and art for use in worship in different cultures is gift to us.  
The prayers from other Christian denomination support our prayer.  
The spiritual expressions of the young can reveal something new to the very old.

The cross-cultural nature of worship helps us to see the gospel in a broader way.  
It invites us to love people different from ourselves.

Yet care should be taken that these cross-cultural expressions of worship  
are understood and respected  
– not plundered for our own selfish use or used as entertainment.

Whenever possible, these cross-cultural expressions  
are based in relationship, mutual respect,  
and accompaniment in the journey of a shared faith.

The ELCA's commitment to this cross-cultural aspect of worship  
is clear in our newest worship resource, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.  
ELW includes a large portion of music from all over the world  
and prayers from a variety of Christian denominations.

## Conclusion

Worship is the mission of God.

It is part of the unfolding purpose of God for the sake of the whole world.

Understanding worship as the mission of God

has implications for our worship practice in every congregation.

I hope that this time today helps you and your congregation

to be more intentional about the relationship between worship and mission.

I hope that you have some ideas about how worship in your community

might be renewed and strengthened for the sake of the formation of faith.

I hope you will continue the conversation

and proceed pastorally and humbly,

keeping in mind that God is the primary actor in worship – and in our lives of faith.

God continues to work light and life into our broken lives.

And God continues to use us – our gifts, our congregations, our worship practices

to reveal grace, life and hope.

*At the end, allow time for discussion with the group if you have time and are comfortable leading it. You do not need to be able to answer any question that arises. Rather, questions may be directed to the whole group.*

*Close with prayer and song.*

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# *Worship is Mission*

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## *Note Taking Outline*

What is Mission?

What is Worship?

Worship and mission related and intertwined

“Inside AND Out”

“Outside In”

“Inside Out”

Implications of an approach to worship as mission

Worship is biblical.

Sacraments enact God’s purpose in Christ for the world.

Holy Baptism

Holy Communion

Worship is not just about me

Worship is responsible and responsive to the world

Trans-Cultural

Contextual

Counter-Cultural

Cross-Cultural

# *Worship and Mission*

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## *Resources*

### **ELCA Worship Resources**

*The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament*, adopted for practice and guidance by the Fifth Biennial Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, August 19, 1997. Download at <http://www.elca.org/worship/Resources/UMG/english.html>

Principles for Worship (Renewing Worship Volume 2) (Augsburg Fortress, 2002) purchase for \$15 at <http://www.augsburgfortress.org/> or free download at [http://www.elca.org/worship/renewing\\_worship/principles\\_for\\_worship/index.html](http://www.elca.org/worship/renewing_worship/principles_for_worship/index.html).

*With the Whole Church* A seven-session study guide that invites people into conversation and study about worship, to think and to share with one another, growing together in our understanding of why worship matters and how worship draws us into God's own mission. The study guide is designed as a leader's book with reproducible participant pages within it. Any part of the study guide may be reproduced for local use. Download at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Learning-Center/With-the-Whole-Church.aspx>

*Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship: The Sunday Assembly* by Gordon Lathrop and Lorraine Brugh (Augsburg Fortress, 2008) \$35.00. Page 137-174 includes reflection on "the Word" in the Sunday Assembly.

*Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship: The Christian Life, Baptism and Life Passages* by Dennis Bushkofsky and Craig Satterlee (Augsburg Fortress, June 2008) \$35.00.

*Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Keeping Time, the Church's Years* by Gail Ramshaw and Mons Teig (Augsburg Fortress, August 15, 2008) \$35.00.

Book of Faith Initiative of the ELCA at [www.elca.org/bookoffaith/](http://www.elca.org/bookoffaith/)

### **Biblical Foundations for Worship**

*Central Things: Worship in Word and Sacrament* by Gordon Lathrop (Augsburg Fortress, 2005) \$9.99 at [www.augsburgfortress.org/](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/)

### **Ecumenical Worship Texts**

See the website of the English Language Liturgical Consultation at [www.englishtexts.org](http://www.englishtexts.org). Especially see the pdf document, "Praying Together" which outlines biblical translation and language issues of the ecumenical texts at <http://www.englishtexts.org/text.html>.