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BOOKLESS IN TORONTO

As you will note elsewhere on the [Lift Up Your Hearts](http://www.worship.ca) website < www.worship.ca >, the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) joined with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) in late July to sponsor a four-day worship conference under the title “Breaking Bread – Breaking Boundaries” (BBBB).

The tradition of mounting a national church-wide worship conference every two years in the Summer has been well-established in the ELCIC for almost two decades now. Venues for the conference have included Ottawa, Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Regina. This year it was held in Toronto, at Victoria College, affiliated as part of the University of Toronto. Delegates were housed in Victoria’s charming Oxford-style dormitories and ate in Victoria’s high-ceilinged neo-Gothic refectory. (“Hogwarts!” exclaimed more than one *Harry Potter* fan upon entering its soaring spaces.)

The conference itself was splendid: lovingly planned, brilliantly executed, with a generous mix of stirring keynote presentations, thought-provoking workshops, magnificent music and hymnody, and heart-lifting worship. The schedule included daily Eucharist in various styles and venues, outdoor Morning Prayer in Victoria’s lovely Quadrangle, candle-lit Evening Prayer. An exhibition of provocative liturgical fine art, a second exhibition of “unique and unusual liturgical accoutrements”, workshops and demonstrations of liturgical dance and drama, world music featuring pulse-pounding percussion: There was plenty here to satisfy the cravings of any liturgical junkie, and plenty too to turn a casual observer into a committed worship freak.



For more on BBBB, including more colour images of much of what I’m describing here, visit [Lift Up Your Hearts](http://www.worship.ca) (Section 3 / ELCIC National Worship Conferences / Breaking Bread).

But it’s Friday night’s service of Holy Communion that gives me my title this month, and I want to give you some notion of how it was planned and executed.

Friday night's Eucharist was to present worshippers with a daring experiment: a bookless service throughout. No books. Not for worshippers nor for worship leaders. The one exception was to be a Lectionary for the readings.

The venue for the service was the venerable and beautiful neo-Gothic Church of the Holy Trinity at Toronto's Eaton Centre. Several of us spent Friday afternoon re-arranging the space at Holy Trinity so as to provide a "collegiate style" setting, with worshippers facing each other across a wide central aisle, the altar on a magnificent oriental rug at the east end of the nave, at people's level, and ambo for reading and preaching at the west end. Holy Trinity's magnificent stone font was centred in the south transept as in a kind of baptistry. The evening was to begin there, with a Rite for the Renewal of Baptism.



And the Gospel, the entire ninth chapter of *John*, was to be dramatized. I was invited to offer a BBBB workshop on Thursday afternoon – "Drama in Worship" – and on Friday night its participants, in costume, were to mime the action of the text as it was read. See the photos in the BBBB pages.

I was also invited to serve the assembly as Presiding Minister – without a book! All prayers and liturgical responses were to be *ex corde*, although I took the precaution of composing the prayers of the Baptismal Renewal rite, the Intercessions, and the Great Thanksgiving, and committing them more or less to memory, in the days preceding BBBB. I include those prayers at the conclusion of this Essay.

Conference participants gathered just before the hour of worship in the lovely courtyard outside Holy Trinity next to the flower garden (and labyrinth!) at the Eaton Centre. In announcements there, I encouraged worshippers in two further experimental expressions: First, to applaud heartily at the announcement of the Gospel, and at its conclusion. The Gospel acclamations are intended after all to serve as a kind of ritual cheer to bracket its reading.



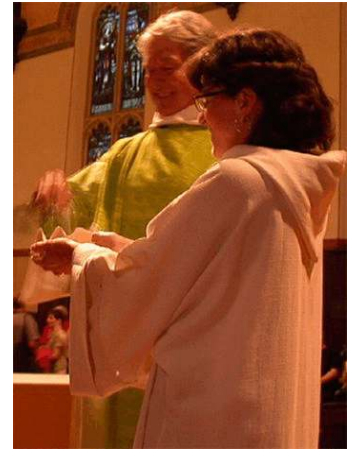
Second, I encouraged worshippers to join me at the Lord's Prayer in a grand corporate *orans*, lifting hands as well as hearts and voices to our God.

In a reverent reference to the retro, I was vested in the wild green floral print chasuble created for me by my wife in the 'Sixties. See photos. (Hey, the whole evening is meant as an experiment, right?)

At the appointed hour, the assembly processed into the church by the south transept door, and gathered at the font, singing a John Bell *ostinato* from the Iona Community, led by BBBB's superb song leader, John

Campbell. All of our corporate song this evening, and much of the singing during the rest of the conference, was led by John in this style, with four-part harmonies on simple *ostinatos*, from Iona or Taize, that lifted the heart! The singing was truly inspired and inspiring.

We renewed vows at the font, facing west for the Renunciation of Evil and the font in the east to confess the creed. And on another song we moved from transept into nave, passing by Assisting Minister with seashell of water and Presiding Minister with cedar twig, who sprinkled the people in remembrance of baptism.



Apostolic Greeting and Prayer of the Day followed, *ex corde*, and then the First Lesson, from Isaiah, was read, from the evening's only book, a splendid specially-designed Lectionary whose green cover featured a cross-and-leaf motif: "Ho! Come to the waters..." Yes, the people actually paid attention to the Reader. Not to a pew Bible or a paper leaflet or a PowerPoint projector screen – there weren't any. The assembly was actually honouring a real live human being: the Lector. (See [Essay 76](#) "The Tyranny of Texts".) The Psalm featured a Hal Hopson congregational refrain.

The Acclamation at the announcement of the Gospel was truly marvelous, a prolonged and unrestrained whoop of joy: applause, whistles, stompings of feet!

Our BBBB World Music workshop, led by Andrew Donaldson, provided a suitable mood of mystery and anticipation to the reading and enacting of the Gospel, with almost-inaudible ratchets, claves, and blocks, swelling to a modest crescendo with tambourines and drums, as actors moved to their stations.



The people seated, I read the Gospel at the ambo. And at the moment of the Blind Man's healing – Holy Trinity's magnificent font served as our "Pool of Siloam" – the World Music ensemble built tension to explode in a spontaneous exuberant congregational "Alleluia! We sing your praises!..." At reading's end, our music ensemble reprised the song to cover the actors' exits. I confess the dramatization was emotionally moving, even to me.

The sermon followed, a spirited exposition of the text by Ansley Tucker (ACC).

Assisting Minister Colleen Shantz led Intercessions as a kind of Bidding Prayer, her hands devoting themselves to the simple dance I've described in [Essay 79](#) above. Her bids invited petitions following the classic shape of such prayers: 1) for church and kingdom, 2) for our world and the nations, 3) for our communities and parishes, 4) for those in special needs, and 5) for the faithful departed.

The Offertory featured BBBB keynoter Mark Mummert in a grand organ improvisation.

The assembly could be counted on to know the responses of the Preface. My *ex corde* Prayer of Thanksgiving was another experiment, a hybrid chiefly from the pen of conference Sacristan Eric Dyck, emended by me and others. It was Eric's idea to present the Prayer as a Johanine composition, innocent of the traditions recounted in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul. Hence it lacked entirely the familiar *verba* or Warrant, setting aside bread and cup with a simple Hebrew *barakah* for each.



Colleen interjected verses from John's Gospel as I prayed, following the traditional shape of such prayers: 1) A recounting of the Holy History, 2) Setting aside bread and cup, usually with the Pauline *verba*, 3) the *anamnesis*, or remembering of Jesus and his life and ministry, 4) the *epiclesis* or prayer for the Spirit, 5) the *prolepsis* or prayer anticipating the coming fullness of God's rule "to us, among us, through us..." 6) an acknowledgment of our unity with the Godhead and with each other, and 7) a concluding Trinitarian doxology. See the attached text and tell me if you think it's too heterodox!

Part of the price of praying *ex corde*: I forgot the precise words of the *anamnesis* I had so carefully rehearsed!

And it was incredibly moving to me to see that grand corporate *orans* at the Lord's Prayer. I noted with satisfaction that many in the assembly felt free to pray in an *orans* posture at other prayers as well during that evening's worship.

A wicker basket held the loaves for Communion, each inscribed before baking with a handsome cross-and-mandala imprint, the wine in a crystal flagon, served from ceramic chalices.

Colleen's *ex corde* Post-Communion Prayer and Dismissal concluded the Service, and a splendid reception followed, as on other nights of the conference.

(My labours of the preceding few days took their toll later that evening: I was hospitalized for three nights with a mild chest discomfort, diagnosed within hours as simple stress, having nothing to do with my previously-wounded heart muscle!)

I am grateful to Pastor Kayko Driedger Hesslein, Publicity Coordinator, National Worship Conference Planning Committee, for providing the photographs included in this essay.

PRAYERS FOR WORSHIP

Toronto + July 23, 2004

A Gathering Act of Remembrance

The people and worship leaders enter and gather at the font.

P Dearly beloved,
in Holy Baptism
our Lord Jesus Christ delivers us from the power of sin and death
and frees us for fulness of life
under the gracious governance of a Holy Good.

I therefore ask you
to renounce the forces of evil,
to confess the faith of the church,
the faith in which you were baptized, and
to commit yourself once again
to the struggle for God's justice, peace and love.
Hear then the Holy Scriptures.

A The Apostle says:
In Adam all die; In Christ shall all be made alive.

P I invite you to turn in your place to face the West,
where even now the darkness gathers.

Do you renounce the devil and all the forces of evil in the world?
If so, confess it by saying: I renounce them.

C I renounce them.

P And all their works and ways?

C I renounce them.

P And all their pretenses and empty promises?

C I renounce them.

P I invite you now to turn to face the font in the East,
the source and fountain of light and life.

Do you believe in God, the Maker and Giver of all good?
If so, say: I believe.

C I believe.

P Do you believe in God's chosen Child,
friend of sinners, Jesus Christ as Lord?

C I believe.

P Do you believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Holy Catholic Church,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and
the life everlasting?

C I believe.

Water is poured into the font.

P Let us pray.

We give you thanks, gracious God,
that in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters
and you created heaven and earth.

By the gift of water
you nourish and sustain us and all living things.

By the gift of water
you raise up your sons and daughters to a new birth in baptism.

Give us grace by your Spirit
always to treasure these your mercies,
and to live our lives wholly devoted
to the pursuit of
your justice,
your peace,
your love.

C Amen.

P If this be the sincere profession of your heart,
declare it by saying, Yes, with the help of God.

C Yes, with the help of God.

May the God of all grace,
who in your Baptism
has begun a good work in you through the Spirit,
continue it
until the day of Jesus Christ.

And may that Kingdom of God,
which comes indeed of itself without our prayer,

come also to us.

C Amen.

During the Entrance Hymn, the people go to their seats as the Presiding Minister sprinkles them with water.

The Intercessions / Prayers of the People

After the Hymn of the Day, the Presiding and Assisting Ministers approach the place of prayer.

P Let us pray for the People of God, and for all people everywhere according to their needs.

A Let us pray for the Church,
for all pastors and people, and
for the coming of the Reign and Rule of God among us.

A brief silence is maintained for prayer.

A Lord, in your mercy...

C Hear our prayer.

A Let us pray for our wounded world,
and for peace with justice among nations and among neighbours.

A brief silence is maintained for prayer.

A Lord, in your mercy...

C Hear our prayer.

A Let us pray for the various parishes and communities
from which we come: for our institutions
of commerce and industry,
of arts and culture,
of education, science, and medicine, and
for all that makes for our common good.

A brief silence is maintained for prayer.

A Lord, in your mercy...

C Hear our prayer.

A Let us pray for all who need our prayers:
the sick, the dying,
the homeless, the destitute,
the addicted, the imprisoned,
the marginalized, and the bereaved,
especially those whom we name in our hearts before you.

A brief silence is maintained for prayer.

A Lord, in your mercy...
C Hear our prayer.

A Finally,
let us pray for the faithful departed,
that at length we with them may enter into
the joys you have prepared for those who love you.

A brief silence is maintained for prayer.

A Lord, in your mercy...
C Hear our prayer.

P All these good gifts,
and whatever else you see that we need,
grant us,
for the sake of him who gave himself for us,
your child and our friend, Jesus Christ.
C Amen.

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.
C And also with you.

The peace is shared.

The Great Thanksgiving and Post-Communion

P The Lord be with you.
C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.
C We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P Holy God,
holy and mighty,
holy and immortal,
have mercy and hear us.

A In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.

P Your Word, O God, is
the tower of our security,
the fountain of our refreshment,
the banquet of our feasting,
a lamp to our feet,
a light to our path.

A The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not comprehended it.

P Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, Maker of all things.
By your Wisdom you created all things.

You have stretched out the heavens like a curtain,
you have established the seasons each in their turn,
Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter.

You have filled the earth
with every good and pleasant thing,
with a fulness beyond our imagining,
satisfying every human hunger.

For all this superabundant fulness in your world our home,
we give you thanks,
God of all Grace.

And we praise you for your Word enduring down the ages,
in your prophets, our parents, our teachers, our mentors:
For Abraham and Isaac and Jacob,
for Sarah and Miriam and Hannah.
You have not left yourself without witness in every age.

But chiefly we praise you for the gift in these last days
of your Son Jesus.

A Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

The Presiding Minister takes the bread in hand.

P Blessed are you, O Lord our God, maker of all things.
You bring forth bread from the earth.

A Lord, give us the bread from heaven.

The Presiding Minister takes the cup in hand.

P Blessed are you, O Lord our God, maker of all things.
You bring forth the fruit of the vine.

A You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

P Remembering, therefore,
the work and witness of your Word among us,
his teaching and healing,
his eating and drinking with outcasts and sinners,
his suffering and death,
and his rising again to the seat of honour,
we give you thanks in the Spirit, not as we ought but as we are able.

A It is the Spirit alone that gives life.

P And we pray,
send your Holy Spirit upon us,
and upon this bread and cup.

Fill us through these gifts with the fire of your love,
shape us more and more into the likeness of your Son, our savior,
so that we can truly become what we receive,
the body of Christ,
and share with him
in his work as ourselves Christs for the world.

Grant, then,
that that fulness of life,
that gracious governance of God,
which comes indeed of itself without our prayer,
may come also to us,
in us,
through us,
by means of us,
where we may have something to do with its coming.

And bring us at length, we pray,
to share with all your saints
in that marriage feast of the Lamb which has no end.

Through Christ,
with Christ,
in Christ,
all honour and glory be to you, O God of grace,
through the Holy Spirit,
now and forever.

C Amen

P Let us pray in the words our Saviour gave us.

C Our Father in heaven... Amen.

The Presiding Minister breaks the bread.

P When we eat this bread we share the body of Christ.

The Assisting Minister lifts the cup.

A When we drink this cup we share the blood of Christ.

...

A Let us pray.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O God,
and make of one will
those whom you have fed with one heavenly food.

C Amen.

A Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

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