

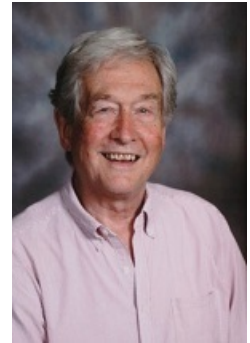
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## TRIVIA

1 I begin composing this posting on Easter Monday, April 1 this year. So, honouring April Fools Day, I'll call it Trivia. Faithful readers of these Essays, however, will recall that, in this author's view, almost nothing in worship – in human life! – can ever be completely without meaning. *Adiaphora*, perhaps, trivia, maybe – but also: Media of meaning. See [Essay 112](#).

2 In that spirit, let me lay out, in no particular priority, a whole set of personal prejudices. I'm happy to claim them each as my own. But I'm certain many respected liturgiologists will share much of what I'm saying here. I'll keep a list for future Trivia postings as well, you can be sure, when I exhaust myself with this one. Here's my first batch:

3 *Preen one another.* Worship leaders who leave the vestry without what I call preening are simply insulting their people. Straighten those stoles! Be certain your alb's cowl or hood is framing your face handsomely, and not bunched at your back or flattened crookedly on your shoulder. Preening is a two-person endeavour: You need an Acolyte or Assisting Minister to assure your dorsal aspect matches your ventral, so to speak. Even vestries properly equipped with a full-length mirror do not reveal the horrors that might be lurking at your back. You need a second person to assure you that you look presentable to the public. Stratford's theatre employs a professional Dresser to make sure Christopher Plummer is presentable when he comes on stage. Worship leaders lacking a professional Dresser must depend on a full-length mirror *and* on one another. And *before* you exit the vestry, please!...

4 *Preen the candles.* After each Service is concluded, someone – an Usher? an Altar Guild member? – must be certain the candles will burn properly next time. Many parishes equip their candles with "followers:" small cylinders of glass or brass that follow the candle's flame and ensure the candle burns evenly. After almost every time they're used, each candle must be preened to ensure its follower is straight, and thus fulfil its purpose. Crooked or cock-eyed followers guarantee a mess of candle drippings to clean up later....

5 *Two hands for orans, please.* The orans is a two-handed posture. You do not hold a book or text in one hand and raise the other in an *orans*. If you need to read your prayer

from a text or book, enlist an Acolyte or Assisting Minister to hold it for you, so you can use both hands in a generous *orans*. Or pray at an ambo. To pray in an *orans* with one hand is like kissing with one lip, as a friend maintains...

6 *One blessing only, please.* And that one at the conclusion of worship. Ignore the permissive rubric – Rubric 38 in *Lutheran Book of Worship*; middle of page 113 in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* – that allows a “table blessing” after the people have communed but before the conclusion of the Service. That’s liturgical inflation. A Lutheran sectarianism. One Invocation or Apostolic Greeting at worship’s beginning. One Blessing at worship’s end...

7 *Ignore LBW’s Rubric 32.* And its equivalent in *ELW*, “Thanksgiving at Table II”, page 108. Another Lutheran sectarianism. See [Essay 16](#)...

8 *Utilize only and exclusively ELW terminologies.* [Essay 28](#)...

9 *Be conscious of nouns, verbs, and prepositions.* [Essay 114](#). Among Lutherans, it’s not “Eucharist,” it’s “Holy Communion;” it’s “Presiding Minister” not “Celebrant.” Much better terms. You “preside” at Holy Communion; you “lead” Matins and Vespers. It’s “Sundays in Lent,” not “...of Lent.” Every Sunday is a celebration: Sundays are in but not of...

10 *Table linens at (Gotcha!) Mass – purificators, corporal – are never polyester.* Polyester fibres simply do not absorb moisture like cotton or linen. A matter of some consequence when you spill wine or water at the Table...

11 *Table linens at (Gotcha again!) Eucharist are always folded in thirds, never halves.* Honours the Trinity. And they’re simply easier to handle. Instruct your Altar Guild: Always fold in thirds. And fold again, in thirds, if necessary..

12 *Be conscious of your specific community when you dress at home before worship.* The functional virtue of vestments is they hide your choice of necktie. Vestments do not however hide your choice of footwear. Dirty sneakers or running shoes peeking out from under an alb may be OK in an informal community, less appropriate in a more formal setting....

13 *Be conscious of your jewelry also.* Dangling chandelier earrings are probably never appropriate with vestments. Expensive jewelry may be offensive to the poor, even a costly wristwatch...

14 *First names only at the Intercessions, please.* No family names. God knows the one you’re talking about: You don’t need to say “Laura Jones.” Just “Laura.” What if there are two “Laura’s” in your parish? One mention of “Laura” is still sufficient. Once again, God surely knows. As for the people, they should know too, having been informed in verbal or printed announcements. The principle is an important one: In the Kingdom of God, there are no distinctions by family, race, political party, or nationality. Even the Pope is simply Karol or Joseph or Jorge.

15 That “Amen” after the sermon belongs to the people, not to the preacher. Note you won’t find it in either *LBW* or *ELW*. (You will find “Silence for reflection follows the sermon,” in both volumes.) That ubiquitous “Amen” you so often hear these days from the pulpit at sermon’s end is a contemporary example of intrusive pop liturgy. It has a place, I suppose you could argue. But not as a signal from the preacher to tell you “It’s over, folks.” It’s rather the peoples’ opportunity to affirm what the preacher has just preached. If you feel that “Amen!” is nevertheless an important addition to weekly worship, train your people to take responsibility for that “Amen!” themselves. A vigorous, heartfelt “Amen!” Not mumbled or half-hearted. By all means, train them too to take that silence seriously.

More to come...

