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On the Place of Hospitality in Ecumenical Worship — *continued*

Hospitality is one of the five key principles underpinning the daily ecumenical worship program because it sets in place a particular sort of spirituality, one that necessitates diversity and inclusivity, provides a foundation for participation, and permits ecumenical engagement. This base-line ethic of hospitality arises *via* our daily practices, by allowing us to move beyond “what I like” and “what I want” in worship and into the alternative position of hosting and partaking, of giving and receiving. As such, we suspend our personal tastes and sensibilities — just as we do when we either cook a dish for a friend with special dietary needs or attend dinner at the house of one who does not cook like we do.

Something is probably going wrong if you can say that you “like” worship in Marquand every single day! If every service is “likable” by everyone then it is a sure sign that our repertoire of practices is too thin. If we are truly leading each day from within the distinct backgrounds of the many and diverse traditions represented in our community, then worship will inevitably be different, and quite radically so, from one day to the next. When one considers the massive variety of practices and theologies embodied in these liturgical traditions, and the fact some directly challenge if not contradict others, then it seems highly unlikely that any one person could “like” being part of all of them.

Now I “like” being part of ecumenical worship, so in that meta- sense I like daily chapel. But, in common with most everyone else in Marquand, there are things that happen each week that stretch, educate, annoy or even offend me, such that I can probably only claim to “like” worship (in the sense of: “I really enjoyed that” or, “I really felt at home in that”) about once a month. There are moments each week that I enjoy, most often in the singing of a hymn, but worship is not, and never was, about what we enjoy or what we like, no matter how much we have become accustomed to assessing it that way in our choice-driven society.

Worship *services* are so called because they are meant to be occasions for us to do “service”, occasions for us to perform our duty, to do our work. The nature of that work is usually conceived as a sacrifice – of praise, of offering, of care, of community-building, of time, of labor; and this conception of worship’s purpose is remarkably cross-denominational. Hospitality, then, is ecumenical not because Marquand is an ecumenical project and we need a method for getting along in there, but, rather, because the notion of liturgy as service and sacrifice is at the root of Christian worship *per se*, whichever tradition we are from.

How we conduct the practices that compose worship in Marquand determines whether and how we cultivate a disposition of hospitality at its core. In the last *Reader* (9/28 – see below for links), I talked about seating, and how we can welcome one another by our seating habits in Marquand. This week, I will consider some issues that all worshipping communities have to face: vesting and dress-codes. In future weeks I will look at how we sing, share food or drink, and how invitations are issued to the table and to other liturgical acts, plus the role of the narthex, greeters at the door, greetings in the liturgy, whether to have a bulletin or not, how the bulletin is laid out, the use of

announcements, explaining things but not over-explaining them, being patient, and suspending some judgments.

Vesting. What to wear when leading ecumenical worship can be confusing. Other worship spaces are usually attached to a single-denomination and there are usually norms about dress dictated by tradition, rubric or just general consensus. For example, a priest in an Episcopalian parish will wear specific vestments for Sunday worship based on the liturgical feast-day or season, while the worship leader at a Vineyard congregation would not be able to lead effectively if they turned up wearing the same thing as the Episcopal priest, because they would have lost the trust of the worshippers who expect them to wear not ornate and coded robes but rather daily clothes. What people gathered for worship expect one to wear when leading worship is directly related to how effective you will be in leading them, and this changes, quite significantly, from one context to another.

In Marquand, then, we have a serious issue; we are not a church, we don't have a set liturgy or worship pattern from week to week, and therefore the norms and expectations about vesting are different. This provides a great opportunity for hospitality on the part of both leaders and congregants. If leaders are planning worship from out of their own tradition, then it makes sense for them to wear what they would wear when leading worship in their own tradition; if leaders are also opening up their own traditions in performance in order to invite those from different backgrounds to participate in them, then they might choose to adjust their dress accordingly.

For example, instead of wearing full red robes and mitre, an Episcopal bishop preaching here at Pentecost might wear an alb with a red stole out of awareness that the full outfit would not be "read" by the majority of worshippers and might even confuse or shock them. The worship leader from the Vineyard might wear jeans, as normal, but wear a shirt with no message or logo on it out of hopes of ministering to those for whom such are stumbling-blocks to entering into prayer or praise with them. Or, the bishop might wear their full regalia and the Vineyarder might wear their ordinary clothes -- but then use their clothing as part of their sermon, referring to it and teaching about it, and inviting people into engagement with their ministry through the invitation into learning about it.

The instinct to wear what would be appropriate in one's own liturgical tradition is a very important part of ecumenical engagement, because it offers an authentic version of one's liturgical life. It is hospitality in the sense of offering the fullest aspect of oneself, sharing one's own authentic life — just as one serves one's favourite food, or uses one's inherited dishes, to guests when they come to dinner. The instinct to moderate or adapt vestments for a specific context is an equally important part of ecumenical engagement. It is equally a form of hospitality, because it shows a care for ministering to people "where they are at"; it start from a place of proximity to other's ecclesial understandings and worship needs.

In summary then, when leading in Marquand, think about what you are wearing and try to be authentic. If you worry that your vesting tradition might be off-putting to, or misunderstood by, people from other traditions then there are two choices: either talk about in your sermon and thus use it as a learning moment, or else alter your dress slightly. Of course, it is not only the worship leaders in a congregation who need to think about how they dress. The phrase "Sunday best" came about due to this very concern, and the fact that it is common to so very many church-going people. **Dress-codes** abound in church life, although they are rarely as explicitly formulated for the congregation as for the ministers.

People in Marquand dress in all sorts of different ways, reflecting the variety in our roles and backgrounds. How we dress says a great deal, but what it “says” is usually culturally-specific and, therefore, prone to misunderstanding. For example, if you see me in jeans, I am off duty: in my mind, in jeans, I am on campus for personal reasons and you are not meant to approach me with work-related matters; if you see Patrick in jeans, he might be working very hard and he is utterly approachable, etc. Such differences simply have to be learned one person at a time, such is the nature of multi-cultural understanding. That said, the principle of hospitality can help us avoid actual offence.

For example: for some, it is still considered rude for men to wear hats indoors, especially in church. A few years ago, one student went at another hammer and tongs to get him to take off his baseball cap in Chapel. He could not understand what her problem was. She could not understand why he would be so disrespectful. In the end, he saw it as an act of hospitality to simply remove his hat. Note: he did not remove his hat because he came to a new understanding of hats and worship; he simply made the sacrifice out of a desire to be in worship with someone for whom his hat-wearing was viscerally offensive.

Other dress codes stem not from hospitality but from these two facts: that we never know what worship will involve before we are in there, and that it often involves STUFF and MOVEMENT. Therefore, it is usually advisable not to wear silk (or else to be able to cover it up) because of the deleterious effects of water and oil upon it. It is usually advisable to wear clothes that you can dance in, or sit on the floor in (although seats are always provided for the less able-bodied), and it is often advisable to wear layers simply because chapel can be irrationally cold and hot: sharing one’s clothing with others when it is cold is, of course, pretty basic hospitality and not especially conditioned by our ecumenism.

Sung Morning Prayer is on THURSDAY, not Wednesday, this week: PLEASE SEE BELOW

Looking ahead to this Week’s Services.

Monday: we will welcome Dr. **Graham Ward** as our preacher. A prolific and applauded theologian and an Anglican priest, Professor Ward is visiting Yale as part of the conference: *Why Homosexuality: Religion, Globalization and the Anglican Schism*.

Tuesday will be the second in our series of graduating student preachers, with a sermon from **Chad Tanaka** and a dramatic piece led with his colleagues from Yale Divinity Drama.

Wednesday is not Sung Morning Prayer! Instead, we welcome the convention of retired Lutheran bishops, their spouses and friends to a service of morning worship drawing on ELCA resources; and we welcome back the Rev. Dr. **Barbara Lundblad**, Professor of Preaching at Union Theological Seminary (and YDS M.Div., 1979) to offer the sermon.

Thursday is **Sung Morning Prayer**, just like we normally do it on Wednesdays, continuing the “Traditional Texts in Global and Contemporary Settings” suite of songs and prayers.

Friday is Eucharist, led by the Rev. Dr. **Bill Goettler**, Assistant Dean for Ministerial Studies and Assessment, and co-pastor of First Presbyterian Church here in New Haven.

Siobhán Garrigan, Dean of the Chapel

Past Issues of the Marquand Reader are available at www.yale.edu/ism/marquand/