

The Society of St. Patrick and St. Aidan

Encourage | Equip | Ordain | Plant | Revival

Is Your Church Liturgical?

In my experience this is a critical question for those who are pioneering new worship communities.

I knew of a growing Baptist Church who's founding pastor retired. This man was my friend and encourager. Just before this pastor retired, the church began to explore the charismatic dimension of the Gospel. At that time, charismatic practice was popular and gaining influence in what would become known as "Third Wave" evangelical churches. When my friend retired, a new pastor was called to the church. He was called to the position because he was open to charismatic practices. During the new pastor's tenure, the church began to decline and struggled to move forward. My retired pastor friend confided to me that it was, in large part, due to the fact that the new pastor could not decide whether the church was fully committed to charismatic practices. The new pastor couldn't decide to fish or cut bait. He wanted his church to be all things to all people. So, he teeter-tottered back and forth, while his confused and discouraged flock looked on.

I've also seen churches within traditional Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations see-saw back and forth on being charismatic or seeker sensitive/attractional. In the end, it usually results in confusion and decline for their congregations.

When it comes to Worship Expressions: There must be a moment of decision.

The Society of St. Patrick and St. Aidan is an Evangelical, Charismatic, and Sacramental group of worship communities and ministers. Perhaps, in a perfect world, there would be a perfect blend of these three Spirit filled streams of the ministry of Jesus. But in reality, each local church must decide if it is a "liturgical church" or a church that uses some liturgical elements. Either way is fine, but it will need to be decided. We describe some of this reality on our website page "Expressions of Worship".

As one of the servant leaders of our Society, I affirm Bishop Tony Palmer's injunction that "Diversity is Divine". None the less, for the sake of your clear identification and mission in your geographical area, it is my personal opinion that you need to decide if you are a liturgical church. Teeter-Tottering back and forth from liturgical to non-liturgical will confuse many, and leave most wanting.

I think one of the strengths of the ACNA churches is that they are, by and large, "Three Stream" churches, but all of them are committedly Anglican and liturgical. I'm not saying that their strength is that they are "Anglican" and "liturgical", but that they "are committed" to being

consistently liturgical and committedly Anglican. They don't confuse their people. They know who they are and they know who they want to be.

Perhaps, it's an easy decision for you because you have strong preference for liturgical church or church with a little bit of liturgy? However, for many of us Three Stream church planters, the difficult part is that we want to be all things to all people. We want to be both "The Vine Fellowship" and "Saint Aidan's Parish Church". Admittedly, House Churches will be more casual, none the less, how you express liturgy in your House Church will be a significant decision as you move forward.

Whether we want to or not, we'll all have to fish or cut bait on this issue. We'll either flourish with a strong identity or flounder with a lack of identity. Personally, I like liturgical worship and worship with a little bit of liturgy. So, with me, it's not so much a matter of preference.

Rather than tossing a coin, perhaps, the following factors could help us to decide:

- Who can I reach and what Worship Expression will appeal to these folks?
- What Worship Expression has the most interest for my core group?
- What Worship Expression is my core group most gifted at doing?
 - If God has gifted you with strong pulpit skills and a "tight" worship band, perhaps it makes the best sense to be "The Vine Fellowship". But if you're more of a "communicator" and your folks are tone deaf, formal liturgy at Saint Aidan's may be your best direction.

Hey, Let's Talk Some More About This

A brief two-page article won't do justice to ferreting out these issues. So, reach out to me, or Bishop Wayne, and let's talk some more about what "Worship Expression" best for you and your ministry context. We're here to encourage, help, and strengthen you as you move forward in your God given vocation.

May the Peace and Power of Christ be with you,

Fr. Jon Aamodt