



Worshipping God

Illustrated by the Revd Neil Thorogood

NT 2004



Vision2020: growing and connecting, faith, partnership and mission in the life of the United Reformed Church

Adapted from *Worshipping the Triune God*

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This edition is edited by:

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar, the Revd Dr Sarah Hall and the Revd Elizabeth Welch

Illustrations © Neil Thorogood

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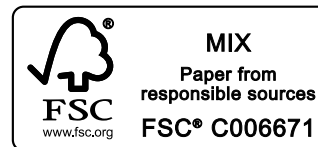
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Adapted from *Worshipping the Triune God*
from the World Communion of Reformed Churches

Edited by the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar,
the Revd Dr Sarah Hall and the Revd Elizabeth Welch,
with Illustrations by the Revd Neil Thorogood

Foreword: Worship in words and art

Christians, especially those of us from Protestant traditions, are very “wordy”. Yet, for many, words can be hard to find and may even hinder conversations on matters of faith. Many find it challenging to verbalise their faith story. Some struggle to find new and appropriate words, while others may despair at their attempts to breathe new life into over-used words in order to share their faith. At the same time many will respond to and talk about pictures, art work, or images more readily than they would about doctrines and theological ideas. As people explain what they think and feel about an image, it is ‘easier’ to share their own stories/journeys and connect these with faith.

Worshipping God is a collection of proverbs on the practice of worship across the many cultures and contexts of our Reformed family - a gift for us to delight in and use as is fitting to each context. Accompanying these proverbs are images by the Revd Neil Thorogood. As an artist/theologian/minister, Neil attempts through these images to capture in art some of the words expressed here.

These images are intended to help readers to find another way to engage with and reflect on these proverbs. As conversation starters, these creative pieces remind us of the potential of art to disclose and actualise the present, giving it a concrete and felt reality. The images will evoke in each of us

different responses, all of which will add to the conversation in your group, church or just between yourself and the text. As an incarnational medium, the paintings make one profoundly aware of possibility beyond words. They highlight the presence of grace in and through the messiness of our lives, while helping us to catch a glimpse of ‘mystery’ in the ordinary. Such ‘seeing’ or ‘glimpsing’ needs discipline and patience, drawing on all of our senses, or, if you prefer, being “literally brought to our senses” as we experience the ‘holy’.

In a number of ways, the art work accompanying this material reinforces the *ArtTalk* project which is currently enabling many in our churches to share and connect their stories and faith by conversing about and around images. Whatever form visual arts may take for you, I invite you to see this as growing and deepening Kingdom values as we set our feet ‘homewards’. As a Moderator of General Assembly, I am delighted to commend this small volume of proverbs on “Worshipping God” for your use as personal reading and study, small group discussions or as a series you and/or your church may wish to follow during a church season.

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar

Moderator of the United Reformed
Church General Assembly 2012-14

Introduction

Worship is the beating heart of the church. Worship draws us into the presence of God and sends us out into the world. The offering of worship is the distinctive gift of the church to the world. In worship God's people join with the saints from across the centuries and the nations in honour of the one holy God, who gives life, transformation and strength for daily living.

Worship is a source of blessing, as people grow closer to God, and a source of wisdom, enabling people to develop in their faith and life. This worship booklet offers reflections on these two themes of blessings and wisdom. The reflections are both visual and shaped in the form of 'proverbs', pointers to further exploration. For the most part, they are longer than a proverb might be expected to be. This is in order to draw out the wisdom from each area looked at. These 'proverbs' are a gift from the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and unite us with the global Reformed community. The United Reformed Church belongs to the world church and these proverbs help our church to connect with the wisdom of the wider family of believers internationally.

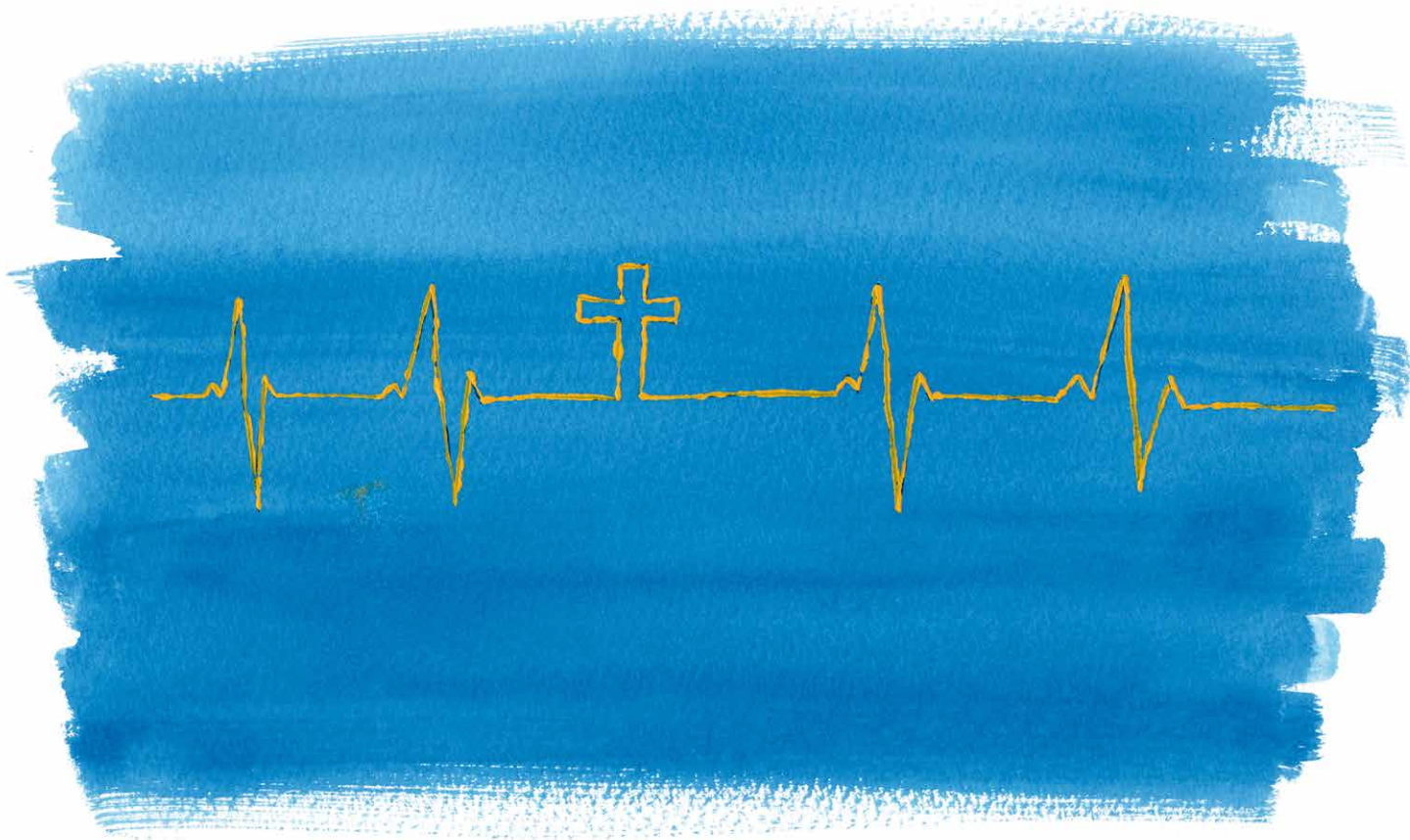
Some of the language of the proverbs will be more familiar than others. You are invited to take notice of times when the proverb strikes home, and times when the wording is challenging because of being less familiar.

Suggestions for the ways in which these proverbs might be used are found in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 outlines some of the background thinking from the World Communion of Reformed Churches about the development of these proverbs, with Appendix 3 being a short summary of the work thus far.

These proverbs come with an invitation, not only to reflect on them, but also to write more proverbs and identify further scripture passages which relate to them. The United Reformed Church faith and order committee is happy to receive further proverbs and to share these more widely across the church.

The Revd Elizabeth Welch

Convener, United Reformed Church
faith and order committee



HEART 2013

*A called and forgiven people:
Assembling in Jesus' name*



SEN 2013

Called by the triune God

Blessed are the people of God who are deeply aware that they are both called by and address the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for the church through Word and Spirit, a God of splendour and majesty perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ, the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1.15). Blessed is the community that gratefully acknowledges that the triune God not only receives our worship, but also makes our worship possible, prompting us through the Holy Spirit, and making our offerings holy through the perfect priesthood of Jesus Christ, who during his life on earth offered praise “to the Father,” “full of joy in the Holy Spirit” (Luke 10.21), and even now “ever lives to pray for us” (Hebrews 7.25). Blessed is the congregation that insists that believers gather to worship God not first of all in order that God might bless them, but because God has already blessed them. Blessed is the congregation that then discovers that God does indeed bless them as they worship the triune God who nourishes, teaches, and challenges them, and strengthens bonds that unite believers with Jesus Christ and with each other through the proclamation of the Word and corporate prayer, through baptism and the Lord’s Supper, through fellowship, offerings, and testimony.

Questions

- It is central to the Christian faith to believe that God is three in one and one in three. How explicit is this Trinitarian understanding in the life of worship and of daily living of the church to which you belong?
- God draws us to worship and encounter us in worship. Where is the balance in your worship between sensing God’s blessing and offering worship in response to this, and seeing worship as a purely human construct which needs to be well-organised?
- Does your congregation gather expectantly of God’s blessings? In what ways can you hear about the blessings that the people receive from God?

1.2

Corporate Assembly, the whole people of God

Wise is the worshipping community that “does not neglect meeting together” (Hebrews 10.25), but joyfully gathers in Jesus’ name, eager to proclaim the Word of God, to offer praise and prayer, and to celebrate the sacraments, each of which are actions of the whole people of God, “the royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2.9). Blessed is the congregation that invites all worshipers—including those which our cultures may label in different ways as “disabled”—to full, conscious and active participation in corporate worship, engaging heart, soul, and mind in devotion to God, deeply aware of how their own personal worship participates in a much larger chorus of praise to God. Blessed is the congregation that expresses in its worship the communion in the body of Christ, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the oneness that is the gift and calling of God, that unites the young and old, and believers of every time and place who share a common calling by the Spirit of God in Jesus Christ.

Questions

- The underlying understanding of the priesthood of all believers is about those who share in the priestly ministry of Christ’s intercession. How far is this understanding shared in your congregation?
- In what ways are you aware of being surrounded by all the saints when you gather for worship?
- How far are the gifts and callings of each member of the congregation explicitly honoured in your offering of worship?

The Holy Spirit

Wise is the worshipping community that recognizes how the Holy Spirit works through both reason and emotion, through both spiritual disciplines and surprising events, through both services that are prayerfully planned and moments of spontaneous discovery. Wise is the worshipping community that recognizes that the lasting value or spiritual power of worship does not depend upon our own creativity, imagination, intellect, or emotions, but comes from the Holy Spirit, who may choose to use any or all of these things. For truly, worship is a gift to receive, not an accomplishment to achieve.

Questions

- The Holy Spirit has a particular role in shaping the Reformed tradition. How much time does your congregation give to discerning the particular movement of the Spirit in its midst?
- Describe the range of ways in which you recognise the presence of the Holy Spirit. Are there yet more ways in which you could see the Spirit's presence amongst the particular outcrop of the body of Christ with which you are most familiar?



1.4

Affirming and resisting culture

Wise is the church that seeks to be “in” but not “of” the world, (John 15.19) resisting aspects of the culture that compromise the integrity of the gospel, and eagerly engaging its culture with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ who comes to each culture, but is not bound by any culture. (Galatians 3.27-29) Wise, then, is the church that is grateful that the gospel of Jesus is at once inter-cultural, and counter-cultural.



Questions

- Describe the ways in which your church is both ‘in’ the world, and yet not ‘of’ the world. Do you find you lean more to one or the other end of this spectrum?
- Describe the range of cultures that are present in your community. Are there ways in which this range could be enlarged in your offering of worship?

The goodness of the redeemed creation

Wise is the congregation that makes clear that its worship participates in the song of praise that is offered by all creation. Wise is the congregation that celebrates worship as an embodied reality, grateful for the gestures and postures that express our praise and prayer, and the book, water, bread, and wine, that God ordains for our use—the gifts of God for the people of God.

Questions

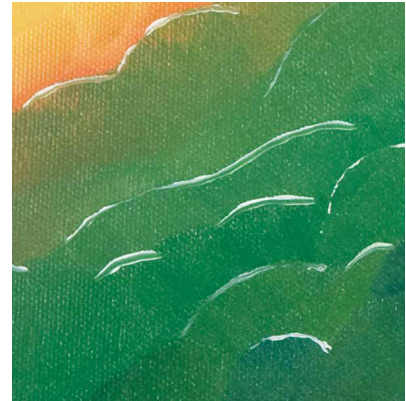
- How do you understand the 'song of praise' that is offered by all creation and in what ways does your worship reflect this 'song of praise'?
- Some traditions of the church are more explicit about the offering of worship being by the whole person, body, mind and spirit e.g. in lifting arms up in worship, in using icons as a window to God, in dancing and swaying to the music, in standing or kneeling to pray, in embracing each other in a greeting of peace. In what ways does your worship reflect an offering by body and mind and spirit?

1.6

Leading God's people

Wise is the community that calls, trains, affirms, and responds to those gifted for leadership in all genders, ages, ethnicities, abilities providing formative training and mentorship for them in the theology and practices of worship.

Wise are leaders in worship who equip all the members of the community for full, conscious, and active participation, taking care to express hospitality to those who are not yet a part of Christ's body, the church.



Questions

- In what way does your community engage people, both in reflecting on the theological understanding of worship, and also in empowering people for worship leading?
- How far are you able to take up the opportunities offered by the wider church for training?
- Describe the ways in which you see your worship as participative. Are there ways in which it could become more participative?

Artistic expression

Blessed is the congregation in which the Word is proclaimed and prayers and praise are offered

not only through words, but also through artistic expression:

through gifts God has given to each local community

in music and dance, in speech and silence, in visual art, symbols and architecture.

Blessed are the artists who offer and discipline their gifts

so God's people may testify to the goodness of God, offer thanks and express repentance.

Wise are artists who are grateful both for the limitations offered by the second commandment,

and also for the example of the biblical artists called by God and equipped by God's

people for service

according to God's commands. (Exodus 35.30ff)

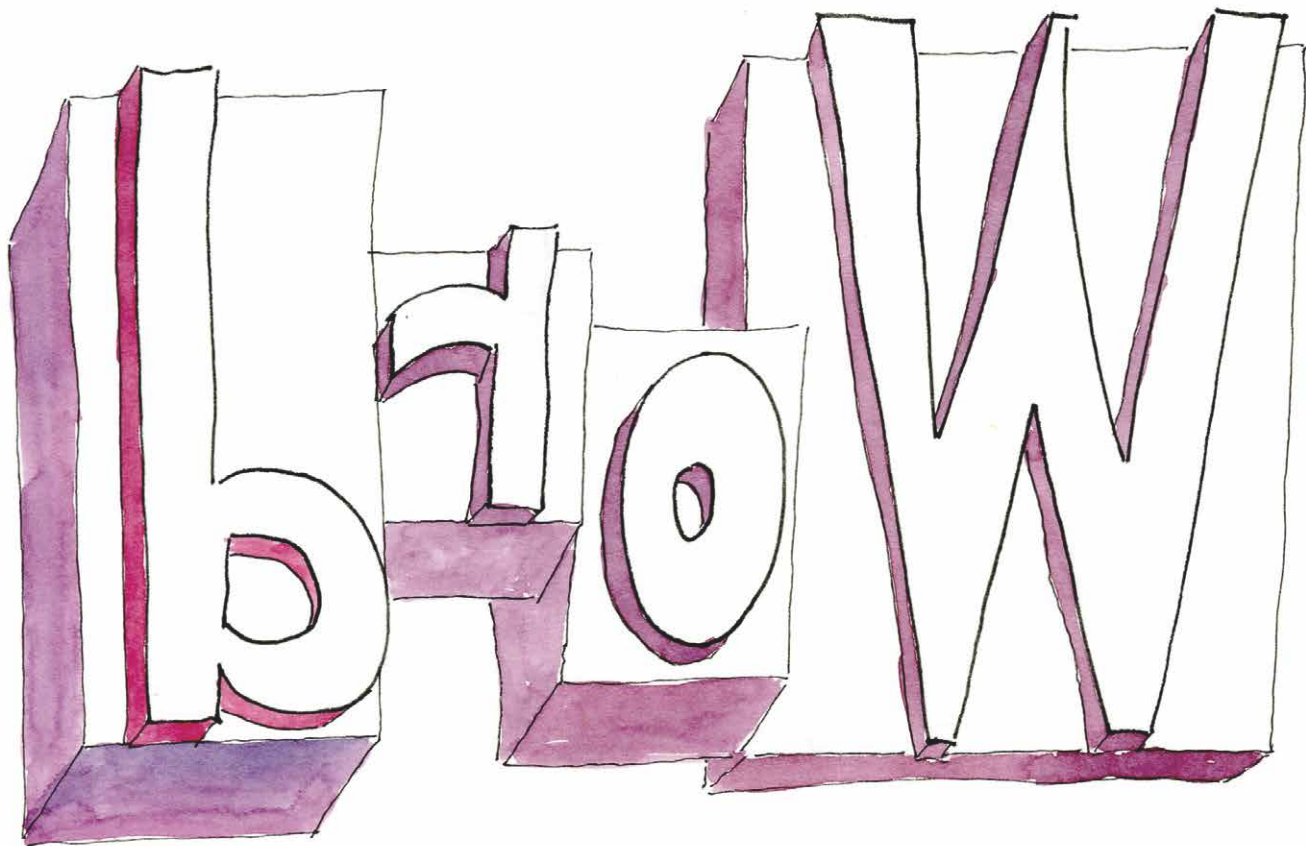
Wise is the church that gratefully receives the gifts of faithful songs and artworks

from other centuries and other cultures, celebrating the catholicity of the church,

and cultivating creativity through new songs and words for worship.

Questions

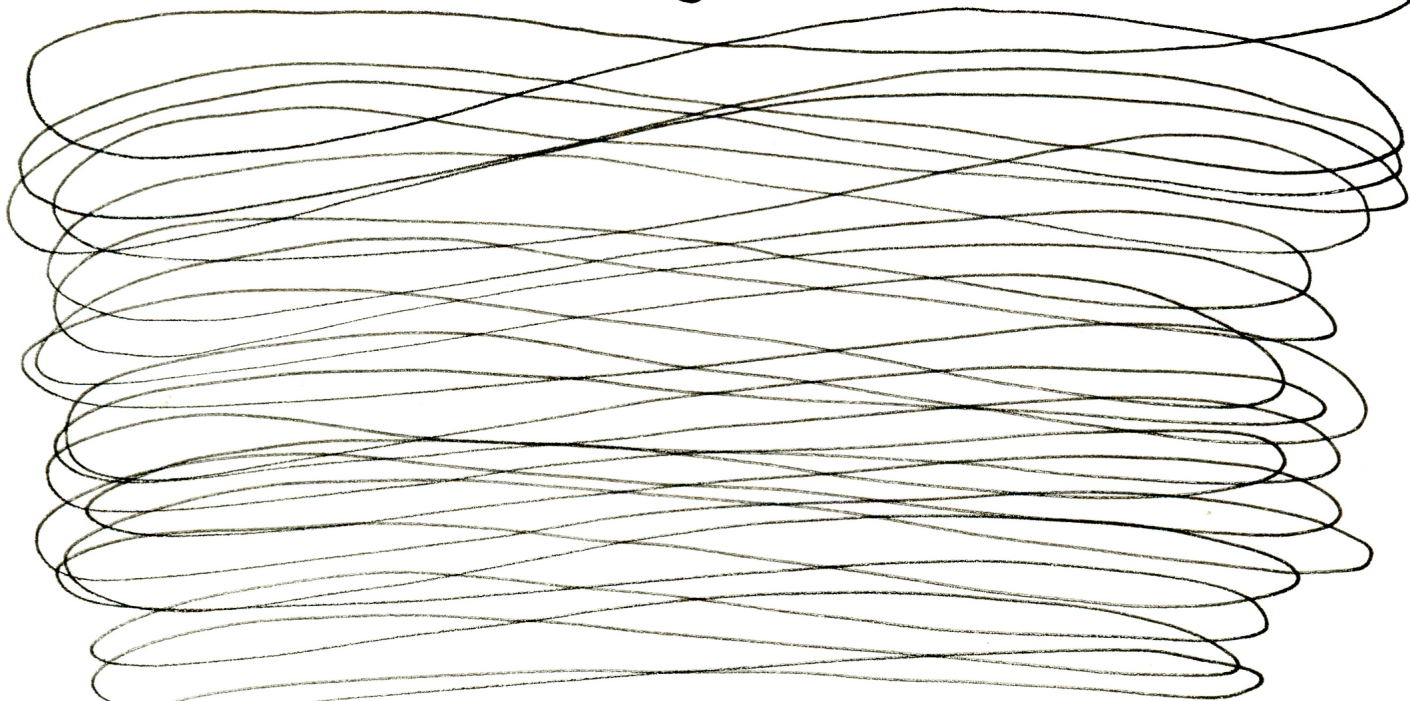
- Consider the ways in which the gifts of artists are honoured in your community. Could your church make these gifts more explicit in its worship?
- It is sometimes commented that the Reformed tradition, with its emphasis on the Word, focusses on the ear and the mouth rather than the eye. Do you recognise this description of the worship that you regularly experience? Can you imagine ways in which the eye could be more valued in worship?



FLOW 2013

Joyfully proclaiming God's Word

In the beginning God



Amen.

SENT 2013

Word and Spirit

Blessed is the congregation in which the Word of God is proclaimed
with conviction, humility and joy,
surrounded by expectant prayers and profound gratitude
for the Holy Spirit's work
to illuminate the hearts and minds of God's people.

Questions

- Do we look forward to hearing the Bible read in worship? If so, why? If not, why not?
- How can we bring its messages alive in new ways for our times?

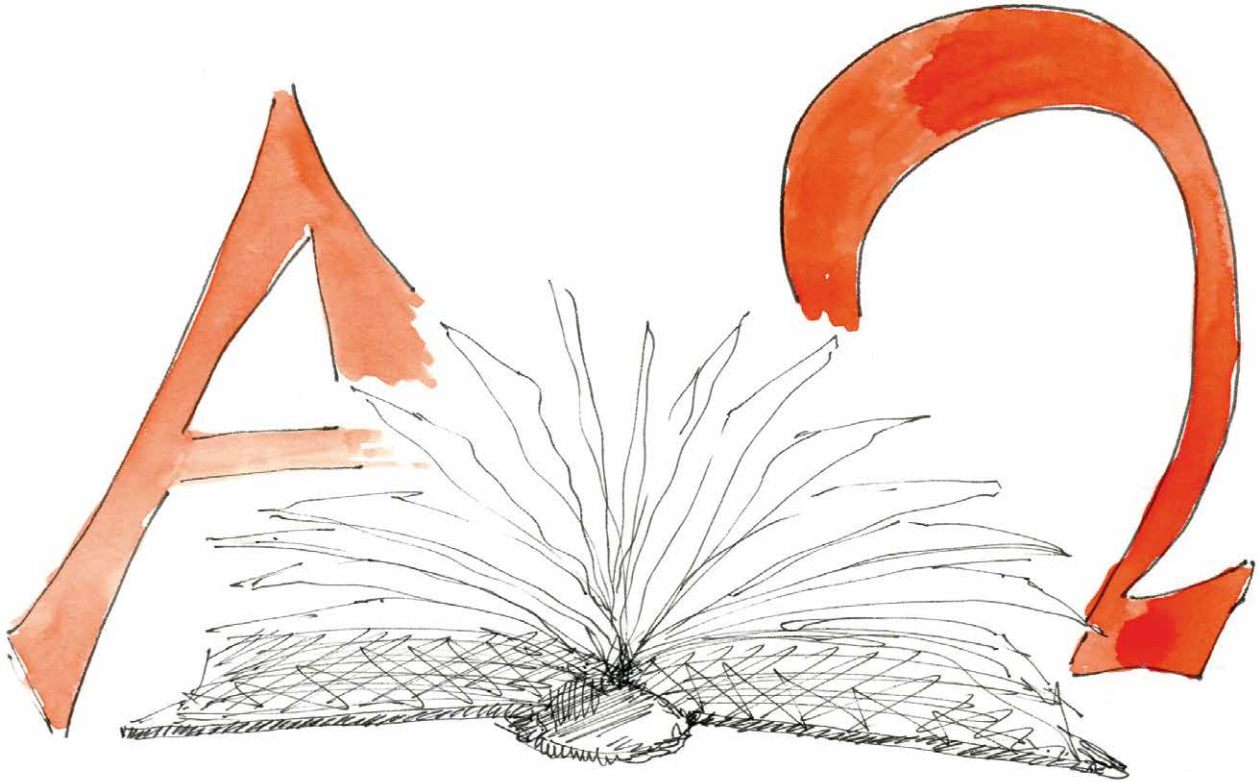
2.2

The breadth of the Christ-centred Word

Wise is the congregation that nourishes believers with readings and sermons and prayers that engage the breadth and depth of God's Word in the scriptures, always proclaiming the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Questions

- How many Bible readings does your congregation generally hear in a service? What is the balance between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament?
- If different preachers serve your church, how do you keep a continuity in worship in hearing the scriptures? What is the balance in worship between the breadth, in terms of listening to the whole of scripture, and the depth, in terms of unpacking individual texts, of God's Word?



SENT 2013

2.3

Calling forth rest and witness, justice and peace

Blessed is the congregation
in which the proclamation of God's Word
comforts those who mourn
and confronts those who oppose God's reign.
Wise is the preacher
who invites hearers to receive God's lavish grace,
to repent from sin and evil,
to turn toward Christ,
to proclaim peace,
"to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God"
(Micah 6.8).

Questions

- Is it possible for a sermon both to 'comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable'? Share examples if you have had this experience.
- What is the balance in your church between doing justice and loving kindness?



PRAYING



SENT 2013

Resisting idolatry

Wise is the congregation
that proclaims the Word of God
in ways that actively expose and resist
both the idols that we are tempted to worship instead of God
and also the idols of our distorted understandings of God.
Blessed is the congregation
that challenges these distortions
by contemplating the person and work of Jesus Christ,
“the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of
God’s being” (Hebrews 1.3).

Questions

- In what or whom do you put your trust, Monday to Saturday?
- How can you recognise and avoid distortions in your understanding of God?

2.5

Credo: The response of faith

Wise is the congregation
in which the proclamation of the gospel
is accepted as the word of God,
which is at work in you who believe (1 Thessalonians 2.13),
leading to both confession and praise,
both repentance and a commitment to service,
both compassion and a passion for justice,
both personal and communal actions,
both new obedience and profound gratitude.
Blessed is the congregation
that invites believers to testify to the goodness of God
by expressing the faith of the church
that transcends and forms our individual experiences
and unites us with believers across cultures and centuries,
and by testifying to the work of God
in the life of the local community.

Questions

- How do you encourage each other to share your experiences of God's goodness?
- Does your congregation use formal statements of faith, ancient or modern, in worship? If so, how are they chosen? Could you write your own?



5/21/2013



*Responding to God in
prayer and offerings*

3.1

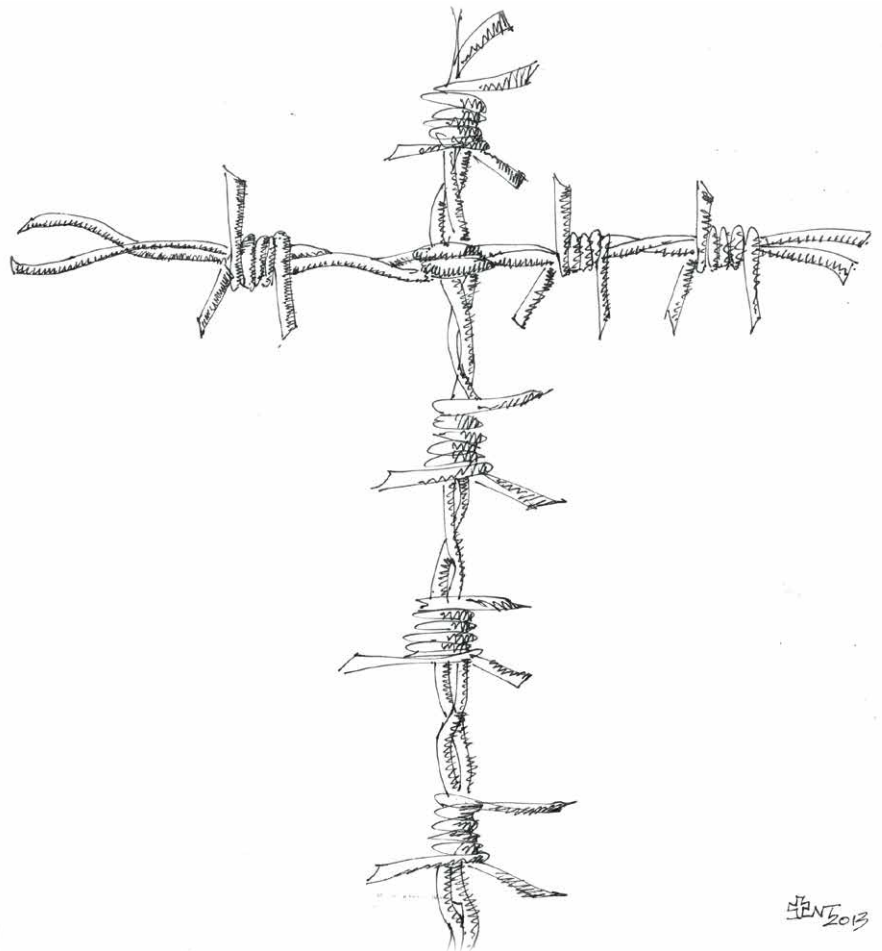
Praise and gratitude

Blessed is the church that offers praise and thanksgiving (cf. Psalms 50.14, Hebrews 13.15), not only extolling the beauty and glory of God, but also contemplating, reciting, and celebrating all that God has done throughout history.

Wise is the congregation that draws upon and learns from the Bible's own prayers of praise and thanksgiving for God's activity in the people's life as it gives form to its own prayer.

Questions

- How do you recognise God's action in history?
- Can you tell the story of your own church or of your own lives in the light of praise and thanksgiving? Why or why not?



HEINZ 2013

Praying in Jesus' name, through the Spirit

Blessed is the church that prays in Jesus' name,
acknowledging our union with our ascended and ever-present Lord.
Blessed is the worshipping community
that prays in and through the Holy Spirit,
desiring the gifts of the Holy Spirit,
and acknowledging that as we pray
the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness,
interceding for us according to the will of God (Romans 8.26-27),
and resisting the "cosmic powers of this present darkness" (Ephesians 6.12).

Questions

- How can you decide whether or not you are praying in Jesus' name?
- Can you share stories of how the Spirit has inspired your prayer?

3.3

Full range of human experience

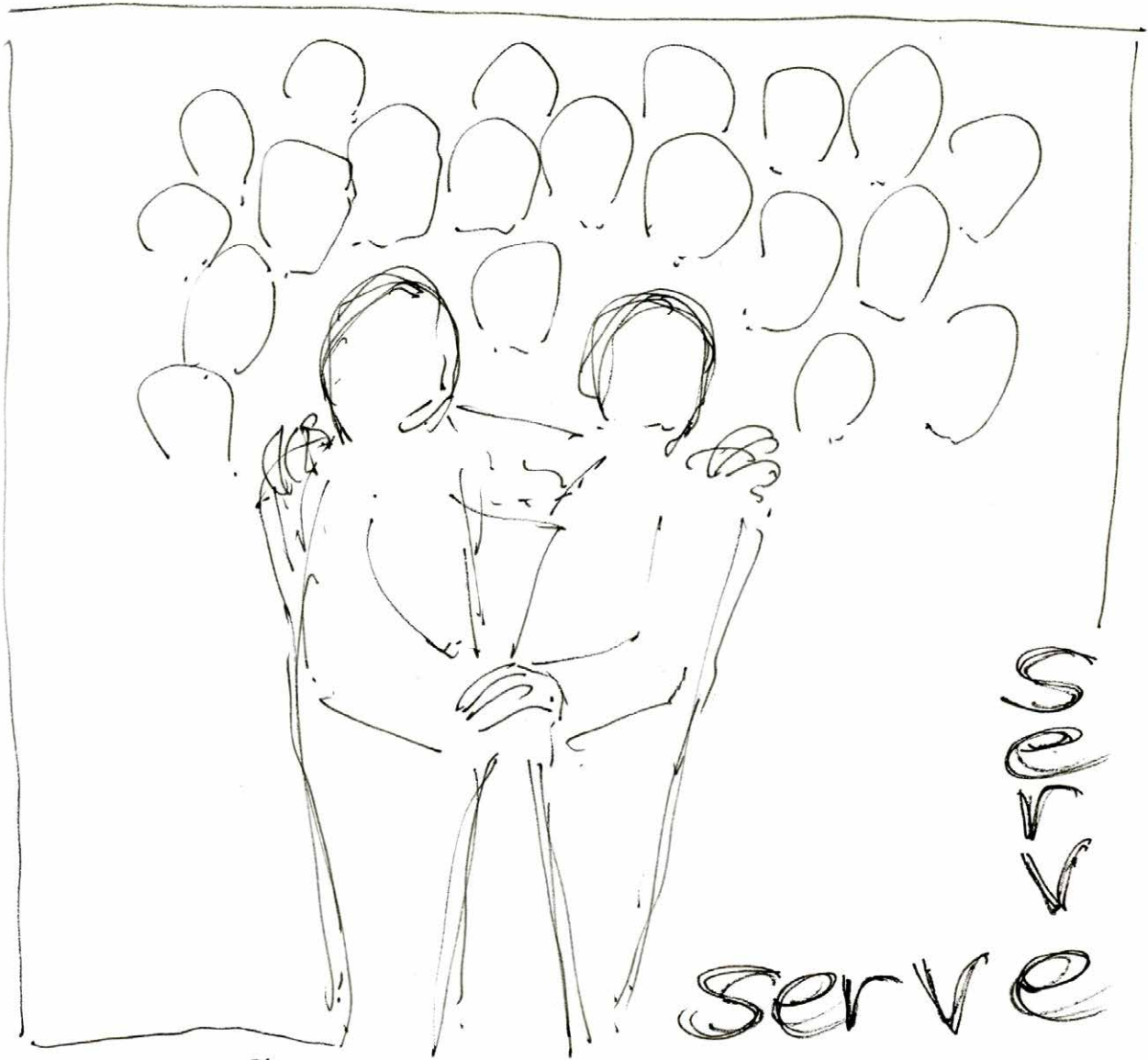
Wise is the church that,
following the example of the Psalms,
encourages honest and trusting prayers to God
that express the full range of human experience—
the “anatomy of the soul”—
spoken, sung or silent,
danced, dramatized or visualized—
prayers of celebration and lament,
trust and desperation,
supplication and intercession,
thanksgiving and confession,
healing and hope.
Blessed is the church that prays not only for its own needs,
but also for the needs of the world that God so loves.

Questions

- How can you be honest before God in worship?
- In what ways do you offer the ‘full range of human experience’ in your prayers?
- Do you pray more in church or at home for the needs of the world or for your own needs? Why?



SENT 2013



serve
↳

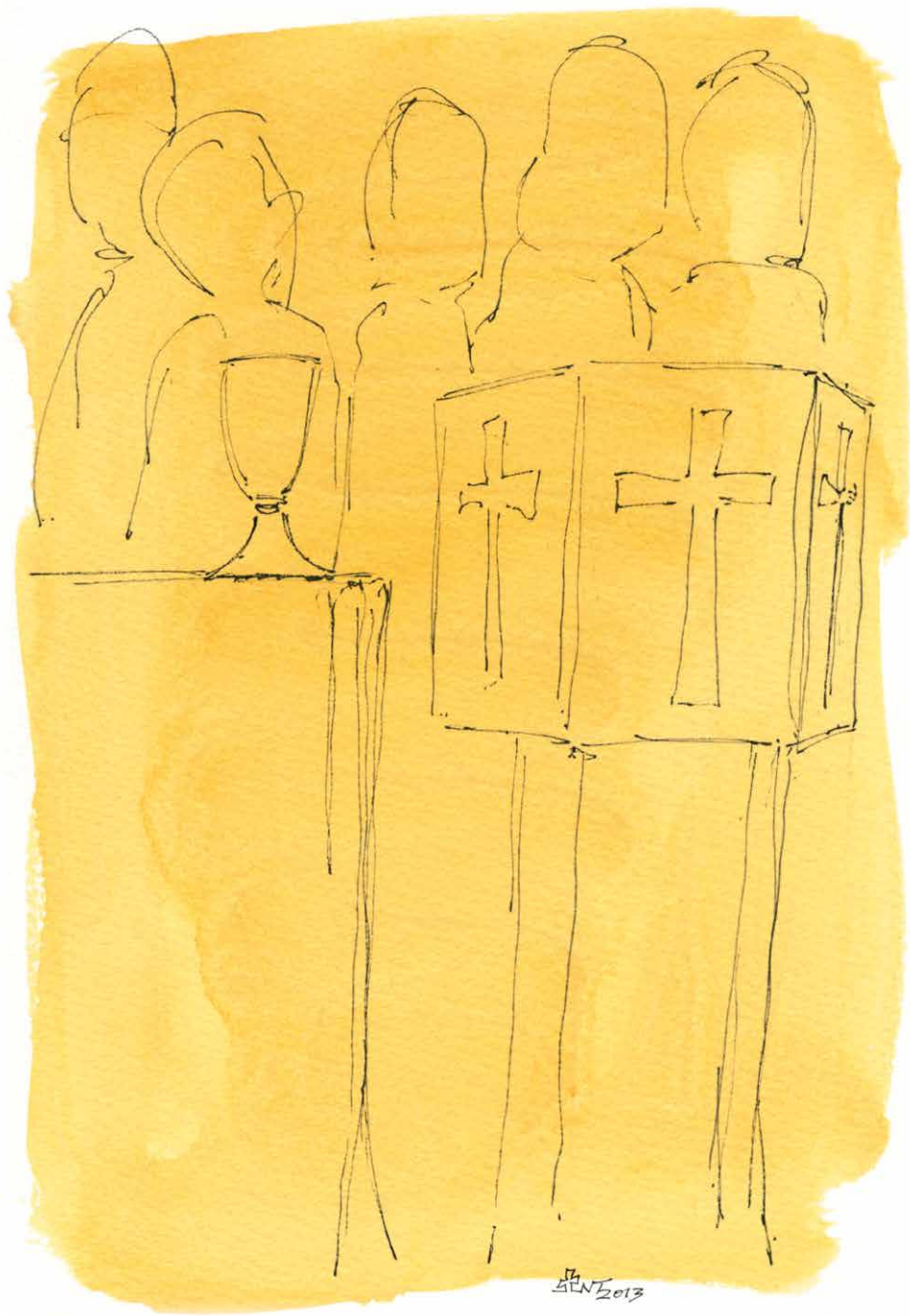
5/25/2014

Gifts and offerings

Wise is the church that gratefully practises the giving of gifts, time and talent, as an act of dedication and worship. Wise is the church which affirms that all of life is lived in service to God and neighbour, and that believers are called to be stewards of every gift of God.

Questions

- What acts of service beyond the church community are seen and encouraged as part of your own vocation?
- How can you support each other in discovering and using your gifts?



Baptizing and feasting



2013

Jesus' commands to baptise and celebrate the Lord's supper

Blessed is the church
that faithfully obeys Jesus' commands
"to make disciples,
baptising them
in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
and teaching them to obey
everything Jesus has commanded (Matthew 28:20)
and to "eat and drink in remembrance of me," (Luke 22.19-20)
receiving these signs
as occasions in which God works
to nourish and sustain,
comfort and challenge,
teach and transform us.

Questions

- What is the significance of water, bread and wine to your faith?
As an example of this, consider where the font is placed in your church.
Would words in worship alone be enough for you?
- Share some stories of how baptism or communion has been nourishment, challenge or transformation for you.

4.2

Baptism

Blessed is the congregation
that announces that their true identity
is found in Jesus Christ.

Blessed is the congregation
that proclaims how the waters of baptism
are a sign and seal
of God's promises
to wash us clean,
to adopt us into the body of Christ,
to send the Holy Spirit to renew, empower,
and resurrect us a to new life in Christ.

Blessed is the congregation
that proclaims how the waters of baptism
are also a sign and seal of God's call to renounce
sin and evil,
to embrace Christ, and our new identity in him
and to live a renewed and holy life.

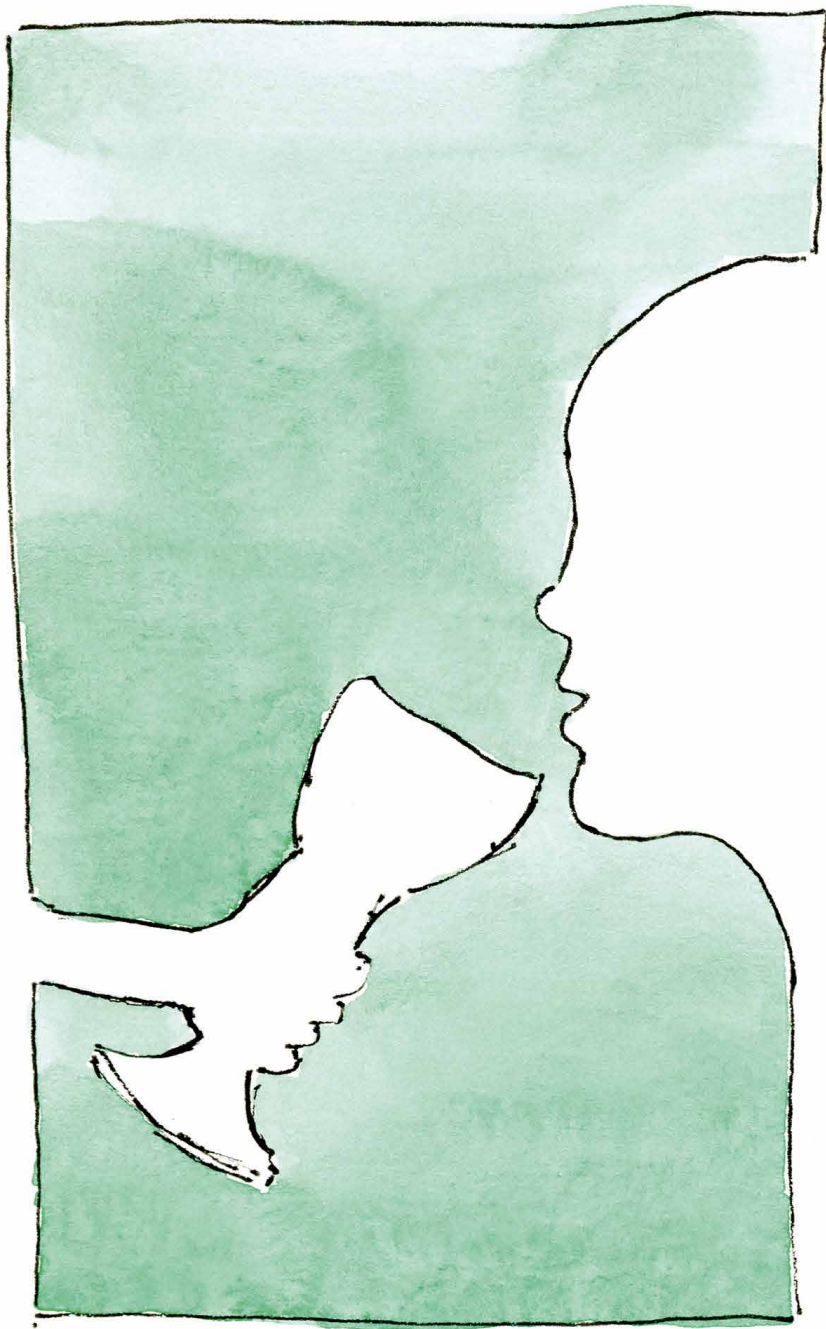
Wise is the community
who celebrates baptism joyfully
and remembers that baptism is a means of grace and encouragement
to live out our vows of covenant faithfulness.

Questions

- Do you remember your own baptism? How do you still recognise it and see it as important to you?
- In what ways is baptism remembered in your church?
- How are those who have been baptised in your church encouraged in their faith thereafter?



HEINZ 2013



5/25/2013

Lord's supper

Blessed is the church
 that regularly celebrates the Lord's Supper
 as a feast of thanksgiving, communion, and hope.
 Blessed is the congregation
 that not only gratefully remembers
 God's creating and redeeming work in Jesus Christ,
 knowing his presence in the breaking of the bread,
 but also gratefully receives the gift of union
 with Jesus Christ and Christ's body,
 and looks forward to the feast of the coming kingdom.
 Blessed is the congregation
 that shares this meal
 by "discerning the body of Christ" in its manifold oneness,
 by expressing hospitality for one another
 with grace and truth (1 Corinthians 11.29-33),
 and by reflecting God's hospitality for us
 in ministries of hospitality in the world.

Questions

- When you share communion, which of the meals of Jesus do you particularly remember (for example, the Last Supper with his friends, the breaking of bread at Emmaus, eating with tax collectors, the feeding of the five thousand)? In what way does this remembering affect the meaning of communion for you?
- How does your church encourage hospitality?





*A blessed and commissioned
people serving in Jesus' name*

5.1

God's sending

Blessed is the congregation
in which believers are
encouraged by God's gracious blessing,
and challenged by God's gracious call
to proclaim the good news of Jesus
and to live as a healing presence in the world
in the name of Jesus.

Questions

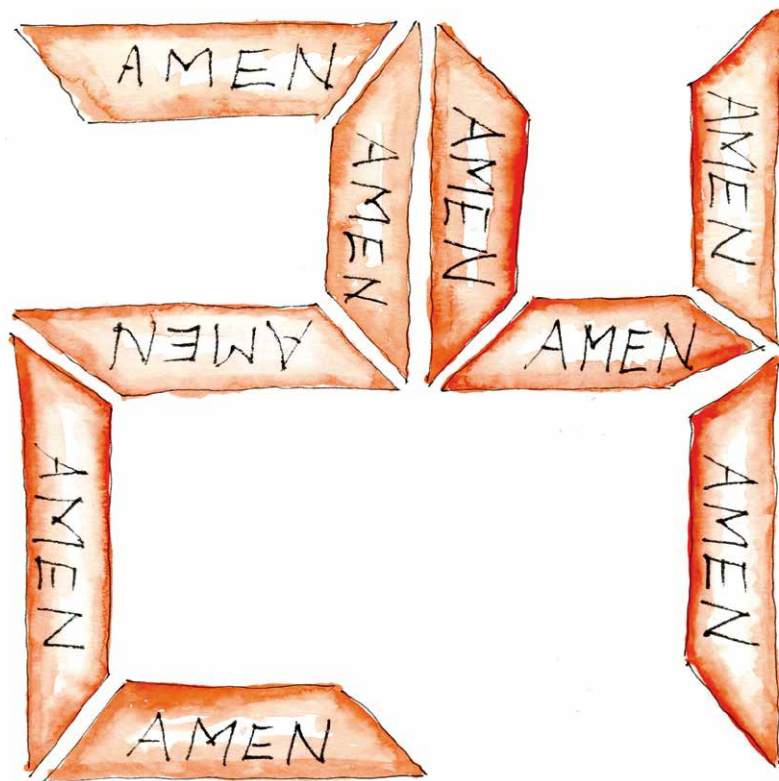
- What is the balance in your church between proclaiming God's good news in words that are spoken and in actions that live out the faith?
- How does your congregation encourage ministries of proclamation and presence in the wider world?

Daily worship

Wise is the community
that nourishes faith
by encouraging daily worship for all believers,
with emphasis on reading and meditating on God's Word,
seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit,
offering prayers of praise and petition,
singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,
listening for God in "sheer silence", (1 Kings 19.12)
and living every moment before the face of God.

Questions

- How is your own faith nourished and sustained day by day: through reading, prayer, song, silence or in other ways?
- Where do you find the presence of God in your everyday life and in the whole of creation?



5.3

Hospitality, evangelism and discipleship

Blessed are communities
in which hospitality
is practised in both public worship and in personal lives,
where strangers and guests are welcomed and embraced,
where the poor and marginalized, suffering and forsaken,
can find refuge under the shadow of God's wings.

Blessed are communities
in which all people are invited and challenged
to become disciples of Jesus,
receiving baptism and formation in the faith (cf. Matthew 28.19)

Questions

- How are strangers welcomed into your congregation? What is your role in this?
- Where do newcomers find the inspiration and challenge to become disciples of Jesus?

Formation for worship

Wise are congregations that invite and challenge believers of all ages and abilities to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3.18).
Blessed are congregations that nurture the faithful interplay of scripture, doctrines, practices, and the fruit of the Spirit.
Wise are congregations that deepen worship through reflection on and teaching about the meaning of worship practices.

Questions

- During the week, how do you reflect on the past Sunday’s worship?
- What opportunities are there in your church for reflection and discussion on matters of faith? Are all ages involved together in this discussion and reflection?



5.5

Worship, compassion, and justice

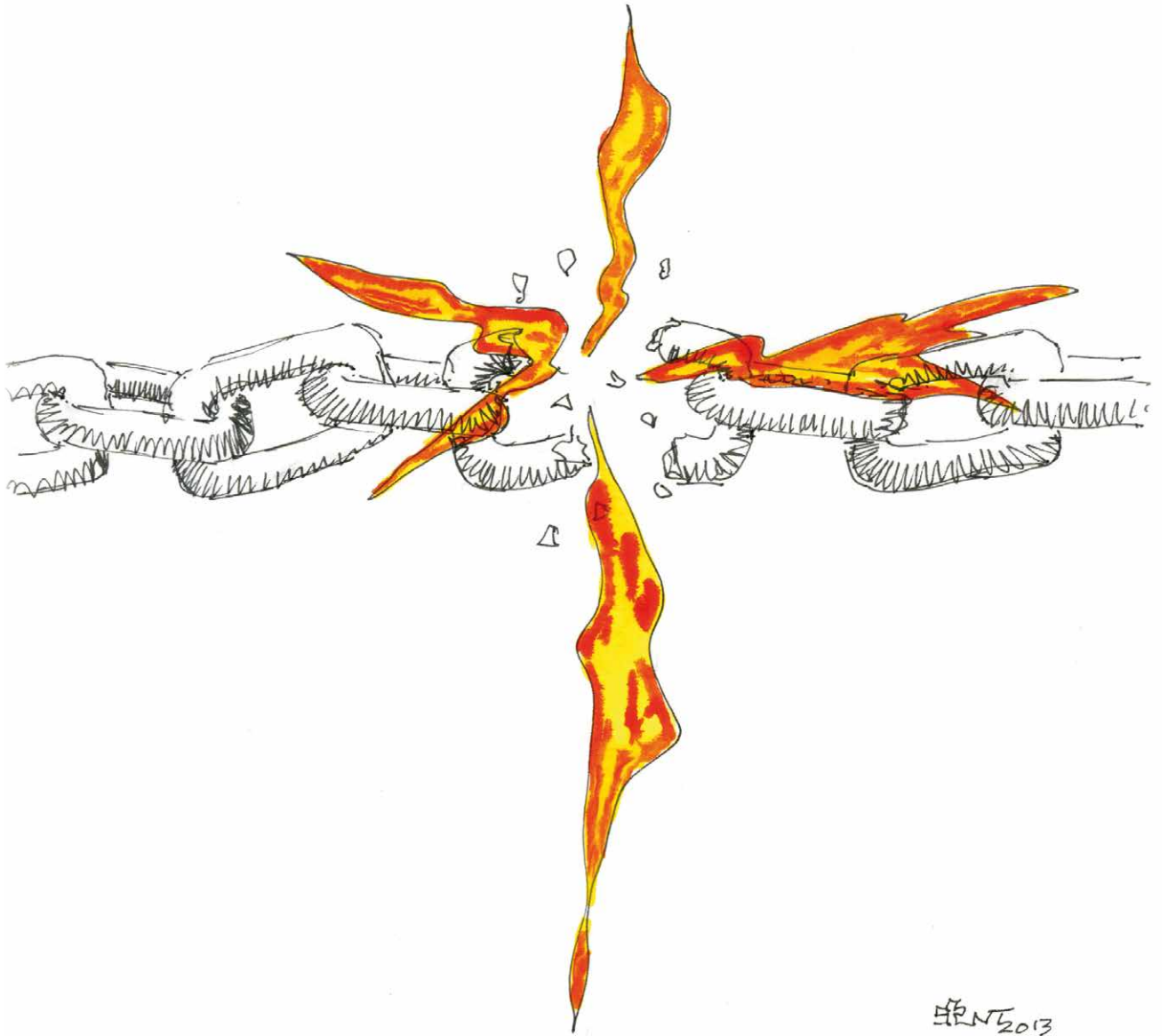
Blessed are congregations
whose public worship points to the one triune God,
and to Jesus' message
about the kingdom of God.

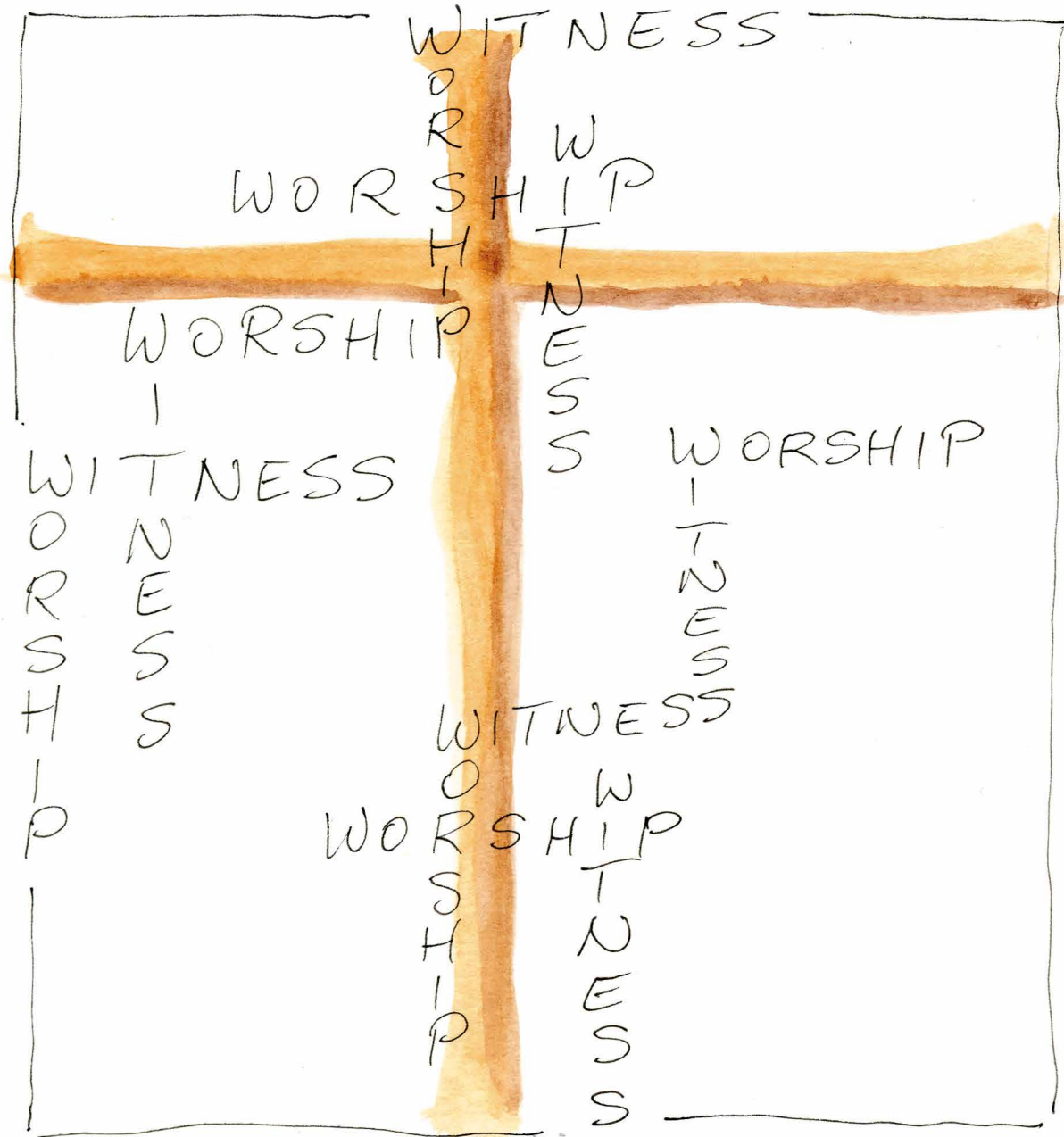
Blessed are congregations
whose corporate worship and public witness
are consistent with each other
and faithful to God's Word,
whose worship and witness are
a testimony to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Blessed are congregations who seek to receive
the liberating work of the Holy Spirit
who alone can break through hypocrisy
and through whom
justice and peace, worship and witness,
can truly embrace.

Questions

- In what ways does your congregation interpret Jesus' message about God's kingdom? Which are the gospel passages which inspire you in this?
- How does public witness in your life as a church connect with your worship together?





SENT 2013

Maranatha: Worship and Christian hope

Blessed are congregations
who are not content
to live only the present moment,
but whose worship expresses
the groaning of all creation
for the fullness of God's reign
in Jesus Christ.

Blessed are congregations
whose life together is summed up
in the certain hope of the prayer "Maranatha"—
"come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22.20).

Questions

- Do you dare to dream together of the fullness of God's kingdom? What might it look like?
- In what ways do your worship and your lives together now reflect that dream?

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Suggestions for using these ‘proverbs’ in local congregational life

There are many and varied ways in which these ‘proverbs’ can be used to stimulate reflection on the church’s offering of worship. Here are a few suggestions:

In meetings

Elders meetings – use a proverb as a starter for reflection at the beginning of the meeting.

Church meetings – take one or two proverbs at a time as the centre point for discussion.

In services

Preaching – expound one proverb or use the proverbs as a basis for a series of sermons.

Prayer – to provide a space for reflection – individually or in a service.

In study

Study groups – set up a series of five study groups to dig deeper into the proverbs.

Study days – take a day to focus on one section.

Worship leaders course – as a framework for discussion.

Church membership preparation – to help people reflect on the worship life of the church.

With children and young people

Asking children to look at the proverbs and offer their own versions.

Individual use

Meditate on one a day for a month.

Write a spiritual journal expanding on the meaning of each proverb.

With other churches

As a basis for getting together with other churches.

Ecumenical groups – use the proverbs as a basis for sharing understandings on worship.

Appendix 2 – The origin of these proverbs in the World Communion of Reformed Churches discussions

Receiving and Sharing Christian Wisdom across Continents and Centuries

Introduction

- The sharing of wisdom is a common practice in many cultures – Eastern and Western, Southern and Northern – and is particularly suited for learning and sharing across cultures, generations, and centuries, both in oral and written forms.
- The sharing of wisdom comprises a significant strand of the biblical literature, including Proverbs and proverb-like Psalms, Jesus' beatitudes and several Pauline exhortations. To share wisdom is to knit together the sinews of Christ's body, the church. Sharing wisdom is, thus, a central practice for global Christian fellowships, like the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). When the wisdom that is shared is a faithful echo and appropriation of scriptural wisdom, a faithful testimony to the Word and "Wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1.24), then this sharing of wisdom can be a sign of Pentecost, not Babel – a gift of the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of wisdom" (Ephesians 1.17).
- The purpose of this collection of proverbs about the practice of Christian worship is to build up the body of Christ for faithful service and ministry. This collection of proverbs is gathered by Reformed Christians.

It is at once a *catholic* collection, reflecting participation in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, and a *particular* collection, reflecting the unique history, theological convictions, and practices of Reformed communities worldwide. This document was drafted in response to mandates by both the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) at its 2004 Assembly in Accra, Ghana, and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) at its 2005 Assembly in Utrecht, the Netherlands, following a period of communication with member churches from both organisations. It was developed by the worship planning team for the 2010 WCRC Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, in consultation with pastors, teachers, and other leaders throughout the world, both within and outside of the Reformed tradition, and was refined by the worship and spiritual renewal section of the Uniting General Council.

- The document is designed to present a vision for worship and spiritual renewal in which we invite each other to deeper and more vital expression. It is not designed to impose a set of practices on member churches or to imply that worship in member churches already embodies the fullness of this wisdom.

The document is designed for several uses:

- 1. The document can be used within a given congregation or denomination to shape a conversation about the gifts, challenges, strengths and weaknesses of local practices.** Those leading these conversations could pause after each proverb and ask “how has God gifted us to practice this wisdom?”, “in what ways is God calling us to embody this wisdom more faithfully?” and “in what other ways would we express the wisdom of our practices related to this theme?” Each proverb is designed to elicit conversations that explore the connections between theological convictions and practices, conversations of testimony and spiritual discernment that are indispensable for fruitful ministry in any context.
- 2. The document can shape a conversation between and among congregations,** denominations, and believers from quite different cultural contexts. Those shaping these conversations could pause after each proverb and ask “how is God gifting each of us in our unique cultural contexts to practice this wisdom?” and “in what way might God be calling us to practice this more faithfully, particularly in light of what we learn from each other?”
- 3. The document is an invitation to collaborative in-depth study and further refinement.** Each proverb is

a summary of a field of research and Christian reflection, drawing upon work in biblical exegesis, theological reflection and historical scholarship. Each proverb could be fruitfully refined after continuing reflection in light of the challenges of faithful discipleship. Thus, this collection is not designed to be final or complete. It is designed to be open-ended: any member church or ecumenical partner can easily supplement this collection with its own materials. Future WCRC gatherings could also amend this collection by adding proverbs to respond to unique challenges that arise in the future. The ultimate goal of all of these uses, however, is not simply to enhance conversations or to result in a better document. The ultimate goal is nothing less than to elicit, by the Spirit’s power, the faithful and grateful worship of the triune God. May God’s Spirit bless these words and all who wrestle with them so that the church of Christ may be strengthened.

Note: for this edition of the document, the terms “church”, “congregation”, and “community” are used interchangeably, reflecting the different uses of our member churches. The terms “blessed” and “wise” alternate throughout the document, with the term “blessed” typically used to refer to blessings God gives when we follow biblical commands, and “wise” for judgments that congregations make in discerning God’s will. We anticipate further refinement of this usage, following responses from member churches.

Appendix 3 – Background note from the World Communion of Reformed Churches:

- The document responds to the mandate of World Alliance of Reformed Churches (2004) and Reformed Ecumenical Council (2005) to prepare a document on worship in the Reformed tradition.
- The document arises out of concerns and joys reported by member churches (2007-10).
- The document describes many common concerns, convictions, practices associated with the Reformed tradition.
- The document reflects the spirit of the World Communion of Reformed Churches as it articulates a vision for worship and wisdom about worship practices which can assist us in discerning God's will, without binding the consciences of our members.
- The document is adaptable, and promises to serve as a catalyst for ongoing learning and sharing among member churches, a means by which we can encourage each other to "grow in grace and knowledge in the Lord Jesus".

About the artist

Neil Thorogood was ordained into URC Ministry of Word and Sacraments in 1992 having trained at Mansfield College, Oxford. His ministries have been in Halifax, West Yorkshire and Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. In 2005 he was appointed Director of Pastoral Studies at Westminster College, Cambridge, becoming Principal in 2014. Art has been central to Neil's life and ministry. Creating highly visual worship led into using visual art for an MA at Northern College, Manchester. Since being at Westminster Neil has used art extensively in teaching. He teaches an MA module on the visual arts and pastoral theology. He tends to paint in oils, often on a large scale, and delights in charcoal. You can see a lot of his work on www.neilthorogood.com





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