Worship at the Edges: Redefining Evangelism

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The sending
The distribution of holy communion is coming to a close and we are singing Simeon’s song from Luke 2, the Nunc dimittis (Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace). We have seen with our own eyes the salvation of God, given to us in the bread and wine, given to us in and through the community. The pastor or lay minister distributing the food to those gathered around the table has spoken with a loud voice, audible for all to hear: “The body of Christ, given for you.” For we remember that the body of Christ given “for you” and the blood shed “for you” centers us, so to speak, in a community, in a communal sharing. It invites us into a communal identity, not an individual, private, self-focused centering. The scriptural “for you” is plural.

We have concluded the sharing of the body and the blood of the Christ. We have all, in bodily gesture or in our heart, knelt or bowed to receive that sacrament. We have all become what we have received—the body of Christ.

And now we come to the fourth and last part of the Sunday pattern for worship—the sending. “God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 93). Perhaps several
ministers of communion have been entrusted with the remaining elements from communion “to take to those who are absent from the assembly” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship Leaders Edition, p. 24). A prayer may have been said over these ministers and for those who will receive communion from them. Announcements have been made “especially those related to the assembly’s participation in God’s mission in the world” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 114). Perhaps an affirmation of Christian vocation has been used recognizing particular vocations of service in the church or service to the world—an affirmation, in a sense, of the various ways in which people live out their baptism (Evangelical Lutheran Worship Leaders Edition, p. 25). The blessing has been spoken and now, as we sing the sending song, people wait for the “dismissal.” We come to the last dialogue of our Sunday liturgy. We await the words—“Go in peace. Serve the Lord. Thanks be to God!”—and yet, these words appear sometimes so insignificant that we hardly notice them. Perhaps we are simply glad that the service has come to an end (that it is finally over!), or perhaps we are already thinking about the coffee hour (because we sure are getting thirsty!), or perhaps we are thinking about what else we still have to do today. We look at our watches. We barely take note of this concluding dialogue other than as a sign that the service is finished—that we are “dismissed.” And yet in this exchange we are actually summarizing everything that has happened in the pattern of worship we have celebrated. In these two phrases, we are preparing the ground for the continuation of the liturgy into the world—the “liturgy after the liturgy.”

Evangelical Lutheran Worship offers us several options for this sending dialogue. “Go in peace. Remember the poor,” or “Go in peace. Share the good news,” or “Go in peace. Christ is with you,” and of course “Go in peace. Serve the Lord.” Each of these liturgical exchanges affirms the pattern of worship in which we have just participated. And with our resounding response, “Thanks be to God,” we, too, affirm that this pattern is for the world. This pattern has welcomed our story,
our lives, and now gives us orientation in the world. We are sent out into the world as part of God’s mission.

What has this sending to do with the “center” that has been the focus of this little volume? We all know that “centers” can be dangerous things. Many abuses can be inflicted on individuals and communities because of a perceived “center” that becomes normative. Liturgists have been particularly susceptible to the temptation of establishing a nearly tyrannical center that must be observed without question. Curiously enough, those who have opposed renewal in worship or have argued against those reflecting on the rituals often establish their own tyrannical centers. They have fallen prey to the same temptation.

This temptation is always to make the “center” about us. Worship becomes about us. The Bible and its message become about us (that is, the Bible agrees with everything we like and disagrees with everything we disdain). Of course, this all-about-me focus is not the intent of our use of the word center or centripetal in the writing of this book. Timothy Wengert has already noted (p. 23), “at the fringes, we encounter the center. And, at the center, the fringes.” And again, citing Gordon Lathrop, Christian worship is about the center and the edges.

The center, in other words, does not exist without the edges. We could argue that the edges will always be there—the reality of human existence with its joys and its pains, with its tensions and contradictions, with its compromises and failings, with its surprises and its tragedies; the reality of suffering in the world, of useless suffering, inexplicable suffering of communities and peoples. The edges are always with us. But the center, Jesus Christ proclaimed as crucified and risen, can never be centripetal if it is not also at the edge.

Whenever we want to forget this characteristic of all centers, whenever we want to establish a center as definitive (even when we claim that center to be God—and perhaps especially then), we only fall into the trap about which Martin Luther already warned us. We are simply erecting a new altar to a God whom we have invented.
Nevertheless, God says: “I do not choose to come to you in My majesty and in the company of angels but in the guise of a poor beggar asking for bread.” You may ask: “How do you know this?” Christ replies: “I have revealed to you in My Word what form I would assume and to whom you should give. You do not ascend into heaven, where I am seated at the right hand of My heavenly Father, to give Me something; no, I come down to you in humility. I place flesh and blood before your door with the plea: Give Me a drink! Instead, you want to erect a convent for Me.”

The pattern of worship, the celebration of word and sacrament—at least as we argue it in this book—is a “pattern” that is continually broken open. It is a center that directs us to the edges. This pattern points us to the other who, by his or her appearance in our midst (for example, as a beggar) somehow, points out the failure of our often insular and hermetically sealed rituals. We become not only attentive to but also responsible for the cry of the other. It continually makes us aware of the other, our neighbor, in his or her need and of ourselves at the edges. In other words, the “center” is about sending us out into the world. Let us reflect more on the center and the edges before approaching the complex topic of evangelism or mission.

**Center broken open**

A less well-known comment from Luther helps us understand the notion of “center” or even of “pattern” as it is used in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. It is found in the *Treatise on the New Testament, That Is the Holy Mass*, written in 1520.

Christ, in order to prepare for himself an acceptable and beloved people, which should be bound together in unity through love, abolished the whole law of Moses. And that he might not give further occasion for divisions and sects, he appointed in return but one law or order for his entire people, and that was the holy
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mass. ... Henceforth, therefore, there is to be no other external order for the service of God except the mass. 60

What surprises us is Luther's use of the word law here in relation to the celebration of holy communion (or mass). How is he using this word? Could he be establishing a new legalistic "center" for worship? Yet, the fact that Luther had an aversion to law is nowhere clearer than in his writings on the liturgy. Despite his deep commitment to basic reformation insights such as communion in two kinds (bread and wine) and the accessibility of communion (as opposed to private masses), when these insights were "forced" upon the people during his absence from Wittenberg, Luther left his "protective custody" at the Wartburg Castle, risking his life, to restore the old order of the Catholic mass. Why? Because he was afraid that the reforming insights were being made into new principles or laws and that the people, rather than being helped, were being confused. Even fundamental evangelical priorities were not to become a new law or new centers.

And yet, he writes, there is one law, one order for the whole people. A cursory reading of Luther may leave us perplexed. On the one hand, for example, he argues in 1520 that all the frills—the singing, the organ playing, the bells, vestments, the ornaments, and all the gestures—are human inventions and have nothing to do with holy communion as it was celebrated by Jesus. And then, in a letter from 1539, when responding to a good friend in Brandenburg who was at a loss about how to respond to his sovereign's demand for all those "smells and bells," Luther responds that the prince can process as many times as he wants—as long as the word is proclaimed. 61

Luther demonstrates a radical freedom with regards to the liturgical enactment of the word because, I believe, he has two presuppositions always before him: first is an inner dynamic, an inner grammar, a center or pattern if you will; and secondly, this pattern is not confined to what happens during the one or two hours that worship is celebrated because this pattern, this grammar, is a grammar for living.
Worship is not to be confined to just the service on Sunday morning but actually forms the pattern of our lives in the world. The center is continually sent out to the edges.

The order that is the “holy mass” is not a new set of rules or principles—no matter how much we wish it were and no matter how much easier that may seem to make our lives. The order is not a new law or center but a language that sends us out and orients us in the world.

The liturgical movement outward is embodied in Luther’s Treatise on the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods. Here, Luther argues outward from the Sacrament of the Altar. Holy communion is truly a communio (Greek: synaxis) that, when received, forms a fellowship, a communion, a community. The signs of the sacrament—bread and wine—signify this fellowship. For example, just as the bread is made out of many grains mixed together, each losing its form but taking “upon itself the common body of the bread ... so it is and should be with us.” The fellowship consists in the happy exchange: Christ taking upon himself our form, which in turn “enkindles in us such love that we take on his form, rely upon his righteousness, life and blessedness.” But that is not all. We tend to overlook another part of this so-called happy exchange.

Again through this same love, we are to be changed and to make the infirmities of all other Christians our own; we are to take upon ourselves their form and their necessity, and all the good that is within our power we are to make theirs, that they may profit from it. That is the real fellowship, and that is the true significance of this sacrament.

The sacrament as real fellowship invites us into a different “grammar” of life—one in which communion with my neighbor, the other, is equated with my own communion in Jesus Christ. It is noteworthy that in this treatise on the Sacrament of the Altar Luther also deals with the subject of “brotherhoods.” In the late Middle Ages, the
“brotherhoods” were, among other things, to be a special “fraternity” dedicated to doing good works and helping others (perhaps something akin to our charitable organizations). Instead, Luther points out, they are full of gluttony and drunkenness where the moneys collected go only to the maintenance of the group.66

On the contrary, the “real fellowship” would “gather provisions and feed and serve a tableful or two of poor people, for the sake of God.”67 The pattern witnessed in the sharing of the bread and the wine, the pattern of God’s grace toward us, is lived out in the world and not simply within our local community. This distinction is important. We can all share to some degree within our local parish community. We can all pledge part of our income. We can all donate our time. We can all bring something to eat to the potluck supper (Lutherans are particularly good at this!). But the “real fellowship” is with those who are not like us. Luther calls them the poor—the ones who do not have enough to eat. We might call them the poor too, but we may also call them the homeless person, the immigrant, the single mom, the addict. We might also call them those who are in spiritual, physical, or mental distress—the bereaved, the sick, those in anguish, the disabled—all those suffering and in need within our communities. Are they at our table or are we like the “brotherhoods”? Is the table an open center?

**Evangelism**

We finally come to the word that is to be our main consideration: **evangelism.** The sending from the center is intimately connected to an understanding of evangelism far more inviting than the way we often use the word. The sending, as we have seen, pushes us out of the center toward the edges as people who have received Christ in the happy exchange. This exchange forms us into a pattern of life where we are all at the edges. There no longer are insiders and outsiders.

When we speak of the sending in the pattern of worship, we are talking about the relationship between the liturgy and what we do with the rest of our lives. There is a “grammar” in Christian worship
that takes us beyond the concepts and structures we assimilate in our respective cultures and even particular faith expressions. Worship that witnesses to the center—the promised presence of Jesus Christ—is worship that witnesses to the edges, to Jesus Christ in the poor and suffering. In other words, it witnesses to a God who is not found in the heavenly realms but to Christ who declares, “I am in the poor” and “You are the poor.” Worship that witnesses to the center involves assemblies in this reorientation—a reorientation of cultural values and theological presuppositions. Evangelism is one of them.

Evangelism has, for a long time, been understood as proclaiming the good news to those who have not heard it—to the “unreached” or to the “unchurched.” It presupposes, however, that our center is the center for everyone else. It presupposes that we have “God” whereas others do not. Classical understandings of evangelism establish a strong center that really does not need the edges other than to bring them into the center. It is no wonder that in earlier ages of the church evangelism in the Third World and among the poor was often confused with the political goals of European colonizers.

As Paul Rajashekar has stated in his contribution to The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution, “it is unhelpful to use the language of ‘unreached’ to refer to people who are not Christian by faith. It sort of begs the question, ‘Unreached by whom?’ It does not mean that God has not reached them. It is a fundamental Christian conviction that God’s love is universal and embraces all people, whether they acknowledge it or not.” Evangelism, then, exists in this tension between God’s universal love and the particular love of God toward humanity manifest in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Proclamation of the word in and through the pattern of worship helps navigate that tension. There is the particular proclamation of God’s love distributed in the bread and wine but there is also the breaking-open of the closed circle around the altar when those who have received bread and wine hear the beggar knocking at the door asking for bread. “I am,” God states in Luther’s words, “that beggar.”
Of course, Luther is here thinking of Matthew 25 ("just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me"). But the move outward, the move to the edges, has far-reaching implications for evangelism. The most significant of these is a redrawing of the boundaries between who is in and who is out, who is "reached" and who is "unreached." John F. Hoffmeyer has also proposed this redrawing of the boundaries. Writing specifically about mission, he states, "Unfortunately, the church's thinking about its mission has often been shaped by gap-bridging models. We have too often conceived mission as taking the word of God 'out' into the world, as if the word were not already present in the world." A dangerous model of two realms, of insiders and outsiders, arises.

Luther's understanding of the God who meets us in the beggar asking for bread disrupts the two realms we create. The beggar disrupts the center—any center—we attempt to establish. Luther's understanding of the celebration of holy communion as a real fellowship in which we take upon ourselves the suffering and infirmities of our neighbor—making them our own—disrupts the closed circles we attempt to construct. We cannot hide behind a "them and us" mentality. We are lost if we attempt to defend imaginary lines drawn between the suffering in the world and our lives in Christian communities. The believer is sent out into the world: "Go in peace. Remember the poor." Believers go out, sent as the body of Christ. But in the world they find Christ already there. They find Christ disseminated in the poor, the suffering, the dejected . . . Christ already in the world.

The "one law" (namely, the sacrament of bread and wine) embeds within it a blurring of the boundaries that results in a kind of "displacement" of the bread, body, life, and even God. In the displacement of God's very self into the world (just as the bread is distributed), we, the participants, are awakened to a joyous and free possibility for response. The "service of God" as holy communion—"the real fellowship"—engages us through worship to live out our lives in the world.
Worship, as witness to the center, witnesses to this response—continually sending us out of any closed circle, out of the community, displaced yet reoriented, to find Christ already displaced, waiting for us outside.

Evangelism, as “sending out,” is now refocused. Rather than being sent out “with a message,” the baptized are sent out to encounter others in all their blessings and suffering. The baptized are sent as the body of Christ but they also encounter the brokenness of Christ in the world. Thus, they encounter the body of Christ, particularly in those people who are suffering; for there, in the suffering of the neighbor, they encounter again, today, the cross of Jesus Christ. This refocusing suggests, of course, that the spread of the good news occurs not only through explicit, verbal proclamation of the word but through our lives as they are committed, engaged, conformed to the suffering in the world.

It is then of no small matter to evangelism that people are starving, that people are dying of HIV/AIDS, that there is still racial injustice here and in other parts of the world, that there is great material inequality, that there is violence (gun violence and sexual violence to name only two) hurting our communities. The “politics” of baptism (which Paul describes in Gal. 3:28, “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female”) and the “economics” of holy communion (that, as Paul admonishes us in 1 Cor. 11, there is enough for all) places the center at the edges—places us, as people of God, at the edges. “Bringing people to Jesus Christ” means being brought to Christ ourselves and taking ourselves—our lives, our comforts, our dreams—to the edges where our suffering neighbor is calling out for help.

Perhaps it was this amazing discovery, that they could heal the suffering of the world, that made the seventy return from their mission with joy, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us” (Luke 10:17). You will remember the beginning of this passage from Luke 10:1-5.
After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!'"

The disciples were sent out with little provisions, not even sandals! This command can of course be read as the disciples' utter dependence on the word to nourish and care for them during their mission. It can be understood as the disciples' complete desire to be one with the people, renouncing all privilege. However, I believe this passage can also be read liturgically. When on holy ground, sandals were removed. As Moses stood before the burning bush, he was told to remove his sandals (Exod. 3). This ritual and respect for holy places has remained alive in many religions. In the Gospels, the disciples are sent out into countryside to announce that the dominion of God is near to you (Luke 10:9), and they are sent out without sandals. They are sent out, we could say, onto holy ground. They are sent out onto the holy ground of the world where God is, in fact, already waiting for them. They are sent out into the world, but this sending is not bridging any gaps between two realms, between "them and us," it is not reaching out to the "unreached," rather it is engaging a communion with all those waiting in despair and in hope.

In the parallel passage from Matthew 10, the disciples are instructed to proclaim the good news, cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons (Matt. 10:7-8). The proclamation consists in breaking down barriers, in the establishment of justice in the land, in the healing of the sick and the reinsertion of those suffering from stigmatized disease into communion with God and the community. The proclamation consists in the work of justice...
and a radical communion—a real fellowship—with the infirmities of the neighbor.

**Christ and all the saints**

When worship draws us toward the center, it draws us finally toward Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. But it is now clearer that Christ is not trapped in any of our words, no matter how eloquent, no matter how theologically compelling; Christ is not trapped in any of our liturgies or symbols no matter how beautifully celebrated. To be sure, all these things—words, water, bread and wine, prayers and preaching—proclaim the promised presence of Christ to us (for here the infinite God deigns to be contained in broken, finite things). Yet that same proclamation sends us out to share the water of life with the thirsty, food with the hungry, justice for the oppressed and excluded. That is the heart of worship—forming our lives in the pattern of proclamation of Christ with us, inside, and Christ waiting for us, outside.

Another point we have sometimes missed in Luther’s early writing on the Lord’s supper is that Luther almost never mentions “Christ” without adding “and all the saints.” Christ and the communion of believers are inextricably linked. Incarnation and community are inseparable. The neighbor and the believer are both caught up in the incredible gift of God’s continual revelation through word and sacraments. Through the participation in the sacrament of holy communion, we are made one with Christ and with all the saints in their works, sufferings, and merit. Union with Christ does not lead to individualistic piety (Jesus and me) as has often happened in our present-day practice. By insisting on communion in the suffering and merit with all the saints, Luther gives no space for an individualist religion concerned only with personal salvation. Many grains become one bread means that we too become one with all the others.

This breaking open of the center—of our selves—becomes our call. In the sacrament, faith is given as gift rather than as possession.
In the distribution of Christ's body and blood, faith is given. In the distribution of God, God conforms us to Christ in the assembly, and God conforms us to Christ in the suffering neighbor. And evangelism happens then, not as our work, but as God's work of real fellowship in the world.

The immediacy of the sacrament, of God's revelation, is expressed symbolically, in language and in gesture. One of the primary recommendations of the early regulations for Reformation churches (Kirchenordnungen) was that there always be a common chest for the poor. After a lengthy chapter on the use and misuse of the mass (and instructions on how the mass should be enacted), Pastor Johannes Bugenhagen follows up with a chapter on the common chest. The line from the eucharist to the common chest, though not explicitly stated, is strongly suggested. "All the trials (literally 'cries for help') of body and soul of our brothers [and sisters], whether rich or poor, should be mine." We cannot truly share in holy communion without sharing in humanity's plight. However, now the correlation between the two is not "extrinsic" (that is, not a cause and effect, not "I do this in order to ... or because of ...") but rather is "living." The promise of God is living the liturgy in the pain of the world—at the edges. The symbolic language of the liturgy, the pattern of worship, is the language of faith and love, the language of communion with the other.

Through the eucharist (in the promise of forgiveness), we are made one with Christ and with the neighbor. The confrontation occurs in "being made one with." We are confronted in our self-centered tendencies whether they are self-justification, pride, individualism, self-gratification of religious emotions, or reason itself. Sin works through these different forms always isolating the individual from a restored communion with Christ and the neighbor.

For Luther, sin is strongly identified with rebellion against God and escape from human community. He considers those who are unwilling to be confronted by the sacrament to be people afraid of
the world. They do not want to suffer “disfavor, harm, shame, or death although it is God’s will that they be thus driven.” They do not want to share in the suffering to which forgiveness of sins calls them. They may be willing to pray in the liturgy but they minimize what beseeching entails. They may recognize the thanksgiving (the meaning of the Greek word *eucharistia*), but they ignore the sharing. Yet, the gift of faith that comes to us in word and sacrament is God reintegrating and re-creating a communion, not only between God and us but also between the neighbor and us. The eucharist “bursts open all the bolts and fetters of this perishing world of death.” The eucharist bursts open all the fetters and self-invented centers that impede communion.

The eucharist confronts us with a new language about the world, with a new order or law for life. Like the bread of life, we are broken and distributed; we share in the sufferings and the pain of Christ and in the sufferings and pain of the neighbor. The common chest set next to the eucharistic celebration is not duty or obligation, not discipline or self-mastery, but witnesses to our own suffering reality. The eucharist defines life as a continual involvement in the dying and rising of Christ that has no end until our bodily death and resurrection.

This confrontation with dying and rising in the eucharist is not merely an emotional or psychological drama. It has become far too easy to equate “awesome” religious emotion with a sense that we have “died,” that is, that we have given something up for God. The dying of which Luther speaks is a concrete participation in the death of Christ, in the suffering of ourselves and others. This participation in Jesus’ command, “Do this in remembrance of me” is not simply an inward act of the heart but an outward and public remembering. The believer is sent into the world: “Go in peace. Serve the Lord!”

**After words: being sent**

Already in the writing of Justin Martyr (a Christian theologian of the second century), we read that there was a collection and a sharing
with the poor, with orphans and widows, with those in want because of sickness or other reason, and with those in prison and the visiting strangers. The needs of all, Justin writes, are addressed. But in this text from Justin, we read about another sending: everyone shares in the “eucharisterized” (consecrated) food, and then this consecrated food, bread and wine, is sent via the deacons to those absent. The “eucharisterized” food sent out became known as the fermentum.

In Justin, the “eucharisterized” bread and wine, the fermentum, sent to all who were absent and the gifts collected for the poor and the needy are both ways in which the liturgy is participating in the world. Later, the fermentum was sent out from the bishop’s celebration at the main church to all the other churches in the region as a sign of the unity between the churches. But this sending did not have as its goal the establishment of the episcopal mass as the center; rather the sending was to be a sign of communion between all the churches. The eucharist was a ferment of union, of communion.

It is Luther who helps us make the connection between this fermentum, this eucharistic gesture, and evangelism. The fermentum sent out into the world, the body of Christ given to the world, is our own body, which we have become in the supper. We are the fermentum sent out from the liturgy. We are given to the world. We are sent out into the world as the body of Christ. But we are not sent out to bridge any gaps. We are not the “holy ones” who march out as Christian soldiers into the foreboding and hostile world.

We go out “in peace”—truly in peace—for this work, the work of evangelism, is not our doing. We go in peace because God has conformed us to Christ through the bath, the word, the meal, and even the suffering of our neighbor. It is not we who are going out into the world; it is not our reason, our goal, our ambition, our effort, our call that is sent out into the world to accomplish something. It is not by any effort or good work on our part that we are ever able to accomplish Christ’s mission in the world. We are sent out to serve the Lord. We are sent, not merely as a servant commanded to
accomplish a task or requirement, not as a servant dutifully obeying
the master, nor in any self-righteous extension of ourselves. Instead,
we are sent to encounter God as the abandoned man lying in the
street near a heating duct, as the woman selling her body, as the
addict stoned on the bench or in the bar, or as the single parent rais-
ing children without knowing from where the next check will come,
and in all the less dramatic wounds and hurts of the neighbors we
daily encounter.

Centripetal worship—worship that witnesses and draws us to the
center, to Jesus Christ and the promise of his presence—forms us
into a real fellowship and now sends us out as memory of a meal, as
“eucharisterized” food, as leaven of comfort and joy, of peace and jus-
tice, within the human family. Isn’t that evangelism in the world?
For reflection and discussion

1. How is the dynamic between “center” and “edges” presented in this chapter?

2. What does this redefinition mean for evangelism in your context?

3. Where do you see the mentality of “insider/outsider” operative in your local community?

4. How does Martin Luther’s insistence on holy communion as “real fellowship” (rather than just individualistic piety) affect the ways in which we celebrate the Lord’s supper?

5. Reflect back on all the chapters of this book. We began with the contrast between “centripetal worship” and worship that sends people away without recognizing the central things around which we gather: the forgiving and life-giving voice and presence of Christ in word and sacrament. Luther’s reform of worship taught us how, with Christ at the center of worship, Christians can enjoy a variety of forms and languages in worship while rejecting any hint of works righteousness and sacrifice. Similarly, we learned that all music in worship calls people to the center, where Christ meets us with forgiveness and mercy. Drawn to that same center, people become not an audience to be entertained but participants, free to work for the sake of all who come. Finally, the Christ we encounter at the center of worship encounters us at the edges of the Christian assembly, in the world, with those in need, transforming our evangelism into true care for others. How has learning these things and conversing about them changed or strengthened your understanding of worship?

6. An old Christmas hymn encourages us to “Come and worship . . . the newborn king.” This book has been an invitation to do the same. May angels sing that invitation in your ears throughout your life!