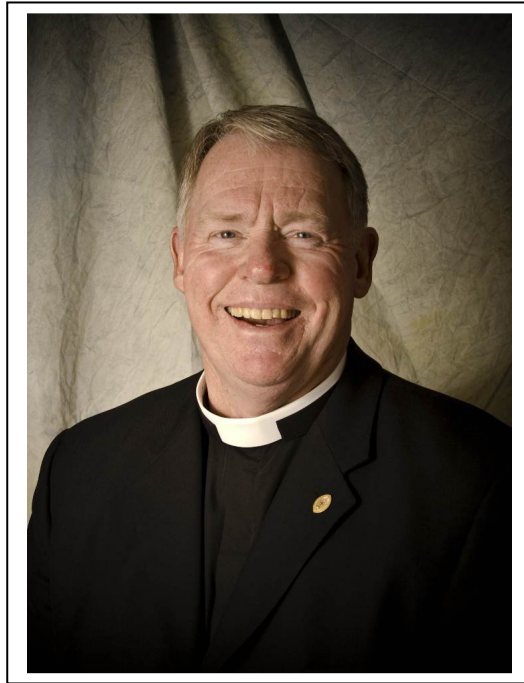


## The Very Reverend Gene R. Tucker



**Age (at time of Nominating Synod):** 63

**Diocese of Canonical Residence:**  
Springfield

**Current Position:**  
Rector, Trinity  
Mt. Vernon, Illinois

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None

## Résumé

### The Very Rev. Gene R. Tucker

#### RESUME

(1995 – Present)

#### PERSONAL

My wife, the former Deborah Jane Kinney, and I were living in Arlington, Virginia, in 1995. The children in our lives had both graduated from college and were no longer in the home. One of them had been married one year earlier.

My wife was working as a secretary for a Washington area think tank called the George C. Marshall Institute.

A bit later on, Deb began to work for a defense contractor, DRS Technologies. Again, she was doing secretarial work for them. For the first four years of our living in Illinois, Deb didn't work outside the home. About two years ago, however, she was employed by a law firm in Mt. Vernon, a position she still holds.

Once I had graduated from seminary, and was ordained, we moved from Arlington, Virginia, to Marion, Illinois, in October, 2004. For Deb, this was a major change in lifestyle for her, for she did not work for the first four years that we were in Illinois. Furthermore, she had never lived in a small city before, being a native Washingtonian who'd gone to undergraduate studies in St. Paul, Minnesota. Nevertheless, she was able to adjust to small town life quite well, and she immersed herself in all sorts of activities, inside and outside the Church.

The transition from life in the Washington, D. C. area to Marion, Illinois, was easy for me, for I'd grown up in Nebraska, living in small towns and in small cities. In fact, the last place I had lived in Nebraska was almost the same size as Marion, Illinois.

After three years in Marion, we moved 40 miles north to Mt. Vernon, Illinois, which is about the same size as Marion is, when I became Rector of Trinity Church.

#### PROFESSIONAL

Prior to being ordained, I had been a professional, classically trained, singer. My musical life was blessed by two major threads: my life as a member of the United States Army Chorus in Washington, D. C., and my life as a freelance professional singer, doing mostly symphony and oratorio work, outside the Army Chorus.

In 1995, I was a member of the Army Chorus, an organization I'd first joined in 1969, though there had been a time when I was out of the Army entirely, and was also away from the organization during a period when I'd been in the National Guard (as an infantryman).

In the Chorus, I sang in the Second Tenor section (The Army Chorus is the last all-male choral ensemble in the military). I had also begun to do advance planning work for the Chorus, meeting with groups we were going to sing for, and planning how our performance would work into their plans for the event we were to be a part of. Sometimes, this work entailed making arrangements for trips that we were to take. At other times, it entailed working with very high visibility events at the Capitol, the White House, the State Department, or other historical venues such as Ft. McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland.

In the course of time, I was promoted to Sergeant Major, and began to lead the advance planning efforts, supervising two others who assisted me. I had also been Librarian for the Chorus earlier in my career. As a Sergeant Major, I began to assume greater leadership roles, caring for the members of the Chorus, dealing with disciplinary problems (which were rare, fortunately), and working with higher echelons of leadership, both civilian and military, to coordinate the efforts of our group with the missions we'd been assigned

I retired from active service in the U. S. Army in March, 2002.

By 1995, my freelance professional singing career had pretty much ended, though I continued to teach voice at a private music school, the Levine School of Music, in Washington, D. C, until 1997. My students there were teenagers and adults. I taught voice and also music theory.

Some of the recordings I made during my career continue to be available commercially.

## CHURCH

Deb and I had been members of Christ Church, Georgetown, in the Diocese of Washington, since 1993. Gradually, we'd become more and more active in the life of this wonderful parish church, singing in its professional, 14 voice choir, becoming Lay Worship Leaders who shared in the duties of leading the Daily Office Monday through Friday, serving on various committee assignments, and assisting with worship responsibilities generally. Deb also served on the Altar Guild, learning the craft of caring for the altar very well from some very seasoned and expert teachers (a skill she passed along to others she was able to train), while I also did some teaching.

I'd been in conversation with the Rector of Christ Church about the possibility of ordination from a time shortly after our arrival in Georgetown. This conversation allowed further exploration of a sense of call to ordained ministry that had been present in my life since age 12 (though music tended to obscure it much of the time as the years went along). In 1997, the Rector made a visit to the Bishop of Washington to explore the possibility of continuing a discernment of this call at the diocesan level. The way did not seem open, he told me, following that meeting.

In due course, I met Bishop Peter Beckwith, Bishop of Springfield, through a mutual classmate at Virginia Theological Seminary (who was also a retired Army man). (I had begun taking classes at Virginia Seminary on a part-time basis in 1997.) Meeting Bishop Beckwith allowed further exploration of the possibility of ordained ministry in the Diocese of Springfield.

Once I had retired from the Army, I entered Virginia Seminary on a full-time basis, and I graduated in 2004.

I had been ordained as Deacon in June, 2004, and took up a position as Assisting Clergy in the Hale Deanery Team Ministry, serving there from October, 2004 – August, 2007. (I was ordained Priest in March, 2005.) I became Rector of Trinity, Mt. Vernon, in September, 2007.

Since arriving in Mt. Vernon, I have also undertaken a ministry with St. John's, Centralia, and I have served as Secretary of the Diocese of Springfield since 2005. Elected Dean of the Eastern Deanery in 2009, I now serve the six churches of the Eastern Deanery in that capacity, as well.

I was active in the ecumenical efforts of the ministerial association in Marion, and now here in Mt. Vernon as well. I currently serve as President of the ministerial association here.

## HOBBIES/OTHER INTERESTS

I have had a fascination with trains and with railroads generally since I was very young. In the early 1990s, this passion found concrete expression in a tourist railroad which is operated with volunteers, the Walkersville Southern Railroad, located northeast of Frederick, Maryland. Initially, I was the head of the Track Department, which was charge with the responsibility for rebuilding four miles of track that had been out-of-service for 20 years. Much of the work of rehabilitating the line was done the old fashioned way, by hand, with volunteer labor. Eventually, I also became a locomotive engineer. In due course, leadership changes took place within the organization, and I became President of the organization, and Chairman of the Board, as well. I assumed both positions in 1997. The organization enjoyed much success through the hard work of its volunteer members, though it was never well capitalized. Old, castoff equipment was obtained, moved to the site, and rebuilt, surplus track components were obtained at auctions and assembled into usable track, and historical buildings were acquired, redone, and put into service, as well. It was my task to keep the volunteers happy and motivated to be a part of the organization, to plan budgets and monitor financial outlays, and to deal with governmental regulators and inspectors at the state and federal levels. Today, the organization continues to mature. The State of Maryland, which owns the line we operate by lease agreement, has recently allocated an additional three miles of track to the Walkersville Southern. Of course, my relocation to the Diocese has curtailed my involvement in the railroad's life. Nowadays, I get to lend a hand to its activities only two or three times a year.

Another passion I have harbored for a long time is bicycle riding. I got interested in this type of physical activity during the gas crisis of 1973, and the interest "took".

Still another interest is old cars and old fire trucks. I currently own a 1960 International/Howe fire engine, which I use for parades.

## Written Responses to Questions by the Nominee

### The Very Reverend Gene R. Tucker

#### 1. Who do you say Jesus Christ is?

Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord.

As Lord, He is God with us, Emmanuel. He is “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1: 15)

As Savior, I can say that “I have been saved, I am being saved, and I shall be saved.”

a. I have been saved:

- God’s righteousness & holiness are seen in Jesus Christ’s perfect, sinless life.
- By His atoning death on the cross, our sins are covered, i.e., God sees our sinfulness through the lens of Jesus Christ’s sinlessness.

- I cannot attain to God’s righteousness by my own efforts. So, I am saved by Christ’s saving work.

- We come into fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, a free gift which we accept by faith. In Baptism, we are “Marked as Christ’s own forever.”

b. I am being saved: The process of sanctification

- Through presence of Jesus Christ within, and with assistance of Holy Spirit, we grow more and more into the full stature of Christ’s holiness. I often tell my congregation that I am “praying for a long life, for I am a ‘work in progress’ ”.

- How does this process of sanctification proceed? It progresses through reading/study/meditating upon Scripture, and in sharing in the sacramental life of the Body of Christ (the Church), especially in receiving Christ through the Eucharist.

c. I shall be saved: Through Christ’s redeeming sacrifice, I shall be forever with God, for death has been conquered through His resurrection. This is the great Christian hope (I Corinthians 15).

#### 2. What is the Gospel message?

It’s important to define to define terms we use. The word “Gospel” comes from the Greek (*euangelion*), which literally means the “good news”.

What is the Good News, then? I think these are the important aspects of God’s good news:

- God saves His people, time and again. (We recall God's saving acts in the opening prayer of the Eucharistic Prayer, right after the "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord", which recounts God's saving acts in various ways down through history.)

- Some examples of God's saving acts: 1. In OT times, with Noah, Abraham, Moses, the prophets, 2. Through life, teachings, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and 3. Through the continuing presence of Christ within us, and with the abiding guidance/empowering work of the Holy Spirit.

God's saving of His people, down through time, means that we are not forgotten, we are not alone in this life, for God has reconciled us to Himself, breaking down the barrier of sin which had separated us from Him and from each other.

This is the free gift of God, the work having been done by Jesus Christ, which we receive by faith.

God does the work, and we benefit from that work.

### **3. What is your understanding of "Mission" and "Ministry"?**

Here again, I think it's important to define the terms we use. Accordingly:

- Mission: Coming from the Latin verb "to send", mission is the work we are sent out by God to do.

1. In being sent by God, we look beyond our own parochial interests/needs to "seek and serve Christ in all persons" (as we affirm in the Baptismal Covenant, Book of Common Prayer – BCP - p. 305).

2. What is the Mission of the Church, then? The Catechism states that the mission of the Church is to "restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." (BCP p. 855)

- Ministry: I am reminded that the English word "ministry" has as its origin the same Latin word from which we get "minus". So, ministry consists of those tasks which we undertake, by which we offer ourselves in service to God and to others. It is a process by which we empty ourselves, placing a higher value on God's call upon us, than we place upon ourselves and our own welfare.

1. It's extremely important to remember that all of us are ministers. The Catechism defines the ministries and the duties of all four orders in the Church: Laity, Bishops, Priests and Deacons (BCP pp. 855 – 856). So, that means that the ordained are not the only ministers in the Church. All of us are ministers.

2. God calls every one of us into a ministry of some sort, according to the "measure of faith" we have been given (Romans 12: 3), and according to the gifts we have been entrusted with.

I think the “bottom line” in ministry is simply this: God never leaves us where He finds us, not in terms of our sense of the ministries to which He calls us, and not in the sense of where He sends us to carry out those ministries.

**4. Provide an autobiographical sketch of your life, including those turning points which were significant on your spiritual development.**

From my early childhood years in Nebraska, I grew up in the fundamentalist tradition, from about age six until I left home to enter music conservatory. As is customary with our life’s experiences, there were some positive and not-so-positive legacies which stem from this period: I can perceive the following aspects of this period in my life:

- Positive: The fundamentalists often harbor a deep love and respect for Holy Scripture, an earnest desire to discern what God’s will is in everything that they do, and they seek to make application of Christ’s teachings to every aspect of daily living.

- Not-so-positive: However, there seemed to be an extreme narrowness of perspective which allowed for no deviation from what was perceived as the “only right way”, and there seemed to be a disdain for others who differed from us which seemed to border on hatred at times. Fundamentalism is marked by a literalist approach to Holy Scripture, an approach which diminished an ability to see the richness of variety in the various literary forms within Scripture, and there seemed to be an overriding seriousness which often didn’t allow a sense of delight in seeing the humorous sides of life.

Once I left home to enter conservatory years in Rochester, NY, I began to feel that the fundamentalism of my upbringing was like a “shirt that didn’t fit” any longer. I was fortunate to secure a singing position at St. Paul’s Church in Rochester, during my first year in conservatory. As I began to sing there, three questions arose in my mind:

1. “What is this strange Prayer Book?”
2. “What are these strange customs and practices?”
3. “What is this wonderful and glorious music?” Music served as the entrée into Episcopal liturgical worship.

Once I graduated from conservatory, I then became a member of the U. S. Army Chorus in Washington, D. C. Once in Washington, when I saw the National Cathedral, I said, “This is where I want to sing!” Some months later, I did begin to sing at the Cathedral, an association that lasted about 25 years.

As it had earlier, music provided the entryway into fine, Episcopal worship as I experienced it at the Cathedral. Gradually, though, I became more and more interested in worship’s historical and biblical roots, and then was confirmed in 1973 at the Cathedral.

Once I’d been confirmed, I remember thinking that “I’m home!”

Since then, I have continued to value, as an Episcopalian, our fine liturgical heritage, our love for Holy Scripture, our Catholic & Reformed tradition, our diversity and our willingness to ask the “tough questions”, our willingness to wrestle with the faith, and our attempts to apply that faith to our daily lives.

Episcopalians value a sense of humor and delight in life, generally, and I think this aspect of being a Christian of the Episcopal persuasion has allowed a sense of humor to develop within me that might have been suppressed during my fundamentalist years.

### **5. Describe your rule of life in detail:**

The Benedictine values of Work, Study, Prayer are basic to my understanding of a walk with God. (These values are also foundational for our Episcopal/Anglican spiritual heritage.)

I live these values out accordingly:

1. Study: Holy Scripture is the primary source which provides us with the record of God’s working in people’s lives, with the record of God’s saving acts, particularly in the life/teachings, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Regular study of Scripture is a must for me, and this practice stems from the legacy of my upbringing.

2. Prayer: The Daily Office: I pray the daily office each day, Morning and/or Evening Prayer. In so doing, I share with Christians across the world in this daily cycle of prayer.

3. Work: Faith in action...Things done throughout each day, no matter what they are, also constitute an act of worship.

I also value meditation very highly. I often spend an hour or more nearly every night meditating on something I’ve read during the day. I also use this time to pray for others according to their needs, and to praise God for His goodness, mercy and grace in my life, and in the lives of others.

Worship is also central to my life. Even though I am a priest, I value worshipping regularly with others, whether or not I am leading worship in some way, or not. As a priest, I do not lay aside the duties which all Christians have, which includes “to follow Christ, to come together week by week for corporate worship, and to work, pray and give for the spread of the kingdom of God.” (Catechism, BCP p. 856)

**6. Based on your reading of the Diocesan Profile (including the Survey), and any other knowledge you have, what do you see that is positive, and what do you see that is challenging for the next Bishop of Springfield?**

Some general comments are in order about the state of the Church and the society in which it finds itself:

1. Being the Church is a difficult task in the age in which we live. Society as a whole is deeply polarized and conflicted, and the Church is also deeply polarized and conflicted in various ways. In some ways, the Church reflects the society around us in its polarities and difficulties.

2. But, I think a sense of perspective is necessary. The Church faces challenges in each and every age, even if the challenge is that the Church seems to be slumbering, enjoying a period of peace and contentment during which people seem to be asleep (mind you: I wouldn't mind having a period of peace and contentment, even if for a little while, these days!). Our age is no different. We face challenges today, just as Christians have always had to do, and we should keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is often the most active during times of conflict and challenge.

I believe the new bishop will be blessed by some of the *positive strengths* which are to be found in the Diocese of Springfield:

1. Diocese of Springfield is blessed to have very dedicated people, many of whom have been Christians for quite awhile.

2. The survey shows that a significant number harbor a deep sense of respect for Holy Scripture and its place in guiding our lives in Christ.

3. The survey also shows that many value a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

4. There is a deep longing for reconciliation between various parts of the Diocese, and between the Diocese and the wider Church.

But, there are some *challenges* to be faced, as well, including:

1. The Church as a whole is facing an era in which many changes are taking place, both within the Church, and outside it.

a. Changes that are taking place *within the Church*: Some of the changes that The Episcopal Church (TEC) has embraced in recent years have prompted a wide variety of responses, ranging from:

- Departures from the Church,
- Some express a sense of loyalty to TEC, no matter what,
- Some express a sense of bewilderment as to “what all the fuss is about”,
- Some advocate for even more changes of the sort that have already been adopted.

It's important to say that this range of responses constitute fairly normal reactions to any sort of change, no matter what the changes themselves are, or whether or not the changes are desirable or undesirable.

b. Changes that are taking place *outside the Church*: Society itself is changing rapidly. Many seem too busy for matters of faith, and many do not have the time/inclination to join a "club". Society is becoming more and more like the Greco-Roman world into which the Church was thrust 2,000 years ago. While that is a challenge, it also offers us the opportunity to study carefully what the Church did to engage the culture of that time, so as to learn clues about how we should engage the culture today.

c. The healing of relationships and restoration of wholeness to the Diocese is going to have to be a top priority for the next Bishop. This will be a major challenge for the new bishop, and its importance to the people of the Diocese is underscored by the number of responses from people who cite this concern.

How should the new bishop be guided in addressing this challenge? I think these principles should inform that process:

- Too often, the world's attitudes creep into the behaviors and attitudes of God's people: We tend to make those who differ from us the "enemy". We label, we become polarized, we seek to defeat, we make those we differ from the "enemy". We act like hatred is a cardinal virtue.

- But we in the Church are called to behave differently, to love those within the Body of Christ, and to care for them, even if we differ from them in some way or another.

- The Church's witness will be strengthened if we will adhere to this standard of love and care. There can be no more effective witness to the power of Christ within and among us, than if outsiders can say, "See how these Christians love one another!"

One final comment: The Church engaged the society of the Greco-Roman world by expressing a deep love and care for all persons, whether they were slave or free, Greek or Jew, rich or poor. It also maintained the teachings of the apostles, even when those teachings led them into sharp conflict with the pagan world around them. We are called to do the same, it seems to me.

## **7. Describe your understanding of leadership, particularly as it would be exercised as a Bishop.**

Anyone in Christian leadership must be guided by our Lord Jesus Christ's model of leadership: In Luke 22: 24 - 25, we read the account of Jesus' response to a dispute which had arisen among the disciples as to who would be regarded as the greatest. In response, Jesus said, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you, rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves." Then, He adds, "For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves."

It follows from this account that all Christian leadership must be of the servant – leader variety, in which the one who leads submits him/herself to Christ, first of all, and, following that submission to the Lord, the individual is able to offer him/herself in service to others, acting as a minister to them on behalf of Christ.

The qualities of good leadership that are important to me are:

1. The ability to listen: "God gave me two ears so I can listen more than I talk," is the old adage that comes to mind here. Listening is critical, listening with ears, mind and heart.

2. Be an "encourager": A good leader finds ways to encourage people to discover their own talents/abilities/divinely given gifts.

3. Placing a high value on collegiality: We as Episcopalians value the consensus of the Church as it is reached when laity, deacons, priests and bishops come together to make decisions. No one of us has a "lock on the truth". Indeed, I can safely say that "I haven't been wrong since the last time, and it's a certainty that I won't be wrong again until the next time." So, the wisdom, perspective and understanding of others is key to understanding and implementing God's will.

4. "Lead, follow, or get out of the way": This saying (from my Army days) holds a good deal of truth: There are times when one in a position of leadership will need to exercise that office of leadership, but at other times, others will exercise their leadership according to their roles and according to the gifts God has given them (I think of St. Paul's description of the importance of differing gifts as we read it in I Corinthians 12), while at other times, it's best for the leader to simply get out of the way and allow forward movement.

5. A sense of humor is valuable: Growing up, I had a wonderful example to emulate in my Danish grandfather's irrepressible sense of humor. He was a man who had a hard and sometimes tragic life, yet his sense of humor did a lot to enable him to maintain a healthy sense of balance in his life.

**8. A Bishop is called to “guard the faith, unity and discipline of the Church” (BCP p. 517). How do you understand this charge as it related to the current crisis and other challenges within the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion?**

We should begin with some general comments about the state of the Church and its episcopal leadership today:

1. The old image of the Bishop as everyone’s grandfather is gone: I recall vividly dear Bishop Creighton in the Diocese of Washington, who confirmed me in 1973....he was the perfect image of everyone’s grandfather. But being a bishop these days is quite a different matter. It is sometimes a difficult, often nearly impossible task, and one that a person should be willing to undertake only with a healthy degree of reluctance, in my view.

2. The charge to the bishop at consecration to “guard the faith, unity and discipline of the Church” places in the bishop’s lap tasks which are at often at odds with each other in the Church today: I believe some of the reasons for this are:

a. Faith: we do not share a common view of what the faith is, and what it calls us to do. Some see the Church’s mission as the reunification of people with God and with each other, while others sense the Church’s mission is to promote environmental stewardship, while still others suggest that the Millenium Development Goals or the betterment of society are paramount in importance. While all of these are worthy goals, we would do well to come to a better consensus about what the Church’s central mission and ministry is.

b. Unity: Consequently, our unity is imperiled. Some four dioceses have now left the Church, as have other parishes, over the changes that have taken place in recent years. (Again, I refer to my answer, given earlier, about the natural responses to change, regardless of the merits of the changes). What we are seeing is the normal fracturing of consensus over what we must correctly describe as major changes in the received teaching of the apostolic faith which has been handed down to us.

c. Discipline: Our discipline is also imperiled. Canons and rubrics are often ignored, or are outrightly broken, and there seems to be little sense that, if we are to survive as a body, there must be some limits on our behaviors, as it has been discerned by the consensus of the faithful, and as it is expressed in the Constitution, Canons, and rubrics of the Prayer Book.

What might a bishop do to help solve these problems? I think the following merit consideration:

1. This saying applies: “In essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity”.

a. We must come to a better consensus about what is essential to the Christian faith. A bishop is called, by virtue of the charge which is made at consecration to “share in the leadership of the Church throughout the world.” (BCP p. 517). A part of the leadership that a bishop can provide is to articulate what the essentials of the faith are. Such essentials are to be found in Holy Scripture, first and foremost, in right reason, and in the traditions of the Church, (as the great Anglican theologian, Richard Hooker, articulated), it seems to me.

b. Once we've determined what is essential, and what is not, we can begin to restore a sense of trust, trust which is currently broken or impaired, between various parts of the Church, and with the wider Anglican Communion as a whole.

c. Of paramount importance is the cardinal virtue of charity, charity (love) in all things, and for all persons. Such love must be shown to all, and particularly to those with whom we differ, and for those whom we may not particularly like.

**9. Describe your liturgical style; include in your answer your understanding of the place of preaching and the use of music in the liturgy.**

Liturgy is, at its heart, drama. It is the remembering of the drama of Christ's life, death and resurrection. So, a proper sense of the dramatic is essential to leading worship, in accordance with liturgical sensibilities.

Worship is to be the vehicle by which we recall God's holiness, awesomeness, and love. God is the audience for worship (we are not!). So, a sense that worship is a window into the otherworldliness of God is also valuable.

I believe that liturgy serves to "protect the people from the priest", from individualism, from fads, and from values which stem from entertainment, not worship.

With regard to preaching, a wonderful image which stems from my seminary days has remained with me. This image casts preaching in the sense of a breaking open of the word, which is shared with all present, in much the same way that the Eucharistic bread will be broken open and shared with all present in the Eucharist later on. As such, preaching ought to seriously and deeply engage the lectionary for the day, and it ought to seek to plant within each listener a love for Holy Scripture and a desire to learn more about its insights.

Music: I will admit my background as a classically trained singer influences heavily my convictions about the proper place and importance of music in the support of worship. St. Augustine of Hippo is thought to have said, "Those who sing well, pray twice." Some of us will sing better than others, obviously. But the central truth of Augustine's comment underscores the importance of music in worship, something that has been true since Old Testament times. For music, whether it is traditional hymns, gospel songs, or praise songs, and whether it is accompanied by a large organ, a guitar, or a praise band, often has the capability to express the mysteries of the faith in ways that nothing else can. Music also enhances our ability to remember the truths we've sung and heard.