An Aspirational Customary for Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist in the Diocese of Springfield

Foreword

Not everybody knows very much about liturgy. Even among clergy, the level of expertise varies widely, as does the level of interest, if the truth were fully told. But hardly anyone, lay or ordained, lacks strong opinions about what they want to see and hear, or not see and not hear, when they come to church on Sunday. So, even though the Ordinary is the chief liturgical officer of the diocese, with an inherent teaching office, I contemplate the publication of this customary with no small degree of trepidation, realizing that it will probably evoke an array of responses.

Hence, the modifier aspirational is in the title. Some clergy of the diocese who are well-schooled in the matter may take exception to some of what is offered here. Others may find it conceptually agreeable but be aware of pastoral realities in their local situations that dictate restraint in implementation. So this customary is not intended to be directive, and should not be read as such. Nonetheless, this is not merely the sharing of my own personal tastes and opinions. I can assure anyone that I have tastes and opinions that go into much finer detail than anything offered here! Rather, I have endeavored to connect both the spirit and substance of nearly a century of liturgical scholarship and renewal with the specific texts and rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer (1979), bringing to bear more than two decades of parish experience in planning and executing liturgy.

For the most part, I have attempted to set forth principles that are applicable across the range of physical and social circumstances in the Eucharistic Communities of the Diocese of Springfield. They are oriented neither toward large churches nor toward small ones, and generally do not promote practices that have been badges of any particular style of churchmanship. To the extent that I have a focused hope for any sort of outcome from this effort, it would be that clergy and laity who take responsibility for planning celebrations of the Holy Eucharist cultivate the habit of "thinking liturgically"—that is, laying aside the various mental maps we bring to the craft of worship planning, maps that define an ideal that we may subliminally associate with "real church," and, instead, give the liturgy's own soul space in which to operate and roam in its natural habitat, for the glory of God, the salvation of our souls, the building up of the Church, and the life of the world.

+Daniel Springfield
Candlemas 2014
The Entrance Rite

1.0 This term covers everything up to and including the Collect of the Day.

1.1 Liturgy planners should make decisions mindful of the liturgical season or occasion, the character of the liturgical space, and the character of the liturgical assembly (particularly, the number of people who will be present).

1.2 As a general rule, the smaller the assembly and the smaller the liturgical space, the simpler the ceremonial and the simpler the music should be. In larger spaces, and when more people are present, and when musical resources are more abundant, then more elaborate ceremonial and more challenging music may be desirable.

1.3 When the assembly is small, having a formal processional entrance may overpower the situation. A simple but dignified entrance is not inappropriate.

1.4 Unless there is an actual liturgical procession around the church or the church grounds, the term "Processional" or "Processional Hymn" is not appropriate. We may speak of the altar party and choir as "processing," but a mere functional entrance is not a "procession" in the strict sense.

1.5 In situations where it is desirable to simplify or shorten the liturgy, the Opening Acclamation may be said or sung from the point of entry, and the altar party may enter during the singing of the Hymn of Praise (Gloria in excelsis or a surrogate), proceeding directly to the Collect of the Day. When this is done, the Collect for Purity is appropriately omitted.

1.6 Any song that expresses praise to God—ideally using trinitarian language—is appropriate as an alternative to the Gloria. In any case, it should be one that the particular assembly can sing confidently. Hence, in a smaller group, a rather simple song may be most appropriate.

1.7 In any case, the Hymn of Praise is by its essential character a song, and this character is especially strong in the text that has pride-of-place in this context, the Gloria in excelsis. There are virtually no circumstances in which it is “meet and right” to simply speak the Gloria. If there is no appropriate song that the assembly can sing with confidence, and the text in this position must be spoken, then it is better to use the Trisagion or Kyrie.

1.8 When the Hymn of Praise is not sung, there should be no hymn at the Entrance, or anywhere else in the liturgy. A "said Mass with hymns" is a singularly incoherent liturgical act.
While the season of Advent has a penitential note, it is not itself a penitential season. The regular Opening Acclamation ("Blessed be God...") should be used.

The Collect of the Day is the culmination of the Entrance Rite and the pivot into the Liturgy of the Word. It should be offered by the celebrant with great dignity, preferably with hands in the orans position. It is appropriate to observe a noticeable time of silence between the response to the Salutation and the beginning of the Collect. It is most appropriate that the assembly remain standing for the Collect of the Day. The rubric directs that the Celebrant alone offer the Collect; there is no provision for the people to join in audibly.

The Collect should be offered by the Celebrant either standing in front of the chair, or from the chancel facing the altar, and not from either a lectern or from behind the altar.

The first words of the liturgy should be the first words of the liturgy. It is superfluous and distracting to add an informal greeting. The way to say "Good morning" is to simply begin the Opening Acclamation.

Note well that, in Rite One, the Kyrie is presumed (though not required) no matter what the season, and the Gloria is an optional (though certainly to be preferred outside of Advent and Lent) addition. In Rite Two, the opposite pertains: Gloria (or its surrogate) is mandatory; Kyrie and Trisagion are optional alternatives (not additions).

The Liturgy of the Word

Only when there are no lay persons present who are willing and able to serve as a lector should anyone other than a lay person read any of the lections prior to the gospel.

Symbolism is important. Lectors should read from a volume of appropriate size and dignity, not from a bulletin insert.

Lectors should be trained to remain in place while the people respond "Thanks be to God" before leaving the lectern.

The Psalm is not merely a "fourth reading," but, given the Psalter's roots in Jewish worship, bears the character of congregational song. At the principal celebration of the Eucharist on the Lord's Day and Principal Feasts, as well as Ash Wednesday and the major liturgies of Holy Week, every effort should be made to ensure that the Psalm is a musical offering. If there is one skilled cantor in the community, the simplest and most elegant way to accomplish
this is for the Psalm to be sung using a responsorial refrain that the assembly sings, leaving the verses to the cantor. This method enjoys great pride-of-place in the history of Christian worship, and is appropriate even when more abundant liturgical resources are available.

2.4 If the cantor sings the Psalm while standing on steps leading to an ambo or pulpit, then it is appropriate to use the expression "Gradual" or "Gradual Psalm." Otherwise, the term is lacking in meaningful context.

2.5 The ancient Hebrew expletive of praise, Hallelujah, Latinized as Alleluia, has pride-of-place as the normative way the reading of the Gospel is greeted by the assembly in song (outside of Lent). Musical options are abundant; consult someone skilled in this area for ideas.

2.6 It is not necessary—and, indeed, may well be superfluous and distracting in most cases—to sing a hymn, other than Alleluia, before the Gospel. When, for choreographic or pastoral reasons, a hymn is sung in addition to Alleluia (or, in Lent, in place of it), it should not be referred to as a "Sequence" or "Sequence Hymn," unless it is one of the handful of hymns generally available that were originally composed with that designation in mind. The most appropriate term for this item is perhaps "Gospel Acclamation."

2.7 When there is a deacon liturgically present, a deacon unfailingly reads the Holy Gospel.

2.8 There are a number of appropriate ceremominal options for the reading of the Gospel, but, as with the prior readings, it should be done with great dignity, from a place of prominence, and from a physical volume of beauty and heft.

2.9 The Gospel may be chanted. When it is chanted, the preceding and concluding responses should also be chanted. When it is not chanted, the responses should be spoken.

2.10 If a hymn is used for the Gospel Acclamation, and there is a Gospel Procession, the rubrics do not permit dividing the hymn, with some verses prior to the reading, and the concluding verses while the procession returns to the sanctuary. The hymn should be sung in its entirety before the reading. A skilled musicians will be able to offer "covering" music while the procession returns.
The Sermon

3.0 The sermon concludes the Liturgy of the Word, and its purpose is to break open one or more of the scriptures that have been heard, placing them in the context of the assembly's eucharistic offering.

3.1 In a Eucharistic context, the sermon is an inherently liturgical act. It is accountable less to the genre “sermon” than to the genre “eucharistic liturgy.” It is not an add-on or a time-out or otherwise a break in the liturgical action. It is not an opportunity for the preacher to simply talk about whatever he or she may feel constrained to share. It is the solemn obligation of the preacher to proclaim and interpret the word of God to the people of God. To do anything else is an abuse of the highest order.

3.2 As a norm, the sermon flows organically out of the gospel reading for the occasion, assisted by insights from one or more of the other readings. On occasion, and as an exception to the norm, it is within the preacher’s discretion to focus on one or more of the readings other than the gospel, or on the occasion being observed itself (e.g. Christmas, Easter) — at such times even the Collect might serve as grist for the homiletical mill. Preachers should not feel constrained to make a reference to every reading in every sermon.

3.3 Homiletics is an endeavor distinct from didactics, catechesis, and moral exhortation, though it may substantially overlap those activities. The preacher should take care to preserve the integrity of the homiletical discipline.

The Creed

4.0 The Nicene Creed is mandatory on Sundays, Principal Feasts, and Major Holy Days, except when the Renewal of Baptismal Vows is used, and when the rubrics direct otherwise (as on Maundy Thursday, and at various occasional services).

4.1 At celebrations of the Eucharist on other weekdays, the Creed is appropriately omitted.

4.2 While the Creed of St Athanasius is authorized or mandated for use on certain occasions in other Anglican provinces, according to the discipline of the Episcopal Church, only the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed are authorized for liturgical use.
**The Prayers of the People**

5.0 Joining in prayer for the church and for the world is one of the privileges and responsibilities that accompany membership in the community of the baptized. Preparation for this element in the liturgy deserves appropriate care and forethought.

5.1 When a deacon is liturgically present, the deacon should be involved in the Prayers of the People, either by leading them, or by voicing the specific (named) intercessions.

5.2 There is more latitude in the rubrics concerning the Prayers of the People than for any other component of the Eucharist. The forms provided are convenient, but not mandated. They do not enjoy pride-of-place, or any presumption in favor of their being used.

5.3 Those who plan liturgy do well to exercise more creativity here than is usually the case. The only operative benchmark, in addition to general sensitivity to time and place, is that the six general areas of intercession that are listed on p. 359 are accounted for in whatever form is used.

5.4 Under the direction of the priest-in-charge, local communities may craft the Prayers of the People to be an authentic reflection of their unique life and piety. It is especially appropriate that these prayers take account of the season of the church year and the theological and spiritual themes found in the scripture readings of the occasion. To this end, there are various forms drafted by others that are available on the internet.

5.5 When the Great Litany is used at the beginning of the Eucharist, the Prayers of the People become redundant.

5.6 The use of Eucharistic Prayer D does *not* obviate the need to include the Prayers of the People in the celebration.

5.7 At the celebration of Baptism and/or Confirmation, the Prayers for the Candidate(s) should be led by whomever would otherwise have led the Prayers of the People.

**The General Confession**

6.0 The General Confession has a well-established place in the Prayer Book tradition and should be considered normative in the celebration of the Eucharist. That said, within the larger ambit of the western rite, it is a bit of an add-on, not part of the essential shape of the liturgy.
6.1 In order to better elucidate the seasonal rhythm of feasts, fasts, and ferials, it is appropriate for Eucharistic Communities to avail themselves of the rubrical permission to omit the General Confession "on occasion." As a general rule, any occasion where the liturgical color is white (not counting lesser feasts on weekdays) is a good opportunity to do this. The General Confession is particularly inappropriate between the Easter Vigil and Pentecost. When the Confession is omitted, it is appropriate that the people be reminded why this is taking place. If either Form 1 or Form 5 of the Prayers of the People are used, the optional petition for remission of sins should be included.

6.2 When the Great Litany is used at the beginning of the Eucharist (particularly on Advent I and Lent I), the General Confession becomes redundant.

6.3 During Lent, particularly on Sundays, the character of the season is made clearer by using the Penitential Order (thus supplanting the General Confession in its accustomed Anglican position).

The Peace

7.0 If the people have been kneeling for the General Confession, the celebrant should motion for them to stand, and wait for them to do so, before announcing the Peace.

7.1 The giving and receiving of the Sign of Peace is an important and solemn liturgical act. It is neither a minor decoration of the liturgy nor an occasion for sentimentality. It reminds the baptized faithful of their obligation to be reconciled with one another before approaching the Altar of God.

7.2 The people should be instructed that if there is another baptized person in the assembly with whom they would not exchange the Peace, they should refrain from receiving Holy Communion on that occasion.

7.3 The most appropriate gesture at the Peace is neither a handshake nor an embrace, but the placing of both hands on the other person’s shoulders while saying, "The peace of the Lord" (or something similar).

7.4 In smaller Eucharistic Communities, it may be feasible for everyone to exchange the Peace with everyone else, but this should not be considered an ideal, and is not an obligation incumbent on the clergy.

7.5 Extraneous conversation at the time of the Peace is not appropriate. This is why we have coffee hour!
Note that the Peace may be exchanged, as in the Roman rite, after the Fraction and before the administration of the sacrament. There is a certain symbolic appropriateness in closely linking reconciliation with our neighbors with the act of "holy communion" with the risen Christ, and in some places it may be a welcome seasonal variant. However, in communities that are accustomed to kneeling for the Our Father and what follows, it may be logistically awkward.

Announcements

There seems to be no flawless and ideal time to make necessary and desirable announcements. But given the position of the Peace in the 1979 Rite (which follows ancient precedent), there is a natural and structural "break in the action" between the Peace and the Offertory Sentence. This may be the "least bad" place to insert announcements. To have them either before the liturgy starts or after it ends violates the organic nature of the action, rendering an "entrance" redundant and the dismissal a mere formality.

In any case, announcements should be kept to a minimum (the rubric uses the word "necessary")—a welcome to visitors, invitation to coffee hour, coming holy days, and a referral to the bulletin for calendar items.

Opening the floor to extemporaneous announcements from members of the congregation is a potentially risky practice, subject to abuse by those lacking in judgment, and prone to extend the length of the announcements to a problematic degree.

If a congregation is regularly served by the same priest, that priest should normatively give the announcements. It is an extension of the presbyteral function of gathering and presiding at the eucharistic assembly.

Offertory/Great Thanksgiving/Eucharistic Prayer

At the principal Sunday celebration, and at other times as feasible, it is the proper office of lay members of the community to present the bread and wine that is to be consecrated to the deacon or celebrant as the altar is prepared.

While there is a symbolic appropriateness to this action taking place simultaneously with the presentation of the monetary gifts, logistical considerations, and the stewardship of time, will often indicate that the
elements should be delivered to the altar in exchange for the offering plates, with the money offering being brought forward at a later time, after the altar is prepared.

9.2 In any case, the faithful should be duly instructed as to the theological and spiritual significance of both the bread and wine and the monetary gifts as they are placed on the altar.

9.3 It is appropriate that the celebrant bid the assembly to join in a specific corporate eucharistic intention. This may be done using the traditional form, "Pray, brethren [or brothers and sisters] ...".

9.4 For symbolic reasons, there should be only one chalice and paten on the altar at the time of the consecration. If more than one chalice or paten will be used for the administration of the sacrament, appropriate vessels should be brought to the altar after the Breaking of the Bread, the elements for them having been consecrated in a flagon, cruet, or ciborium.

9.5 In Rite One, due consideration should be given to using Eucharistic Prayer II, which is at the same time more concise and more theologically comprehensive than the traditional Cranmerian form.

9.6 In Rite Two, Prayer B, with its emphasis on incarnational themes, is especially appropriate in the Advent-Christmas-Epiphan cycle of the calendar, as well as on saints days, with its provision for adding the name being commemorated. Prayer D, with its transcendent imagery, is well-suited to the Great Fifty Days, Easter Vigil through Pentecost. Prayer A is appropriate for other occasions—Lent and Ordinary Time.

9.7 The Breaking of the Bread is one of the essential four actions of the liturgy (take, bless, break, give). As such, it should be accomplished with appropriate solemnity. When either large scored hosts or real leavened bread are used, along with a musical setting of appropriate length, all the bread should be broken at that time.

9.8 It is unfortunate that one of the most widely overlooked rubrics in the Prayer Book is the one requiring a period of silence following the Breaking of the Bread.

9.9 In communities where it can be done felicitously, the use of real leavened bread for the Eucharist makes the sign value of the sacramental action more robust. It does, however, present some challenges, and it is better to use the customary hosts and wafers well than to use leavened bread poorly.

9.10 The form provided in the Prayer Book—"[Alleluia] Christ our passover..."—may be considered normative, but not exclusively so. On a seasonal or
occasional basis, other forms may be substituted. These include *Agnus Dei* and the texts set to music at S164 through S172 in the Hymnal 1982.

9.11 Traditional devotions such as "Behold the Lamb of God..." and "Lord, I am not worthy..." may be construed as covered by the rubrical mention of "other anthems."

**Delivering the Sacrament**

10.0 The administration of Holy Communion is fundamentally a ministry of the ordained. The use of lay Eucharistic Ministers is a pastoral concession to practicality, and neither a norm nor an entitlement. It is not an example of "lay ministry." Under no circumstances should priests or deacons who are vested, present in the sanctuary, and physically able, remain idle while laity administer the sacrament. (*Please note that this situation will very often arise on the occasion of the Bishop’s visit, and it is best dealt with pastorally in advance, rather than asking someone to stand down while in the sacristy just before the service.*)

10.1 In general, a ratio of two chalices to one paten results in the most efficient delivery of the sacrament to the assembly.

10.2 Intinction of the consecrated bread by the communicant is a practice that should be discouraged. It risks contaminating the contents of the chalice via fingers of the communicants, and does not tend to foster a developed respect for the sacramental Body of Christ. When Intinction is desired, it should be performed by the chalice-bearer.

**Post-Communion**

11.0 It is best to proceed to the post-communion prayer with a clear altar. Even if a burse and veil were used, there is no need to rebuild the stack and leave it on the altar.

11.1 With the restoration of the Sign of Peace to our liturgy, the time-honored Anglican introduction to the Blessing ("The peace of God, which passes all understanding ...") may be understood as redundant.

11.2 From Advent through Trinity Sunday, and on the observance of All Saints, the seasonal blessings provided in the Book of Occasional Services are highly desirable. They help illuminate the peculiar character of each season, and encourage a deeper understanding of the sanctifying power of liturgical time.
During Lent, the seasonal blessing takes the form of a Solemn Prayer Over the People, and there is, in fact, no blessing. This adds a particularly compelling dimension to the Lenten fast. The command "Bow down before the Lord" should be given by the Deacon, if there is one, and it is best to resist the temptation to soften it by altering the language in any way.

Presbyters should banish the word "may" from their liturgical vocabulary. Blessings are not delivered in the subjunctive mood; they are authoritatively invoked.

In any case, please note that, in Rite One, the Blessing is mandatory while the Dismissal is optional. In Rite Two, the opposite pertains: the Blessing is optional and the Dismissal is mandatory.

There is no rubrical provision for a hymn between the Blessing and the Dismissal. The latter should follow immediately on the former.

Likewise, there is no rubrical provision for a hymn following the Dismissal. The expectation of the rite is that the Dismissal means "Go!". However, this ideal seems to be honored exponentially more in the breach than in the observance, and it may not be a battle worth fighting.

Under no circumstances may the double Alleluia (or any other number of Alleluias) be added to the Dismissal outside the Great Fifty Days of Easter, and at funerals, which are always Paschal in character.

There is no more enthusiastic fan of organ music than YFNB. But an organ postlude is supposed to accompany people heeding the missional imperative of the Dismissal and leaving the church building. It is not an appropriate occasion for a recital. We do well to find other compelling means of expressing appreciation to our fine church musicians than by waiting in the church and applauding for the postlude.

Times & Seasons

After the conscientious observance of the texts and rubrics of the Prayer Book and other authorized rites, due attention to liturgical time is the most important element of liturgical stewardship. Every aspect of public worship should be planned with a keen awareness not only of the various liturgical seasons, but of each one’s peculiar shape and character.

In our context, the traditional western rite color scheme commends itself more strongly than any other as the immediate sign of liturgical time. The choice between purple and blue for Advent is a matter of little import,
though, if blue is chosen, it should be a proper "Sarum blue," and not a lighter shade. Red is the appropriate color from Palm Sunday through Good Friday. Under ideal circumstances, this is an "oxblood red," which is a slightly darker shade than typically used on Pentecost and other "Holy Spirit" occasions or the commemoration of martyrs. Dedicated Holy Week vestments are appropriately trimmed in black. When a lesser feast is commemorated with a celebration of the Eucharist on a weekday, it is advisable to use the color of the season rather than the color of the commemoration.

12.2 In addition to colors, and according to the resources of the community, changes to the physical environment can provide powerful visual cues that enrich the experience of those gathered for worship. The number and style of candles on and around the altar, the position of the Paschal Candle, the presence or absence of flags and banners in the sanctuary, and other such variations, when applied thoughtfully, assist with a subliminal awareness of liturgical time.

12.3 The choice of hymns is also a critically important tool in the illumination of liturgical time. Attention should be given not only to their general appropriateness to the occasion, but to how they might enhance or otherwise shed light on the flow and rhythm of the liturgy. Hymns should serve the liturgical action, not dominate it.

12.4 Extra-liturgical devotions for the lighting of Advent Wreath candles are unnecessary and usually inappropriate. When pastoral considerations dictate their use, however, they should occur before the beginning of the liturgy—that is, prior to the entrance song.

12.5 Variations in service music, consistently applied, provide another opportunity for strong subliminal cues about changing seasons. The possibilities are nearly endless. Sensitive pastors, musicians, and other liturgy planners will be able to strike the right balance between too much monotony and too much change. This will vary according to the resources and abilities of the congregation.

Renewal of Baptismal Vows

13.0 Among the features of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer is an attempt to recover a more robust baptismal piety among the faithful in the Episcopal Church.
13.1 To this end, certain occasions that have a particularly paschal character are identified, and it is recommended that, when pastorally feasible, the administration of Holy Baptism be reserved for these times: the Great Vigil of Easter, the Day of Pentecost, the celebration of All Saints, the feast of the Baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Epiphany I), and the Bishop’s visitation.

13.2 When there are no baptisms scheduled on the occasions, it is appropriate for the members of the Eucharistic Community to renew their commitment to the vows and promises of baptism. This normally takes the place of the Nicene Creed in the celebration of the Eucharist.

13.3 The celebrant addresses the people, adapting the form provided on p.292 for use at the Easter Vigil when there are no baptisms, supplanting the words "now that our Lenten observance is ended ..." with language suitable to the occasion, proceeding to the questions and answers of the Baptismal Covenant and the concluding benediction.

13.4 Following this rite, the celebrant may sprinkle the people with water that has been previously blessed during a celebration of Holy Baptism, or otherwise set aside for this purpose. Either designated singers or the entire assembly may sing while this is taking place. Appropriate texts include the traditional Asperges me, domine (in translation or paraphrase), Vidi aquam during the Easter season, the Taize chant There is one Lord…, the song Come to the Water, and other songs and anthems that make reference to paschal or baptismal themes.

13.5 As an alternative to being sprinkled by the celebrant, the people may make a procession to the font and sign themselves with the cross after dipping a hand into baptismal water.