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An inclusive church: a harmonious coexistence of different life forms

Hilton R Scott
Stellenbosch University, South Africa
hiltonscottrev@gmail.com
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9582-9481

Abstract

Since the time of the early church, through the era of the Roman Empire, the Reformation, including the Second Vatican Council and the present-day lived experience, there has been a concern regarding inclusion (and exclusion) within church communities. Thus, in terms of being a church, how ought the worshipping community respond to the call to worship in a manner which allows every member to experience God in the community? This paper explores a global and perennial concern through the lens of Liturgical Studies. Firstly, the dynamics between the individual and collective were explored. This was followed by describing a call to worship; and exploring how that call is responded to by the congregation(s) as The Body of Christ. This culminated with exploring connectedness exclusively and inclusively and alluded to worship as enacting the "already" and "not yet". Therefore, the worshipping community as the body of Christ should enact through worship the "not yet" kingdom from every tribe tongue, and nation to cultivate a harmonious coexistence.[1]

1. Introduction

As *we* enter *our* church; *we* realise that *our* church is filled with people that look like *us*. Others are going into *their* church, and *they* all look like *them* and not like *us* (cf. Smith 2009:161–162). Should the individuals (those of *us* and *them*) gathering enter into worship with the expectation of tangibly experiencing the community of believers and being connected by a shared faith? This question is not a new one, rather it addresses a normative concern

1 This article was adapted from a paper presented at *Facoltà Teologica Pugliese* (The Pugliese Theological Faculty) for the annual seminar *Per una teologia della/dalla sinodalità. Processi, figure e istituzioni* (For a theology of/from synodality. Processes, figures, and institutions).

that has plighted the Church since the time of the Apostles (cf. Van Wyk 2014:1–2 & 1 Th 1). However, Tom Long (cf. 2001:25) suggested that human beings have two profound needs: one is a hunger for communion with God, and the other is a hunger for community – or the need for human community. This paper aims to explore the challenge(s) of being a church amid difference(s) among the community that have collectively been called to worship. Therefore, this is a Liturgical Studies exploration that asks how the worshipping community should respond to the call to worship in a manner that allows every member to experience God in the community.

Long adds to the explanation of humans having two profound needs, that this can also be seen as a desire for God in the community, which at its simplest explanation, is the notion of *koinonia*. The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu is famously quoted as saying: "A person is a person through other persons; you can't be human in isolation; you are human only in relationships." However, today's lived experiences are all the more polarising which is partially a symptom of binary thinking and an all too human narrative of being human concerning us/them. This narrative is evident throughout global current affairs, as fires fuelled by differences flare across the world. One such fuel is the differences between identities[2]. Volf (cf. 2019: XIV) explains that "national, ethno-cultural, religious, racial, gender, and sexual identities are major drivers of politics everywhere." Additionally, Van Wyk (cf. 2019:5) writes that: "[a] key issue with regard to reconciling diversity, collective living and transformation is the notion of 'identity.'"

It is not in politics alone that the struggles of identity, or more accurately the struggles of differences in identity or between individuals are evident. Liturgical scholar, James Smith (cf. 2009:161–162) writes the following:

> There is also another scandal that we experience in gathering: we will notice that others are gathering for worship in a different space just down the street; as we make our way to "our" church, other Christians are making their way to "their" church right in the same neighbourhood. We may also notice a tragic pattern that seems to emerge: those streaming into our church look like "us" – an

2 See Volf 2019:xiii: "At the time, similar fires were flaring up elsewhere in the world … all centred on ethnic, religious, racial, and cultural identities."

> "us" defined by a similar race or class or ethnicity – whereas those making their way into the neighbouring church don't look like "us" (though they, too, all look like each other). Right here, just as we're responding to the call to worship, we already experience the eschatological nature of what we're about to do, for our "gathering" does not look like that of which we'll sing… But our congregation doesn't look like this kingdom from every tribe, tongue, and nation. And yet we'll sing of it, in confession and hope.

There is irony to be found in the notion of gathering for worship; in the idea that individuals are coming together to form a collective. The irony is that the heterogenous intends to homogenise. This is intensified by remembering the commandment given by Jesus: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another." (Jn 13:34 (ESV)). Furthermore in Matthew 22:36–40 (ESV): "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend on all the Law and the Prophets." Calvin (cf. 2008:265) explains that Jesus showed in the parable of the Samaritan that "… the term neighbour comprehends the most remote stranger, there is no reason for limiting the precept of love to our connections." Referring back to the excerpt from Smith (cf. 2009:161), the majority of churchgoers ought to agree with the assertion that "we" make "our" way to "our" church and gather for worship amongst people who look like "us". Furthermore, "we" gather in "our" church with people from "our" tribe, tongue, and nation.

It is, however, necessary to comprehend that there is more to one's uniqueness as an individual than one's tribe, tongue, and nation – or community, language, and nationality. Rather than providing a detailed list of the aspects that comprise an individual or one's "identity"[3], the following

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3 See Van Wyk 2019:5, she writes: "There are different 'axes of identity', or points of focus around which identity coalesce, such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, or age. Other dimensions of identity become apparent or are highlighted with regard to social roles and the connection or commitment to a piece of land or a country: religion, language, culture, nationality, and the types of relationships you might enter into or be a part of. This could also be described as social identity."

definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary* is provided: "The sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition of being a single individual; the fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality." Before considering these gatherings of individuals as a collective, that has come together to worship, it is imperative to understand what it means to be "called to worship".

2. A call to worship

According to Horton (cf. 2003:24), "church" (as in ekklēsia[4]) means "called out". Smith (cf. 2009:160) explains that simply by attending, there is an indication of something fundamental: "that a people have gathered in response to a call". If gathering as a church is the response to being called out, what is it that those gathered are called to do? First of all, by being called there is the sense that one is being summoned out of the world and "into His marvellous light: That is why we gather" (cf. Horton 2003:24). By entering into God's marvellous light, or presence, in response to the call to worship; those that respond are fulfilling their profound need for communion with God. "Church" is also understood as a tangible community where Christians gather for worship[5]. Thus, in being a church, the congregation have been called out and responded by gathering as a community to worship. Two questions are raised from this understanding of being called to worship: (1) what is "worship"? And (2) what does it mean to worship? In other words, it is necessary to understand "worship" as an event; and then understand it as a practice – and the intentions of said practice(s).

Classically defined, worship is: "the glorification of God and the sanctification of humanity" (cf. Saliers 2014:290). Moreover, worship can be seen as a "set of practices, experiences and fundamental dispositions toward what is deemed most sacred" (cf. Saliers 2014:289). Worship is an activity, revelatory in nature, and is a human response to the mystery and wonder of God; it is steeped in tradition as well as being drenched in

4 Ekklēsia, from the verb kaleō (to call) and the preposition ek- (out) (cf. Smith 2009:160).

5 See Scott 2022:28

culture (cf. Saliers 2014:289). Wepener (cf. 2009:21) states that Liturgy (or worship)[6]:

> … is the encounter between God and man in which God and man move out towards one another, a movement in which God's action is primacy, so that in a theonomic reciprocal fashion a dialogical communication in and through rituals and symbols is established in which man participates in a bodily way and can in this reach his [or her] highest goal in life, namely, to praise God and enjoy Him forever.

Thus, in worship, there are relationships and/or relativity between God and human beings; especially between God's holiness and human self-understanding – yet comprehending more than human religious consciousness alone (cf. Saliers 2014:291). However, liturgy requires more than a catalogue of procedural ritual practices. For it to be faithful, liturgy – or the act of worshipping – should become a "way of life, guiding moral and ethical behaviour, providing aesthetic and mystical experience" (cf. Saliers 2014:289). In his book, "Caring Worship", Howard Vanderwell (cf. 2017:2) shares in his introduction that: "I went to worship Sunday morning, not just because it's my custom to do so. I went because I sensed deep within me the need to be in the presence of God and with His people". In this sense, it is necessary to add to the descriptions of liturgy (or worship) that have been provided above. in a way that aligns with Long's statement regarding human beings' needs for God and community. Therefore, worship is a set of ritual practices, symbolic experiences, and fundamental dispositions as human responses to God's action, in its primacy, that cultivates communication with God and communion between His people (cf. Long 2001:25, Saliers 2014:289, Schattauer 2007:106, Scott 2022: 16–17 & Wepener 2009:21).

Grimes's description of liturgy (cf. 2010:42–44), as a scholar of ritual studies, may serve as a link between the two questions posed earlier. These

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6 Viewed as a phenomenon, worship encompasses: "gathering, singing, listening, speaking, praying, and enacting the ritual forms appropriate to naming God." (cf. Saliers 2014:291). For liturgical scholars, this phenomenological definition considers the theological, anthropological, sociological, psychological, and cultural aspects of individual and corporate acts and participation in worship/liturgy.

questions are: (1) what is "worship"?[7] And (2) what does it mean to worship? There is an interpretive nature to these questions; by asking them, one seeks to describe the "worship" as a rite and interpret the act (or actions) of worshipping. These questions stem from the idea of a "call to worship", in which participants have responded by going to worship (or going to church) and then, by worshipping. As a presupposition, this language gives the impression that "worship" is an event – at a place, at a time; it is also a verb or action. Hence, the insistence on these two questions and their interpretive nature.

Firstly, Grimes explains that liturgy "begins with the ritual cultivation of being and is typified by a deep receptivity" (cf. 2010:42). In answering the question of "what is worship", this sentence serves as a fine summary of "what": "Liturgy is how a people become attuned to the way things are – the way they are, not the way they appear to be" (cf. Grimes 2010:42). Thus, in answering the call to worship, one is answering the call to attune oneself to the way things are. Then, in answering more of the second question of what it means to worship, Grimes writes the following: "What is unique to liturgy is […] that it asks" (cf. Grimes 2010:43). Furthermore, in addressing the action of worshipping, in liturgy, worshippers "actively act" as a means to an end of being "acted upon" (cf. Grimes 2010:43). This notion agrees with Wepener's definition of the liturgy (worship) provided above; namely that man moves out toward God, in reciprocation to God's initial action – all the while this reciprocity continues as "God and man move out towards one another" (cf. Wepener 2009:21). Thus, the initial action is God's in calling man to worship; by attending worship man's actions – that move the man out toward God – including communicating, proclaiming, exclaiming, and asking (cf. Wepener 2009:21 & Grimes 2010:43). According to Vanderwell (2017:24), the purpose of worship is to "declare the worth of God, to respond with awe and reverence to Him as the most Holy One … The heart of worship is to respond to God's glory in a way he deserves."

It is important to grasp that there are multiple meanings or understandings of words such as "church" and "worship". Typically, a church is a place, a structure of sorts, at a fixed location. However, church is also the gathering

7 This question could simultaneously be "where is 'worship"? and "when is 'worship'"?

of God's people – no matter where they are; in this regard, the people are "being church". The word "worship" also has numerous understandings from those described above to being "the work of the people" – or "'work' of the faithful" (*leitourgia*) (cf. Plaatjies-van Huffel 2020:2). More important, here, is to understand these concepts in context for inquiry. Thus, the descriptions above provide understandings of (1) being called to worship, (2) worship, and (3) the act of worshipping in the context of an inclusive church – or a lack thereof.

Because this call to worship is not answered by any given individual, but instead answered by a multitude of people, the next section continues the question(s) addressed above with an added perspective: what does it mean to worship together – as a community?

3. Responding to the call as the Body of Christ

Barnard and Wepener (cf. 2020:17) describe that one of the aims of the worship service is to give tangible expression to the community of believers; furthermore, the congregation is not a collection of detached individuals rather they are connected by a shared faith.[8] Faith is not the only intangible concept being shared; each congregant likewise shares in the call to worship – and a fundamental response to that call. Each congregant or worshipper responds to a call, sensing deep within them, that they need to be in the presence of God – and with His people.[9] However, in terms of tangible expressions, the Eucharist, which is also referred to as Communion, serves as a good example. John van de Laar (cf. 2008:49) writes that (receiving) the Eucharist "becomes a doorway into a new kind of life … in which God's story and my story and our story are continuously merging". Whether it is described as stories merging, a tangible community of believers, or the need to be in the presence of God and his people, the concept being described is *koinonia*.

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8 Translated from the original Afrikaans: "Een van die doelwitte van die erediens, is om op tasbare wyse uitdrukking te gee aan die gemeenskap van gelowiges, en kom die gemeente nie as losstaande individue saam nie, maar as gelowiges wat op grond van hul gedeelde geloof in die drie-enige God, aan mekaar verbind is." (cf. Barnard & Wepener 2020:17).

9 See the earlier quotation from Vanderwell (cf. 2017:2).

Koinonia is fellowship or communion of a multi-directional nature (cf. Scott 2022:142). Firstly, the vertical component is the communion between God and the worshipper(s). Then, there is a horizontal component, the fellowship between worshippers. Thiselton (cf. 2015:311) suggests that to be considered "Christian" a person should participate in a community of God's people "in Christ". Furthermore, Smit proclaims that:

> The congregation assembles publicly as a community to meet with God and one another to hear the Word of God, to celebrate the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, to pray, to sing and to bring offerings, to care [mutually] and [communally] for one another, both spiritually and physically, to witness and to serve the marginalized and downtrodden. In worship, the real human and spiritual needs of the church members and larger community are being addressed in a holistic way (cf. Smit 2004:887–907[10] & Plaatjies-van Huffel 2020:4).

In each of these perspectives, there is an emphasis on each aspect of *koinonia*; to reiterate: "the congregation assembles publicly as a community to meet with God and one another". Thiselton emphasises the same points as Barnard and Wepener. Another perspective is to consider the Pauline concept of the church as the body of Christ. Consider the following description of the church as the body of Christ, and the cooperation of various "body parts":

> … the body may function harmoniously – that, so-called, "body parts" are not in conflict with one another. In other words, a body needs both legs to work cooperatively to walk for example. To take this imagery further, within the body are many parts—or cultures – and each part has its cells, the cells of the lungs being different to the cells of the heart. However the heart and lungs function in harmony to oxygenate blood and pump it around the body, the heart deals with "the otherness" of the lungs to function in unison as one body. Similarly, within a multicultural church, the cultures of those participating in the worship service should deal with each other's

10 This excerpt is from Plaatjies-van Huffel 2020:4, that is translated version of the original (cf. Smit 2004).

> "otherness" so that there is homogenous and heterogeneous unity in the worship service. Scripture reaffirms this fundamental, albeit profound, need for community: "The eye cannot say to the hand,'I have no need of you,'nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Cor 12:21) (cf. Scott 2022:141).

From all the above, there is one common thread that can – and should be – argued for. Namely, in being a church there is – and ought to be – a connection between God and the individual members of the congregation, between God and the congregation as a collective, and between the members of the congregation as a community. The unfortunate reality is that these notions are largely ideals, as the lived experience can be one of exclusion and a fragmented community or congregation. The church is not exempt from experiencing the divides throughout the world's communities and societies. These divides are usually qualified by one or other "us" and "them" scenario; and are usually defined as some type of "-ism", "-ist" or "-phobic" – as in racism, sexism or homophobic (for example).

It is common that any given congregation most likely has a majority of its community as an "us", as Smith (cf. 2009:161) writes: "As we make our way to "our" church, other Christians are making their way to "their" church right in the same neighbourhood". Typically, there is something similar, or familiar, about "us" and something different about "them"[11] (also cf. Volf 2019:89–90 & 97–98). This difference is identifiable or distinguishable, which is not where the problem lies. The notion of "identity" denotes that one distinguishes both sameness ("us") and difference ("them") in others; the problem lies solely in separating or excluding "us" from "them" (cf. Ackermann 1998:17–26 & Van Wyk 2019:6).

This leads to a question: how should the church, as the body of Christ, find a harmonious coexistence within the throes of sameness and difference? Simply, it begins with an understanding of language and its antonyms. In other words, the opposites for "separate" and "exclude" are "unite" and "include" respectively. However, one need only keep abreast with current affairs to have an understanding that this challenge is not as simple as

11 "… those streaming into our church look like "us" – an 'us' defined by a similar race or class or ethnicity – whereas those making their way into the neighbouring church don't look like "us" (though they, too, all look like each other).

flicking the metaphorical switch from "exclude" to "include". The next section of this paper will describe the ideal of a harmonious coexistence within/when being a church and discuss a theory for praxis that could lead to an inclusive church.

4. A harmonious coexistence: an inclusive church

Perhaps one considers Smith's analogy of a church of "us" and a neighbouring church of "them" as acceptable, or even harmonious. Perhaps "our" "acceptance" of "them" in "their" church is seen as inclusivity, while "we" gather in "our" church. Unfortunately, this is hardly the case. As quoted earlier, Calvin (cf. 2008:265) states that "… the term neighbour comprehends the most remote stranger, there is no reason for limiting the precept of love to our own connections". On the other hand, Volf (cf. 2019:126–127) makes the argument that "them" remaining "they" and "us" remaining "us"; that living at safe distances from one another is not peace yet – rather, it is the absence of hostility. Volf (cf. 2019:127) adds that peace is the result of communion. Both Volf (cf. 2019) and Van Wyk (cf. 2019) discuss embracing differences by opening up and inviting "them" in. Van Wyk (cf. 2019:8) explains that opening also involves ceding: "to give up some of yourself and some of your space for all who inhabit the space to participate mutually and equally." In some ways, this goes back to the use of language. In other words, by inviting "them" into "our" church, "we" are holding on to what is "ours" which prevents mutual and equal participation because it is not "theirs".

Therefore, a harmonious communion of pluralistic worshippers occurs in spaces that are conceded to one another. This communion is inclusive because there is a reconciliation of diversity that is devoid of "us" and "them". Instead, there is one body (of Christ) that is being church and experiencing *koinonia*. In this context, *koinonia* is a (vertical) connectedness experienced between, on an individual/private level, the worshippers and God. Simultaneously, there is a (vertical) connectedness, on a corporate/communal level, between the faith community and God. Furthermore, there is a (horizontal) connectedness experienced between the individual worshippers and one another as a faith community. Thus,

the profound needs of human beings to experience God and the fellowship of the community are addressed.

4.1 An exclusive connectedness

To achieve peaceful, harmonious, inclusive communion in being church, it is necessary to cede of oneself on a personal level as well. If, in being a church, the congregation desires to enact the notion of the church being the body of Christ, then the notion of us/them ought to be overlooked. In other words, there ought to be a shift in familiarity – or an effortless migration from the bonds of ethnographic familiarity to the bonds of a shared faith and a shared need to be in God's presence. This idea is adapted from Volf's (cf. 2019:30) notion below:

> Much like Jews and Muslims, Christians can never be first of all Asians or Americans, Croatians, Russians, or Tutsis, and then Christians. At the very core of Christian identity lies an all-encompassing change of loyalty, from a given culture with its gods to the God of all cultures.

Furthermore, by shifting loyalty from "us" or "them" to Him, the faith community allows one another to participate in a community of God's people "in Christ" – in which one can call oneself "Christian"[12] (cf. Thiselton 2015:311).

The achievement of an inclusive church bears two noticeable outcomes: connectedness with God and connectedness with (all) other people as a worshipping community. Since one's connection with God is personal, it is referred to as exclusive connectedness. In other words, one can "privately experience God's "mystical" presence whilst praying simultaneously with others, thus activating one's relationship with God through their exclusive mystical perceptions or beliefs" (cf. Scott 2022:160–161). Reverting to the Pauline notion of the church as the body of Christ, although both arms belong to the same body, the right arm can function independently of the left. In other words, praying simultaneously with others, their words, this exclusive connectedness fulfils each one's need to be in communion with

12 The direct quote from Thiselton 2015:311"If a person was not part of a community of God's people 'in Christ', that individual would hardly be 'Christian'"!

God. One part of the metaphorical body and all others are worshipping God simultaneously but independently – exclusively moving out, praising, and enjoying God[13]. Vanderwell (cf. 2017:27) provides several examples of the exclusive – or personal – connectedness:

> One of the important aims of worship is to make us newer, stronger, and more mature. One person may come to faith in worship, and another may find her faith renewed again. One may confess his sins for the first time and find freedom of pardon, though another may refuse to confess. One leaves with a greater willingness to obey God, another with a commitment to love others more, still another with the commitment to identify and develop her spiritual gifts, and still others with a deeper resolve to be better parents.

As seen here, these are personal examples of man in his/her capacity and God moving out toward each other. There is dialogical communication between the individual, the collective, and God through rituals and symbols. There is a priority to being in communion with God; rather, the fundamental imperative is to experience a connectedness with God. Long refers first to the human need for communion with God; similarly, Smit writes that the "congregation assembles publicly as a community to meet with God and one another" (cf. Plaatjies-van Huffel 2020:4). The difference between Long and Smit's perspectives is that in Smit's case, the initial act is the gathering of the community. However, the priority then is to "meet with God" and (then) one another.

4.2 An inclusive connectedness

Nevertheless, throughout this paper, there has been a clear indication that connecting in worship is as much part of the act of worship itself as connecting with God is. This sense of belonging to a community of believers is referred to as inclusive connectedness. In their discussions or descriptions of worship Smit (cf. 2004), Barnard and Wepener (cf. 2020), Van de Laar (cf. 2008), Long (cf. 2001), Vanderwell (cf. 2017), Pecklers (cf. 2005), Saliers (cf. 2014), Schattauer (cf. 2007), Thiselton (cf. 2015) and Van Ommen (cf. 2019), all make reference – in one way or another – to

13 Referring to Wepener's (cf. 2009:21) definition of liturgy quoted earlier in this paper.

the connection(s) between one another and as a (faith) community. This gathering, merging, or interconnection and idea of community all denotes an atmosphere of unity and inclusion in the worship service, which appropriates "the worshippers' sense of belonging to the faith community and that community's sense of belonging to God" (cf. Scott 2022:163–164).

Vanderwell, in his book "Caring Worship" (cf. 2017:25), writes that: "If giving God glory is the fundamental activity of worship, we must proceed to another question. What shall we do in worship that will properly give Him glory?" Vanderwell lists four aspects of the worship service that Christians strive to achieve. The second of these four is relevant to this theme, namely, "we strive to experience fellowship" (cf. Vanderwell 2017:26). Vanderwell (cf. 2017:26) then provides the following description that is poignant to this concept of inclusive connectedness:

> Believers congregate to worship. They come together and form a body. […] Many worshippers think of their church as family. They look at each other as brothers and sisters, they believe they possess a deep spiritual oneness with each other. […] A large part of worship for them is the interaction they have with others.

Realistically, the context provided above by Vanderwell is not the case in all churches or all worship services. This is why it remains an ideal and has done throughout history; there is evidence of such from the early church, through the time of the Roman Empire, as well as the Reformation, including the Second Vatican Council and the present-day lived experience (cf. Pecklers 2005:162–170, Societas Liturgica 2023 & Van Wyk 2014). As Smith (cf. 2009:162) suggests: "But our congregation doesn't look like this kingdom from every tribe and tongue and nation. And yet we'll sing of it, in confession and hope". Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger (cf. 2009:347) wrote:

> Yet often in the church, we find it difficult to see any evidence of the *koinönia* of the saints. Instead, we see interpersonal conflicts that lead to entrenched power struggles, and denominational factions that give rise to gnawing anxiety about whether the church can hold together … While we may confess in our creed, "I believe in the communion of saints," we long for actual glimpses of it in our everyday life.

The challenge of an inclusive, worshipping community is hardly a new issue. As evidenced by the above, it is a problem that has only become more intense and complex since the days of the early church (cf. Van Wyk 2014:2). This brings the argument back to its introduction: whether in worship or the everyday lived experience of a person, said a person is a person through other persons. For one person to exclude another or isolate a person from, for example, a community of worshippers is to deny that person the experience of being a person. Furthermore, one ought not to only include one's immediate neighbours, as in persons known to them, but also include their "most remote stranger" in the worship service (cf. Calvin 2008:265). Ackermann (cf. 1998:23) refers to loving the radically other and radically related, rather than referring to a neighbour.

Thus, an inclusive church navigates through the problem of inclusivity and exclusivity with a community of worshippers bonded by a shared faith, a shared call to worship, and a shared need to be in God's presence. Furthermore, each member of this community ought to earnestly live out the commandment to love their neighbours – radically other and radically related – as themselves

5. Conclusion

In closing, it is worthwhile to be reminded that an inclusive church is a utopian ideal. Pecklers (cf. 2005:169) writes: " We speak of the Eucharist as transformative of human society, and the concomitant goal of Christian worship to shape moral formation so that we live differently because of our liturgical participation. That is the ideal, of course, but the task is easier said than done". However, worship is the enactment of the "already" and "not yet" (cf. Pecklers 2005:163). While the church is already inclusive, it is not inclusive yet. At this point, it is worthwhile to be reminded of the axiom of *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex (con)vivendi*. Which denotes that as we worship, so we believe, so we live (together).

The relevance of this notion in such a polarised world cannot be understated. For, if congregations worship inclusively, including loving their neighbour, their "most remote stranger" as themselves. Then, through the interrelatedness between worship, belief, and living, these congregations will live inclusively too, because "as we worship, so we live together". Thus,

as Christians, worshippers continue to love their "neighbours" in their general conduct, as they love their "neighbours" whilst worshipping in an inclusive church (cf. Scott 2022, Smit 2004 & Plaatjies-van Huffel 2020). Plaatjies-van Huffel (cf. 2020:7) writes that: "Worship (*lex orandi*) should transform the faithful to live as the new people of God in communities with diverse challenges (*lex vivendi*)". Albeit utopian, the worshipping community as the body of Christ should enact through worship the ""not yet' kingdom from every tribe and tongue and nation to cultivate a harmonious coexistence that allows each member that has gathered to experience God in community, or to be in the presence of God and with His people."

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