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# THINKING SURGICALLY WHEN LEADING LITURGICALLY

**I. Intro**

- A. Every church has its own liturgy
- B. But some more than others
- C. Formal liturgy results in more constraints. These constraints can result in a frustrated worship leader
- D. It's possible to lead vibrant worship in the confines of a formal liturgy

**II. A lot to love**

- A. The church year tells the story of Jesus
- B. The depth and richness in theology
- C. The vast number of rich corporate prayers
- D. The structure it provides for Gospel-centered corporate worship services

**III. A lot of possible pitfalls**

- A. There are many dangers to watch out for
  - 1. Mindless repetition
  - 2. Rigidity
  - 3. Elevation of tradition to inerrancy
  - 4. Pomposity
  - 5. Grandiose prayers
- B. The temptation that lurks
  - 1. Empty words
  - 2. Empty prayers
  - 3. Empty songs
- C. Recognize the dangers

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#### IV. Owning it

- A. Like a good chef owns a recipe, to lead worship effectively in a liturgical church you have to “own” the liturgy
  - 1. Getting experienced and familiar with the ingredients
    - a. What are the different kinds of services?
    - b. What is required?
    - c. What is optional?
    - d. Where can you tinker with the recipe?
    - e. Where have adaptations crept in?
  - 2. Pay attention to the “mays”
    - a. A song of praise “may” be sung
    - b. The creed “may” be omitted
    - c. The officiant “may” say
    - d. Wiggle room can be found in the “mays”

#### V. Practical Guidelines

- A. Avoid token songs
  - 1. In liturgical churches, there are certain songs that get repeated more often than others. Some on a weekly basis. Paying attention to these songs is important.
  - 2. Songs lose their power when they’re sung every week.
    - a. The Gloria

“When appointed, the following hymn or some other song of praise is sung or said, all standing...”
    - b. The Doxology
    - c. Sanctus
    - d. Agnus Dei

One of the greatest missed opportunities for preaching the Gospel through music in most liturgical churches
  - 3. Keeping a service that holds to a formal liturgy from feeling dead is all about making little changes like this.
  - 4. Quality and clarity decreases each time you make a copy of a copy of a copy.

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- B. Know your place in your church's history
1. You are not the best thing to ever happen to your church
  2. Honestly, where is your church on the trajectory of corporate worship? What decade are they in?
    - a. The farther back they are: the more your role becomes that of a loving, pastoral, patient and faithful prodger
    - b. The more "current" they are: the more your role becomes that of a careful chef, making sure the time-tested recipes don't lose quality or disappear altogether as a result of the new tweaks and ingredients that keep cropping up.
- C. Understand your pastor
1. Operate in submission to him.
    - a. You honor the Lord
    - b. You honor your pastor
    - c. You serve the church better
    - d. You have the pastor's protection
  2. Ask for parameters
- D. Learn the "capital equation"
1. Build capital. Spend capital. Build back capital.
  2. Hymns are your friend. Modern hymns are your secret weapon.
  3. It's not about you. But you can make it about you. You shouldn't.
- E. Know when to retreat
1. Most things will take years longer than you think they should.
  2. You'll have to choose to ignore certain things in order to focus on others
  3. Avoid wasting your energy
- F. Guard against cynicism
- When and if you're leading a congregation in an unfamiliar direction, you will have many opportunities to become cynical and hardened. Pray for a soft heart.
- G. Seriously consider staying put for the long haul
- People will go with you if they trust you. They can only trust you if you're committed to them and display you're trustworthy.

## VI. Conclusion