

‘Ordered Liberty’ in Worship for *UiW2*

Introduction

On any Sunday, a variety of people will gather together to worship God. There will be women, men, young, old. Worship will be offered in a variety of tongues, and in a variety of styles. Not all will worship in a church building.

The Uniting Church in Australia has inherited a particular approach to worship. Its heritage is not that of the Prayer Book, closely prescribing the majority of words and actions; neither is our heritage one of freedom without form. Through our Reformed and Methodist inheritance, we have received an approach to worship that has been named ‘Ordered Liberty’ by partner Churches such as the United Church of Canada and the Church of North India.

Our approach has great freedom, which is exercised within a broad framework. In some places, the freedoms will be emphasised over the framework; in others, the people will find that an ordered style enables them to be free before God.

The first edition of *‘Ordered Liberty’ in Worship* was requested by the Eighth Assembly and approved by the Assembly Standing Committee in 1998.

It provided guidance to the ‘essential’ parts of the major services of worship (the Service of the Lord’s Day, baptism and related services, marriage and funeral services and the ordering of the Church). ‘Essential’ refers to parts that are of the *essence* of the service; not in the sense of a ‘basic minimum’, but as a guide to those parts that need to be included for a ‘full diet’ of worship. Two services of worship, both drawn from *Uniting in Worship 2* and following ‘Ordered Liberty’, may look very different indeed; this is because worship is not something we write, but something we do. Factors such as the setting of a service of worship, the way the people use their bodies, and the music and prayers used all have a very great bearing on the service.

Uniting Church worship may make use of a wider variety of resources than is found in *Uniting in Worship 2*. Care should be taken that the meaning and intention of such resources is consistent with similar resources in *Uniting in Worship 2*, and with Assembly statements concerning doctrine and liturgy.

The Introduction to the 1998 edition of 'Ordered Liberty' in Worship quoted Robert Gribben's *A Guide to Uniting in Worship*, now out of print. Gribben writes:

Uniting in Worship will guide you through what is essential, and what elaborates the theme, partly through the careful wording of rubrics in the use of 'may' or 'shall'. 'Shall' indicates something whose omission would distort what we are doing or saying in this service, and most of these are obvious. (p. 14)

and

Uniting in Worship is closer to a Directory than a book of common prayer.... The book is chiefly a framework, with prayers which are interchangeable, and with a vast resource of further material for worship from our own historical traditions, and from others, both ancient and modern. (p. 16)

These words may still be applied to Uniting in Worship 2. Within the book, the provisions of 'Ordered Liberty' in Worship are contained in A Short Guide to the Service of the Lord's Day on p. XX, and in the outlines found in the major services. The 'essential' parts are indicated by arrows (▶). These outlines with brief explanatory notes, collected on one file, may be found on the website and cd-rom with this Introduction.

With this in mind, let us summon the whole earth to make a joyful noise to the Lord, worshipping God in spirit and in truth. (Psalm 100:1; John 4:24)



What does Ordered Liberty mean for how we plan and lead worship?

What do you like or question about Ordered Liberty?