

Presidential Address: Ancient Future Worship
June, 2008

I. Mission statement

“The Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies forms servant leaders in Christian worship renewal and education through graduate academic praxis, grounded in biblical, historical, theological, cultural, and missiological reflection in community.”

II. Two Questions:

A. Does the institutional church resemble the church our Lord established? What implications does this question have for Christian worship and, in particular, ancient future worship?

B. How do we begin to think and act missionally as worship leaders? How do we participate in the mission of God?

A. What does ancient future, biblical worship look like?

1. Rooted in the story of God. Webber on story-formed, biblical worship: “. . . It remembers God’s work in the past, anticipates God’s rule over all creation, and actualizes both past and future in the present to transform persons, communities, and the world.” (p. 43)

2. Word and table (pp. 168 [the reason IWS exists], 90)

Content: Gospel, the Christ event.

Structure: a. Dialogical, proclamation and response, word and table
b. Remembrance and anticipation

Style: Indigenous, facilitating the content and structure

3. Webber: “Reflection on the incarnation and its connection to every aspect of God’s story is the missing link in today’s theological reflection and worship. The link is found in these words: God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves.” (p. 35) Romans 8:35-39; Eph. 3:14-19 Worship manifests the love of God.

B. Thinking missionally

1. David Bosch: Our mission has not life of its own: only in the hands of the sending God can it truly be called mission. Not least since the missionary initiative comes from God alone . . . Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.

2. Jurgen Moltmann: It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.

3. Eric Bolger: Worship [at IWS] is understood as a retelling of the biblical story, which has at its center the *Missio Dei*. Through the 2,000 years of human history following the New Testament era, God has continued to incarnate his mission in the church, and this historical development of worship theology and practice is a

vital resource for reflection on worship today. . . From early in its brief history, IWS has defined its mission as “training teachers of worship.” Its goal is to develop leaders for God’s kingdom who are not only practically proficient but also able to train others in leading and promoting worship that takes the *Missio Dei* seriously. Corporate worship is itself missional, anticipating the eschatological consummation towards which God’s mission in the world is moving. Corporate worship also proclaims and enacts the *Missio Dei*, and concludes by sending worshipers into the world as a missional people.

4. Ryan Bolger and Mark Lau Branson: Shift from ecclesiocentric mission (as part of Christendom), to a theocentric mission (as part of a missional engagement of the world)

5. Shift from church as destination to church as connection. Destination: Kingdom life! Impact on worship.

Ancient future worship uniquely connects the historical, biblical story of God to the mission of God in its remembering-anticipating posture – ongoing incarnation.