

Lutheran Church of Australia: Commission on Worship

STATEMENT 5

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF DRAMATIC ARTS WITHIN THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH

Originally adopted by the Commission on Worship, September 1985. The Department of Liturgics prepared this statement as a response to the growing use of drama in the church. It was revisited by the Department of Dramatic Arts and this revision was adopted by the Commission in September 1998.

Reformatted and revised: 29 September 1998

1 Definition

- The term ‘dramatic arts’ includes drama, puppetry, clowning, and dance.

2 The place of dramatic arts in worship

- It is especially important that liturgical dramatic arts are an integral part of the service and fit into the structure, movement, and sense of the liturgy.
- Like music, dramatic arts dramatise the proclamation of God’s word in worship or highlight some aspect of the congregation’s response to it.
- Dramatic arts may supplement some part of the liturgy, such as a reading or psalm, or serve as an introduction to a sermon or theme.
- In a service with holy communion it is usually better if dramatic arts presentations occur before the preface, so that the inherent drama of the communion liturgy is not disrupted.
- Since liturgical dramatic arts are part of the structure of the liturgy, the pastor is ultimately responsible for determining the suitability of the presentation and its placement in the liturgy.

3 Presenting dramatic arts in worship

- Take care that liturgical dramatic arts are carefully scripted and well rehearsed, so that the presentation is appropriate, effective, and communicates to the whole congregation. Always strive for the best presentation possible to give glory to God.
- Ensure that the presentation can be seen and heard by the whole congregation.
- Keep it simple. Dramatic arts are usually most effective in regular worship services if they do not rely on elaborate structure, costumes, props, or a large cast.
- Be flexible. Adapt the presentation to fit the building and make the best use of the space available.
- Introduce different styles of dramatic arts gradually and sensitively, as the congregation is ready. It is important that the congregation is open to presentations, and so likely to benefit from them.
- Take care not to give offence to spiritual sensitivity and reverence by presenting unduly provocative material or using the altar, font, pulpit and lectern as props or by moving them without consultation.
- Include prayer as an important part of the preparation of any dramatic arts presentation in worship. It is important to remember that the presentation itself is an act of worship, not a performance.

‘I would like to see all the arts in the service of Him who made them.’

Martin Luther