



Anglican Parish of St Julian of Norwich

March 2020

Dearly beloved in Christ

As you know Level 4 Lockdown means that we will be unable to worship together as a congregation in our church for the foreseeable future. Following an emergency Zoom Vestry meeting last night, our joint Vicars Fr Wiremu and Mater Ambrose¹ have discerned, that celebrating the Eucharist online would not, for scriptural, traditional or theological reasons be appropriate.

As an Anglo-Catholic parish where our theology is primarily sacramental and our worship is corporate in nature², this decision will be upsetting to many of you.

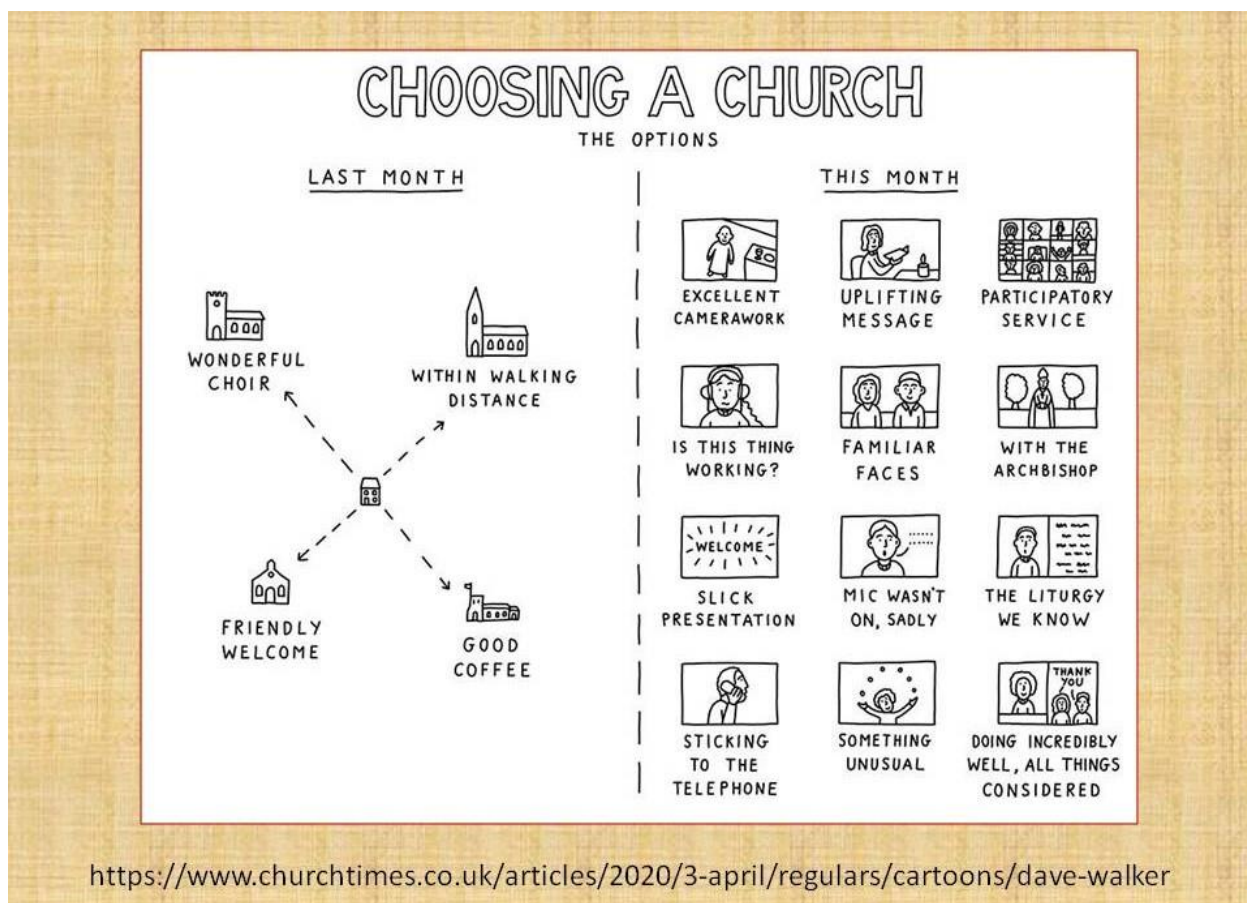
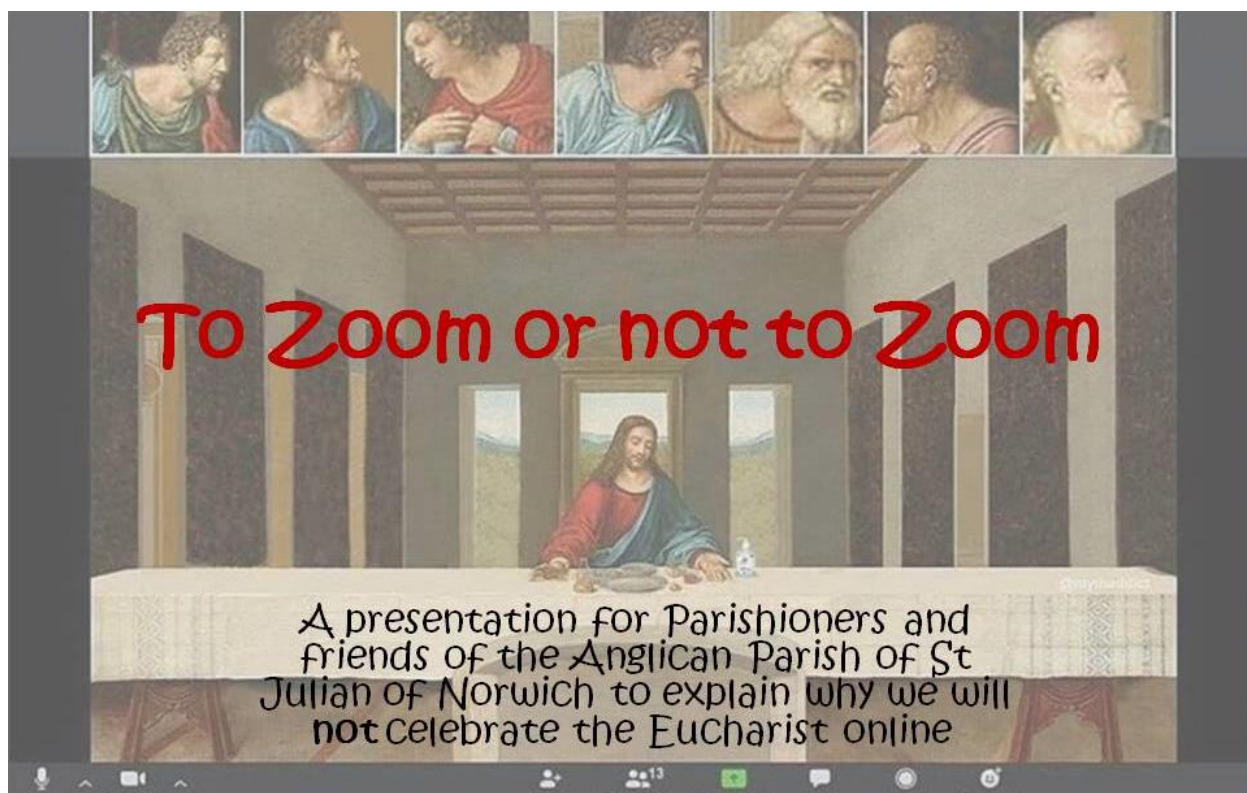
The rapid escalation of alert levels now also means that we will not be able to hold a congregational meeting to discuss this. Instead, we hope that our attached presentation may help explain this decision and the arguments in support of this.

People's Warden of St Julian of Norwich.

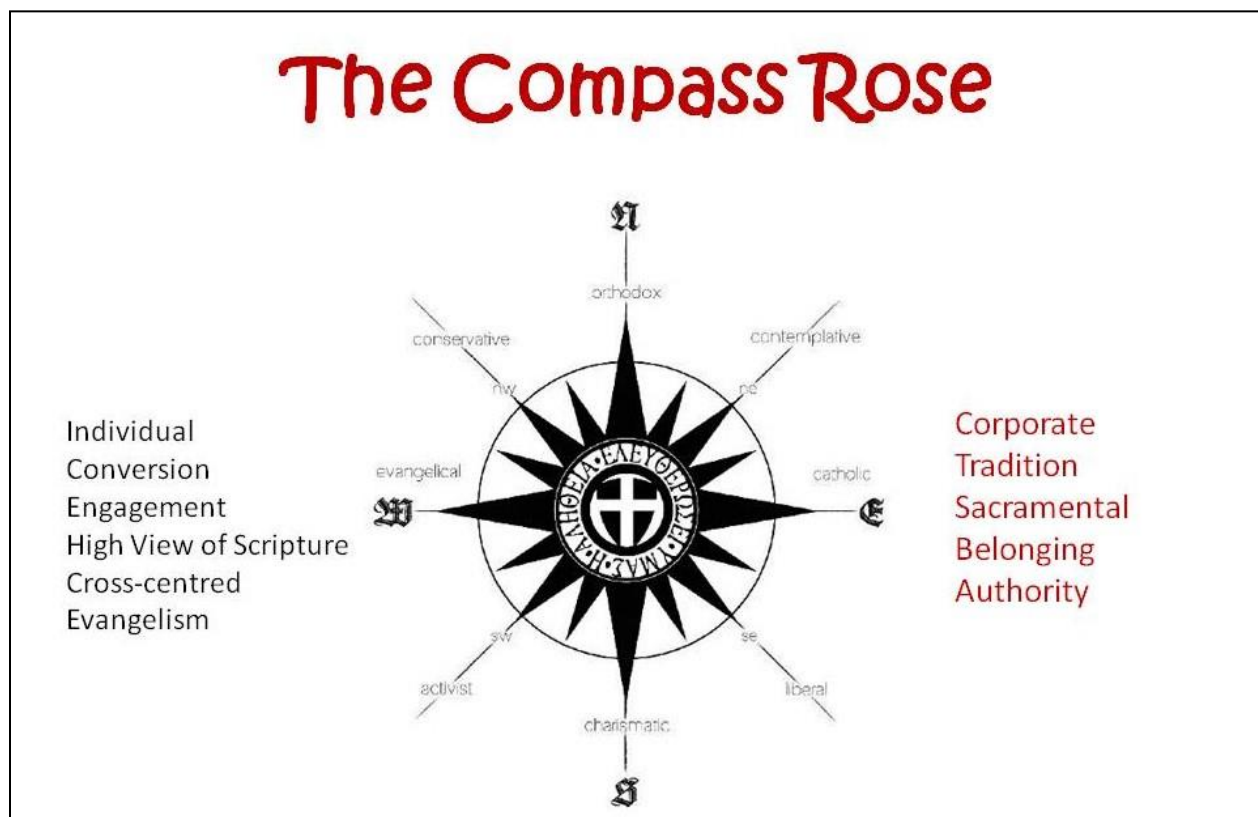
Note: Relevant explanatory text appears **below** each slide.

¹ The parish, clergy and wardens are fictitious!

²Thomas McKenzie, *The Anglican Way*. (Nashville: Colony Catherine, Inc., 2014), 39.



Various memes about virtual worship have been already been born, such as the one above. While it is intended to be humorous, worship options have evolved into a pick and choose menu to suit the **individual**. Zeroing in the “Participatory” service we need to ask ourselves if a collection of disembodied individuals could constitute a congregation engaging in corporate worship, a vital element in the celebration of the Eucharist.



Our parish traditionally follows the Eastern direction (not to the exclusion of other points!) of the Compass Rose³, which explains our preference for tradition and fostering a sense of belonging through corporate worship and our sacramental theology⁴. We identify as “Catholic”, in this context, meaning “universal” or “whole”, reflecting our being the body of Christ, and part of His universal Church⁵. This explains why we use the liturgy on p404 in *A New Zealand Prayer Book – He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*

³ McKenzie, *The Anglican Way*, 18.

⁴ Ibid., 37.

⁵ Ibid., 37.

(ANZPB) at least once every Sunday. This liturgy very much reflects our corporate “we” rather than an individual, “me”, spirituality⁶.

What are the Sacraments?

The Sacraments

Ngā Hākarameta

40. What are the Sacraments?

They are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ to the Church.

41. What is grace?

Grace is God’s freely-given love for people, forgiving sins, enlightening minds, stirring hearts and strengthening wills. Through grace we are given strength to live as loving sons and daughters of God.

932 *A Catechism*

A New Zealand Prayer Book – He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa, p932

We are reminded of what our Catechism teaches us about the Sacraments.⁷ A Hebrew word from the Old Testament, *nephesh*, meaning “soul”, also refers to “body”⁸. So we worship physically as well as spiritually. Not everyone has emotional or mystical experiences of the Holy Spirit, but in the case of the Eucharist where bread and wine are used and consumed as the elements as instituted by Jesus in this sacrament, regardless of feelings or theology we will always receive God’s grace!

⁶ McKenzie, *The Anglican Way*, 20.

⁷ Church of the Province of New Zealand. *A New Zealand Prayer Book: He Karakia Mihinare O Aotearoa* (Auckland: Collins, 1989), 932.

⁸ McKenzie, *The Anglican Way*, 174.

Why is the Eucharist Central to our worship?

³⁵ Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty”.

⁵³ Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.

⁵⁵ For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them.

John 6:35,53-56, (NIV)

Jesus reminds us of His being the “bread of life” and that He remains with those who eat his flesh and drink his blood. For this reason the Eucharist is “central to our spiritual life”,⁹ and so it is, “food for the baptized¹⁰”, “food we need week by week and year by year¹¹”. By receiving it “we come to touch the hem of Christ’s garment¹²”. According to the Catechism it is described as the

“family meal of the Church in which we are strengthened in our union with the living Christ and with one another for service in the world.¹³”

⁹ Church of the Province of New Zealand. *A New Zealand Prayer Book: He Karakia Mihinare O Aotearoa*, 403.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 933.



Image taken by the author.

When we entertain friends or family, or expect a visit from an important person, we prepare in advance by ensuring our homes are tidy and decorated, perhaps with flowers; that there is sufficient food and drink. We will also dress appropriately for the occasion.

In our church, we do likewise by ensuring the Table is correctly set, that the linen is clean, the candles are lit, the flowers are beautifully arranged, the appropriate Vestments worn, music and readings practiced and the homily is well prepared. The external preparations done, our liturgy equips us to make the physical and spiritual journey to meet Jesus.

What is Liturgical Worship?

“an action by which a group of people become corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals – a whole greater than the sum of its parts”

Alexander Schmemmann. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, p25

Liturgy comes from the Greek *leitourgia*¹⁴. Far from being a collection of printed prayers and prescribed patterns of worship, our coming and worshipping together as a church is a sacramental act in itself¹⁵. And of course Jesus Himself has said “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:20, NIV).

This sacramental act is already taking place as people leave home to travel to church:

“... an act which is the very condition of everything else that is to happen. For they are now on their way to constitute the Church, or to be more exact, to be transformed into the Church of God¹⁶.”

At church, true to *nephesh*, we worship with all our senses¹⁷. We hear the organ and the toll of the bell; see the candles, flowers and stained glass windows; smell the incense

¹⁴ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 25.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 27

¹⁷ McKenzie, *The Anglican Way*, 174.

and taste the Communion Elements. We stand to sing, for the Gospel proclamation and the Creed; we kneel in prayer and when receiving Communion; sit to listen to the lessons and homily; bow, genuflect and/or make the sign of the cross. We recall the past, yet look ahead to catch a glimpse of Heaven; we strengthen our personal faith in encountering Jesus and receiving personal nourishment when receiving Communion; and strengthen our commitment as a Community or the Body of Christ¹⁸.

All these functions are captured within our p404 liturgy. In accordance with Tradition we focus on both Word and Sacrament, this dual focus having been central to practice since the early church¹⁹. Indeed it is from the Word, Jesus Himself, and God's word in Scripture from which our Sacraments and Liturgy derive so one Ministry cannot take precedence over the other.²⁰

During the liturgy, once we are formally gathered as a community, we sing the *Gloria*, confess our sins, and receive absolution from the priest, another sacramental act, obeying St Paul's instruction that

"Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup." (1 Corinthians 11:28, NIV).

We then pray the collect, setting the theme for the readings, through which we look to the past. Following the sermon, we affirm our faith as a body in the words of the centuries old Nicene Creed.

In the Ministry of the Sacrament we start by exchanging the sign of the Peace, obeying Jesus' teaching to "be reconciled to your brother then come and offer our gifts". (Matthew 5:24).

The Great Thanksgiving starts with the *Sursum Coda* where we offer our own hearts to God. We then recall the sacrifice Jesus made through His crucifixion, the triumph of His

¹⁸ McGrath, Alister E., and McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2010), 412.

¹⁹ McKenzie, *The Anglican Way*, 177.

²⁰ John 1:1.

resurrection and join with the company of Heaven in the words of the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*.

The epiclesis

“Send your Holy Spirit
that these gifts of bread and wine which we receive
may be to us the body and blood of Christ,
and that we filled with the Spirit’s grace and power
may be renewed for the service of your kingdom.”

ANZPB, p423.

We then recall the institution of the Last Supper as in the synoptic gospels, and proclaim the mystery of our faith. Then the priest says the *epiclesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit over the elements. This is the point where the elements transform and Christ mysteriously becomes present. We then are invited to draw near...

The Invitation

Draw near and receive the body and blood of our Saviour
(real Presence, physical)

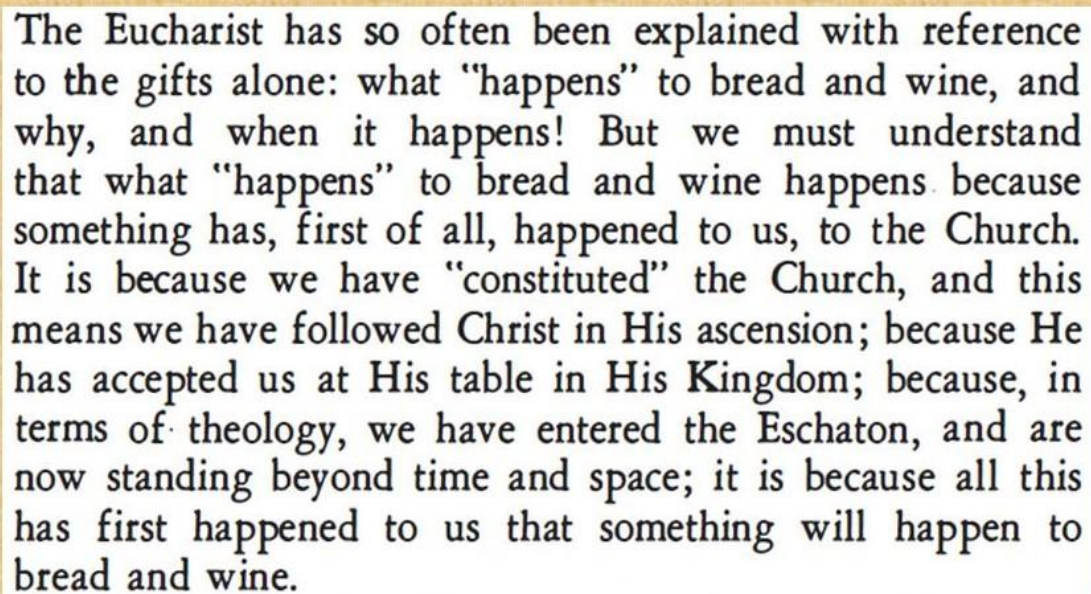
Jesus Christ in remembrance that he died for us.
(a memorial like a Passover meal)

Let us feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.
(spiritual food when taken in faith)

ANZPB, p427.

We will not discuss or debate what exactly how and what happens to the bread and wine, knowing that there is a continuum of theologies acknowledged in these words, a significant achievement from the Elizabethan Settlement where her goal was to achieve a Church which was uniform but also allowed for varying opinions²¹.

Instead we should consider Schmemmann's theory:



The Eucharist has so often been explained with reference to the gifts alone: what "happens" to bread and wine, and why, and when it happens! But we must understand that what "happens" to bread and wine happens because something has, first of all, happened to us, to the Church. It is because we have "constituted" the Church, and this means we have followed Christ in His ascension; because He has accepted us at His table in His Kingdom; because, in terms of theology, we have entered the Eschaton, and are now standing beyond time and space; it is because all this has first happened to us that something will happen to bread and wine.

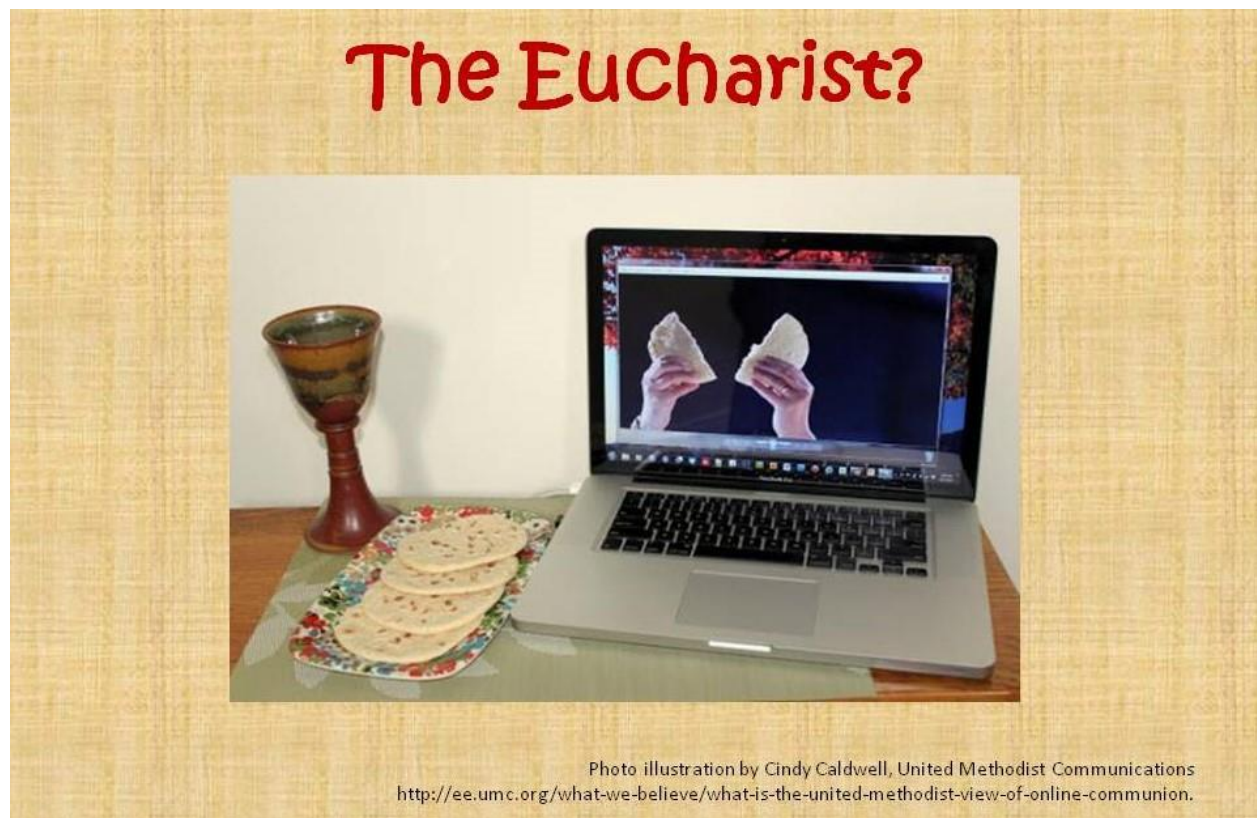
Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 37

In the p404 liturgy, There are no instances of "I"; it is all "we" and "us". The only moment we operate as individuals is when "we call to mind our sins"²². Now recall the image from the cartoon above: individuals peering into a screen, plugged into their device with earphones and ask yourself: would a virtual Mass, celebrated in this environment, be a valid sacramental act? So far the evidence is that the celebration of the Eucharist is a corporate form of worship which proven to be vital to this sacrament. We have recalled how Christ is present when two or three gather in His name and explored how corporate worship is a sacrament in itself. Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury adds

²¹ Justo L Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity Volume II*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 97.

²² Church of the Province of New Zealand. *A New Zealand Prayer Book: He Karakia Mihinare O Aotearoa*, 407.

to this, arguing that “that the Church is most truly itself when it is engaged in sacramental worship...²³.



Anglican tradition decrees that the Eucharist cannot be celebrated “unless at least one other person is present to receive communion with the presiding priest”.²⁴ If clergy are isolating alone, then of course they cannot celebrate the Eucharist, unless it can be determined that someone “zooming in” is present. Another issue arises with the elements at home and how they should be handled. We have also recalled how at in our Masses we worship with our bodies and senses – ask yourself, would sitting, staring into a screen with your own elements really match this? Unlikely! There is yet another limitation that not everyone has internet, so the community would be undermined and the Eucharist would become an exclusive gathering, not the open and inclusive Table.

²³ Rowan Williams, “The Church as Sacrament,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 10, no. 1 (February 2010): 8.

²⁴ Church of the Province of New Zealand. *A New Zealand Prayer Book: He Karakia Mihinare O Aotearoa*, 517.

Many of you might argue that God is beyond time and space and suggest we are questioning the power of the Holy Spirit with regard to the *epiclesis*. There is absolutely no doubt that the Holy Spirit could transcend cyberspace. The question is, given we have proven that it is the corporate nature of worship which causes the “whole greater than the sum of its parts”; then would those “zooming in” be as equally and fully present as if they physically were at church? The truth is we do not know. Any doctrine pertaining to online celebration will need to be prayerfully discussed and discerned over a long period of time. Something, given how rapidly the lockdown situation has escalated, we do not have, hence our decision not to celebrate an online Eucharist at this time. In the meantime, we can look beyond the seven official sacraments, to the infinite God can reveal Himself to us in even the most ordinary actions, sacramental acts in themselves.²⁵

²⁵ McKenzie, *The Anglican Way*, 167.

References

Church of the Province of New Zealand. *A New Zealand Prayer Book: He Karakia Mihinare O Aotearoa*. Auckland: Collins, 1989.

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