

**Christian Formation within Working Class Communities in the Church of Ireland:
The Purpose and Use of Liturgy**

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Abstract

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This research focuses on the question of how best to serve Christians from traditionally working-class communities through worship and liturgy in the Church of Ireland.

The dissertation begins by establishing the content and purpose of worship gatherings presented through the Old and New Testaments and in the first four centuries of the early church in order to establish the biblical concept of worship and the need for doctrinally robust liturgy. It reviews the principles that undergird the liturgies produced by the Church of England during the Reformation period and shows how doctrine and form combined in liturgy to create powerful Bible-based worship formats, intentionally crafted for the spiritual edification of the church. The dissertation goes on to present the philosophy behind the transformative effect of liturgy and how both secular and spiritual liturgies have the capacity to form and de-form Christian growth depending on their form and content, and show how knowledge of this transformative capacity is crucial for the church if it is to facilitate effective worship. The research then turns to the foundations of working-class theology, presenting some of the cultural barriers which might restrict the Church of Ireland from realising a truly catholic and inclusive ministry and suggesting principles and strategies for recognising and removing such social and cultural hurdles. The final section combines the biblical doctrine of worship, the philosophy of liturgical formation and the insights from working-class theology to produce a proposal for engaging working-class Christians in biblically-based, spiritually-transformative worship.

The main impetus for this study is to address the service which the Church of Ireland offers to working-class Christians. However, the work has wider implications for the Church as a whole as it aims to fulfil its mission transcending social class and reaching all people with the transformative gospel of Jesus Christ.