

My Lenten fast from chanting

By [Diane Roth](#)

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So the senior pastor and I decided not to chant the communion liturgy this year during Lent, thinking it would be simple and a bit austere—and that, like "Alleluia," we might miss it and long for its return. It's not a total fast, as we still chant the "Kyrie," although that's usually the choir, not me or the senior pastor. And of course, at the second service, which is more contemporary, we have less liturgy and we don't chant anything, although we've had some nice sung responses at the beginning of the service.

So, I'll confess: I do miss chanting. I miss chanting The Great Thanksgiving, with its back and forth echoes, but even more, I miss chanting the Preface, with its poetic words and phrases. I still speak the words, and there is something that makes me sort of pause, because I am speaking words I usually intone. For me, the chanter, the words sound richer, rounder, with layers underneath them, when I chant them.

I wonder, though, if anyone else is missing it the way I am. After all, chanting is sort of an unusual activity, something it's hard for us to relate to in our Ordinary Lives. You don't really have chanting in a worship service with a Praise Band, for example. For example, the Assemblies of God congregation, which meets in the middle school right behind our church, has a younger crowd at worship than we do, and no chanting, I'll bet.

I think though that a dislike (or at least puzzlement) for chanting is intergenerational. At least, one older member of our congregation once told me that though she prefers traditional worship, we could get rid of the chanting, and it wouldn't bother her one little bit.

Maybe we don't know what chanting is for; everything has to have a use, after all. I heard that priests began chanting the liturgy in the old cathedrals long ago because it was easier to understand a sung tone than a spoken one. But we don't need chanting for that reason any more.

Everything has to have a use, after all. Or does it?

On Easter morning, I will put on the gold chasuble, and I will chant the Great Thanksgiving, and the Easter Preface, and remind the congregation that when we sing God's great Alleluia, we will be singing with Peter and Mary Magdalene, with all the witnesses of the resurrection, with angels and archangels, and with the earth and all its creatures. And for me, it will be like indulging in a piece of expensive chocolate after a long fast, or like seeing a friend I love but haven't seen in a long time, or like looking into a package and discovering that there was another layer under the tissue paper, something you never saw was there before.

But, I wonder what everyone else will think. Will they be glad to welcome chanting back into worship?

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