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Preliminary thoughts on the interplay between face, masking and self-presentation in a liturgical-ecclesiological praxeology in a pandemic time

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This article examines faith communities that have been offered a new front door during the pandemic, namely, the internet. Firstly, one should acknowledge that people called participants in the liturgy encountered a defining moment in their cognisance of the pandemic. They were exposed to the virtual domain. As identified by Erving Goffman, the role of self-presentation, with specific mention of the fact that people normally wear masks, is insightful. A liturgical praxeology deals with people's propensity to make sense of communicators' facial expressions. Consequently, one must ask whether virtual participation in the liturgy and the possibilities for self-presentation in the online environment could not add value to a liturgical-ecclesiological praxeology. In presenting systemising perspectives on the importance of the relational aspect underlying the ecclesiological premises and the importance of people participating in the liturgy to seek God's face, the article reveals that there should be further refinements in this time of pandemic pandemonium. A mere transposing of the liturgy in face-to-face worship practices to the virtual environment will offer challenges. Finally, the following research question is formulated and briefly discussed: to what extent should the idea of self-presentation within a pandemic be integrated into a praxeology for a liturgical ecclesiology?

Contribution: The article aims to provide practical theological perspectives on how self-presentation in both face-to-face and virtual participation in the liturgy could be addressed.

Keywords: self-presentation; virtual participation; pandemic; masks; liturgical-ecclesiological praxeology.

Introduction

On 07 April 2020, the World Health Organization appealed to religious leaders to maintain their distance from each other and their faith communities. This had far-reaching consequences for worship practices[1] (World Health Organization 2020:1). This study underlines reflection framed by ecclesiological assumptions based on reconvening faith communities after lifting lockdown measures, with encounters before the pandemic with concomitant emphasis on face-to-face meetings and virtual engagement in the liturgy as essential building blocks (Campbell 2020:3; Scott 2020:4). Campbell (2020:4), for one, encapsulates the evident tension. Under normal circumstances, the idea of a community of people meeting during worship services is a central aspect, and virtual engagement in the liturgy could probably not replace this experience fully. During face-to-face worship services, people simultaneously do things together such as singing, listening to preaching and having communion (Campbell 2020:5). Various aspects related to the idea mentioned earlier cannot be maintained in a virtual environment. However, Campbell (2020:5) warns that the notion of a distant or a liquid church should not be misinterpreted, because it does not denote a disembodied church not interested in communal aspects but instead the quest of the church as a community of believers to find ways of effective communication underlining their interconnectedness during challenging times. Olivier (2021:4) argues along the same vein that the world has become defined by COVID-19, and we are forced to deal with a praxeology that resonates with the endless echoes of the pandemic. The fear of this virus has deeply penetrated all spheres of life, including worship services. Honigsbaum (2020:5–7) mentions that more viruses and pandemics are expected in the future, and worship communities have to acknowledge this danger. Therefore, liturgical-ecclesiological reflection is needed to define this underlying tension in a new time (Min, Kim & Yang 2021:282).

1.'Many faith traditions include touching or kissing of sacred and symbolic objects during worship services and prayer. The virus that causes COVID-19 can remain on such surfaces for hours or days. Religious leaders and faith-based communities need to protect their members from becoming infected by avoiding practices involving touching or kissing of such surfaces. Leaders can create and help community members accept new ways to reverence these objects and symbols safely' (World Health Organization 2020:3).

The need to rethink ecclesiological assumptions is often referred to as liturgical ecclesiology.[2] These considerations include intriguing discussions about digital ecclesiology (Berger 2013:4; Landová 2021a:2). Deeg (2021:124) stresses the need to realise the underlying challenge of revisiting liturgical ecclesiology. He points out that present-day faith communities are confronted by a crisis centring on a language to express themselves or (formulated differently) the challenge of communicating the gospel in a time irrevocably changed by the pandemic. One should not overlook Sweet's (2021:4) timely reminder that the church has received a new front door during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely the Internet, nor should this idea be exaggerated with faith communities trying to become frontrunners in the digital world.

One of the immediate consequences of the pandemic was that mask-wearing meant that facial expressions became less visible. This challenged people's interactions and the quality of their communication. People immediately reacted negatively to wearing masks because it made interpersonal communication difficult. It even became a controversial matter. Later, mask-wearing was elevated to a signal or clear message about whether people cared for other people or not. Hancock and Garner (eds. 2021:3) underline that people soon adapted to this reality of wearing masks, and people who did not wear masks were alerted that this conduct was unacceptable. As time went on, mask-wearing became the carrier of signs or messages like 'Black lives matter' or even 'I only wear this not to get fired'. It became a unique manner of communication of intrinsic attitudes (Dubrow 2021:2). Masks started fulfilling the role of unmasking deeper-lying attitudes and became a prominent communication medium later in the pandemic.

In the world of the performing arts, a performer would use a mask to obscure one identity so that they can embody another. Often, the masks used during performances have meanings that are instantly understood by an audience familiar with the specific codes of a particular theatre form (Hiestand 2020:2). The work of Erving Goffman (1956:71) can help us understand the need for people like actors or performers to control the impressions they make on others and simultaneously to read the impressions of people as one of several aspects of the presentation of the self in everyday life. These could be called the presenting and decoding actions, or they could be summarised as impression management (eds. Hancock & Garner 2021:1). During face-to-face encounters, people unintentionally and intentionally provide cues to enable other people to understand and perceive them well. Goffman's theory explains that people usually use masks (in the psychological sense) in their day-to-day interactions because they do not want to lose face in the eyes of the people they are interacting with. People have to make an impression on others so that they will be perceived well (Merunková & Šlerka 2019:246). According to Fiske (2004:315), Goffman's theory means that viewed from the angle of the perceivers, people are constantly interested in checking up on a person's sincerity, trustworthiness and general suitability.

The following research problem is formulated, namely: to what extent should the idea of self-presentation be integrated into a praxeology for a liturgical ecclesiology for a pandemic? This problem is addressed by applying Browning's (1996:13) visualisation of a research methodology that describes a research activity as developing from the description to systemising (exploring practical wisdom and understanding) to strategising (practising strategic, practical theology).

Descriptive-empirical perspectives on a liturgical ecclesiology

This section offers a description of contemporary praxeology and outlines the problematic praxis.

Empirical perspectives on participation in the liturgy based on the Barna Group

Kinnaman (2020:1–2), who is closely involved with the Barna Group, took efforts to track the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on churches, of which we should take cognisance. This group functions as a research and resource organisation in America, focusing on the intersection of faith and culture with a particular interest in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Barna Group's research identified a few different scenarios regarding the pandemic, and liturgists should become aware of this kind of reality, namely:

- Some participants prefer rather to stream their pre-COVID-19 church online.
- People stream the worship service of a different church or church online.
- People stop attending worship services and consequently stop participating in the liturgy.
- People who did not regularly attend worship services started participating during the pandemic. The number of this group of people is not significant, however.

Based on the research of the Barna Group, one out of three members of a faith community still attend their pre-COVID-19 church. At least 35% of the participants in the survey have indicated that they are following other denominations' worship services. They are, practically speaking, doing digital or virtual church-hopping (Kinnaman 2020:3). Although 35% of the participants have indicated that they still only attend their pre-COVID-19 churches' worship services, 32% of the respondents have answered that they have dropped out of participating in the liturgy. The interesting statistical revelation emerging from these numbers is that 68% of all participants (including those who have stopped participating) still need the care of a faith community. Sweet and Beck (2021:4) are adamant that when people eventually come out of the lockdown, they will realise that they have become a lockdown generation. The effect of fear in pandemic pandemonium time could be more dangerous than the virus itself. The consequences of social

2. According to Landová (2021b:137), this perspective of liturgical ecclesiology does not say that the life of the church consists solely in the liturgy, but rather it shows that the liturgy enables us to precisely understand the fundamental aspects of the church's existence. Liturgy should enable its participants to realize the essential aspects of ecclesiology.

distancing and mask-wearing, amongst other things, will be the two aspects of an imminent reality to deal with.

Bryson, Andres and Davies (2020:362) show that the role and representation of liturgical space had changed even before the pandemic started. Now, faith communities are further challenged by realising that participation in the liturgy in a virtual environment means that people are together in time but not in space. It should also be acknowledged that the Barna Group has indicated that in-person attendance of worship services or face-to-face participation in the liturgy is 30% – 50% lower now than before the pandemic. Moskala (2020:3) provides information about the Barna Group statistics denoting that 45% of their respondents indicated that they need to experience connectivity and community after participating in the liturgy. A total of 45% of the respondents demonstrated their intense need for emotional support. A further 35% of the respondents indicated that they need to become engaged in service and community and that their participation in the liturgy should provide perspective on this matter. Only 29% of the participants in the liturgy indicated a profound need for a well-constructed sermon according to the formal requirements for a good sermon. Based on these statistics, it should be asked whether it will be responsible to go back to liturgical practices precisely as they were before the pandemic.

Descriptive perspectives on virtual engagement as reality during the pandemic

The descriptive literature study reveals that most scholars agree that a liturgical praxeology for a pandemic should deal with its participants' physical presence and online presence (Legare 2021:3). For one, Bauman (2010:11) emphasises the emergence of liquid modernity, where systems in society do not hold their shape indefinitely. People often refer to the online sphere as the under-the-radar life, but the reality thereof as an integral part of reality can no longer be ignored, according to Holst (2021:2) and Joubert (2013:215). Scholars feel that gatherings outside the church building and in more minor formal settings will soon become a reality that should be dealt with responsibly (Moskala 2020:4). Sweet (2021:6) offers an exciting view of the COVID-19 pandemic as something that has enabled families and faith communities to rediscover the central place of the family table. The benefit and potential of a rediscovery of the *sobremesa*, the power of the after-meal reflections that include reflection on the liturgy's message, could offer faith communities poignant opportunities with a specific focus on the functioning of small groups.

Descriptive perspectives on self-presentation as identified by Erving Goffman

Immink (2014:24) emphasises the notion of a worship service as a performative act, and consequently, all liturgical elements contribute to the active presentation of God's salvific action. In participation in the liturgy, people become participants rather than mere listeners. Based on the notion of the performative act of a worship service, the contribution of Erving Goffman's work has been attracting renewed interest, especially his theory that people function as actors performing a role on stage when they are in social situations. When the performance (interaction) ends, the person returns backstage, where this role is shaken off to prepare for the next performance. The renewed interest in people playing their roles first increased because of people's involvement in online social networks, but it has become even more relevant during the pandemic (Merunková & Šlerka 2019:160). Goffman's emphasis on self-representation and social interaction is being scrutinised. If Goffman's theory is linked to liturgical studies, the idea that people present a good image in face-to-face interactions and the virtual or online environment becomes relevant. We are confronted by at least two aspects: the challenges of wearing physical masks and people's natural tendency to wear psychological masks as an integral part of impression management. Masks are therefore a timely reminder that people hide their authentic selves and a reminder of the imperative of becoming true to what you are claiming you are. With or without physical masks, Goffman enables us to realise that people do use invisible masks. Sweet (2021:9) states that mask-wearing during the COVID-19 pandemic has unmasked faith communities to the extent that they are now forced to show their authentic selves. In the meantime, people suggest that wearing masks will probably be regulated as mandatory once the State of Emergency has been declared as something of the past. The wearing of masks will be compulsory for the foreseeable future and could be seen as a reality for faith communities to deal with.

Back to the perspectives provided by Goffman and closely related to the matter of authenticity whilst participating in the liturgy is the thought of people constantly interpreting other people's actions and the pandemic itself differently. The importance of cognition – people's thoughtful ability to make sense of life – comes to the fore (Fiske 2004:33). The following formulations of social masks could be recognised during the pandemic: expressions of distress, people discovering feelings of guilt because of the severe effects of the pandemic, people trying to invite others to repentance, witnessing hopelessness or hope, reminders of compassion and confessions of faith. In a nutshell, wearing masks reminded people of the imminent danger of possible infection (De Souza 2020:407). One cannot ignore the fact that people have a vital need to understand the facial expressions of the other people they interact with as part of the liturgy.

Systemising perspectives on self-presentation as part of a liturgical-ecclesiological praxeology

This section first discusses self-presentation from the perspective of ecclesiological-liturgical premises. Secondly, the section offers a normative investigation of the functioning of people's faces based on perspectives from the gospel. The section ends with systemising perspectives on liturgical ecclesiology.

Liturgical-ecclesiological perspectives on people's faces and mask-wearing

The importance of one's face viewed from the angle of the gospel is briefly investigated in this section. Douglas (1986:365) helps us understand that someone's face is more than just a look. From the perspective of the gospel, it deals with the idea of presence. A person's face could refer to their physical appearance or denote their outward presentation. A person's face reflects intrinsic emotions. Brown (1986:585) examines the original meaning of the concept of προσωπον, which denotes the idea of the appearance of something that strikes the eye. The same concept could also relate to actors' masks or a scene in the Greek world. In the Old Testament, noting God's face in an intimate relationship with the temple is striking. Seeking God's face in the context of liturgy and viewed from an Old Testament perspective means coming near to God, especially in a prayerful attitude (Brown 1986:586). It boils down to seeking fellowship with God. Jenni and Westermann (1984:434) state that the word for face or *angesicht* is frequently used in the Old Testament. There are 2140 references to this concept in the Old Testament and 76 references in the New Testament. The use of the word προσωπον is often used as an anthropomorphic expression (Bromiley 1985:951). It literally means that which strikes the eye (Brown 1986:585). The relational aspect of God standing in a relationship with humans comes to the fore. For example, God lifting his countenance and shining his face on people means grace and peace, whilst hiding his face means withdrawal. God's face in the Bible denotes the idea of his presence. In mentioning someone's face, cognisance of a mirror of their soul becomes evident (Jenni & Westermann 1984:437). Someone's face is synonymous with their presence, and the notion of the face simultaneously provides a visible indication of intrinsic emotions. It follows that someone's face is functional in unveiling or unmasking their attitudes and emotions. The ideas of presence or presentation and the revealing or unmasking essence of someone's face emerge.

According to Brown (1986:585–586), mentioning someone's face in the ancient world also denotes an actor's mask or indicates the actor's role in a drama. Consequently, seeing the face of someone means to meet a person and knowing someone by face denotes personal knowledge of the person (Bromiley 1985:951). Pattison (2013:22) enables us to realise that encountering others face-to-face is associated with intimacy, whilst the inability to do so is often seen as problematic in human interactions. People's faces are, after all, functional in communicating the self. This idea correlates with the concept of self-presentation mentioned earlier on.

Kruger (2005:651) embroiders on this idea and underlines that someone's face is the most expressive part of communicating emotions and could even be described as a particular display of emotions. Emotions such as anger, fear, joy and disgust, amongst others, are reflected in people's faces (Ekman 1994:270). Faces are essential parts of communication or interaction, and seeing a person's face can be a fundamental building block of relationships. The revealing function of faces where emotions and the deeper-lying matters related to oneself are unmasked is incorporated into a biblical understanding of the concept of face. The relational aspect deals with the cognisance of God, who seeks his people even when men try to hide their faces from him or even when it is mandatory to wear masks. God's interest in a relationship with his people and his desire that they meet him face-to-face is compelling.

During the Israelites' journey in the desert, God promised Moses that his face would go with him and the Israelites on their journey. The realisation of this promise supported and encouraged Moses as he fulfilled his task. In the book of Psalms, the idea of seeking God's face when people meet him becomes even more prominent. One example is Psalm 27. The importance Psalm 27:8 attaches to participation in the liturgy is closely related to the concept of a strong desire to seek God's face. As God's face becomes evident in his house, the Psalmist has only one desire, namely, that he may dwell in God's house in proximity of his presence. In seeking God's face or presence, the Psalmist is committed to doing two essential things: gazing upon God's beauty and continuing to seek God in his temple. This is not strange, because God's presence should be a fundamental aspect of any faith community's life. Based on this desire to seek God's face, the Psalmist indicates that being a participant in the liturgy helps believers experience the profound meaning of God's presence and his kindness in their lives in God's presence. Psalm 27:8 further describes participation in the liturgy as a strong desire to seek God's face or presence. One could say that God is displaying himself to the participants in the liturgy whilst they are worshipping. Participants in the liturgy who desire to seek his face commit to searching for and studying God's revealing character in all elements of the liturgy.

The investigation into the concept of the face offers some perspectives on the notion of the face as a revealer of emotions and an indication of someone's presence (Moskala 2020:3). During the COVID-19 pandemic, where the emphasis fell on wearing masks, the fact that someone's face speaks louder than words was put under pressure. It is uncertain whether mask-wearing will remain mandatory. The importance of integrating the notion of a face in a liturgical praxeology could not be denied. In endeavouring to meaningfully rethink mask-wearing, the unmasking of faces and self-presentation should be considered influential building blocks. This should also be investigated in a virtual environment. Participation in the liturgy opens further possibilities to seek God's face in the face-to-face engagement in the liturgy and the online environment. Reflection on how liturgy could enhance our efforts to seek God's face even behind our physical masks and a computer screen needs the attention of faith communities.

A liturgical-ecclesiological praxeology dealing with the face of liturgy

In this section, the importance of the concepts of face, masking and self-presentation will receive further attention.

Hence, Lathrop (1999:32) enables us to understand that participants in the liturgy and faith communities need to understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The empirical section shows perspectives that denote the importance of faith communities understanding their current challenges and the unique role liturgical enactment could play in this process. Based on the foundation of participants in the liturgy coming together to seek God's face or presence, liturgy evokes experiences or reactions from its participants to engage in activities to seek other's faces and to face realities in daily life (Schmemann 2003:41). Cilliers (2009:517) underlines the importance of liturgical enactment in saying that God is, after all, revealing himself in the proclamation of the Christ event in worship. Those who worship could then be described as *creatura verbi dei* or as the creation of the Word of God. The face of liturgy deals with the presence of God and his people. Furthermore, Plantinga and Rozeboom (2003:3) underline the importance of God revealing himself in worship, and based on this idea, people should see reality differently.

Furthermore, liturgy, or a faith community's liturgical enactment dealing with face and self-presentation, enables the participants to realise the core or centre of their mission in this world. Lathrop (1999:27) stresses the idea that in a faith community's liturgy, the face of God is made visible according to what he reveals. Therefore, the essential aspects of a church should become visible from how a faith community participates in its liturgy. According to an Aristotelian, understanding of appearance or face denotes that one's face is a map to the personality and the kind of life they are living (Schiaparelli 2017:24). Hence, people are enabled by faces to recognise and remember each other. The face symbolises the authentic self, and it could not be more applicable to argue that a faith community's face in the liturgy also indicates the authentic self of the community. In facing God and each other whilst participating in the liturgy, eyes widen to see reality's face. According to Landová (2021a), Lathrop emphasises that:

> [*T*]he church in liturgy manifests itself as a community being in dialogue with God. It is a gathering that stops, becomes quiet, listens to God's address, expects his presence in the Holy Spirit, and responds, prays, sings, and addresses God as its partner in communication. (p. 7)

Based on the mentioned ideas, a gathered community seeking God's face during their participation in the liturgy should inevitably concern themselves with their face (authentic self) and the face of the world they live in (Landová 2021a:11). One could also say that liturgy has a face, and based on this insight, people's faces are essential whether we are participating in face-to-face worship or virtually. Scott (2015:26) clarifies that liturgical-ecclesiological reflection should deal with what it means to be present or (stated differently) how faith communities could manifest or present themselves bodily and virtually in the world. The idea that the faith community should have a face and a physical address in the community comes to the fore.

The essence of the real presence – even amidst the physical mask-wearing or in Goffman's sense, people wearing masks in the roles they fulfil – and the notion of actual presence in the virtual environment need special attention (Sweet 2021:7). The outlines of a digital liturgy different from face-to-face worship services should be investigated.

A liturgical-ecclesiological praxeology related to the face-to-face participation in the liturgy and virtual engagement during a pandemic

Sections 2 and 3, as described earlier, are deployed in a hermeneutical interaction to provide strategising perspectives focused on a liturgical praxeology for a pandemic. The following key aspects have emerged thus far: the defining characteristics of the COVID-19 pandemic, the increasing reliance on virtual engagement in the liturgy that is different from livestreaming, people wearing masks literally and figuratively speaking and finally, the importance of faces or self-presentation.

The need to cultivate a praxis of meaningful engagement in the liturgy during a pandemic

The article initially started by recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic will have a lasting effect on faith communities in years to come (Berger 2020:3; Bryson et al. 2020:360; Da Silva 2020:2; Rosen 2021:3). The presence of a faith community's members or the embodiment of cyberspace provides opportunities to see virtual engagement as complementary or risk management and fully engage in this dynamic.

Notably, liturgical enactment is highlighted as a primary concern in navigating the consequences of the pandemic. The pandemic offered faith communities creative and dynamic opportunities to reach vulnerable people via the virtual environment. Faith communities should not let this opportunity slip once pandemic measures are lifted because of the current research findings. If liturgical enactment is indeed a central focus and presentation or presence is intimately related to this action, it seems foolish not to revisit essential ecclesiological aspects and not reflect on a faith community's identity in both the face-to-face and virtual worlds. A liturgical ecclesiology has emerged in which the place of people's homes and participation in the liturgy from home has become central. During the pandemic, the virtual enactment in the liturgy has shown multiple opportunities to reach people online (cf. Spadaro 2012:69–70). The author agrees that thoughtful revisiting is needed and that presence in the virtual domain indeed presents challenges.

Mask-wearing and people who need to see faces

During the pandemic, it was ironic that people could see other people's faces because of virtual engagement in the liturgy. In contrast, the limited number of people allowed to face-to-face worship were obliged to wear masks. The section earlier has

provided perspectives on the need for a revisited liturgical-ecclesiological praxeology that deals with the opportunity to reach people and enable them to participate in a digital-liturgical manner but still according to the faith community's ecclesial identity. A revisited praxeology should integrate the consequences of people's natural tendency to wear masks in social interaction, the physical wearing of masks and the importance of faces. Based on this insight, one should ask whether the idea of sincerity and authenticity should then not be addressed as a starting point in the rethinking of a liturgical-ecclesiological praxeology. Suppose Bonhoeffer's (1954:3) premise of a faith community as a community through Christ is central to our ecclesiological understanding. In that case, it should include the idea that a community should present their authentic selves whilst participating in all aspects of the liturgy. Showing your true colours reveals what you believe, and acting accordingly comes to the fore. Suppose the idea of lived religion is acknowledged as an essential aspect of everyday life. In that case, one could also speak of a lived liturgy, which entails a liturgical presence in both face-to-face worship and online participation in the liturgy (Scardigno & Mininni 2020:214). Authenticity in liturgical experiences has been identified in the section on systemising perspectives as the endeavour in which participants in the liturgy firstly seek God's face. Secondly, in experiencing God's presence, one's presence or face is a vital mirror of authenticity, with or without a physical mask.

Authentic self-presentation or participation in the liturgy offers a meaningful signal of how people perceive authenticity. The psychological effects of the pandemic, also called COVID-19 syndrome, will accompany people for some time to come. Will the practice of going to worship services on the Lord's Day before starting with the following week's activities survive during a pandemic? Sweet (2021:10) points out that a church is not a building, but a space for worship and a place to worship God with. There should indeed be a rethinking of vital aspects of ecclesiology, including the use of space. Hopefully, it will include the realm of a faith community being simultaneously present in the virtual domain but with the commitment to worship God and seek his face. Behind the masks and computer screens, people's faces tell an intriguing tale, and the unique experiences are remarkable. A further aspect of revisiting is the notion of liturgical rituals, which refer to repeating elements such as reflecting on one's life in listening to his will or the commandments, the confession of sin, scripture reading and the celebration of the sacraments. The determining aspect of participating in rituals aims to express meaningfulness. It should be investigated in face-to-face worship where physical masks are used and when participants meet in front of a computer screen. The challenge in a pandemic pandemonium time will be to revisit the rituals being utilised to relate to the specific context in which it is used. Consciousness in a liturgical praxeology dealing with a rereading of faces, whether behind masks or in a virtual environment, needs the attention of faith communities. The presentation of the authentic self, whether behind masks or behind a computer screen, seems to offer a challenge.

Through the ages, the realisation of God's presence in all spheres of life has enabled faith communities to adapt to the challenges of new technology (Musa 2020:54). Technology has been used to enrich and cultivate liturgical practices that acknowledge that a faith community deals with fellowship and relationships. Technology and the virtual environment could enhance a liturgical-ecclesiological praxeology, but it should entail something more than simply duplicating the actual worship via livestreaming. The virtual or digital environment has its weaknesses, but there is little doubt that it also increases interaction between participants (Cooper et al. 2021:7). Participants' experiences of these interactions are crucial in determining how shared experiences of the liturgy could be enhanced. A mere digitising of face-to-face worship services such as the livestreaming approach is an option. Still, much more could be done to fully explore the richness of virtual engagement in the liturgy by prioritising feedback and interaction. This article favours a liturgy where people's need to see other people's faces, meaning their authentic selves, stands central.

Conclusion

This article emphasises a liturgical-ecclesiological praxeology. Included in this idea is the essential role ecclesiological assumptions play. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that applying these assumptions during a pandemic needs fine-tuning. The notion of self-presentation in face-to-face worship services and the virtual environment is challenging. The idea of seeking the face of God emphasises that people need to unmask participants' faces whilst worshipping. We should identify the sincerity of people whilst participating in the liturgy. It seems responsible to conclude that with the manifestation of a liquid society and the reality of a virtual environment that has grown by leaps and bounds, a liturgical-ecclesiological praxeology has to take into account the value-add of virtual engagement in worship services, not merely as a duplication of face-to-face worship services. A liturgy for virtual enactment in the liturgy in which self-presentation is taken seriously is challenging. It could still provide a new dynamic for faith communities' connectivity to people in need of seeking God's face.

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F.P.K. is the sole author of this article.

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