

Anglican Worship (This is a huge topic, but let's scratch the surface:)

The word "Liturgy" means "work of the people" and describes the patterns of worship in the church. We can think of such patterns in three groups: **The Eucharist, The Daily Office and Occasional Liturgies**. Note that this is a different way of categorizing Sacraments (primarily Baptism and the Eucharist), sacramental rites (traditionally: confirmation, marriage, reconciliation, anointing of the sick, ordination), and other pastoral rites.

The Eucharist:

The Eucharist is the center of the life of the church. As St. Paul writes, "for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Corinthians 11:26). Christians moved the Sabbath from the end of the week to the beginning of the week, the day on which Jesus rose from the grave, marking the new age and the new creation. Sunday is the Lord's Day in the life of the church, taking precedence over lesser feast celebrations. As the central feast of the church, the Eucharist is the most appropriate liturgy for Sundays. The word "Eucharist" means "thanksgiving." The Eucharist is celebrated in two parts, the liturgy of the Word, and the Liturgy of the Table. The thanksgiving of the table is always surrounded by the proclamation of scripture. Elements of this Liturgy carry over from the earliest times of the church, and are shared in common with Eastern, Roman, and some Protestant churches.

Liturgy of the Word:

- Call to worship; Gloria (hymn of praise)
- Scripture: Old Testament, Psalm, New Testament epistle, Gospel reading
- Sermon
- Nicene Creed
- Prayers (including confession & absolution if not said earlier)

Passing of the Peace

Liturgy of the Table:

- Sursum Corda: call and response (lift up your hearts...)
- Thanksgiving, Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy)
- Anamnesis: remembrance, especially of the Last Supper
- Words of institution (This is my body...this is my blood...)
- Epiclesis: calling down the Holy Spirit to consecrate the elements
- The Great Amen! (no response of "Amen" = no Eucharist!)
- Fraction: breaking the bread (& anthem, such as the Agnus Dei: Lamb of God)
- The Lord's Prayer
- Communion
- Blessing & Dismissal

From the earliest times, the church celebrated the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, including particular reverence to the consecrated bread and wine. How and when this happens only became an issue in the Protestant Reformation. The Eucharist is a sharing in Christ's life, death and resurrection. The Eucharist is called "Holy Communion" because through it, we are knit together in communion with Christ and with his church (the whole church, around the world, and through time). The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is central to this sacrament, proclaiming the incarnation, the atoning sacrifice of the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, and our hope in the resurrection to eternal life through his resurrection. The priest or bishop who presides at the Eucharist is traditionally called the "celebrant," but we all celebrate this sacrament—the central feast of thanksgiving of the church.

The Daily Office:

Patterns of prayer (especially at home) carried over from Jewish practice into the life of Christians. As the church developed, Monks were leaders of reform and the call to a holy life. Monks followed patterns of regular daily prayer. Benedictine monks prayed together nine times per day, according to the “Rule of Benedict,” setting a precedent for other monastic patterns, and for parish clergy and laity. Many of these patterns survive in the life of the church, in what is called the “Daily Office.”

In the English reformation, Thomas Cranmer (who wrote the first Book of Common Prayer) conflated these nine “hours” of prayer into two: **Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer**. Remnants of other offices are found in the brief services of Noonday Prayer and Compline (at the close of day). English clergy are still required to “read” the offices every day: Morning Prayer and Evening prayer, including the regular reading of scripture at each service (our current BCP has a two year lectionary for the Daily Office, separate and different from the three year Eucharistic Lectionary for Sundays).

There are regular psalms or scriptural songs (called “canticles”) read or sung, and a regular pattern of prayers (whose language has embedded itself in the minds and speech of centuries of Anglicans and other English speakers). The Apostle’s Creed is the creed used, and the office does not necessarily include a sermon (but it might). Lay people can lead the Daily Office, and one can “read the Office” at home alone or with others. In many regions, Morning Prayer was the more standard worship form for Sundays (but now Eucharist is recognized as the norm, in keeping with much of church history). When Evening Prayer is sung, it is called “Evensong,” a special gem of Anglican Liturgy.

Occasional Liturgies

These are liturgies that mark the church calendar, Baptism and other liturgies. The calendar of the church year (and their corresponding colors) begins with Advent (four weeks before Christmas, usually marked with purple), then Christmas season (12 days, remember?; white), Epiphany (green), Lent (40 days, plus the Sundays, purple), Easter (the great 50 days, then Ascension; white), and Pentecost (red on the day, green in the season). High Feast days include All Saints on November 1, and the Baptism of Jesus on the First Sunday after Epiphany.

Special calendar liturgies include:

Ash Wednesday: marking the beginning of Lent, the season of penitence, with a reminder of our mortality: the mark of ashes (“remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return”).

Palm Sunday: Also now Passion Sunday, remembering Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem where branches of palm were laid before him, and now remembering the rest of Holy week: his betrayal, arrest, trial, torture and crucifixion.

Maundy Thursday: marking the last supper with the disciples, often with foot washing, and stripping of decorations from the worship space.

Good Friday: remembering Jesus’ crucifixion. No Eucharist is celebrated.

The Great Vigil of Easter: The Great Vigil is traditionally (and therefore still, for Eastern Orthodox) the pinnacle of the church year: the end of Lent, the recitation of God’s saving acts in history, culminating in a celebration of Baptism and the first Eucharist of Easter.

Baptism:

Central to Christian identity, celebrates the cleansing of sin, the forgiveness and new life in Jesus, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Baptism and the Eucharist are the two primary sacraments, since they were ordained by Christ himself. Sacraments are defined traditionally as “outward and visible signs of an inward and invisible grace.” Baptism is the first sacrament listed in the Book of Common Prayer, followed by the Eucharist.

Other Liturgies (“sacramental” perhaps; listed as “Pastoral Rites” or “Episcopal Rites”):

Confirmation: Originally part of the Baptismal rite (and still united with it in Eastern Orthodoxy), Confirmation was disconnected from Baptism centuries ago in the West to delegate Baptism to the priests without requiring a bishop’s presence, while using confirmation to retain the connection to the bishop by the “laying on of hands” later. Confirmation is a mature adult affirmation of faith, with the laying on of hands by the bishop (sometime taught as signifying the gift of the Holy Spirit; now considered a strengthening of that gift given in Baptism). Both RC and Protestant churches have been rethinking the theology of Confirmation in recent decades, laying greater emphasis on Baptism, and moving away from seeing Confirmation as a “completion” of Baptism.

Marriage: “a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God” for lifelong fidelity in married union. The chief celebrants of the sacrament are the bride and groom. The church promises to uphold the marriage as well.

Reconciliation of a Penitent: commonly called “confession.” The most common setting for “confession” (other than in immediate address with God or with the other person) is in the “General Confession” shared by the congregation in corporate worship. “Reconciliation of a Penitent” is a more appropriate title (one the RCs have also embraced) because confession is only part of the process that includes repentance, amendment of life, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The opportunity for a priest to assist in this process is preserved by this rite, in keeping with Cranmer’s tradition that one can read in the Exhortation (BCP p.317). This rite offers forms for the priest and penitent for this process. Tasks given to the penitent (sometimes called “penance”) are disciplines of help, rather than disciplines of punishment (for Christ has paid the price). This rite is seldom part of the experience of most Episcopalians, but is certainly available to all.

Ministration to the Sick: This parallels what used to be called “Last Rites” or “Extreme Unction,” though the RCs are also laboring to correct this to a more general “anointing of the Sick” at any time.

Burial: prayers of commendation and committal (not traditionally considered a sacrament, but still a special pastoral liturgy in the life of the church).

Ordination: of Deacons, Priests and Bishops. They are ordained clergy “in the one, Holy, catholic and apostolic church,” and set apart for life (rather than just a role).

Other rites include Thanksgiving for a Child (appropriately and humorously placed in between Marriage and Reconciliation!), Commitment to Christian Service (placed after Confirmation), Celebration of New Ministry (when a new rector begins), and Consecration of a church. Other rites can be found in the *Book of Occasional Services*.

The Book of Common Prayer includes these liturgies, the Psalms, many prayers for various occasions, the Lectionaries (calendars for readings), the 39 Articles & other important historical documents, and the Catechism.