

**The Whys of Worship: What Christians do on Sundays and why we do it.**  
**Classes #4 & 5: Walking through our Sunday Service: The Liturgy of the Word**  
**9/14/23**

Here is an outline that walks through our Sunday worship service. Our Sunday services are in two parts: The Liturgy of the Word, and the Liturgy of the Table. “Liturgy” is the structure of how a group of people worship God together.

**The Liturgy of the Word** opens with praising God. We then hear scripture and a sermon, recite the creed and offer our prayers. The Liturgy of the Table then follows (Holy Communion).

Before the service: a time for prayer

*Not silence, but quietness, sets the tone so that we all may prepare to worship God.*

### **The Liturgy of the Word of God**

Hymn of Praise (“enter into his gates with thanksgiving, go into his courts with praise” Ps.100)

Invocation: “Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...”

*Naming whom we are here to worship.*

Different invocations are used in Lent and Easter because of the seasons, see BCP p.355.

*There is an optional gesture that many people observe at this time. They “cross themselves,” by making a sign of the cross at the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The first two fingers and thumb are brought together (the three-fold nature of the Trinity) and touch the head, the chest, the left shoulder and then the right (Eastern Orthodox touch right first, then left). This happens at other times in the service where this name is invoked or when a blessing or absolution is given. You do not have to make this gesture, but many do as a sign of reverence for God.*

Collect for Purity: a prayer for preparing our hearts & thoughts to worship God

Gloria (a traditional hymn of praise)

or in Lent/Advent: Kyrie (Lord have mercy...)

or the Trisagion (“three holies”)

Collect of the Day (a prayer summing up the occasion, usually related to the readings)

### Lessons

Old Testament Reading (*the new lectionary uses Acts in Easter Season*)

Psalm (*our habit is responsive by half-verse, in keeping with the way Hebrew Poetry works*)

New Testament Reading (*From Acts, the Letters or Revelation*)

Gospel Reading

*?Why a special Gospel Book? Why a Gospel Procession?*

*We read the Bible through the lens of Jesus, so the Gospel accounts are key.*

*We bring the Gospel (“Good News”) ‘to the people’*

*The Gospel is proclaimed by the liturgical Deacon (Priests are also Deacons).*

*But: The risk is that we give the impression that the rest of the Bible is less important.*

### The Sermon

*A response to the readings; A proclamation of the Good News*

*About God! Based on at least one of the Biblical readings, or one aspect of one reading.*

*Addressing the text and the world; Addressing sin and addressing Grace: what God does.*

## The Nicene Creed

*A response to the proclamation, reaffirming who God is and who we are in relation to God.  
We use the Nicene Creed for Eucharist, The Apostles Creed for Baptism and Daily Office.*

## The Prayers of the People: (p.359 & p.383) Intercession for:

- The Universal Church, its members and its mission
- The Nation and all in authority
- The welfare of the world
- The concerns of the local community
- Those who suffer and those in any trouble
- The departed.

*The BCP forms I – VI are possible ways to achieve these priorities.*

*The prayers may be written from scratch as long as they meet the above criteria.*

*However, if the prayers change constantly, it may be harder for the congregation to enter into the prayers (rather than paying attention to something new in the prayers).*

*Issues with the prayers when designing liturgy:*

*“Reading the phone book:” When is it “OK” to remove someone from the prayer list?*

*Needs a consistent policy for pastoral sensitivity.*

*Group size, formality and time often impact what is included, and the style of the prayers.*

*The formula above omits thanksgivings, but isn't it important to thank God?*

*Note that under BCP guidelines, we have adapted our Prayers of the People in small ways, including adding Thanksgivings.*

## Confession & Absolution

*We do have private confession (BCP. p.447), but this is a “general” confession.*

*“We” means each of us individually, and all of us together.*

*The Confession & Absolution come at the end of the prayers so that we move from being free from our sins straight to the exchange of the Peace of the Lord. So we approach the Communion table reconciled with God and with each other (Matthew 5:23-24).*

## The Peace: exchanging the peace of Jesus Christ

*A sign of our reconciliation with God and with each other in Christ, and his peace.*

“Necessary announcements may be made before the service, after the creed, before the offertory, or at the end of the service, as convenient.” (BCP, p.407)

*Care must be taken to avoid the announcements overtaking the service or interrupting the flow from the Peace to the Table.*

*The verbal announcements are the most sought after piece of real estate in the church!*

*Our aim is no more than three, focusing on large scale events, or items needing particular attention.*

*We also pray for those celebrating birthdays or wedding anniversaries at this time.*

## **The Liturgy of the Word prepares us for the Liturgy of the table: Holy Communion**

## The Liturgy of the Table: Holy Communion

### The Offertory:

“Representatives of the congregation bring the people’s offerings of bread and wine, and money or other gifts, to the deacon or celebrant. The people stand while the offerings are presented and placed on the altar” (BCP, p.361).

*Notice that the bread and the wine are the primary gifts being presented, not the money. Food for the poor is often among the “other gifts.”*

### The Great Thanksgiving (“Eucharist” means “thanksgiving”)

- Starts with the “Sursum Corda,” Latin for “Lift up your hearts”  
*The Eastern Orthodox say we are lifting ourselves into heaven, before the throne of God.*
- The Proper Preface *begins the prayer, specific to the season or occasion.*
- The Sanctus (Latin for “Holy”) taken from Isaiah’s vision of the throne room of God (which is why we bow during the Sanctus, as Isaiah did).  
*“Sanctus Bells” ring during the Sanctus and at the elevation of the elements.*  
*?Draws attention—was helpful when the service was in Latin! Now it’s a tradition...*
- God’s saving acts are recounted, especially the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- The “words of institution” from scripture: “...This is my body...this is my blood...”
- The “epiclesis” asks the Holy Spirit to sanctify the bread and wine (and us who receive).
- The Great AMEN. *This is a key way the congregation participates! Say it with gusto!*
- The Lord’s Prayer.

### The Breaking of the Bread

#### The “Fraction”

Fraction anthem: *varies in the season (no alleluias in Lent).*

In Rite I, the “prayer of humble access,”

*Describing our approach to God and God’s generous grace to us.*

#### Communion

*All are welcome to come forward: for a blessing if one is not baptized or does not wish to receive, or to be in communion with Christ and his church if one is a baptized Christian of any denomination. This is a newer discipline: it used to be required to be confirmed in the Episcopal Church; since 1970, the emphasis is on Baptism instead.*

- *Receive the bread alone, or the wine alone, or both the bread and the wine (any of the three ways of receiving count as receiving communion).*  
*Receive the bread on palms stretched out flat and lifted up a bit;*  
*Receive the wine by holding the base of the chalice to guide it to your lips;*  
*Or dip the wafer in the cup (“intinction”); neither is more sanitary (but don’t touch the chalice rim or the wine with your fingers).*
- *If you drop the wafer, pick it up and consume it;*  
*or the server will do so and give you another wafer.*
- *The consecrated bread and wine are handled with reverence (but not idolatry).*  
*They are consumed or poured down a special sink (called the “pacina”) which drains to the ground, not the sewer.*

*Communion (continued):*

The sending of Eucharistic Visitors

*Eucharistic Visitors are lay people licensed to “extend the altar rail down the street” by taking communion to those who, for good cause, cannot join us for the service. They are sent by the priest from a specific celebration of the Eucharist before the post-communion prayer. Thus, they serve like “Eucharistic Ministers” to people in their homes. But they are not deacons, and therefore have a very focused role. We ask God’s blessing on them as they go.*

The post communion prayer

*We give thanks for the Eucharist and ask God to send us into the world to serve God.*

The Blessing

The Dismissal *(the liturgical deacon’s role)*

*Note that the alleluias are in the response only if they are in the “call.” Alleluias are especially omitted in Lent and Advent, and especially included in Easter season and the feast of Pentecost.*

Notes about Posture:

*Posture is a physical way to participate in worship, helping us to avoid feeling like a spectator and bringing all of who we are to God.*

- In the last several hundred years, the tradition in the west has been to sit to listen, stand to praise and say the creed, and kneel to pray.
- But standing is also a posture of prayer with more ancient roots (many Eastern Orthodox churches do not have seats because of this). Some advocate for standing at the Eucharistic Prayer in a sense of joyful celebration of the renewal Jesus gives us (especially in Easter Season).
- The BCP often offers the option to stand *OR* kneel. Some congregations value a diversity of postures at the same time. Some value a posture shared by everyone: either uniform through the year, or changing in the seasons. Our custom in recent years has been to all kneel in Lent and all stand in Easter season.
- There is always something particularly appropriate about kneeling for confession (though not required).
- Some people bow at certain points, out of reverence to God. These moments include: as the processional cross passes by, before and after the Gospel is read, and as the bread and wine are lifted up during the Eucharistic Prayer before communion. Some also bow slightly if the name of Jesus is mentioned. This gesture is optional.