

LUTHERAN WORSHIP

The Order of the Morning Service

Service of Worship

"Liturgy" is a Greek word meaning "work of the people" in the service of the state. The early Christians used this word to refer to their "service" of worship to their true Lord, God. This is not a performance or a self centered pastime but involves all the worshippers in responding to God's word to us.

Psalm 51:15-17

The German word for worship, "Gottesdienst", means "service of God". This reminds us that first of all worship is God serving us, his needy children, with his word and sacraments through which we receive life, mercy and truth.

Direction of Worship

Worship is a meeting between God and man. Here God comes to his people and people come to their God. In the Old Testament times this meeting took place at the "mercy seat" of the Ark of the Covenant and at the Altar of sacrifice. In Christian worship we meet with God at the Cross of Jesus Christ. The Altar and the cross are not the objects which we worship, but they are the focus of our worship. They call our attention to Christ who died as a sacrifice for our sins.

"Sacramental" parts of our worship are those in which the main emphasis is on God's coming to his people through the word and sacraments. The direction of these parts of worship is shown by the minister's facing toward the congregation, acting as a spokesman for God.

"Sacrificial" parts of worship are those in which the main emphasis is on our responding to our God in prayer, praise and service. The direction of these parts of worship is shown when the minister faces the altar along with the congregation for which he is the spokesman.

PREPARATION

Opening Hymn

The opening hymn is often a hymn of invocation, praising the triune God as we come into his presence to receive his blessings.

Invocation

In the ancient church, the leader prepared himself for worship by making the sign of the cross accompanied by a brief statement of faith. This has become a congregational act.

God gets the first word in worship. His name is spoken, identifying whom it is that we worship, the true Triune God. "Invocation" is a Latin word meaning "speaking in". Worship is done in his name, meaning that he is the one who is speaking to us through his word. The pastor is serving as his spokesman.

These words with which we begin our worship remind us of the words which first began our relationship with God brought us into his church, the words of baptism.

Matthew 28:19, Colossians 3:17

"Amen" is an ancient Hebrew word which is literally translated "true" or "trustworthy". When used as a response it means we agree with what has been said and "second" it. When used at the end of a statement, it means we are sure what we have said is true. When used at the end of a prayer, it means we are confident that our trustworthy God will truly hear and answer.

The High Priest, in the Old Testament, did not dare to pass through the curtain into the most holy place of the temple, where God's "presence" was, until he had cleansed himself from sin by special sacrifices. We, members of the "priesthood of all believers" (1 Pet. 2:9), prepare ourselves for worship in God's presence by being cleansed of all sin through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Hebrews 10:19-22, Psalm 32:3-5,
1 John 1:8-9

Confession

We include here...

- what our sin is: both original - "by nature" and actual - "thought, word and deed"
- the types of actual sin: commission - "what we have done" and omission - "what we have left undone"
- both tables of the law we have broken: "We have not loved you with our whole heart... We have not loved our neighbor as ourselves."
- the just consequence of sin: punishment, both present and eternal
- the reason we expect forgiveness: "For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ"
- and the two fold cure for sin we need: justification: forgiveness and sanctification: power for holy living

A "Confession" means, literally, a "statement of agreement". God knows our sins. When we stop denying them, we confess that he is right about them. Later, we will "confess" our faith using the creed as a statement of the beliefs on which all Christians agree.

Absolution

The pastor, using the office of the keys which are given to all Christians, announces forgiveness, speaking as the representative of God and the people of God through whom God chose and called him. "Absolution" is from the Latin word meaning to "wash away" sins.

John 20:23, 1 Cor. 4:1

Once again, we are reminded of our baptism, which first washed away our sins and through which faith in Christ was first caused in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

John 20:20, Philippians 1:6

Chanting

It is appropriate that the preparation in which we deal with our sins is soberly spoken. Now, having been assured of forgiveness, it is proper that the remainder of the service is joyfully sung, following the pattern of worship in both the Old Testament and New Testament church.

Psalm 95:1-2, Ephesians 5:19

The Service of the Word

CELEBRATION

Propers

In our service of worship we enjoy both familiar continuity and interesting variety. The "ordinary" is our name for the parts of the service which are ordinarily used every Sunday.

"Propers" are those parts which are different in each service because there is a proper one assigned to each season or Sunday of the church year. Each week the propers focus on a different aspect of our faith.

The propers include:

- Introit
- Collect (prayer of the day)
- Old Testament Lesson
- Gradual
- Epistle Lesson
- Alleluia Verse
- Gospel
- Proper Preface

The hymns and sermon follow in the theme set by the propers.

Introit

The minister now goes from outside the altar rail up to the altar itself, symbolizing the response of the entire congregation to the call of God

Hebrews 4:16

"Introit" is a Latin word meaning "entrance". This is the historical name given to the Bible verses sung as we enter worship. The introit has three parts: antiphon, psalm and gloria.

An antiphon is a part of the liturgy which is repeated responsively. The antiphon which begins the introit is repeated at the end. The introit, especially the antiphon, sets the tone for the worship and suggests the theme for the day or season.

The psalm portion, taken from the hymn book of the Old Testament, is commonly sung by the choir, as the voice of the whole church.

The gloria which follows connects the Old Testament psalm to the New Testament and makes it a part of specifically Christian worship.

Romans 16:27

Kyrie

This is not a repeat of our prayer for forgiveness, but a confident call for spiritual strength and health.

"Kyrie eleison" as a Greek phrase translated "Lord, have mercy". It is similar in meaning to the Hebrew "Hosanna", meaning "please save". "Lord, have mercy" is a phrase often found in the psalms and is heard in the Gospels from the lips of lepers (Luke 17:12-15), the blind (Luke 18:35-43) and others who called on Jesus for help. When they were healed, they responded by glorifying God. We follow the Kyrie with the same response.

Originally, in the early church, "Lord, have mercy" was the congregational response to a series of general petitions. Later it was shortened to a nine-fold and then a three-fold repetition of the response itself.

Hymn of Praise

The "Gloria in Excelsis" (from the Latin, translated "Glory in the highest) is a traditional hymn of praise from the early church which is introduced with the song sung by the angels at the birth of Jesus, and follows with echoes of other New Testament verses.

Luke 2:14, John 1:29, Luke 22:69

The first line is sung by the minister alone, with the congregation joining in a response.

It is traditional that the Hymn of Praise is not used during the seasons of Advent and Lent. The alternate hymn of praise in Divine Service II of Lutheran Worship is based on the song sung in heaven and heard by John the apostle.

Revelation 5:11-13

NOURISHMENT

Salutation

There are three points of climax in worship: the preaching of God's word, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and the Benediction. Each is marked by a preceding salutation. This greeting, echoing the ancient Hebrew "Immanuel" ("God is with us"), has its roots in the Old Testament but quickly became the greeting of early Christians.

Ruth 2:4, 2 Timothy 4:22

Collect

The words "Let us pray" invite the worshipers to join their hearts in the prayer spoken by the minister.

The "Collect" is a prayer in which we collect our requests concerning the specific benefits to which the scriptures of the day point.

The Collects are prayers which have been in use in the church for as long as 15 centuries. The five parts which these formal prayers may include are:

- invocation - addressing God
- basis - why ask these things
- petition - our specific request
- purpose or benefit - desired result
- closing doxology - praise to God.

Most Collects are addressed to God the Father and all close in Jesus' name, as Jesus instructed.

John 15:16

Scripture Lessons

"Pericope" is the name given to the part of the Bible which is selected for reading on a particular Sunday. This is a Latin word meaning "cut around". A "lectionary" (from the Latin word for "reading") is a book or list containing all the pericopes. Our present lectionary follows a three year cycle which calls for the pericopes to be repeated once every three years.

In the early church, the pericopes often formed a continuous reading through a book of the Bible. This pattern is still found to some degree in the present lectionary; but as the church year developed through history, the pericopes were keyed more and more to the themes of the developing seasons and festivals. The use of standard pericopes ensures a balanced and complete presentation of the truths found in the whole Bible.

The Jewish synagogue of Apostles' day had readings, one from the law (books of Moses) and one from the prophets, followed by an address concerning them.

Acts 13:15

Early Christians continued these readings in their worship, later adding readings from the epistles as they were written, and then from the Gospels.

Colossians 4:16

For a long while in recent history, Old Testament lessons were not commonly read, but now they are once again being restored to their proper place in worship. This lesson is often called the "First Lesson" since, during the Easter season, it is taken from the book of Acts.

The response to the Old Testament and Epistle lessons, "Thanks be to God", found in Divine Service I of Lutheran Worship, originated as a password given to the door keeper of a worship service during times of persecution in the early church.

"Epistle" is the Latin word meaning "letter". These books of the Bible were first written as letters sent by the Apostles to churches and individuals.

The scripture lessons build to a climax in the Gospel. The Old Testament lesson, pointing toward its fulfillment in the Gospel, is first followed by the epistle, which often applies the message of the Gospel.

Gradual

"Gradual", a Latin word meaning "step", is the name of the Psalm verse which was originally sung from the step of the altar.

From ancient times, the scripture readings have been alternated with choral responses. Following the ancient practice of an Old Testament reading, a Psalm verse was sung in relation to the Epistle. Our present propers use one gradual throughout each season, unlike most other propers which change each Sunday.

The Gradual originally came before the Epistle. When the Old Testament Lesson was not used, it was combined with the Alleluia verse which came before the Gospel.

Alleluia Verse

Our joy at the hearing of God's word is expressed by the singing of the Alleluia verse.

"Alleluia" is a Hebrew word meaning "Praise God!" which was adopted in its original form by the New Testament church.

Revelation 19:1

Along with the single or triple Alleluia there is a scripture verse, which is intended to be sung. While in the past one verse was assigned to each season of the church year, the present propers assign a different verse to each Sunday.

The liturgy of Divine Service II in Lutheran Worship provides two general Alleluia verses which speak of our response to God's word. One is for Lent and the other is for the other seasons.

John 6:67-68, Joel 2:13

The congregation is seated, as learners, for the first and second lessons, but rises, as a servant would in the presence of the master, when the Gospel, often containing the words of Christ, is read. The Gospel is also emphasized by accompanying praise verses.

Sermon Hymn

The hymn at this point almost has the status of one of the propers since historically there has been a hymn assigned to each Sunday which was sung after the reading of the lessons. In recent centuries it has become common practice to choose a hymn which ties into the theme of the sermon.

Sermon

The practice of preaching a sermon originated in a homily following the Gospel. Its importance in the service was reestablished by the Reformation and it is based on a scripture, often taken from one of the lessons for the day. It contains instruction and encouragement but it is not just a speech or lecture. It is always an announcement of both the Law and the Gospel which builds and strengthens faith.

Many pastors traditionally begin their sermons with the words St. Paul used to begin his letters: "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 1:2).

The "votum" (a Latin word meaning "wish") which concludes the sermon is the pastor's sincere prayer for all who have heard God's word.

Philippians 4:7

EXERCISE

Creed

The church responds to God's specific word for the day by summarizing the whole faith of the church in the words which outline the fundamental beliefs of all Christians in all ages.

"Creed" comes from the Latin word meaning "I believe". Here we use the singular pronoun "I". Although our confession of faith unites us with one another and with the whole church on earth and in heaven, each must believe for oneself; no one can believe for another.

1 Peter 3:15, 1 Corinthians 12:36

The two creeds which are commonly used correspond in a sense to the two sacraments. The Apostles' Creed, a summary of the faith taught to converts in the early church, is connected to Baptism, in which the Christian continues to live. We use this creed on Sundays when communion is not celebrated. The Nicene Creed, emphasizing the deity of Christ, is connected to the Lord's Supper in which Christ is present as true God and true Man, and is used on Sundays when Holy Communion is celebrated.

The Athanasian Creed, a comprehensive statement about the Trinity and the natures of Christ is traditionally used on Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday after Pentecost.

The word "catholic" is Latin, meaning "universal" or "world-wide". Only when it is capitalized is it part of the name of the church body with its headquarters in Rome, properly called the Roman Catholic Church. The substitution of the word "Christian" for "catholic" in the third article of the creed is a practice which originated in Germany before the time of the Reformation.

We stand for the creed, in a sense, standing ready to defend our faith.

In the ancient church the sermon followed immediately after the Gospel lesson. The creed began the "service of the faithful" in which only baptized believers were allowed.

Having heard the word of God which offers us eternal life, we respond by offering ourselves and our lives to him and his service. At this point in the service there is a group of responses from God's people, which includes the reception

of the offering, the singing of the offertory and also the offering of our prayers.

Offering

The gathering of the offering is an act of worship, not simply a convenient way to collect money. We honor God not only with our lips but with our lives as we present to him the firstfruits of our labors.

2 Cor. 9:7,12, 1 Cor. 16:1-2

In ancient times, the people came forward with their offerings which were actual items of produce. From these the minister selected the bread and wine, which were then used in the Communion. While the gifts were brought forward, the offertory was sung.

Offertory

Originally, the offertory was one of the propers which changed with the day or season. With the words of the Offertory we offer God our very hearts.

Psalm 51:10-12

When singing the offertory, we are not so much looking back on the sermon as we are looking ahead to the blessings which are to come, such as the Communion, when it is celebrated.

Psalm 116:12-14, 19

Prayers

In our prayers we are speaking not to one another but are instead speaking together to our God. Therefore the general prayer is not the place for a summary of the sermon or a recitation of news items. Although it may reflect the special theme of the service, it is to a prayer for all the needs of all people.

1 Timothy 2:1-4

The prayers may include congregational responses or the litany (TLH #661, LW pg. 279) may be sung as the prayer.

It is appropriate that our prayers conclude with the prayer that our Lord taught unless this prayer is used in another part of the service, such as the Communion liturgy. This prayer sums up every Christian desire and every human need, physical and spiritual.

Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4

Closing Collects

When Holy Communion is not celebrated, a hymn may be sung and our prayers conclude with a final collect. Both the Collect for the Word and the Collect for the Church are summarizing our expectations concerning the benefit of meeting with God in worship - that God's word will have its proper effect on God's people, the church.

Isaiah 55:10-11

The Service of Holy Communion

Our worship centers around the Word of God. The first part of our service reaches a climax in our hearing that word proclaimed from the pulpit. The second, and higher, climax of our worship is the Sacrament of the Altar in which the elements joint with the word to bombard all of our senses with the Gospel, which motivates our faith. Like an attorney who would convince us of the truth, God presents not only testimony but, with it, evidence, the very body and blood given for our salvation.

1 Corinthians 11:26

CELEBRATION

Preface

The preface with which we begin this part of the liturgy consists of the salutation, "sursum corde", common preface, and proper preface.

Like the Service of the Word, this new part of our worship is also introduced with a greeting between the minister and the congregation which is a mutual prayer for God's blessing.

"Sursum Corde" is the Latin for "Lift up hearts". Since God is here offering us a wonderful blessing, it is fitting that we say we "celebrate" the sacrament. Appropriately, this part of the liturgy, which dates back to the most ancient Christian church, calls on us to joyfully lift up our hearts as we anticipate God's coming to us in love.

"Eucharist", a Greek word meaning "Thanksgiving" is one of the names used for this sacrament. Scripture records that when our Lord first celebrated this sacrament with his disciples

at the Last Supper he began by giving thanks (Luke 22:17). We agree that it is good and right for us to begin in the same way, using the words of the ancient Jewish table prayer: "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God."

Common Preface

The words which precede the proper preface echo the words preceding the Jewish Passover meal, which foreshadowed this sacramental meal. In turn, the words which follow draw our attention forward to the heavenly banquet of which this meal is a foretaste.

Proper Preface

In the proper preface, which changes with each season of the church year, we thank God for his wonderful deeds which are especially in our mind at this time.

Sanctus

"Sanctus" is the Latin word meaning "Holy". We draw from the whole drama of salvation in the words of the Sanctus which praises the God of both Old and New Testaments.

First we quote the angels which the prophet Isaiah saw in his vision of God's throne (Isaiah 6:3). "Sabaoth" is a Hebrew word which is translated "hosts" or "armies". It refers to all the mighty inhabitants of heaven of whom God is the great leader. Because of its spelling, this word is often confused with "Sabbath", a Hebrew word translated "rest", which refers to the Old Testament day of worship.

Next we quote the crowds which welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:9) "Hosanna" is a Hebrew word meaning "save, please". It was used by the people as a joyful greeting to their king. Jesus is the God of Sabaoth, the host of heaven, who reveals himself to us in this sacrament, and he is our king, the son of David, who comes to us here

Psalm 118:25-26

NOURISHMENT

Prayer

As God comes to us in this sacrament, it is appropriate that we also come to him in prayer. We thank him for this gift which he offers us here and request the work of the Holy Spirit who causes faith through the word and sacraments.

The close intimacy which we have both with our fellow Christians and with God is expressed in the prayer in which Jesus taught us to call God our Father.

The words "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory", not actually part of the prayer itself, are a response of the church showing our confidence in the God to whom we pray.

1 Chronicles 29:11-12

Words of Institution

The words of institution are given in four places in scripture, which may be taken as an indication of their significance and importance. In the consecration of the sacrament, we combine the words of the four texts.

Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24
Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

These words are not a magical incantation but a word to us from God. It is not the minister's speaking of them that gives power to his sacrament, but the fact that they were spoken by Christ himself. These are the Lord's words and this is the Lord's table. He is both the host and the sacrificial feast. The sign of the cross is made as a visual reminder that the forgiveness which we receive in this sacrament has its source in the once and for all sacrifice on the cross.

Hebrews 9:12-14

Pax Domini

The peace of the Lord ("Pax Domini" in Latin) is ours through the death and resurrection of Jesus. (John 20:19-20) We have peace with God through the forgiveness of our sins and peace with one another as we forgive each other. We are reminded of Jesus' instruction that before coming to God for forgiveness, we should first make peace with our brothers.

Matthew 5:23-24

"Communion", which means "coming together" is another name for this sacrament. Here Christ's body is joined together with the bread and his blood is joined together with the wine. Through the sacrament we are joined together with Christ and also with those who are one with us in faith.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

It is both because the act of communing together is a statement that we are one in faith, and because of Paul's warning that those who do not recognize the real presence of Christ's body in the sacrament do more harm than good, that we practice "close communion". (1 Corinthians 11:29-31) For practical purposes, this means that those who believe as we do, and so wish to commune with us, are consistent in their practice by being members of congregations of our church body.

Agnus Dei

"Agnus Dei" is Latin for "Lamb of God". The words of this hymn quote John the Baptist who pointed to Christ as the one who would fulfill the role of the Old Testament Passover lamb and other sacrifices to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). It is this sacrifice of Christ from which we are about to receive the benefit in this sacrament.

1 Peter 1:18-19

Distribution

The giving thanks, the consecration through the words of institution and the receiving of the elements are together all part of the sacrament in which we receive the body and blood of Christ to eat and to drink for the benefit of our souls. Christ said "take, eat" and "drink it, all of you." As we personally eat and drink, the words of distribution give us individual assurance that all of our sins are truly forgiven.

Dismissal

The words of the dismissal remind us of the benefit of this sacrament. We have received more than mere bread and wine. Just as the disciples in the upper room, we too have received his very body and blood as Christ said,

"Do this in remembrance of me." The body and blood received here are a reminder and a sure evidence for our faith that Jesus did indeed give his body into death for us. Therefore we can go in peace, sure of our forgiveness.

EXERCISE

Post-Communion Canticle and Collect

"Nunc Dimittis is Latin for "Now let go". We respond to the blessing, "Go in peace", with the words of the aged Simeon who held the baby Jesus in the temple. Like Simeon, we too have personally encountered the Savior of the world in the flesh. Now we are fully prepared, whether it is to die or to live.

Luke 2:29-32

Once more, as we reflect on this sacrament which is God's special gift to us, we give thanks and we express our intention to keep on proclaiming the death and resurrection of our Lord, as we have done through our celebration of this sacrament.

Psalm 118:29, 1 Corinthians 11:26,

Psalm 105: 1-3, 42-43

Benedictus

One final time, we look back on the whole service in which we have met with our God and we exclaim antiphonally with joy and thanks.

2 Corinthians 9:15

Benediction

As Christ departed from the earth, his final act was blessing his disciples with raised hands (Luke 24:50-51). Our final act on the spiritual mountain-top of worship is the Benediction in which the pastor, with raised hands, announces God's blessing. This Aaronic Benediction is the blessing prescribed by God himself for his people in the Old Testament.

Numbers 6:22-26

The making of the sign of the cross is a final reminder that this blessing of peace with which we leave is ours only through the atoning death of Christ.