

An Introduction to the Lutheran Liturgy

Traditional Lutheran worship follows a *liturgy*, meaning “work of the people”. It is a style of worship we participate in *together*, and dates back to the earliest Christians who combined the synagogue’s hymns and scripture readings with the celebration of Holy Communion. Nearly every portion ties to passages in the Bible. Although this worship format has existed for centuries, it’s in music and language which speak to us today.

Our worship is a time of renewal and recommitment as we prepare to return to the everyday world to serve God. He is in our midst in four forms – in the wine and bread of Communion, in the spoken words of the scriptures, and in the hearts of our fellow worshippers.

This guide is intended to provide a better understanding of our liturgy, so it will be more meaningful to you. Some of key aspects of the liturgy are:

Confession and Forgiveness: This is a time for reflecting on our shortcomings and to renew our commitment to Christ as our Forgiver, Renewer, and Leader (see I John 1:8-10).

Kyrie: *Kyrie* is a Greek word meaning “O Lord”. In ancient times, crowds would shout “Lord, have mercy” as the King entered town. In the same way, we welcome Christ into our midst as we pray for peace, unity, and well-being.

Hymn of Praise: As we sing “This is the Feast” we echo the voices of the angels in heaven and all creation (see Revelation 5:12-13).

Scripture Readings and Sermon: Three scripture readings tie together the Old Testament, the Epistles of the New Testament, and the Gospels. The message usually unifies these themes, which are expressed in the hymns of the day.

Apostles’ Creed: The Apostles’ Creed is a statement of our beliefs about God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. We profess our unity with other Christians in “the holy catholic (or universal) church, and the communion (or unity) of saints.” This creed is said to date to the original followers of Christ.

Great Thanksgiving: Just as Jesus’ offered thanks at the Last Supper with his disciples, so we also offer thanks before participating in Holy Communion. It is followed by the Hosanna, recalling the voices of those who praised Him as he entered Jerusalem (see Matthew 21:9).

The Lord’s Prayer: Before coming to the Lord’s table, we join in the prayer Jesus taught his disciples (see Matthew 6:9-13).

Communion: Christ himself welcomes us to become one with him in the receiving of His body and His Blood (see “What Is Holy Communion?”). It is followed by a song of thanks (canticle) and the post-communion prayer.

Benediction: The benediction is over 3200 years old and dates back to the time of Moses and Aaron (see Numbers 6:22-27).

Dismissal: Having strengthened ourselves during worship, we receive the charge to go into the world to serve the Lord.

We hope the timeless traditions of our liturgy will refresh and strengthen you for the week ahead!

What Is Holy Communion?

Holy Communion (also called the *Eucharist* or the *Lord’s Supper*) is celebrated each Sunday in our church. It was instituted by Jesus Christ

himself as he shared his final meal with his disciples. While Communion is celebrated by many Christian churches, it has special significance to us.

Communion means “intimate fellowship or rapport”. During Holy Communion, Christ’s body is present in the bread and His blood is present in the wine. The bread and wine are not literally the body and blood of Jesus, nor do they change into His body and blood. Through our faith in Jesus, and through the eating and drinking of the body and blood, we become one with Christ. By participating, we publicly accept His offer of forgiveness for our sins. Invitation to the Communion table comes from Christ himself (see Matthew 26:26-28), therefore anyone who accepts the forgiveness of sins through Christ is welcome to participate.

Communion is a celebration of unity. It unites us with Christ, with those around you here today; with Christians throughout the world (see I Cor 10:16-17); and with followers of Christ in heaven (see Matthew 26:29).

Our Lord Jesus Christ welcomes you to His table!

Understanding and Appreciating Our Worship Service



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