

Advent Lutheran Church

Worship Handbook



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Introduction

This handbook was created to give an overview of a typical service of Holy Communion or the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. All these names are used interchangeably, and it depends on personal preference and institutional habit. The overview has additional background information that may help one to understand some of the how and why of worship. We hope that this information is helpful and please ask as many questions as you like – if we do not readily know the answer we will find out.

In this handbook we will take a closer look at the elements that make up a worship service of Holy Communion. We will consider why we do things the way we do. The most important thing to remember is that we have all gathered together as sisters and brothers to praise God, to give thanks, to pray for others, and to experience Christ in the breaking of the bread. As always, God is with us and the Holy Spirit is working in and through us to make this world a better place.

In the Appendices you will find information on altar care, ushering, music in worship, roles of the assisting ministers and communion assistants, and learn of opportunities to volunteer in worship.

There is a great deal of variation in the way that Lutherans worship, but there are also commonalities. The focus of our worship is word and sacrament, but music plays a vital role in how we worship and how we experience liturgy.

In some ways our Sunday service might be compared to an iceberg. Perhaps two thirds of the work for Sunday occurs ahead of time. Music is selected and practiced, the service is prepared, a sermon is written and the sanctuary space is prepared. All of these things come together to make our worship possible.

What the Pastor wears

The Pastor wears vestments, and the colours correspond to the liturgical colours of the paraments (hangings on the pulpit and the altar). The colours change throughout the church year. The vestments can be relatively plain or quite fancy – it depends on the preference (or budget) of the pastor and the congregation. Some congregations own the vestments.

You will note that there are three separate pieces.

Alb

The alb is worn by assisting ministers and the pastor. This is the garment of our baptism. As early as the first century the *tunica Alba* or alb was a bleached white garment put on after baptism. The alb has become the basic liturgical garment. It does not signify ordained ministry – it signifies baptism. Leaders wear it on behalf of us all.

Stole

The stole is put on over the alb to preside or preach at a service of Holy Communion or when the pastor is going to otherwise exercise the role of an ordained minister. The stole is a badge of coloured cloth used to mark our principal leader in the assembly. A stole can only be worn by an ordained person.

Chausable

A chausable is put on over the alb and stole and is worn during services of Holy Communion and is usually worn throughout the service to signify the unity of word and sacraments.

The Worship Service

Our service is divided into four parts: Gathering, Word, Meal and Sending.

The central elements of the liturgy are:

- The Greeting and the Prayer of the Day in the Gathering section.
- All the scripture readings, with the psalm and gospel acclamation, the sermon, the hymn of the day, the prayers of intercession and the peace are in the Word section.
- The offering, setting the table, the Great Thanksgiving with its diverse parts, and communion in the Meal section.
- The blessing in the Sending section.

Gathering

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

There is a great deal of local variety in worship, and it changes seasonally. Some days we will begin with a thanksgiving for baptism, some days with a confession and forgiveness and other days move directly into the Gathering section and the music.

Music plays an essential part in our worship. Music invites participation and it helps to form the community into one, taking individual feeling to communal expression.

Gathering song

The character of the gathering, the season of the church year, and the practices of the local context are among the factors that help determine choice of the gathering song. It is called a gathering song to allow for individual choice of music. The gathering song can also be used to introduce new or less familiar hymns. (Hymns 520 -533 are frequently used.)

During the gathering, the presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the name of the triune God. The presiding minister gathers the assembly into prayer.

Greeting

The presiding minister greets the whole assembly with the words used by the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 13:13) to greet the Churches. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” The congregation responds, “And also with you.”

Kyrie and Canticle of Praise

Please see Appendix Two for more information. The Kyrie and Canticle of Praise change as the settings for Communion do. The Kyrie is often sung by a soloist. During Lent we do not sing the Canticle of Praise.

Prayer of the Day

The prayer of the day collects us together in prayer before God and turns us toward the scripture readings we are about to hear. It is the link between the gathering and word.

Word

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song. We value the reading of scripture, often including an Old Testament reading, Psalm and New Testament reading. The readings are done by the assisting minister or other members of the assembly who wish to read and assist in leading worship. At Advent we follow the Revised Common Lectionary that has a three year cycle. Each year focuses on a different Gospel.

First Reading

This is usually from the Old Testament.

Psalm

Music is a vehicle for the proclamation of the word of God in and by the assembly. Hymns can be proclamation. The psalm is the response to the first reading. The Psalm can be read, sung or read responsively.

Second Reading

This is from the New Testament.

Gospel Acclamation

The Gospel acclamation involves the assembly in standing and welcoming the very presence of the risen Jesus Christ. The verse is usually addressed to Christ who meets us here. Alleluia means “praise to the Lord”. We do not say “Alleluia” during Lent.

Gospel

The reader of the Gospel is usually the minister who will preach. Our Gospel reading comes from Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

Sermon

Preaching brings God’s word of law and gospel into our time and place to awaken and nourish faith. Using the texts of the day, the preacher preaches the law – that is, the

preacher speaks the truth about our sin, loss, failure and death. Preaching is a time for truth-telling about the human condition. But the preacher also gives the very grace we need. From the starting point of the day's readings, the preacher leads us into the presence of the life-giving God. The sermon is to lead us into the encounter with the grace of the triune God. There are traditional patterns around the conclusion of the sermon, the most common being that the last words of the sermon will evoke from the assembly a strong, assenting "Amen". A time of silence for reflection can follow after the sermon.

Hymn of the Day

This is the principal hymn of the service and is a key component of the day's proclamation. The hymn of the day gives the assembly the responsibility and opportunity to proclaim and respond to the Word.

Creed

The Apostles' Creed is usually chosen for Lent and for all the Sundays in the time after Epiphany and the time after Pentecost. The Nicene Creed is usually chosen for festival days and during the seasons of Advent, Christmas and Easter. The creeds were originally teaching documents

Prayers of Intercession

We are invited to exercise our faith and trust in God by praying for the needs of all the world.

We stand before God on behalf of others. At Advent these prayers are led by the assisting minister.

Peace

The sharing of the Peace concludes the Word section and transitions to the Meal section. Like the prayer of the day, it is a link. The words are from the Gospel of John. The presiding minister's words make it very clear that this gift of the risen Christ is the gift that we speak. The exchange of peace is a ministry, an announcement of grace we make to each other, a summary of the gift given to us in the liturgy of the word. Because of the presence of Jesus Christ, we give to each other what we are saying: Christ's own peace. The minister says, "The peace of Christ be with you always." The congregation responds, "And also with you."

Offering

A collection is taken for the mission of the Church. This is the time in which the good things of the earth, the resources that God has made for the life of all, are celebrated, set out and shared. The ushers collect and bring forward the collected gifts. The assisting minister or ministers (presiding and communion assistants) receive these gifts. After the offering has been collected, the assembly stands, presenting themselves as well as whatever they have given. At this time the offering hymn is sung.

Table Setting

This occurs during the time of the offering. The assisting minister and communion assistants have responsibility for setting the table – the presiding minister can also help.

Offering Prayer

The assisting minister reads the offering prayer.

Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, who we have encountered in the heart of the scriptures, here gives himself to us in body and blood as the meal of the Church. Paul writes, “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:26)

Christ invites us to this meal. There we give thanks, pray, receive the bread and wine and share this feast in the gathered community. With prayers and with song, we come to the banquet that is prepared for us. Communion is not necessary each Sunday. Only an ordained person can consecrate the bread and wine and preside at Communion.

Great Thanksgiving

Again, this is an area of great variety – especially around the words of institution – they may be brief – focusing on Jesus’ words or longer and changing with the season. We need to understand that all the words around the table, regardless of the choices we make, are together a great thanksgiving. “Do This” of the New Testament stories of the Last Supper to include that we are to have a meal that is bread and wine, give thanks at table, distribute, receive and consume the gifts, all in remembrance of Jesus. This Thanksgiving is both a public proclamation of what God has done and a humble prayer, begging God for daily bread for all the world, confidently dependent on the promise of God. All the words at the table are meant to be heard openly.

Dialogue

The presiding minister and assembly share in giving thanks at the table.

Preface

We begin to give thanks.

Holy, Holy, Holy (also called the Sanctus)

The Sanctus – continues the praise and thanks with the whole assembly joining in.

Thanksgiving at the Table

The words of institution. This is another area of great variation and many options and can be adapted for season and preferences.

Lord’s Prayer

The Assembly prays the Lord’s Prayer. We are given the words with which to stand before God.

We continue the thanksgiving by proclaiming what God has done in creation and redemption, especially as this is summed up by Jesus and in the words at the supper. During the entire great thanksgiving everyone stands as we are in dialogue and standing is the posture of resurrection.

Invitation to Communion

The Presiding minister invites everyone to the table and the assembly is seated. The Presiding Minister says, “Come to the banquet, for all is now ready.” At Advent the members of the assembly come forward down the centre aisle at the direction of the ushers and return to their pews down the side aisles.

Communion

Communion is not only about something that is given to us, but about God continually forming us in giving toward our neighbour.

Communion Song

“Lamb of God” addresses the risen Christ giving himself away at the table as the true lamb. This echoes John 1:29 and Revelation 5:6.

Communion

The presiding minister says, “The body of Christ given for you.” The communicant responds, “Amen”. The assisting minister(s) distributes the wine and says, “The blood of Christ shed for you,” and the communicant responds “Amen”.

The intention of the communion ministers is to handle and serve this holy food with deep reverence. The ministry of the bread and cup call for wisdom, sensitivity and care, i.e. being aware of blessings or how people receive the bread and/or wine. One may receive the bread and the wine or just one or the other. This is a matter of personal preference. Receiving either or both is valid. Each one receives the gift given to all, and that reception is a public, open event.

How to hold your hands or why we do things the way we do.

- This practice came from a fourth century Bishop – Cyril of Jerusalem. He suggested that we make of our hands a “throne” to receive the Lord of life, first given into our open hands, one hand on top of the other, then brought by those open hands up and into our mouths, heart and life.
- The presiding minister, assisting minister and communion assistants can commune before or after the assembly, it depends on local custom and preference and it is a sign of hospitality.

Song During Communion

Singing during communion is an opportunity for centering and focus. It may be a time for personal prayer. Singing focuses the assembly as it accompanies the actions of those walking, sitting, communing or praying.

Table Blessing

These are the final words about communion. The table blessing is a version of the medieval words at the distribution. This is done by the presiding minister.

Song after Communion

“Now let your servant go in peace” – the *Nunc Dimittis*. It is one of the canticles from the infancy narrative in the Gospel of Luke (2:29-32). It came into the Lutheran liturgy in the 16th Century.

Prayer after Communion

It is a link that leads us to the sending and is done by the assisting minister. It is a prayer before God that the wonderful sacrament we have received will turn us toward a needy world in mission and service.

Sending

Like the gathering it is flexible, adaptable to the community, and forming of the assembly. We are being formed for life in the world as the local expression of the body of Christ disperses. The sending is a time to recall our baptism and for taking our baptismal calling with us into our daily vocation. During this time we thank God for the gifts of this assembly and prepare to extend it into the community. The sending empowers the community by calling each one to their service and ministry in the world and reminds us that the Church is not contained within its walls – but extends as the body of Christ throughout the world.

This is what God does...
we would “go” but God sends.

Announcements

This is a time to share information on activities, upcoming meetings, greetings, national church, synod or community information. The announcements can occur at the beginning or the end of the service.

Blessing

This is given by the presiding minister.

Sending Song

Singing at the end of the service strengthens the assembly as it prepares to disperse and gives voice one more time to the entire assembly.

Dismissal

The assisting minister announces the assembly’s dismissal. At Advent the pastor and the assisting minister walk to the back during the last hymn. This is a recessional.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Preparing the Space for Worship – Altar Care

Altar care is an important part of the preparation for worship. This work includes checking the candles and oil levels, putting out the correct colour paraments (hangings on the altar and pulpit), preparing for communion and taking care of the linens.

At Advent there is a team of altar care people. The altar care chairperson ensures that the wine and cups are purchased as well as the candles and the altar care supplies that are required during the year. Wafers are on hand for emergencies and for home communion.

The preparation for communion includes preparing the bread which is covered and in a basket and placed at the back of the sanctuary until the time of the offering. At Advent we typically use pita bread. The wine is poured into a pitcher (flagon) and placed with the bread. An altar care person brings these forward during the offering. The pouring chalice and common cup are placed on the “side table” or credenza. At Advent we offer individual cups or the common cup. The individual cups are placed in a covered tray. Other trays are available to collect used cups.

A pitcher of water (warm and with a little soap) is placed on the credenza with a bowl and towels. This is for the presider, assisting minister and communion assistants to wash their hands.

The plates for the offering are also placed here.

After the service of Holy Communion, the used linens are collected and taken home to wash.

What do you do if there is bread and wine left over? The wine may be poured reverently onto the ground and the bread may be shared in a time of fellowship. There are a variety of customs. However, the remaining food is dealt with reverently, but without anxiety. This is best done after the service.

The vessels are washed and put away in the altar care room.

Altar care also includes vacuuming and dusting the area above the steps. This is most often done the day before the service.

Ushers/Greeters

The ushers/greeters are very important in the hospitality of worship. They arrive early and turn on the lights. They greet people at the door, distribute bulletins, give out the visitor packages and invite visitors to sign the guestbook; count the number of people at worship and include this in the record book. They are also responsible for collecting the offering.

The ushers/greeters guide people at the time of communion. They put down the kneeling cushion and put in and remove the section of altar rail. During the service, the ushers/greeters usually remain near the doors of the sanctuary so that they can help anyone who comes during the service. Following the service the ushers/greeters check the pews to put hymnals in their proper place and remove bulletins or items that have been left behind. They extinguish the altar candles and then turn off the lights before leaving.

Another opportunity to prepare the space for worship is to volunteer to put the hymn numbers on the board and to set up and lock up the sound system.

Preparation of the worship space is an important ministry.

Appendix 2 – The Role of Music in Worship

Music is a very important part of our worship. Through music, we worship God, give thanks to Him, make an offering to Him through use of music, pray to Him, thank Him, and sing His holy Word. Music in the church is a unifying experience that we do as one, as one Christian body.

These pillars of our musical worship are seen in our hymns and liturgy, and wonderfully outlined in the first two canticles we sing: the Kyrie and the Hymn of Praise. In the Kyrie, we sing to God to have mercy on us and we pray. In the Hymn of Praise, we offer thanks and praise to God in Three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are very blessed to have a devoted choir at Advent, who offers choral music at services throughout the year and rehearses weekly on Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m. If you like to sing, our choir is the right place for you. No previous musical experience is required, nor is the ability to read music.

We are also very blessed at Advent to be accompanied in worship by the magnificent pipe organ. The instrument we use has a unique history: it was built by the members of the congregation in the 1960s when Advent was founded.

Submitted by Trevor Hicks, Organist and Choir Director

Appendix 3 – The Role of the Assisting Minister

At Advent the assisting minister and the presider walk together to the front of the sanctuary and bow to the altar at the beginning of the service. This is called a processional. The assisting minister is often the reader, sometimes sings the Kyrie, offers the prayers of intercession, collects the offering from the ushers/greeters and places it on the altar. The assisting minister also offers the offering prayer, the prayer after communion, assists with communion and gives the dismissal. The presiding minister normally offers the bread; but if the presider is doing a healing blessing or is not available, the assisting minister gives the bread. The assisting minister and communion assistant distribute the wine. The assisting minister robes in an alb.

Appendix 4 – Communion Assistant

At Advent the communion assistant comes to the altar during the offering. The communion assistant joins the assisting minister and the presider to wash hands in preparation for communion. When the offering is brought forward, the communion assistant receives the bread; the presider receives the wine and the assisting minister receives the offering plates. The communion assistant offers the wine, either from the common cup or the pouring chalice. At the conclusion of communion, the communion assistant helps to clear the table and then returns to their pew.

Appendix 5 – Volunteer Opportunities

There are many roles for volunteers in our worship service.

- Altar Care
- Usher/Greeter
- Assisting Minister
- Communion Assistant
- Choir Member
- Reader
- Soloist/Musical gift
- Bulletin Preparation
- Setting up the sound system
- Putting the hymn numbers up on the boards

Altar care, communion assistants, assisting ministers, ushers/greeters and fellowship hosts are all “teams” that are led by a chair. This person coordinates members of the team to ensure that there is a schedule in place and people to fill the roles needed to prepare for worship and during worship. This person also communicates with the congregational council and prepares a submission for the Annual Report.

Fellowship Host

This is a vital role in the fellowship of our congregation. Volunteering in this role consists of setting up the coffee/snacks, serving and cleaning up.

If you are interested in volunteering in worship please speak to the Pastor. Training and “shadowing” people in the roles you are interested in is always available. You will never be on your own.

Advent has a strong history of lay involvement in worship. Worship is highly valued.

Appendix 6 – The Liturgical Calendar

The Christian year is divided up into seasons, and these seasons correspond to the colours that we use for our vestments and paraments. Green is the most frequently used colour and covers most of the weeks of the year. Green is often referred to as “ordinary time”. Red is used for Pentecost and for Lutherans, Reformation Sunday. We use Purple in Lent, Blue for Advent and White for seasons of Easter and Christmas. White is also used for weddings and baptisms.

This liturgical wheel is a good visual way to understand the seasons of the year.

