

# LUTHERAN DIVINE WORSHIP: A GUIDE FOR THE LITURGY

## Introduction

The worship of God is faith in Jesus Christ. God gives and sustains our faith by coming near us in His Word and Sacraments. Historically, our holy worship has been called Divine Service, for it is chiefly a time set aside for the Lord to bless and serve us with His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation. The focus of our worship is on God's works in Christ and on Christ who is living and active among us in the Word and Sacraments. Thus, worship is a time for us to leave the things of this world, to enter into God's presence, and to receive His gifts that will never perish.

The rhythm of worship expresses our relationship with God. He speaks; we listen and say His words back. He gives His gifts; we receive them and praise and thank Him. We, in turn, build up one another in the hymns and liturgy.

Liturgy engages us in learning about Christ. Built upon the historic practices of the ancient church, liturgy echoes the truths of Scripture. It recounts what God in Christ has done for us as told by the inspired Word. As we sing, speak, and hear these same words each week, the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith through the living and active Word.

It is the "United in Hymn" Worship Renewal Committee's hope that this guide

will deepen our appreciation for the Divine Service through which the Lord comes to convert us and strengthen our faith by the hearing of the Eternal Word, by remembering the enduring promise of Baptism, and by receiving the precious gift of Holy Communion.

## Confession & Absolution

**Prelude:** This music sets the atmosphere and draws us into an attitude of prayer and praise.

**Invocation:** We announce the Name of the triune God proclaiming His presence and remembering our baptism. Wherever God puts His name, He is there to bless. (1 Kgs. 8:27-30) By calling upon the name of the triune God, we identify who we are there to worship, we acknowledge God's name as hallowed, and we remember the name put on us at our Baptism. (Matt. 28:19) The sign of the cross may be made as a visible reminder of baptism when God made us His children.

**Confession:** We are in the garden with Adam and Eve. We now confess the truth that we are sinners. We examine ourselves and confess our sins, privately and publicly. We admit we have sinned against God and deserve only death and eternal punishment. (1 Jn. 1:8-10)

**Absolution:** We hear the promise of a Savior. In answer to the truth of our sinfulness, we hear the good news of God's forgiveness for the sake of His Son. From the lips of the pastor, we hear God's own words of pardon. To this gracious gift of forgiveness, our faith answers, "Amen," may it be so, the gift has been received. (Jn. 20: 19-23)

## Service of the Word

**Introit, Psalm, or Entrance Hymn:** (pronounced inn-TRO-it) Introit is Latin for "enter," as it was the practice long ago to gather outside and enter the church together. With our sins forgiven, we joyfully enter into His courts singing praise and thanksgiving. (Ps. 100)

**Kyrie:** We are with blind Bartimaeus crying for mercy because our merciful Lord is present. (Mk. 10:47-49) *Kyrie eleison* (pronounced KEE-ree-yay e-LAY-son) is Greek for "Lord, have mercy." Freed and absolved, we affirm that the Lord is with us and is faithful to His promises. So, we pray for His mercy to grant the petitions for our peace and salvation, for the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of His Church, for our worship, and for our everlasting defense.

**Gloria in Excelsis:** (pronounced GLOR-ee-ah in ex-SHELL-sis) Latin for "glory in the highest." We are with the shepherds near Bethlehem. (Lk. 2:14) We sing this as our joyful reply to the Lord having come in answer to our cry for mercy. Like the angels, we sing because our merciful Lord humbled himself to be our Savior and is now seated at the right hand of God as our high priest and mediator. This is not sung during Lent or Advent.

**Salutation:** In this exchanged greeting, the Pastor and the congregation acknowledge each other in the name of the Lord and recognize the Pastor as Christ's servant and authorized representative. (Gal. 6:18)

**Collect:** (pronounced COL-lect) The main themes and teachings of the day are collected into this brief corporate prayer. The collects for the church year have been used for centuries and are a rich treasury of our church heritage.

**Scripture readings:** The readings follow the church year and are set by a three-year series of readings called the lectionary. The reading from one of the four Gospels sets the theme for the day around which the other readings were chosen. The first reading comes from the Old Testament and we are in the temple seeing Jesus teach that these words testify about him. As a bridge of praise to the next reading, a

gradual or psalm is sung or spoken. The second reading is from a New Testament epistle and is part of a series taken from an apostle's letter that speaks the truth of Christ to our faith and our daily lives. Each reading is proclaimed to be the Word of the Lord, and we respond in thanksgiving. For the Gospel reading, we stand and sing praises to honor our Lord's coming in the Gospels where we hear of His incarnate life and ministry and hear His spoken Words.

**Hymn of the Day:** With the Word dwelling in us, we sing our praises and our faith in a hymn that reflects the readings and prepares us for the sermon.

**Sermon:** The preacher proclaims God's Word, preaching and teaching as Peter did in Acts 2. The preacher explains and applies the Word, rightly dividing the Law (God's demands of us) and the Gospel (God's great works for us through Christ). By this proclamation, the preacher becomes the Good Shepherd's voice calling, gathering, and teaching his flock.

**Creed:** In confessing the essentials of our holy Christian faith through one of the historic creeds, we are answering back to God with what He first said to us. It is the Church's "Amen" to the Gospel.

**Prayer of the Church:** Moved by His Word, we join with all believers in bringing our requests and thanks to God in corporate worship. We make "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for all . . .", that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." (1 Tim. 2:1-2)

**Offering:** We join with all believers who respond by faith to our generous Creator and Giver of all things. As an act of worship and with thankfulness in our hearts, we give to God from what He has given us. (2 Cor. 9) The offering is collected to support the church's proclamation of the Gospel and its care for those in need. The offertory follows, and taken from Psalm 116 it expresses gratitude for God's blessings and teaches the greatest offering is to receive by faith the cup of salvation.



## Service of the Sacrament

**Preface:** After the greeting, we prepare our hearts by recalling Christ's saving work and by thanking the Lord. The proper preface reminds us of the redemptive theme for that season. It concludes by inviting us to join with the church and all the company of heaven in praise of our Lord. (Lam. 3:41; Ps. 136)

**Sanctus:** (pronounced SAHNK-toose) Latin for "holy," this has been called the most ancient and universal of Christian hymns. It begins with Isaiah's vision of Lord's glory in His Temple. (Is. 6:3) and ends with the crowd's joyful response to Jesus on Palm Sunday (Matt. 21:9). The Sanctus proclaims the coming together of heaven and earth as is done for us in the Lord's Supper. The song "Hosanna" is Hebrew for "save us now."

**The Lord's Prayer:** Praying to God our Father the words Christ taught us, we say our family table prayer. (Matt. 6:9-13; Lk. 11:2-4)

**Words of Institution:** Christ's own words from the Last Supper are spoken over the bread and wine blessing and setting it apart as the body and blood of Christ. (Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)

**Pax Domini:** (pronounced PAHKS DOH-mee-nee) Latin for "peace of the Lord." We are with the disciples on the evening of Easter as the risen Lord stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." This peace is the forgiveness of sins we receive by faith through Christ's presence in this divine meal. (Jn. 20:19)

**Agnus Dei:** (Pronounced AHG-noose DAA-ee) Latin for "Lamb of God." We sing the words used by John the Baptist to greet Jesus and to identify Him as the Messiah. (Jn. 1:29) As Christ meets us in this meal, we recognize him as the Lamb of God sacrificed for us to take away the sin of the world and to deliver us from death.

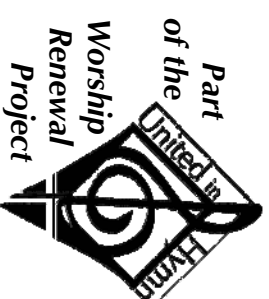
**Distribution:** We come forward to the Lord's Table and are fed with His body given into death for our sins and refreshed with His blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Strengthened and preserved, we leave the table hearing again that the Lord is our peace. (Eph. 2:13-17)

**Post-Communion Canticle:** With thankful hearts for this meal of salvation, we sing of our faith in what God has done and will do for us. Having seen and received Christ in this meal, we sing the

Nunc Dimittis, Latin for "now [let your servant] depart in peace," joining with Simeon who held the infant Jesus in the temple and was ready to die in peace after the Spirit revealed this infant to be the promised Messiah. (Lk. 2:29-32) Alternately, we may sing "Thank the Lord" based on the thanksgiving Psalm 105.

**Post-Communion Collect:** We again give thanks for this gift of forgiveness and ask that it may strengthen our faith towards God so that we may live in Christ serving Him and loving one another.

**Benediction:** At God's direction, Moses gave Aaron and the other priests this blessing to speak over the people of Israel. (Num. 6:22-26) Just as the Divine Service began in the Name of the Triune God, the benediction's three-fold use of Lord signifies the Triune God's gracious presence. With His favor upon us, we leave church and are sent out into the world to serve Him.



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