

**The Whys of Worship: What Christians do on Sundays and why we do it.  
Class #6 & 7: Walking through our Sunday Service**

*Before the service: a time for prayer*

*(everyone can set an example of quietness before the service, so that we all may pray)*

**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.*

Collect for Purity: *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 (*summing up the occasion, usually related to the readings*)

Lessons

Old Testament Reading

Psalm

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

Gospel Reading

*?Why split the hymn around the Gospel? Music for the procession?*

*But perhaps better to give the hymn its integrity: whole hymn before Gospel.*

*?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 Creed

*A response to the proclamation, reaffirming who God is and who we are in relation to God.*

Prayers of the People: intercession for (p.359 & p.383):

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?*

## Confession & Absolution

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

*“We” means each of us, 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).*

### **But wait! There’s more!**

Announcements and addressing special occasions are often done before the offertory.

*At St. Peter and St. Paul, there are additional prayers and actions right before the Peace that are not part of Prayer Book Liturgy. On the one hand, some of these are prayers, which fit with the Prayers of the People. On the other hand, they come after the confession rather than before.*

Remember the pattern of “accretions and reform” in the history of liturgy? Local custom often adapts or adds things onto the liturgy (“accretions”) that stick onto the basic form. From time to time, we either incorporate these additions into liturgy officially, or we clean them up to simplify and refocus the liturgy on its central purpose: to glorify God.

Birthday and Anniversary Prayers: A tradition at SPSP starting in the early 1980s, dropped in the 1990s, and brought back ~2009. Individuals come forward to the altar rail for special prayers if they are celebrating a birthday or wedding anniversary that week. These are seen by most people as a “special blessing” to receive from the priest. Some people have been gravely concerned if they don’t “get their special blessing,” or if the priest doesn’t do it the “right way.”

*How does this addition help to glorify God?*

*It helps the community pray for people more personally.*

*It helps a larger community feel more personally connected, rather than impersonal.*

*Especially with the prayer that we use, we see examples of faithfulness in marriage and from that faithfulness, see a sign of Christ’s love for his church.*

*What’s the risk?*

*More attention to us than to God?*

*More about what we get than offering prayers for others?*

*Interrupts the flow of prayers-confession-Peace.*

*An addition to the prayer book liturgy that is hard to reverse due to personal affection.*

Prayer for the Nation: Added ~2009 and used every week (though in the 1980s we used a similar hymn for peace). The U.S. Flag is brought in front of the altar and we sing the fourth verse of Hymn 717: “Our fathers’ God, to thee, author of liberty, to thee we sing; long may our land be bright with freedom’s holy light; protect us by thy might, great God, our King.”

*How does this addition help to glorify God?*

*We pray for our Nation (in our bulletin, we call this a prayer rather than a national song)*

*(a second time, since we pray for the nation already during the Prayers of the People)*

*We call God “author of liberty” and “great God, our King.”*

*What’s the risk?*

*Confusion: are we worshipping the country by accident?*

*We stand as we do when we praise God,*

*We sing a rousing hymn as we do when we praise God,*

*Many people face toward the flag,*

*Many people put their hand over their heart as for the “pledge of allegiance to the flag,”*

*Many people think “thee” in the song is the country, rather than God,*

*as in “My country ‘tis of thee” from the first verse of this hymn.*

*Interrupts the flow of prayers-confession-Peace.*

*Contrasts the mood and flow of Advent or Lent (we don’t even say “alleluia” to God in Lent)*

*Once started, how would we remove it without seeming to offend patriotism?*

To avoid idolatry, there are very few material things that the church holds up with reverence:

The Cross (the sign of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice)

The Gospel Book (through which we know about Jesus, but see above)

The Consecrated Bread & Wine (through which Christ is present)

## **The Peace of the Lord:**

*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)

*Some prefer announcements at the beginning, so as not to interrupt the flow of the service.  
Some prefer them before the offertory to provide prayerful preparation before worship begins.*

*?How best to welcome newcomers?*

*Flowers and attention of the congregation might make them feel special.*

*But most visitors are a bit self-conscious when they visit a place for the first time. They might not want the attention of 400 strangers.*

*Especially: do not force visitors to receive that attention!*

*Why not greet them personally after the service? Allow them to connect at their own pace.*

## **The Liturgy of the Table:**

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.”*

*?Why a fancy procession for the money (Verger, torches, cross)?  
(The bread and wine only get ushers...)*

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.*

### Communion (*Continued*)

- *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.*

### 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:

- 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. So, for instance, we might all kneel in Lent and all stand in Easter season (*your new rector finds this option appealing*).
- There is always something particularly appropriate about kneeling for confession (though not required).

(2/26/14, TCP)