

The Whys of Worship: What Christians do on Sundays and why we do it.
Classes #4 & 5: Walking through our Sunday Service: The Liturgy of the Word

Before the service: a time for prayer

Not silence, but quietness, sets the tone so that we all may prepare to worship God.

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.

Different invocations are used in Lent and Easter because of the seasons, see BCP p.355.

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 (*the new lectionary uses Acts in Easter Season*)

Psalm (*our habit is responsive by half-verse, in keeping with the way Hebrew Poetry works*)

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

Gospel Reading

?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 Nicene Creed

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

We use the Nicene Creed for Eucharist, The Apostles Creed for Baptism and Daily Office.

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

- 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?

Note that under this rubric, we have modified Form I for Epiphany Season in recent years, and included Thanksgivings.

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 weekly, except for Baptism, Lent 1, Christmas and Easter. 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...I sing” 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)