

# **Welcome to Worship**

**We are so glad to have you with us today. I am Pastor Brian, and I would like to personally welcome you to worship. Feel free to introduce yourself to me and to others. We are a friendly bunch but we are not sure how friendly you want us to be. If you want to talk, we'll talk; if you want to be left alone, we'll leave you alone.**

**I would like to offer this as a guided tour to our worship for those of you who may be new to church, for those who have not been in church for awhile, or for those who have been in church but still do not know what our worship is about.**

First Question: "Why is he wearing a dress?" Answer: It is called a robe and the thing around my neck is called a stole. The robe is a symbol of service and humility not of authority. I need to wear a robe because I am a sinner just like the rest of you and the only way I can stand before a holy God and all of you is if I have a covering. The robe covers my own sin and shortcomings so I can do my job. That is also why judges wear robes. The stole is a symbol of burden and service. It goes around my neck like an ox's yoke or a horse's collar. It is a symbol of work and service, even slavery, not of authority. When I put on my robe and stole it reminds me that it is time to set aside my own needs, opinions, and personality and be the pastor.

**Now I will take you through our worship service. If you follow the bulletin, you will find everything you need, even the words to the songs. Your parts are in bold type. We all have a part in worship.**

- ❖ **Prelude and Lighting of the Candles** – Prior to the prelude some people like to visit. Other will take the time to look over the bulletin to prepare for worship. Still others like to take to opportunity to pray, meditate, or just sit. The prelude invites us to turn our attention to worship. At this time the candles are lit. The flame is a symbol of God's presence with us in worship.

- ❖ **Announcements**
- ❖ **Call to Worship** – Says what it does. In a call and response pattern we are invited to worship God.
- ❖ **Opening Hymn** – A song that helps us to get into the worshiping spirit
- ❖ **Opening Prayer** – A formal prayer offered by me to open the service. At the end of this and all prayers the people say "Amen." Hebrew for "so be it."
- ❖ **Hymn of Illumination** – A song that is usually slower than the opening hymn. It is supposed to slow us down and focus our attention on the Bible reading.
- ❖ **Scripture Reading** – A reading from the Bible. Usually I follow a schedule of reading called a lectionary.
- ❖ **Children's Time:** All children are invited to join me at the front of the church for a children's version of the sermon. I will then lead in a repeat-after-me prayer in which the whole congregation usually joins. I send the kids back to their seat with a coloring or puzzle page and a sticker.
- ❖ **Sermon** – Usually between 10-15 minutes. Almost never more than 20. To keep yourself awake, try taking notes on the "2Nite@Home" sheet. Take it home and use it as a family or small group Bible study. Answers will be on next week's insert or on the parish website.
- ❖ **Hymn of Response** – A song that we sing in response to the message to drive it home.
- ❖ **Joys and Concerns/Prayers of the People** – I will start us off with prayers for the church, local and worldwide, and for the world and its people, at home and abroad. People are invited to share joys and concerns, please feel free to do so, you'll get the hang of it.
- ❖ **Pastoral Prayer** – A prayer offered by me in which I pray in general for all of those things we have prayed for specifically. Also a prayer of blessing and a prayer to help us apply what we learned in the sermon.
- ❖ **Prayer of Confession** – A prayer the people pray together to confess our sins and profess our faith. Usually connected to the sermon.
- ❖ **Words of Assurance** – I offer all of us the assurance that God has forgiven our sins in Jesus Christ. Notice how I also need forgiveness.

- ❖ **Passing of the Peace** – Because we are forgiven sisters and brothers in Christ, we greet one another. We shake hands, say hello, and visit, but now we do so as sisters and brother in Christ sharing the peace of Christ.
- ❖ **Offering** – This is an opportunity for us to offer our gifts to God in financial support of the work of the church locally and around the world. It is also a time when we offer ourselves to God’s service. If you are a visitor, please do not feel that you have to give, you are our guest.
- ❖ **Doxology** – An ancient hymn in praise of the Trinity sung as our gifts are brought forward. If you spend much time around here, you will know it by heart.
- ❖ **Offertory Prayer** – A prayer prayed by me blessing the gifts that are offered.
- ❖ **The Lord’s Prayer** – An ancient prayer of the church given to us by Jesus himself. We all pray this prayer together. Soon you will know this by heart too.
- ❖ **Closing Hymen** – Our final hymn that sends us back into the world to do what we have learned.
- ❖ **Extinguishing the Candles** - The candles are put out and the flame, God, lead us back out into the world to do God’s work.
- ❖ **Benediction** – I dismiss the people with a blessing and one more reminder of what we have learned.
- ❖ **Postlude** – Joyful music to send us on our way.

### **Holy Communion**

On the first Sunday of each month, and on other special occasions, we celebrate Holy Communion or the Lord’s Supper and the service has a few things added to it.

In Holy Communion we celebrate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ by joining in a ritual meal of bread and wine. (grape juice) I could fill a library, much less this pamphlet, and still not explain Communion. The best way to understand it is by listening to the words I say in the Communion prayer. The Communion prayer begins with creation and tells the whole story of God’s work throughout history culminating in the work of Jesus who died on the cross, paying the penalty for our sins so we could be forgiven. The bread is Jesus’ body and the wine is his blood. Communion reminds us that Christ’s body was broken and his blood was shed for us. We believe that when we receive the bread and wine we are receiving Christ’s body and blood, “In a heavenly and spiritual manner.”

As I say in the invitation, we have “open Communion.” All are welcome to receive as long as they believe that Christ died for their sins and rose again. You may have just made that decision now; you are still welcome to receive. Those visiting from other denominations, as far as we are concerned, are welcome to receive, but your denomination may not allow receiving Communion at another church. If you are not sure, you should check with your pastor before receiving.

As you come forward to receive hold out your hand and I will break off a piece of bread and place in your hand and say, “The body of Christ broken for you.” The usual response is, “Amen.” (You may say “thank you” but do not say it to me, say it to God, *my* body is not broken for you.) Take the piece of bread and dip it in the cup. (careful not to dip you fingers) The person holding the cup will say, “The blood of Christ shed for you.” The usual response is, “Amen.” After you receive you may stand or kneel at the alter rail for personal prayer, if you wish.

A note about children receiving... Our tradition places the responsibility of deciding when children are ready to receive, and preparing them to do so, on their parents. Of course, I am always ready to help if needed. Usually I would recommend waiting until a child can handle the elements themselves and teach them that this means that Jesus loves them and Jesus died for them and rose again. However, I have seen Communion placed in the mouths of very young children, even infants. (This is also sometimes necessary for people who are disabled) There are some who think that we should wait until children understand what they are doing before they receive Communion. I am in my thirties and a pastor, if Communion depended on my understanding, I would not be able to receive it, much less offer it.

A few more notes... I sanitize my hands prior to serving Communion to maintain hygiene. If you have specific concerns about hygiene, please let me know. If you have been sick, let me know and I can serve you separately. If you have mobility concerns and need to be served in you seat, please let me know. If you have issues with gluten, please let me know in advance and we can arrange for a portion of gluten free bread for you. The bottom line is that everyone is welcome at Christ’s table and we will make any arrangements necessary to make sure that everyone can participate. All you have to do is ask.