

# About Episcopal Services



Episcopal Liturgy (a word that means "work of the people") is taken from ceremony crafted from the earliest known Christian and Hebrew sources. The first Christians were Jewish and so their traditional forms of worship influenced the first forms of Christian worship. The focus of the liturgy is the Eucharist (a Greek word meaning "Thanksgiving") which is a re-enactment of the Last Supper in which Jesus commanded his disciples to "do this in remembrance of me." There are two main parts of this service, first the **Word of the Lord** in which we listen to Scripture and learn about it in preparation for the Eucharist, and the **Holy Communion** during which the assembled body of Christians through the leadership of the priest blesses the bread and wine making it the Body and Blood of Jesus. We eat the broken bread and share the one cup as a sign of unity in faith and taking our place in the one Body of Christ, the fellowship of all believers.

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Upon entering the church, a sense of quiet allows the worshippers to prepare themselves in prayer. Ushers show visitors to the pews and make sure they have a bulletin. Trinity's bulletins give the directions for the order of the service, the readings, Prayers of the People, and hymn numbers. If you are unfamiliar with the Episcopal Church, ask the person next to you for direction or simply listen as the service progresses.

The Organist plays a prelude to assist us in centering on prayer. The introduction to the opening hymn is played louder to draw us together. As the introduction begins, the congregation stands to greet the Procession.

## **Procession**

Formal processions were the custom of the leaders of secular assemblies. When the Christian Church became the official church of the Empire in the early 4th Century AD, the custom was applied to church assemblies.

## **Opening Acclamation**

These opening sentences (chosen according to season as indicated on BCP p. 355) are a salutation to the fellowship, an exclamation of praise, and permission to preside.

## **Gloria**

A hymn of praise is then offered. Usually this is the Gloria but during Lent and Advent the more solemn *Kyrie* (Lord Have Mercy) or *Trisagion* (Holy God, Holy and mighty, holy immortal One have mercy upon us) are used.

## **The Word of the Lord**

### **Collect of the Day**

Collect (accent on the first syllable) is a word for prayer which "collects" intentions, sets a theme for the readings of the day.

## **Scripture Lessons**

Reading scripture during a service is based on ancient forms of Jewish worship. After each reading we allow a period of silence to respond inwardly to the words in thought and prayer.

- **Old Testament Reading**

What we call "Old Testament" is in fact the Hebrew Scriptures which Jesus and his disciples would have heard and studied. Christians call this the Old Testament (or old covenant) referring to God's first promise to Israel through Abraham. New Testament refers to the New Covenant or promise made by God to humanity through Jesus.

- **Psalm**

Psalms are ancient Hebrew hymns Christians and Jews have sung for thousands of years.

- **New Testament (Epistle)**

These readings are mostly from letters (or Epistles) written by Paul and other evangelists offering comfort or instruction to the newly formed Christian churches. Many of their issues are familiar to us today.

- **Sequence Hymn**

This hymn allows time for the Gospel reader and acolytes to get in place. Hymns are an important part of the service, chosen thematically to reflect the readings where possible providing theology, prayer, and praise in poetry and music.

- **Gospel**

*(From old English words "God Spell" meaning "good news.")*

This last reading comes from one of the four narratives of Jesus' life and ministry. A three-year cycle allows us to focus on a different Gospel: Year A for Matthew, B for Mark and C for Luke. John is used at different times throughout the three years.

- **Sermon**

Having heard lessons from scripture the preacher seeks to proclaim God's love reflected in these texts, applying them as much as possible to current issues in the church and the world.

## **Nicene Creed**

The early Christian church nearly divided over substantial disagreements in theology about the person of Jesus and the relationship between God the Creator, the Son and the Holy Spirit. To resolve these differences the Emperor Constantine called a convocation of the Bishops in the year 325 AD to the city of Nicea. After much controversy, the statement of beliefs they crafted became known to future generations as the Nicene Creed. The word "creed" is from the Latin word "Credo" which means "I believe." This Creed has been recited by Christians ever since as a response to the Word of the Lord. Another similar Creed used by the Church is known as the Apostles Creed and is used at Baptisms and other daily prayer services. .

## **Prayers of the People**

Another response to the Word of the Lord is prayer. Our Prayer Book contains six forms offering a variety of methods, but each contains petitions regarding the Church and the world, those who have died and a general call for personal petitions.

### **Concluding Collect**

The celebrant gathers or "collects" the prayers of the faithful with one concluding prayer.

### **Confession**

Having heard the Word of God, affirmed our faith using the Creed and offered prayers for our various needs and concerns, we take a moment to prepare ourselves for communion through confession. After the invitation to "Confess our sins against God and our neighbor", a moment of silence is offered to gather our thoughts about how we understand sin in our lives and take stock of that for which we are truly sorry and hope to correct or make amends. Confession has two main parts: identifying the sin and the intention to address it. While we recite the words together in a general form, it is intended that in our hearts, we reveal the intentions to God.

Though the posture for confession is generally kneeling as directed in the Penitential Order on BCP p. 351, it is not uncommon for people to stand. Kneeling emphasizes the individual inner examination while standing emphasizes the outward connection to others confessing. The choice is an individual one and no one should be uncomfortable if their posture differs from anyone near them. From Easter through (and including) Pentecost, the Confession is omitted.

### **Passing the Peace**

Matthew 5: 23-24 says "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go, first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift." Passing the peace is the enacting of this verse and a liturgical observance of reconciliation. The appropriate method is shaking hands, an embrace, or a kiss with those immediately around you. It is also important to be sensitive to those who may not be comfortable with these methods.

## **The Holy Communion**

**The Great Thanksgiving** refers to all the parts of the service in which the bread and wine are blessed.

**The Offertory** brings to the altar money to be blessed in use for ministry as well as the bread and wine to be blessed for our communion. These gifts are used literally, but are also symbols of offering ourselves to God's love and service.

**Sersum Corda** (Latin for "Lift up your hearts") is a phrase dating back to 215 AD to focus our attention on God's action coming to us and our thoughts ascending to God. **The Proper preface** is seasonal found on BCP p. 377ff., and the **Sanctus** (Latin for "holy") begins a hymn of praise dating from the 4th Century echoing the songs of angels in the visions of Isaiah and later St. John the Divine in the Book of Revelation anticipating the heavenly banquet. There are six **Eucharistic Prayers** (two in Rite I and four in Rite II). The first part of each recalls the events of salvation history and this is called *Anamnesis* (meaning "remembering").

The **Words of Institution** recall Jesus' words at the Last Supper (instructing the disciples to do this in remembrance of him.) The words of invocation called *Epiclesis* is where we ask the Holy Spirit to descend upon these gifts and upon us to make the bread and wine holy and to make us part of Christ's body.

**The Great Amen** (from the Hebrew meaning "so be it") is boldly proclaimed by the congregation affirming the actions that have just taken place.

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

When Jesus taught his disciples this prayer it was a summary of all prayers. Placed in our liturgy at this place it again becomes the summation of our prayers to God in blessing the Bread and Wine.

#### **The Breaking of the Bread, also called The Fraction**

In the Eucharist the use of silence is active rather than passive and in this silence, we break the bread and recall the body of Christ broken for us. The anthem following is a reflection on this action.

#### **Communion**

All who feel called to receive Communion with us are welcome to do so, regardless of denomination or faith background. When receiving each element, it is appropriate to respond by saying "Amen." It is also appropriate and helpful for the person receiving wine to lightly hold the lowest part of the chalice base guiding the chalice to their mouth. Receiving communion from the common cup is a sign of unity within the body of Christ and among the fellowship of the faithful. When receiving, you are welcome to stand or kneel at the rail. If you prefer not to receive the wine, simply leave the altar rail after you have received the body of Christ. If you desire neither, please cross your arms over your chest so the chalice bearer understands your wishes. You will receive a blessing.

#### **Post Communion Prayer**

This concluding prayer thanks God for the gift of communion and recognizes that it inspires and empowers us to live out our Christian mission in the world.

#### **Blessing and Dismissal**

The service ends with the blessing by the priest or Bishop and the final words are a dismissal sending us into the world to be a blessing to others.