

LUTHERAN SERVICE

Visitor's Guide

Prepared for
Messiah Lutheran Church - Seattle
A Congregation
of
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

WELCOME

Welcome to **Messiah Lutheran Church, Seattle**. We would like to extend a warm welcome to you. This pamphlet is designed to give you a brief guide to our hymnal, *The Lutheran Service Book*. For people who are unfamiliar with this hymnal or liturgical-based worship, our service may seem confusing. This guide was prepared to walk you through a typical Divine Service of our church and explain some of **our beliefs and practices**. If at any point you need further clarification about our service, please speak with the pastor or one of our elders before or after the service, and they will be happy to assist you.

Finding Your Place - The Sections of the Hymnal

The Lutheran Service Book contains a great deal of information about our confession of faith. However, for our service today, the three main sections we need are the **Psalms**, the **Divine Service**, and the **Hymns**.



Each of the three listed above are in the following pages.

100-150 Psalms
151-218 Services
331-1023 Hymns

If you have time, you may also want to explore other sections of the hymnal. A useful section for understanding what we as Lutherans believe can be found on page 321, *The Small Catechism*. There are also prayers for you on the front page.

Marking Your Place - Order of Service and Hymns

Before the service starts, you may find it helpful to mark your hymnal with the ribbons. You can find which **Order of Service** and which **Psalm** will be used in the **bulletin**.

In addition to the bookmarks that are attached to the hymnal, you can also use your bulletin as a marker.

Singing a Hymn

Almost every service will begin with a hymn. The page number for a hymn will be in the bulletin and/or on the number board up front.

If you are unfamiliar with singing from sheet music, we sing the first line of each stanza and then the second line and so on. You can see this by following the dashed line below in the sample song below.

Start →

1 O lit - tle flock, fear not the foe Who mad - ly
2 Be of good cheer; your cause be - longs To Him who
3 As true as God's own Word is true, Not earth nor
4 A - men, Lord Je - sus, grant our prayer; Great Cap - tain,

→ seeks your o - ver - throw; Dread not his rage and pow'r.
can a - venge your wrongs; Leave it to Him, our Lord.
hell's sa - tan - ic crew A - gainst us shall pre - vail.
now Thine arm make bare, Fight for us once a - gain!

→ And though your cour - age some - times faints, His seem - ing
Though hid - den yet from mor - tal eyes, His Gid - eon
Their might? A joke, a mere fa - cade! God is with
So shall Thy saints and mar - tyrs raise A might - y

→ tri - umph o'er God's saints Lasts but a lit - tle hour.
shall for you a - rise, Up - hold you and His Word.
us and we with God— Our vic - t'ry can - not fail.
cho - rus to Thy praise For - ev - er - more. A - men.

Back to next verse

Invocation and the Sign of the Cross

At the beginning of the Divine Service, the **Invocation** calls upon God's name and shows us that this is His Service to us, not ours or someone else's. During the **Invocation**, the pastor reminds us of our own **Baptism** by making the sign of the cross. (Baptism is where we first received the sign of the cross.) You and those around you may also desire to make the sign of the cross to remember your **Baptism**.



Confession and Absolution



During the **Confession of Sins**, we acknowledge that we are sinful by nature and by our actions and therefore fail to meet God's righteous judgment against us for our sins. But the Lord is present with us and because He has conquered sin, death and the devil through His death and resurrection, we receive the forgiveness of our sins.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. -1John 1:9 ESV

Through the mouth of God's servant, the pastor, our Lord declares His grace and mercy to us and that our sins are forgiven. The **Absolution** speaks the Gospel to us in a very personal way. In the Gospel, we receive the salvation earned by Christ on the cross; all our sins are covered by His blessed death. The pastor indeed does have the authority, given by Christ, (as one called by God and ordained through the church) to speak God's word of forgiveness to the repentant sinner in the stead and name of Christ. (See Matt. 16:18; 18:15-19; Jn. 20:22-23)

The Service of the Word

The **Service of the Word** is the portion of the service where the Risen Christ comes to teach us through His word. This portion of the service holds to traditions of the ancient church's worship that is centered on the reading of the Scriptures. The public reading of the Scriptures and proclamation of the Word is at the heart of our service. (1 Timothy 4:13) The foundation of our faith is that the Word of God alone raises us up to be the children of God.

The Introit: "To Enter"

The **Introit** is a collection of passages from the **Psalms** that sets the tone for our service. The **Introit** may be sung or spoken by the choir, the people or the pastor. Sometimes they are **spoken or sung** responsively.

You will notice that during the Introit, the pastor may make his way from outside the communion rail to the altar area. Since Introit means "to enter", this movement depicts the entrance into "**The Holy of Holies**." This was the place in the Old Testament where God's presence dwelled. Today, God's gracious presence is in the meal of Jesus' body and blood.

Kyrie

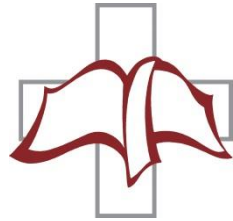
The first prayer of the congregation is the **Kyrie**. It is a deep cry for mercy. We are beggars before God. We cry out because God has promised to hear us sinners and lavish His gifts upon us.

Hymn of Praise

The **Hymn of Praise** to be sung depends on the season in the church year. The congregation will either sing the **Gloria in Excelsis** (Glory to God in the Highest) or **This is the Feast**. During **Advent** or **Lent**, the **Hymn of Praise is omitted**, because we are in a penitential season. You can tell if it is Lent or Advent because the color of the **altar** and the **pastor's stole** is either **purple or blue**.

The Scripture Readings

We read from the **Old Testament**, from an apostolic **Epistle** (Letter) and from the **Gospel**. In a very real way, the readings from the **Old Testament** and the **Epistle** find their **fulfillment** in the **Gospel** reading. The readings do this *not by simply* telling us about Jesus, but by giving us Jesus, who was crucified for our sins and raised from the dead so that we might be saved. **The Word of God is the Word of Life**. You can read the Scripture readings along with the pastor on the back of the **bulletin** or the **bulletin insert**.



So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 10:17 ESV

Hymn of the Day or Sermon Hymn

The **Hymn of the Day** is the chief hymn of the Divine Service and keeps with the theme of the day's service. It also helps prepare our hearts for the **Sermon**. You can find the number of the **Hymn of the Day** or the **Sermon Hymn** printed in the **bulletin** or the **number board** up front. *Remember, the hymns are located between pages 331-1032*

The Sermon

Our Lord sent His apostles into the world to preach the forgiveness of sins, the promise of eternal life, and our salvation found in Christ Jesus. In the **Sermon**, this same word is proclaimed to us today. The pastor's **Sermon** is the living voice of Christ proclaiming both Law and Gospel usually from the appointed Scripture readings.

Creed



Having received the Word of the Lord, we respond by confessing our common Christian faith by speaking an historic **Creed**. The word **Creed** comes from the Latin word *credo*, which means “I believe.” Through the **Creed**, we express our unity of faith throughout the world and across the ages.

Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. — St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans 10:9 ESV

Prayer for the Church

In the **Prayer for the Church**, we pray not only for our own needs, but also for the needs of our neighbor. This is seen by the invitation “Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.” This is the longest prayer of the service and may include prayers for: the local congregation, the church at large, for right teaching, protection from the devil, the government, the military, all who suffer, the welfare and safety of ourselves and others, for the conversion of the unbeliever and the restoration of those who have left the Church.

Offering and the Offertory

Just as we respond to hearing God’s Word in prayer and praise, we also respond in the **Offering** by returning to God a small portion of the gracious gifts He has bestowed on us. The **Offertory** is sung while the **Offerings** are brought forward.

The Service of the Sacrament

The **Service of the Sacrament** is the celebration of the **Lord’s Supper**, which was **instituted by Christ for the forgiveness of sins**. (Mt. 26:26ff) During the Lord’s Supper, we partake of Christ’s sacrifice and atonement in His true body and blood. Through this we are made one with Him and all Christians throughout the world and all the saints who have gone before. This is why we call it **Holy Communion**. This is part of the ancient temple worship in the Old Testament, sacrifice. Blood of animals was shed in the past to cover the sins of the people. Now, Jesus’ **blood was shed** on Calvary and Christ gives us this to eat and drink by **the fruits of the cross**, the Savior’s body and blood under bread and wine.

Our Practice of Closed Communion

The historic and loving practice of **closed communion** means that confirmed members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are welcome to commune at this altar. We desire those who commune here to be under the faithful pastoral care in our confession of faith. (Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Tim. 4:16)

Please know that our communion practice **does not mean** that we are judging any individual Christian's faith or salvation. But sadly not all Christian churches hold the same confession of faith. As a consequence of these divisions we see in Christianity, we cannot extend a general invitation to receive the Lord's Supper. Reception of Holy Communion by Christians that are not fully united with us in confession would imply a oneness which does not exist and for which we all pray. We hope you understand that our practice of closed communion is out of our love and concern for you. We would deeply regret if you participated in something in which you did not fully agree unto the injury of your soul. Though communing one is indicating that they agree with all that we **believe, teach and confess** as Lutheran Christians. (1 Cor. 11:18-19,29) Closed communion is not about keeping people away from Jesus' meal, but rather assisting people in coming to God's Altar with a full and rich understanding of what Christ gives in this meal, (1 Cor. 11:27-29) **The pastor would be happy to speak with you about communing here in the future.**



Distribution Hymn

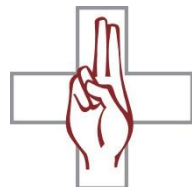
During the distribution of the Lord's Supper the congregation usually sings one or more **Hymns**.

Lord's Prayer

The **Lord's Prayer** is the chief prayer of the Christian Church and was taught to us by Jesus in the 6th chapter of Matthew. For more information about the Lord's Prayer, see page 323 of the Hymnal.

Benediction

We end our service in the same manner we began- in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Now the congregation departs in peace, reassured in the knowledge that their sins are forgiven.



THANKS BE TO GOD

Thank you for worshiping with us today. Hopefully through the Divine Service and this guide, you now have a better understanding of our faith and hope in Jesus Christ, as well as our traditions and practices.

If you have any further questions please speak with one of the pastors or one of the elders and they will be happy to assist you. More information about our Church's beliefs can be found on our synod's website at www.lcms.org or our site www.messiahseattle.org

More information about our Divine Service can be found in the book *Worshiping with Angels and Archangels: An introduction to the Divine Service*. The pastor can obtain a copy of this book for you to borrow.

We hope and pray you join in the Divine Service with us again!



“Wherever the Word is heard, where Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, the absolution are administered, there you may conclude with certainty: ‘This is surely God’s house; here heaven has been opened.’”— Dr. Martin Luther