

Explanation of the Order of Worship

Welcome to Christ Church Conway; we are glad that you have come to worship the true and living God with us. With the variety of church traditions that exist today, you very well may have some questions about our service. Questions are fine; you don't have to be a professional Presbyterian to worship with us (in fact, most of us aren't). If you do have questions, here is a brief explanation of how and why we worship the Lord.

When the church gathers to worship, we gather in Christ as the people of God in order to hear from our God and respond with the help of the Spirit in faith and repentance. In this way, the Christian worship service is, in essence, a covenant renewal ceremony in which the covenant community gathers to hear the covenant promises, which have been secured for us by Christ, and respond in faith. The congregation is not a passive, but an active participant in the worship service. The church is not an audience standing before a preacher or a band, but the people of God called together by the Lord in order to worship the Lord.

The worship service of Christ Church Conway is structured according to the idea of covenant renewal. First, we hear from our God and acknowledge that he is the sovereign. Second, we hear his law read, acknowledge our sin, and call out to him for mercy. Third, we hear God's declaration that based on Christ's fulfillment of God's law on our behalf, all who believe in Jesus are righteous. Fourth, having been reminded of God's mercy toward us we call out to God in prayer and sit under the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. Finally, we respond in thanksgiving and praise to the grace our heavenly Father has shown us through his Son and applied to us by his Spirit.

What follows is list of the various elements of our liturgy, in the order that they would come in a service. Every element may not be present every week, but most will be. We do not claim that this pattern is the only appropriate way to worship God in a corporate setting, indeed this is an area where God has given us great freedom; nonetheless for all the reasons given above and below, we have chosen to pattern our service in this way. The general pattern given below is an old liturgical pattern of corporate worship that has been used by Christians for generations.

Praise

Call to Worship

God is the sovereign over all creation and is worthy of all glory, praise, and reverence. We gather to worship him because he has called his people to worship him as the true, living, and triune God.

Invocation

Since God calls us to worship him and we are sinners, incapable and unwilling to give him praise apart from his grace making us new and his Spirit leading us in truth, we call on him in prayer by faith asking that he would help us along by his Spirit that we may worship truly and rightly, in Spirit and in truth.

Hymn of Praise

Throughout history, the people of God have sung of the glory of God. The book of Psalms is a collection of some of the songs God's people have sung. We continue now in the biblical tradition of singing praises to our God.

Affirmation of Faith

Jude tells us that there is a faith once for all delivered to the saints. We use both passages of Scripture and biblically-faithful, historic creeds and confessions to corporately confess this common faith.

Hymn of Response

Confession

Scriptural Warning

The law of God was given that we may see our sin and our need for a Savior. Even a simple summary God's Law shows our guilt and serves as a grave warning that apart from Christ we stand condemned already.

Way of Salvation

Having heard the warning of our condition contained in the law, we now hear a scriptural summary of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Confession of Sin

The Bible teaches us to confess our sin to one another. Here, having heard the warning and way of salvation, with the help of the Spirit we corporately confess

our sins and our need for the mercy of the Father, which comes only through Jesus Christ.

Hymn of Confession

Typically we think of hymns and spiritual songs as songs of praise; however, throughout history and in Psalms we find the church singing all kinds of songs to her God. The Christian life is not one constant religious high. When we come to grips with our sin, a song of lament and repentance is appropriate for us, just as it was for David (Psalm 51) and Asaph (Psalm 73).

Assurance of Pardon

God has not left us, his people, to wallow in our sin, so we announce and hear the wonderful promises of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Exhortation to Holiness

Jesus has freed us from sin and death. No longer are we slaves to sin, but now we are slaves to Christ. Scripture commands Christians to put on the new self, walk in the Spirit, and not present our members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. Therefore, as those who have been declared holy, we here an exhortation to progress in holiness by looking to Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Hymn of Response

Means of Grace

Pastoral Prayer

Scripture directs us to pray in several ways- we are directed to pray for each other, for the church at large, for our earthly leaders, and for our enemies. Having been welcomed in by our heavenly Father, we now make our requests known to him in the name of Christ and with the help of his Spirit.

Scripture Reading

The Word of God is sharper than a double-edged sword. When the Word goes out it will not return empty. The Word of God remains forever. Therefore, we read God's Word that God may be glorified and that we may be strengthened as his people. After hearing the Word read we respond as follows

Minister: This is the Word of the Lord.

Congregation: **Thanks be to God.**

Children's Sermon

Throughout Scripture we see children included in the public worship of God. It is our desire that children be included in our worship services and helped to understand all that is done and said. Much of this great responsibility belongs to the parents, but we hope to aid parents in this learning process. The children's sermon is a brief, summary explanation of the sermon text.

Prayer for Illumination

Any failure or difficulty we have in understanding God's Word is due to our inability to comprehend his glory not to God's inability or failure to communicate his will; therefore, we seek the Spirit's help and favor that we may rightly understand his Word.

Sermon

Paul asks, "How will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" The proclamation of the Word of God is central to both evangelism and discipleship and is the one of the biblically-ordained means through which God communicates his grace to his people.

Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ. By giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is displayed, and worthy receivers are, by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

Christ Church Conway invites all Christians, those who have been baptized and profess faith in Jesus Christ, to share with us in this meal. If you are not able to come forward to receive the bread and wine, please let us know. We will be glad to bring the elements to you in your seat.

Communion Hymn

Doxology

Response

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Offering

Because God creates and sustains all things, and has given his people his fullness and greatest treasure in Jesus Christ, generosity serves as a humble and glad response of worship.

Hymn of Thanksgiving

Benediction

Having proclaimed the glory of God, having confessed our dependence on him, having sat under the authority of God's Word, and having benefited from the sacraments, we receive God's blessing that we may walk in faith and holiness.