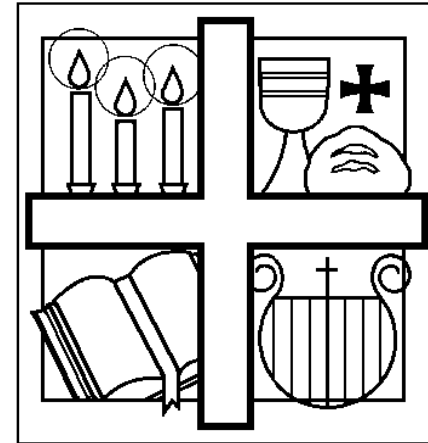


# Worship: A Church Family “Get-together!”



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What is the best way to think of a worship service? It is a family “get-together,” like a big meal at which we get together to talk and be fed. For centuries, Christians have called this “Eucharist.” This is a word that means “giving of thanks” or “thanksgiving.” So, we begin our Saturday or Sunday celebration the same way we would begin if we were going to someone’s house for a special party or dinner: we arrive and get together with people.



## The Gathering



As we gather in the worship area we prepare for the celebration while music is being played. At some services there is an Entrance Procession where we usually sing a hymn to help us worship God. The procession is a great parade with the Cross of Jesus leading the way and members of the choir and other worship leaders following the cross because Jesus leads us! At other services we sing a song to help us worship God without a procession.

Then, we are greeted by God through the words of the pastor who says: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”



We greet the Pastor back by saying, “And also with you!”

Sometimes the greeting will consist of other words. For example during the Easter season the pastor says: “Christ is risen!” And we respond: “He is risen indeed!”

Sometimes special prayers or songs (like the hymn of praise) follow the greeting. But, always the pastor gathers together our individual prayers into the opening prayer called the Prayer of the Day.

*So, the pastor and people, together, greet God!*



## The Word

When families and friends get together to eat, they sometimes sit down first to chat or share special memories. That is what we do now, in the Bible readings.



First we read from the **Old Testament** which is the part of the Bible we share with our Jewish sisters and brothers. Here we hear about God's special people Israel and the prophets – all who lived before Jesus.

Many families have favorite songs which they sing when they get together. The oldest songs of the family of God are called the **Psalms**. We sing them most Sundays between the lessons.



Often at family gatherings people will share letters and postcards they have received from friends. The next lesson is usually taken from a letter in the **New Testament** part of the Bible. These letters were written to churches to help them keep their faith.



Before we read the Gospel we sing! Sometimes we sing a song. Much of the time we sing “*Alleluia!*” a word that means, “Praise the Lord!” The good news is about to be spoken so our hearts are joyful and glad.

The reading of the **Gospel** is a high point in the service because it tells us about Jesus: his words, actions, his death on the cross for all people. The pastor usually reads this in the center of the congregation so that we can all celebrate how God is at the center of our lives and is present among us!





The **Sermon** is usually given by the pastor, who talks about the Bible readings for the day. In the sermon God touches our hearts with God's love and challenges us to live as the people of God.

We usually follow the sermon with a special song related to what was spoken about in the sermon. Sometimes we even say a "creed" which is a way for us to say "we believe in this."

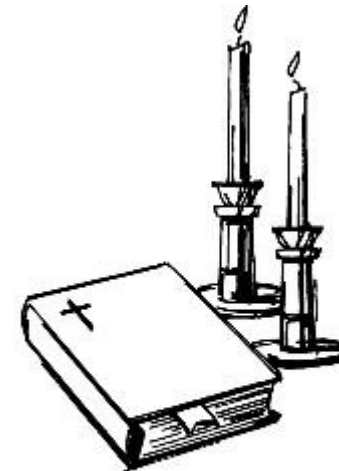
Families are always concerned about how each other are doing. As Christians, we express our concern in the **Prayers of the People**, by praying for each other, other parts of the church body in the world, for peace, for the sick, for justice, for people in pain and in trouble, and many other concerns.

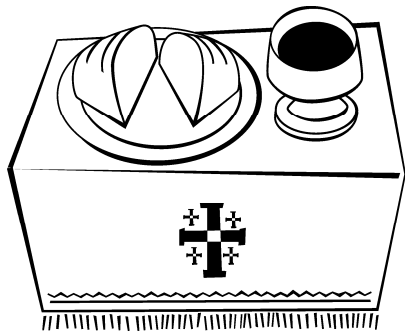


Families like to show their love for each other with special gestures like a hug or a kiss on the cheek. In the **Sharing of the Peace** we show how

we love each other, not with our own love, but in the power of the Spirit, with Jesus' love. We say "peace be with you." The person responds to us "peace be with you too!" We shake hands or give a hug showing how the love of Jesus is among us!

*So, together we hear the Word of God!  
God speaks to us.*

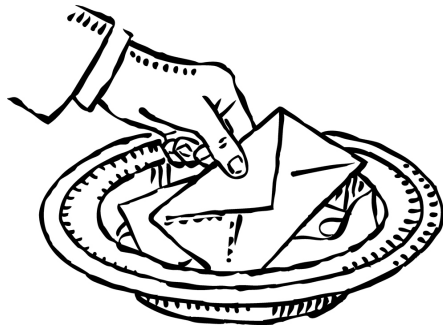




### The Meal

Next the **table is set**. While this is being done, we give our offerings of money as the Bible encourages us to do. When we get ready for a family meal we always set the table. That's what we do here. We share this meal because Jesus commanded us to have this meal to always remember who he is and what he said and what he did for us. *So, we get together to eat this meal.*

Next we bring our gifts forward. These are gifts of money. This money goes to the ministry of the church and is given to people in need. We present the gifts to God and God always directs our gifts to the poor and hungry because that is where God is sometimes most present.



Next the pastor leads us in a prayer of thanksgiving to God. It is much like saying table grace over dinner at home. In this great prayer known as the **Great Thanksgiving**, we give



thanks to God not only for this special food, but, for everything which God has done for us from creation until now. It is a joyful and great prayer thanking God for his wonderful love and asking God's Spirit to come upon us as we share the bread and the wine.

Next we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us. Called the **Lord's Prayer**, this prayer speaks of bread, forgiveness and the coming of God's kingdom.



Then the loaf of bread is broken and the people are invited to come forward for the meal. When you receive the bread, the minister says “the body of Christ given for you.” When you receive the wine, the minister says “the blood of Christ shed for you.” Say “Amen” after receiving the body and blood of Jesus. When we say “Amen” we say “YES! ... Let it be so.”



Like having dinner with our family at home, we share this special meal together (that’s why we share a loaf of bread and share a cup of wine) with our faith family.

*So, together we share the meal. Christ feeds us!*



## The Sending Forth

After sharing the meal, we say a prayer and are blessed. Then we get on with the business of being a Christian in the world. To live as a Christian is not always easy. Nevertheless, when we are told to go and live as such we say “Thanks be to God.” This reminds us what the Eucharist is all about – to live our lives thankfully. So, at the end of the service when we hear the words,

*“Go in peace. Serve the Lord.”*

We say,

*“Thanks be to God!”*

