

Instructed Holy Communion¹
Christ Church, Dartmouth
10:00 a.m. Book of Alternative Services (BAS)

THE GATHERING OF THE COMMUNITY

Introit Hymn (sung together with choir)

The Greeting - p. 185 of the Book of Alternative Services

Hymn of Gathering (sung together with choir)

This is a sort of Coles Notes for the everyday Christian/Anglican and to someone who might be new to this community and not understand the liturgy. Hopefully, you will appreciate the opportunity to think about why we do what we do, and maybe even consider what we might do differently.

The root meaning of “liturgy” is “the work of the people.” So, we are reminded that worship is an activity that belongs to us all – liturgy is the common act of worship.

Holy Communion is our central act of worship, which is an expression of our Anglican denomination. We are what you might call a Eucharistic Church, which is different and similar to other churches in our community. The word “Eucharist” will be explained later in this document.

Jesus said, “Do this” and so we do.

Our tradition of celebrating Holy Communion goes right back to the early church – and therefore the structure of the Holy Communion and some of the prayers are very old.

Liturgy is not static – it is always evolving. We are in a constant tension between preserving our connection with our rich tradition and finding creative ways to worship in a way that fits who we are, in this place and in this time – just as Christians have done in the centuries before us.

At our 10:00 a.m. service, we use the Book of Alternative Services (the BAS, or as we often call it – “the green book”, which was published in 1985). Back in the sixteenth century, at the time of the Reformation, the Anglican Church separated from the Roman Catholic Church. After the separation, it gradually adopted a combination of Roman Catholic and Reformed worship practices, but it is distinctly Anglican.

We begin with the ***Gathering of the Community*** – this introductory part of the service reminds us of our baptism. It also allows us to unite and prepare ourselves collectively for worship.

The Collect for Purity (read together)

Glory to God (sung responsively with choir)

Kyrie (sung responsively with choir)

¹ Adapted from various sources, and created within the context of Christ Church, Dartmouth in mind. (Rev. Kyle Wagner, Spiritual Development Committee)

The Collect (read together)

The Collect of the day is prayed by the priest and all of us. The Collect ‘collects’ the ideas of the worship service and it is a prayer of our intentions each Sunday morning, therefore we use different Collects each week.

The term “Celebrant,” which is the word used in the BAS, might seem in a way a misleading word, since we are all celebrating Holy Communion. An alternative word is “Presider”. This fits the role of someone who presides – in other words, the person who leads the whole people of God in worship. The Presider brings us together and watches over all of the parts of the service.

Traditionally the Presider does the beginning, middle and end – in other words the Greeting and Collect at the beginning, the Eucharist Prayer in the middle and then the final Blessing.

The Collect is an appropriate prayer for everyone, as we pray it together to unify our voices to God.

With the Collect, we come to the end of the introduction of the **Gathering of the Community** and we move into the first of the two major parts that make up the Eucharist, which are the **Proclamation of the Word** and the **Celebration of the Eucharist**. Sometimes they are called the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Table.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

The **Proclamation of the Word** focuses on the Bible and our response. This part of the service has obvious roots in the Jewish tradition of worship in synagogues at the time of early church. This worship included public readings of the Bible, singing of psalms and proclaiming the sermon.

The central place given to Bible readings in our worship reflects the high value we, as Christians and as Anglicans, give to the Bible. Many Anglicans subscribe to the Protestant principle that each Christian has the right to read and understand the Bible.

The specific Bible readings are determined by a calendar called the Revised Common Lectionary, which gives a 3-year cycle of readings. Right now, we are in Year B. This Lectionary is used by many churches in North America – and, in fact, throughout the world. This means that we can go to another church and find them doing the same readings.

We stop between readings to reflect and pray in silence. The Quakers practise what they call a “liturgy of silence”.

Worship involves all of us – our mind, our bodies, our emotions. That means using our bodies to worship, so ideally, we don’t stand, sit or kneel just to get exercise – or just because that is how we always do it.

When it comes to posture, which is the act of sitting or standing or kneeling, there are lots of different opinions and practices. One thing we do consistently is stand for the Gospel reading – and turn to face the Gospel, which is often brought into the centre of the congregation. We stand and face the Gospel because this signifies just how important we feel the readings are. All of the Bible readings teach us, inspire us, challenge us, and feed us. But the Gospel brings us the words of Jesus: The good news!

You might see some people signing a cross on their foreheads, lips and chest when the Gospel is announced – this is to show that the words of Jesus guide our thoughts, our words and our deeds – or mind, body, and soul.

You might also notice that some people, when the name of Jesus Christ is used, bow. You don't have to do this, but for many it is a simple act of adoration or recognition of who God is for them. Different types of prayer are suited to different postures – kneeling for confession but standing for praise and thanksgiving. When we stand to pray, we can think of ourselves as the resurrected people – risen up. So, it makes sense, particularly for the prayers after the Eucharist, and in the weeks after Easter.

We also have to bear in mind, our physical abilities. At some stage in our life, not all of us will be able to stand or kneel. But we can offer the bodies we have to the act of worship. So this means it's okay to receive communion in your seat, just ask the priest or Eucharistic minister.

The Proclamation of the Word:

First Reading

Psalm (read responsively)

Second Reading

Gradual Gospel Acclamation (sung or said by all)

The reading of the Gospel (read by the priest or the lay reader)

Gradual Gospel Acclamation (repeated) (sung or said by all)

Sermon/Homily

A **sermon** is a talk by a clergy person or lay reader and it addresses scripture, theology, religious and moral topics in relation to what is happening in the world today. A **homily** is normally given in the context of an Anglican, Roman Catholic or Lutheran service where communion is celebrated. So, perhaps all homilies are sermons but not all sermons are homilies. On a normal Sunday you would hear a sermon that comments on the readings and proclaims the good news for our times, carrying on Jesus' example of preaching.

Hopefully, we respond in various positive ways to the preacher's words, but our liturgical response comes in the Creed, where we sign on to our faith's statement of identity.

But looking at some words briefly, a "priest" is a person authorized by a denomination to perform sacred rituals which connect humanity to the Divine. The term *priest* is generally used in the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions. A "minister" is someone authorized by the church to teach beliefs, lead services such as weddings, baptisms, funerals and provides spiritual guidance to the community. The Latin for minister is "servant." A "preacher" is a person who delivers sermons or homilies to a gathered group of people, often in line with the teaching of that denomination. A preacher must be licensed.

The Apostolic Creed (said together)

The **Creed** is essentially our statement of faith. There are various creeds. The Nicene and the Apostolic Creeds are the ones we are most familiar with here at Christ Church.

The wording seems to be a bit old –that’s not surprising because it is more than 15 hundred years old. In saying this Creed, we are touching hands with Christians down through the centuries and around the world. We don’t have to say the Creed every Sunday. Just the act of worship signifies our understanding of what it means to be Christian. It is important for us to say the Creed from time to time, like on certain occasions such as Christmas, Easter, or at the beginning of a new church season. We stand and face the altar because it signifies that we are saying this together and to God.

After the Creed, we have the Prayers of the People, which – appropriately enough – are led by a lay reader or member of the congregation representing those gathered on Sunday. These prayers reflect our concerns, not just for ourselves and our church community here, but for the broader world – from which we come, and to which we will return after the service.

The prayers conclude with the Confession and Absolution. Here, we think about how we have separated ourselves from God – and then we are welcomed back into God’s loving embrace.

The Prayers of Thanksgiving & Intercession (aka the Prayers of the People) – p 190 of the BAS (read by lay reader or member of the congregation)

Priest invites people to the Confession and Absolution – p. 191 of BAS

After the prayers and confession, we have the **exchanging of the peace**. When we exchange the peace with each other, we recognize that we meet Christ in other people – including our neighbours in the pew, whether they are friends, family, acquaintances, or visitors.

In the peace, we encounter the other, we seek reconciliation and we look forward in anticipation to the coming of God’s Kingdom when there will be peace among all people. In the early Christian Church, the peace exchanged was actually a kiss. Today, we simply shake hands or offer a warm embrace.

Priest invites people to exchange the Peace

Music is also an essential part of our worship, especially here at Christ Church. The piano, organ and the singing play a key role in the service. Listening to the music can help us move from the busyness of our regular lives to a spirit of worship. It helps us meditate prayerfully. It can communicate dimensions of the Christian story that words cannot. The beauty of the music reminds us of the gloriousness of God’s creation. Singing is a natural way to offer praise and, by singing together, we express our unity.

The music is chosen to reflect the theme or the liturgical season and the hymns are chosen because they express what we want to say – not just because we like the tunes!

We as members are encouraged to sing all parts of the service. When the choir sings, we should sing with them. When we don’t sing together, we really miss a huge part of what we do on Sunday morning. And we all know that learning new music takes time. From time to time, the choir alone will offer us, and most importantly God, a special piece of music. That is their ministry! The

postlude is the music that concludes the service as people are leaving the church. It is important to socialize at the back of the church so as not to disturb those staying in their seats to listen and reflect on the music.

Hymn of Offertory (sung by all) – this hymn is sung while a collection is being taken up and will be blessed in the **Prayer Over the Gifts** (read by all).

CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

This is the second main part of our service. The word **Eucharist** in Greek means “thanksgiving.” We are reminded in many different ways throughout this part of the service that we are giving thanks, just as Jesus gave thanks at the Last Supper. Essentially, each week we re-enact the time Jesus met with his friends in the Upper Room.

We begin with the Offertory, where we offer up a portion of God’s gifts – not just the money, but also the music we sing, and our hearts.

The Eucharist is made up of four essential acts: The Offertory – when we give the bread and wine; the giving of thanks, which is the prayer over the bread; the breaking of the bread, and finally the Communion when we share the bread and the wine. If you do not wish to receive Communion, but would like to receive a blessing, you simply come before the Presider, and cross your arms over your chest. The blessing will then be given to you and you can respond with the word “Amen”.

Looking at the four acts from the point of view of the Presider, we can say that he or she takes, blesses, breaks and shares.

The congregation is not a passive participant, of course. As it was already mentioned, we present the bread and wine, and of course we receive Communion. And in the middle, we say “Amen” to the Eucharist Prayer, as well as the Lord’s Prayer. As we may know, there are various versions of the Lord’s Prayer, which will be talked about at a later session.

The Eucharist Prayer comes in various versions – we have six to choose from in the Book of Alternative Services. Like the Eucharist as a whole, this prayer has a very ancient history going back to the early church – and even before, since it borrows elements from the prayers of blessing said by the Jewish people at the table.

These different versions always include certain basic elements: giving God thanks and praise, remembering God’s actions in creating and redeeming the world, telling the story of Jesus’ last meal, and asking God to send the Holy Spirit to bless and sanctify both us and the bread and wine.

The prayer is a single prayer, so we shouldn’t change posture in the middle. Some may prefer to kneel, others might think it more appropriate to stand. For the most part, during the BAS service, most people stand. At our 8 a.m. and Book of Common Prayer service, people generally kneel. Neither is wrong.

The Celebration of the Eucharist is not just in the words, but also in the actions. The bread is broken and the bread and wine are shared. We try to reflect in actions what we believe the Eucharist is about. So, for example, the priest faces the congregation because we are a

community celebrating Holy Communion together. And the altar is a table to remind us that this is a shared meal to which we are all invited.

After the Eucharistic Prayer, we speak of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ and of being in Communion with Jesus. There is so much more that could be said about the Eucharist – of course as the central Sacrament of the church. There is a rich history of reflection on the subject.

Priest prays The Eucharistic Prayer

Holy, Holy, Holy (sung or spoken)

The Lord's Prayer p. 211

The Breaking of the Bread p. 213

Lamb of God (sung or spoken)

Hymns during Communion (led by choir but can be sung with them if you wish)

The Prayer after Communion (said together)

Doxology Prayer – Glory to God, **whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen**

THE BLESSING

The last part of the service, the Blessing, is offered by the priest as a sign of God's love as we go out into the world. The Dismissal is not "you must go now" but in the sense of sending us out into the world to be the church in action.

So, to summarize our service, in one hour we will have heard the whole Christian story of Jesus: His coming to the world (celebrated in the Gloria), His life (heard in the readings), His death and resurrection (retold in the Eucharistic Prayer) and in the Dismissal, we relive Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples and they were sent out into the world to spread the good news.

Priest offers announcements

Hymn of Sending (last hymn of the service sung by all)

Dismissal Go in peace to love and serve the Lord (usually said by the lay reader of the day)

Response is: Thanks be to God! Alleluia! (The word "Alleluia" is not said after the Dismissal during Lent)

If you have any questions about our service and why we do what we do, or have other questions, please approach Rev. Kyle – don't be shy or afraid to ask! We will do another instructed service at another time to cover the things we didn't get to. Because we omitted some things does not mean they are any less important.