

# HOLY CROSS

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## ANGLICAN CHURCH

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*“A traditional fellowship committed to worship God, serve others, share the gospel, and grow disciples in the transforming love of Jesus Christ..”*

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“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship,  
to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

Acts 2:42

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO ANGLICAN WORSHIP: A Guide for Newcomers (and those not so new)**

**Welcome to Holy Cross!** Whether you are familiar with Anglican worship, or new to it all, we are so thankful that you have decided to worship with us this morning. We pray that your time with us today will be filled with God’s presence and peace. If this is your first time at Holy Cross, a few words of explanation about our worship service might be helpful. This little brochure is a brief introduction to Anglican “liturgy” (i.e. the way we worship the Lord).

### **Liturgy: A Full Body Experience**

If you are not familiar with “liturgical” worship, one of the first things you will discover is that our worship style involves the whole person—body, mind, and soul! This form of worship is not unique to Anglicans (Christians have been worshiping this way since the ancient church), but as Anglicans we value the way God calls our whole being to join together in our worship of Him. This means that we don’t just sit back and passively listen with our minds; we also use our bodies by kneeling to pray, standing to sing or show honor, bowing or genuflecting to show reverence, crossing ourselves to be reminded of our identity as belonging to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and responding together as a congregation with songs and with spoken words. If you’re not familiar with this form of participatory worship, it may seem baffling at

first, like encountering a foreign culture. If that's the case, I would encourage you to just sit back and observe. Participate to the degree you are comfortable, but don't feel any pressure to "do" or "say" the right thing at the right time. And if you do find yourself "out of sync" with the rest of the congregation, don't worry about it. No one will care! Simply use the service as an opportunity to open yourself to the Lord and allow Him to speak to you through words, music, symbols, and the beauty of the liturgy. The goal is not to intimidate, but to help you draw near to God.

## **The Shape of the Liturgy**

Liturgy is the "language" of Christian worship, best learned through immersion and repetition, but it can also be helpful to get an overview of the service as a guide to what we do. It is helpful to think of the service as divided into two main parts: the **Service of the Word** (containing the "Call of God" and our "Confession of Faith"), and the **Service of the Sacrament** (containing our "Communion with God" and our "Commission into the World"). This pattern follows the early Church who "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). For those who are interested, what follows is a more thorough explanation of the service.

## **PART 1: SERVICE OF THE WORD**

### **"CALL OF GOD"**

#### **The Procession and Opening Acclamation**

The Call of God actually begins with a Processional Hymn (often based on the words of Scripture) where we prepare our hearts for worship. The ministers enter the church behind the cross, and many in the congregation will reverence the cross (bow) as it passes, signaling their respect for Christ's atoning work on the cross. In the priest's opening acclamation, we name and bless the object of our worship, the God of the Christian Faith, revealed in Scripture as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A prayer is usually said by the minister asking God to cleanse our hearts for worship, and then the "Gloria" is sung in praise of God, just as the angels did at the birth of Christ in Luke 2:13-14.

(During Lent, a more somber season, we omit the Gloria and often begin with a "Penitential Service" which includes the recitation of the Decalogue [the Ten Commandments], a confession of sin, and the singing of the "Kyrie" [a simple prayer for mercy sung by Christians since ancient times, based on a variety of biblical texts such as Matthew 15:22 and Luke 18:13]. In the "Penitential Service" we are reminded of our failings and shortcomings before the Lord, but also reminded of His mercy and forgiveness.)

#### **The Collect of the Day (Prayer of the Day)**

A 'Collect' is a prayer that "collects" the intentions of all the people and sums them up by acknowledging God's work or character, asking something of Him based on that truth, and ending with a doxology of praise. This collect sets a theme for the day and week.

#### **The Scripture Lessons**

The Call of God continues with the reading of Holy Scripture from the Old Testament, a psalm, and a New Testament lesson. Our Scripture readings come from a common "lectionary," a schedule of weekly Scripture texts shared by other Christians around the world. This helps us to worship together

with other Christians, even though we are in different places. St. Paul wrote that we should continue in the public reading of the Scriptures (I Timothy 4:13).

### **The Holy Gospel**

The congregation typically stands for the Gospel reading as a sign of honor for the message of God's salvation in Christ. Because Christ came into the world to live among us, the Gospel is read from the midst of the congregation, symbolizing the Incarnation as the center and foundation of our faith (see John 1:1-14 and I Corinthians 3:11). The "little" sign of the cross may be used with the thumb over the forehead, the lips, and the heart, signifying our prayer that the Gospel would fill our minds, be upon our lips, and enter into our hearts.

### **The Sermon**

In the sermon, the priest preaches on the Scripture texts which the congregation just heard. Typically, the sermon focuses on the Gospel reading, but often the Old and New Testament readings are incorporated as well. This is a chance for us to allow the Word of God to move past our heads and into our hearts and lives. As the Apostle Paul said, we need to hear the Gospel explained and illustrated out loud (Romans 10:14).

## **“CONFESSION OF FAITH”**

### **The Nicene Creed**

Having heard the Call of God through His Word and sermon, we now Confess our Faith together using the Nicene Creed. This Creed was produced by the undivided Church in the fourth century, and it is a summary of the “faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). The words “Catholic and Apostolic” in the Creed do not refer to the “Roman Catholic” church but to the “universal” church (which is what “catholic” means), founded on Christ and the teaching of the Apostles.

### **The Prayers of the People**

Paul wrote to Timothy that, “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people...” (I Timothy 2:1); after hearing individual prayer requests from the congregation, we go to God in prayer together, trusting that He cares about our concerns and hears our requests. Many in the congregation will kneel at this point as a sign of humility before God. We also pray for those who have departed this life in faith because together with them we await the final Resurrection of our bodies (I Thessalonians 4:17; 5:10). They rest in Him now in peace, and yet cry out “How long, O Lord?” (Revelation 6:10). As One Body of Christ, we share communion with the faithful on earth and in heaven (I Corinthians 12:12 and Hebrews 12:1). Our prayers remind us of their example of faith and call us to follow it.

### **The Confession of Sin and the Absolution**

If a Confession of Sin has not been said earlier in the service (such as during Lent), we now offer our Confession together for the ways we have sinned against God and our neighbors. We remain kneeling during the Confession as a continued sign of our humility before God. After our Confession, the priest pronounces the absolution, or forgiveness of sins. It is not the priest, however, who is forgiving you; he is simply exercising his Christ-given authority (John 20:22-23) to remind you of God's forgiveness and assuring you that “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9) and that “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

### **The Passing of the Peace**

The passing of the peace is a renewal of our obedience to the command of our Lord in Matthew 5:24, “First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift,” and the admonition of St Paul to the Corinthians, “Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you” (II Corinthians 13:11). It is not necessary that you move around to greet every single person, but you may wish to offer God’s peace to those near you.

## **PART 2: SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT**

### **“COMMUNION WITH GOD”**

#### **The Offering**

The offering of our resources to God by giving to our local parish is a tangible expression of God’s ownership of all things, including our whole selves. Visitors should never feel obligated to give money during the offering, but you may do so if you desire. At this point, the bread and wine used for Communion are also brought forward and placed on the altar. The congregation typically stands and sings the “Doxology” during the offering of the gifts as an expression of our praise and thanksgiving to God for all the blessings of our life.

#### **The Great Thanksgiving**

Holy Communion is sometimes referred to as the Eucharist, a Greek word that means “Thanksgiving.” Our Eucharistic service begins with what is known as the “Sursum Corda” (“lifting of the heart”), a congregational call and response that dates to the earliest Christian liturgies of the second century. After an opening prayer reflecting the season of the year, the congregation sings the “Sanctus,” a prayer of praise that is sung in heaven (even now) by the angels, archangels, and the whole host of heaven (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8; and Matthew 21:9). Bells are often rung at this point as a way to focus our attention and to contribute to the heavenly “music” before the throne of God.

The long prayer that follows (called the “Anaphora” or Eucharistic prayer) comes from some of the most ancient liturgical prayers of the Church, and the congregation typically kneels in humility and reverence at this point. The exact wording of these prayers may vary throughout the year, but the pattern is the same: a recitation of salvation history; an “oblation” or declaration of the continuing power of Christ’s one-time sacrifice for sin; the “words of institution” (the words Jesus gave His disciples when He instituted the sacrament; see I Corinthians 11:23-26); an “invocation” of the Holy Spirit to come upon the bread and wine, making them more than just an ordinary meal but the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ as promised (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; I Corinthians 10:16); and a doxological prayer at the end. You may also notice “little crosses” (✠) throughout the prayer; oftentimes people will cross themselves at those points as a reminder of Christ’s sacrificial death or God’s blessing bestowed upon us.

Notice that all of the preceding words in the Eucharistic prayer are not spoken to the *congregation* but to *God!* The priest is offering to God, on behalf of the whole congregation, a prayer of re-presentation of Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice, in obedience to Christ’s own command in the Gospel, “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

After the Eucharistic prayer is concluded, the congregation sings the prayer taught to us by our Lord (Matthew 6:9-13). The priest then breaks the bread, signifying the breaking of Christ’s body, and the sacrament is administered to the people of God.

#### **Receiving Communion**

While Baptism is the initiation into the Christian life when we are engrafted into Christ's Body and marked as His own forever (I Corinthians 12:13 and Romans 6:3-4), Holy Communion is the on-going sacrament of participation in Christ (I Corinthians 10:16-17), the sustaining provision of God to nourish our faith and to regularly and continually remind us of His mercy and to provide us His grace. All baptized believers are welcomed to receive the sacrament. Simply come forward and stand in line, extending your hands out flat together to receive the bread. You may consume the bread at this time, or wait for the wine. When the assistant comes with the chalice, guide it to your own lips, or dip the bread gently into the wine and place it in your mouth. Many will make the sign of the cross before receiving each element, and after receiving say, "Amen."

Those who are not baptized, or are not receiving communion for some other reason, but would like to receive a blessing by the priest, may indicate so by crossing your arms on your chest, with hands at each shoulder. Unbaptized children are welcomed to receive a blessing as well.

### **Post-Communion**

Having received from our Lord Jesus Christ in Word and Sacrament, we offer a quiet, contemplative hymn reflecting the meaning of the sacrament, and then say a post-communion prayer together, giving thanks for God's great mercy and grace just received.

### **The Blessing**

After this prayer, the priest will offer a blessing (or solemn prayer in Lent). The blessing is rooted in Aaron's blessing in the Old Testament (Numbers 6:22-26). It also reflects Paul's doxologies in his Epistles, most notably Romans 15:13, 33 and Philippians 4:7.

### **"COMMISSION INTO THE WORLD"**

During the closing hymn, the ministers recede to the back of the church, again following the cross. Members of the congregation may bow their heads as the cross passes, signifying (again) our reverence for Christ's saving work on the cross. After a final prayer, the congregation is sent forth into the world as ministers of reconciliation in Christ's name (II Corinthians 5:18).

### **Departing**

As we leave, many members of the congregation will dip their fingers in the small font on the wall and sign themselves with the sign of the cross as a reminder of their baptismal identity in Christ. We may be leaving our worship experience, but we go into the world bearing the light of Christ in us.

As you depart the church, the priest will greet you, and others may introduce themselves as well. We are a friendly congregation and we enjoy having visitors. We hope you will return to worship with us again soon!

\*The information in this booklet was adapted from "An Anglican Sunday Worship Service" by Greg Goebel (used with permission): <http://anglicanpastor.com/an-anglican-sunday-worship-service-2/>