



ABOUT OUR WORSHIP

a guide for the curious

April 2007

introduction

If you come to church regularly – or perhaps did at one time in your life – you will have a general familiarity with our worship. Whatever your tradition (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox) you are likely to know something about the Christian Eucharist (- also known as Holy Communion from the Latin *communio* - "sharing in common", the Lord's Supper and the Mass).

Beyond that general familiarity it might all be rather vague. That's where these notes come in: a brief introduction to Christian worship as understood by the Church of England and with information about our particular approach here at St James's.

→ Over the page you will find an outline of the Eucharist liturgy, and a bit more commentary.

organised worship can be pretty dull...

We couldn't possibly comment. Well, maybe we can. You are right – it *can* be dull. The early church was set ablaze by what it had experienced, and various rituals and gatherings took place to remember the man Jesus and all he said and did. Some degree of organisation followed, and with it certain set forms and practices. This was not just a human attempt to control and define – it also came about because the early church wanted to *protect* something it considered valuable, and so slowly set out common patterns and certain rules, such as who could participate and what was said at central moments such as the consecration of the bread and wine.

the sacraments

There are two sacraments which are termed *dominical* – meaning that their origin is with something Jesus is recorded as saying and doing: **baptism** and **eucharist**.

You can find the accounts of Jesus and baptism in Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22. The 'words of institution' used in the Eucharist are a from a combination of references from the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke and the words of Paul (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Other parts of the church (including the Church of England) also count marriage (but not civil partnerships), ordination, confession and the last rites as *sacraments*. A sacrament is '*an outward and visible sign of an inward, invisible grace*'. By which, the church means that it conveys something special to the recipient, something connected with God's blessing and with the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.

People have argued over these things. If in doubt, simply trust that God wishes to do good things with, for and through you and that by opening yourself in faith and trust, you open yourself to God's action and love.

an outline of the Eucharist

The shape of the Christian Eucharist in the West has changed little since the fourth century.

Hymn & Procession	⇒ The service begins with the singing of a hymn ('introit') during which the symbols of our faith – the Cross and Gospels – are formally brought into the assembly. We turn to face them as a sign of the significance we give them.
Greeting & Welcome	⇒ In addition to the formal greeting ('Grace and peace from God...'), everyone is invited to greet their neighbour. Worship is communal. We are one body.
The Collect For Purity	⇒ A prayer of preparation, said by all. This particular prayer, in slightly varying forms, has been a feature of Anglican prayer books since 1549.
Confession & Absolution	⇒ Before we participate in the gift of the Eucharist, we are invited to make a sober acknowledgement of our need for God's grace and to be honest with ourselves before God. This is followed by the priest pronouncing absolution.
Gloria	⇒ A song of praise to God (omitted in Advent and Lent). <i>Glory to God in the highest (Gloria in Excelsis Deo)</i> . It is based on the song sung by the angels as part of the announcement of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:14). Its <i>joyful!</i>
Collect of the Day	⇒ The Collect (stress on the first syllable) is a prayer which addresses the themes of the day. They may be found in <i>Common Worship</i> .
1st Reading and Psalm	⇒ This first reading is from the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament). After that we are led in the singing of a psalm (psalms are ancient songs of praise and lament), during which the Gospels are carried in procession around the church.
Gospel	⇒ The Gospel is proclaimed. We receive the proclamation of the Gospel standing to show the significance we give it.
Sermon	⇒ The preacher 'serves the Word' and has the task of helping develop our understanding of God in Christ. A sermon is not a lecture, seminar or star turn. On occasions it is followed by the 'roving mic' to allow for shared reflections.
Affirmation Of Faith	⇒ We sometimes use the formal Creeds of the Church, sometimes other variations. All affirm a belief and trust in God as revealed in Christ.
Intercessions	⇒ The intercessor addresses our common prayers to God – simply and sincerely. (We have some guidance notes for intercessors – see website or ask. If you might be willing to join the rota, please let us know).
The Peace	⇒ The peace we believe Christ imparts is symbolically shared amongst us. Whether you actually <i>touch</i> anyone else during this is a question that divides Anglicans and others! 'The peace of the Lord be with you – and also with you'.
Offertory	⇒ The money from the Collection, along with the elements of Bread and Wine, are 'offered' to God, symbolising <i>the offering of our own lives</i> ('All things come from you, and of your own do we give you').
Thanksgiving Over The Gifts	⇒ A prayer thanking God for all the material gifts of this wondrous planet. After this we leave our seats to gather 360° degrees around the altar for this central part of our worship. We are the Body of Christ: one body, one humanity. <i>If standing is difficult please use the benches and chairs around the altar.</i>
Eucharistic Prayer	⇒ Based on an ancient prayer of solemn invocation, calling upon God's Spirit to transform the elements of bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood. We listen to Jesus' words, and believe we may be changed by what we receive.
The Lord's Prayer	⇒ Said by all, uniting all. Also known as the <i>Our Father</i> or <i>Pater noster</i> , it is probably the best known prayer in Christianity.

**Distribution of Communion,
Prayer**

⇒ Both elements of the Sacrament are received with 'Amen'. If you wish to receive a Blessing rather than Communion, please indicate to the priest. After receiving, please return to your seat (unless, on a Sunday when it is offered, you wish to go to the side chapel to receive Laying on of Hands for healing).

Blessing and Dismissal

⇒ The Blessing and Dismissal are given from the West End of the Church; we bless one another into God's future – see below, right.



WHAT ABOUT THE NOTICES?

Oops, we forgot. Notices and information of likely interest to our community are given immediately after the post-communion prayer and before the final hymn. This takes no more than ten minutes but folklore has it that on one occasion they went on until Tuesday (seriously, those who want to give notices are asked to be brief and not to repeat information already printed in the notices sheet).

**some features
about how we
celebrate the
Eucharist here**

We seek to express something of the solemnity, the joy and the intimacy of this liturgy. Here are some examples –

- we generally greet our immediate neighbours at the very beginning
- before the gospel is read, it is carried around part of the church (a way of showing how seriously we take it)
- at the consecration of the bread and wine ('The Great Thanksgiving') we gather around the altar. In this way we show more clearly that we are the gathered 'Body of Christ' and also that although the priest leads the worship, *all of us* are celebrating the mystery and sharing in the offering
- at the Blessing at the end of the service we have established the tradition of resting a hand on a neighbouring shoulder, so blessing one another into the forthcoming week and into God's future.

**something short
about prayer and
the Eucharist**

The whole of the Eucharist should be seen as *an act of prayer*, using words, silences, movement, action and symbol.



PLEASE help create a quiet time before the service starts. If at all possible, stay behind for tea or coffee and talk as much as possible.

**the prayer of the
church; daily
prayer**

Try and pray daily. See our website for suggestions – st-james-piccadilly.org. See also the Church of England's prayer book called *Common Worship*, and the useful book *Celebrating Common Prayer* published by the Anglican Franciscans.

THESE MAY BE OF INTEREST, TOO...

**don't confuse
your alleluias with
your amens...**

Alleluia: is the anglicised form of *hallelujah*, Hebrew for 'praise Jehovah' or 'praise the Lord'. It is a greeting or praise offered to God. In the Eucharist it is used before and after the Gospel is proclaimed (except in Lent). During the season of Easter the liturgy is awash with alleluias, reflecting the joy of the resurrection. **Amen:** from the Hebrew, translated by Luther as 'yes, yes, it shall be so'. It signifies your assent, and should *never* be whimpered but always said with confidence.

vestments

When serving at the Eucharist the clergy wear vestments. Over a cassock and alb (a white garment) – or a ‘cassock/alb’ – the ‘celebrant’ (or ‘president’) wears a chasuble (Latin, ‘little house’) in a colour that matches the liturgical season. Under that is a stole (a long scarf of fabric, a symbol of ordination representing the yoke of Christ).

colours

The Christian year has different seasons and each season (and certain days) have different colours. The **seasons** start with **Advent**, then **Christmas** which is followed by ‘ordinary time’ until we reach **Lent**, **Holy Week** and **Easter** (then more ‘ordinary time’ until we get to Advent again).

Ordinary time is generally Green (vestments and altar frontals). White is used at Christmas, Easter and various Feast Days. Red is used at Pentecost, Palm Sunday, and certain Feasts. Violet/Purple is used in Advent and Lent.

lay singers

Our Lay Singers provide some marvellous music for our services. If you want to join, contact Lil.

clergy

Our four clergy are available to help you, and to try to answer questions you have about the faith, worship and to support you in the sometimes puzzling business of life. They also want to know about members of the community in any kind of need. Call via the Rectory or email them via the website.

website

You will find an extravaganza of information at -
www.st-james-piccadilly.org

other sources

- Mowbrays (at Hatchards 187 Piccadilly, just a moment from the church) has an extensive selection of books on faith and religion
- the Links page on the parish website is a springboard to various delights
- explore the Church of England at www.cofe.anglican.org
- buy the latest copy of our magazine *Piccadilly Press*

These notes have been produced by the clergy team at St James's. Constructive comments are welcome – feedback@st-james-piccadilly.org or to any of the clergy.



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