

Our Worship Services at Third Church

Our Order of Worship

From its beginning, the church has gathered on the first day of the week to worship the Lord. The first day has special significance, since it is the day of Christ's resurrection. It is also the day that God began creation, separating light from darkness. Early Christians saw the resurrection as the beginning of the "new creation" and called the first day of the week "the Lord's Day."

Our worship has a four-part structure: Gathering, The Word, The Lord's Supper and Sending. In the Gathering we assemble in God's name with the Call to Worship, Hymn of Praise, and Confession and Pardon. We proclaim The Word with Scripture Readings, the Sermon, Anthems, Affirmation of Faith, and Prayers of the People. When The Lord's Supper is included we give thanks to God with the Offering, Invitation to the Table, Great Thanksgiving and Lord's Prayer, and the Communion of the People. In the Sending we go in God's name with a hymn and the benediction.



There is broad historical ecumenical consensus on this liturgical pattern. It has its roots in Jewish worship. The pattern is also alluded to in [Luke 24:13-35](#), when the disciples meet the risen Christ on the Road to Emmaus, break bread with Him and return home proclaiming "The Lord has risen indeed!"

How We Prepare for Worship

Christian worship joyfully offers praise and glory to God. The Book of Common Worship says that worship is at the very heart of the church's life. We respond to God's love through corporate* worship, which is the most visible way we express our faith.

Because it is the central act of our congregational life, worship should be approached with reverence, devotion and preparation. John 4:24 tells us "Those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth." The short period of time between arriving at church and the beginning of the worship service offers us an important time to prepare ourselves for worship.

While interacting with friends reminds us that we are part of the body of Christ, a time of quiet meditation before the service is a necessary part of preparing to worship God. It helps us to leave behind the distractions of busy, noisy lives and open ourselves to the presence of God. The prelude sets the atmosphere for worship preparation. Reading through the texts in the bulletin or the words of the hymns helps us focus on the proclamation of the word. A contemplative prayer opens our hearts to respond to God's love.

God of grace, you have given us minds to know you, hearts to love you, and voices to sing your praise. Bless us with a reverent sense of your presence, and fill us with your Spirit, that we may

celebrate your glory and worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

* Corporate, from the Latin *corpus* ("body"), not related to business or commerce.

The Congregation's Role in Worship

The reading, hearing, preaching, and confessing of the Word are central to Christian worship. The pattern of our worship is called the Liturgy, from the Greek *laos* ("people") and *ergon* ("work"), which means "work of the people." Liturgy is a drama in which we all play an important part, and not an activity confined to just the clergy and a select few others. We worship God with our whole being, and not just our minds, by standing, sitting, singing, speaking, tasting, smelling, hearing and seeing.

During every service at Third Presbyterian Church, there are numerous opportunities for the people to participate in worship. Congregational prayers and responses are printed in bold so that we can join our voices in praise, confession, intercession and thanksgiving. Hymns and responses provide a chance to make a joyful noise to the Lord. The Lord's Supper brings us together in communion with the risen Christ.

There are many ways to share in the work of the people during worship. Choir Members provide the primary musical leadership for our worship services. Lay Readers help lead the proclamation of the word. Ushers and Greeters offer welcome and hospitality. Acolytes (youth) light and extinguish the candles, and carry the Bible during processions. Other ways to contribute to the worship experience include serving on the Worship, Music and Arts Committee or the Chancel Care Committee, acting as a candle lighter for Advent worship and evening prayer, or serving as an elder or deacon. If you feel so called to lay leadership at Third Presbyterian Church, please contact one of the ministers today!

The Role of Music and Art in Worship

The purpose of Christian worship is to praise and glorify God. The Presbyterian *Directory for Worship* tells us that the offerings we present in worship should always raise our awareness of God's holiness, majesty and authority. According to The Directory we respond to God's claim upon our lives through "creative expressions in architecture, furnishings, appointments, vestments, music, drama, language, and movement. Artistic expressions should evoke, edify, enhance, and expand worshippers' consciousness of the reality and grace of God.

"Song is a response which engages the whole self in prayer. Song unites the faithful in common prayer wherever they gather for worship... Psalms were created to be sung by the faithful as their response to God. Through the ages and from varied cultures, the church has developed additional musical forms for congregational prayer."

Music in worship should never be entertainment or exhibition. The role of the choir is to lead the congregation in the singing of prayer, and to pray on behalf of the congregation. Organ and instrumental music can also be prayer since words are not necessary to pray. The Directory says, "Music as prayer is to be a worthy offering to God on behalf of the people."

What Do Those Symbols Mean?

Take a moment and look around the sanctuary at Third Church. Our worship space is rich with symbols, many which date back to the first generations of Christians. And each has a special significance that communicates an aspect of our faith. For the most part, the symbolism of the early Church was cloaked in secrecy and understood only by Jesus' followers. After Christianity was officially recognized by Constantine in the 4th Century, symbols of the faith became more widely known and used.



The **Cross** was used as a Christian symbol from the earliest times. However, the crucifix did not appear in use until the 5th century. The **Dove** is a symbol of the Holy Spirit and comes from the Baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16, when the Spirit descended like a dove and came to rest on Christ.

The **Ichthus**, or fish, is an acrostic made up of the first letters of five Greek words that describe the nature of Christ: *Iesous Christos, Theou Huios, Soter*, meaning "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." Christograms are monograms form an abbreviation for the name of Jesus; IHS denotes the first three letters of the Greek name of Jesus, Iota (I) Eta (H) Sigma (S). Another is the **Chi-Rho**, the superimposed Greek letters chi (X) and rho (P), the first two letters of Christ in Greek.

The **Shell** is a traditional symbol for baptism. The droplets represent the waters of baptism, while the shell itself is a sign of pilgrimage, because early pilgrims used sea shells to drink with along their journey to the Holy Land.

The **Triquetra** represents the Trinity, the triune nature of God. A pair of **Keys** symbolizes Peter, who was given the keys to the kingdom by Jesus (Matthew 16:19).

The **Anchor** signifies hope because it was regarded as a symbol of safety (Hebrews 6:19). The **Harp** represents joy in worship and is a symbol of David (I Chronicles 13:8). The **Hammer** symbolizes the Passion of Christ because it was used to nail Jesus to the cross.

You'll see many more symbols in our worship space, and there is an extensive description of Christian symbols on the web: www.christiansymbols.net.