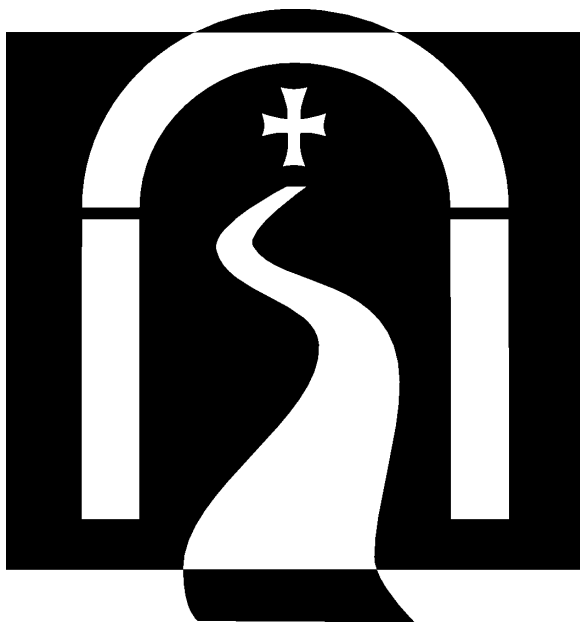


**Into the Heart of Worship:**

*A Lenten Journey*



## *Resurrection Lutheran Church*

Christian worship follows an ancient pattern: Gathering, Word, Meal, Sending. Based on Jewish worship in the synagogue on Sabbath, Christian worship also incorporates the specific good news of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection among us in a dynamic dance between God and God's people. Worship takes place on Sunday: the first day of creation, the day of Jesus' resurrection, the double birthday of light in the world. Our worship enacts, celebrates and deepens our relationship with God: the relationship which God the Father has given in creation, restored in Jesus, and continues to perfect through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as community and individuals. Worship also deepens our relationship to one another and to the whole Christian family throughout the world. Our use of ancient, global traditions in worship connects us to Christians of every time and place.

At the same time, worship is attentive to our particular time and space, the human realities in which God works. Time is organized by the Christian year, which moves through six seasons:

### **Advent**

*"arrival"*

The first four Sundays of the Christian year are a time to prepare for God's arrival in Christ--both at the end of history and in the historical Jesus of Nazareth. The color of the season is pre-dawn blue: the color of hope.

### **Christmas**

*"mission of Christ"*

12 days celebrating the Incarnation: God's arrival in the world in Jesus Christ, whose liturgical color is white (light and joy).

### **Epiphany**

*"revelation"*

Epiphany unveils and celebrates the good news of Christmas which shines for all people. It begins January 6, Three Kings Day, when the Wise Men led by the eastern star find Jesus. Bookended by white Sundays (the Baptism and the Transfiguration of Our Lord), the color of Epiphany is green, the color of growth which characterizes "ordinary time" (when the church is neither especially festive nor penitential).

### **Lent**

*"spring" from "lengthening" (of days)*

40 days (not counting Sundays) of prayer, fasting, penitence (Latin, *to be sorry*), and Christian education preparing for Holy Week: the death and resurrection of Christ into which we are baptized. The color of Lent is purple for penitence.

### **Easter**

*"east" for sunrise*

50 joyful days of celebrating Christ's resurrection (white).

### **Pentecost**

*"the fiftieth day"*

Pentecost (the agricultural Jewish festival of Weeks 50 days after Passover) is the birthday of the Christian church: the day on which the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the first

disciples (Acts 2). The color of the day is the fiery red of the Holy Spirit. The color of this long season is green, marking the growth of the Christian community (spiritually and numerically) which is the gift of the Spirit active among us.

Space is organized as well as time. The baptismal font is front and center at the entrance to the worship space, because baptism is how we enter the Christian community. At the center of our community life together is Holy Communion, so the altar sits at the very center of the room, surrounded on all sides by the faithful (including the saints at rest in our columbarium to the east of the altar). The Word of God which leads us is read and proclaimed from the front of the worship space, although the Gospel about Jesus (the Word made human who lived in our midst) is read from the midst of the assembly. The movement of the visual focus of worship provides leadership for the focus of our minds and hearts. Worship is not performed by the presiding minister or other leaders (such as choir, assisting ministers, etc.); it is the work of the whole community. The word *liturgy* means "work of the people."

## GATHERING

*Emphasis for 1 Lent*

1. **Prelude** The prelude, or pre-service music, begins to establish the mood and theme for Sunday worship. Like all

the music, it is chosen to amplify the Bible readings and/or the season/occasion in the church year.

**2. Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness** The preparation for worship continues with an introspective time of confessing the sins which impede our relationship with God and then receiving the good news that God has forgiven them and removed the impediment. The visual focus of this action is the baptismal font, where God cleanses us of sin and claims us as God's beloved children. As forgiveness is proclaimed by the presiding minister, the congregation is invited to make the sign of the cross in remembrance of their baptism. Worship thus begins with an affirmation of our identity as God's baptized, beloved children.

During the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, a different form of confession is used to underscore the severity of our sin and our responsibility for it. This realization deepens our appreciation of the strength of God's total, unconditional forgiveness in Christ.

**3. Entrance Hymn** Praising God, we celebrate and proclaim in song the good news of our identity in Christ as we enter worship. Like the prelude, the entrance hymn is chosen to set the theme and the tone for the day.

It is often said that "Lutherans sing their theology." The hymns during worship serve three purposes: praising God, teaching Christian truth, and proclaiming God's Word. A rich, wide variety of hymns should be sung to reflect the diversity of people and faith experience (indeed, the breadth of God's love) which marks the Christian community.

4. **Apostolic Greeting** The presiding minister welcomes the assembly to worship with the Trinitarian salutation of Saint Paul from 2 Corinthians 13:13.

5. **Kyrie and Hymn of Praise** The Kyrie (Greek, *Lord*) is a litany of intercession for God's help in our lives and in our world. The Kyrie was introduced to Sunday worship with Communion in Jerusalem in the 4th century. The congregation responds to the cantor's bidding with "*kyrie eleison*"--"Lord, have mercy" as the presiding minister extends her or his arms in the Oran position, which marks the times during worship that the community is collectively at prayer.

The Hymn of Praise follows petition with praise, joining our voices to the music of heaven: the angels singing at Jesus' birth ("*Glory to God in the highest*"--Luke 2) or saints and angels singing around Jesus' throne in glory ("*Worthy is Christ*"--Revelation 5 & 7). Like the word "*Alleluia*" (Hebrew, *Praise the LORD*), it is omitted during the penitential season of Lent and saved for Easter.

6. **Prayer of the Day** Also called the "collect," the prayer of the day "collects" the biblical and seasonal themes of the day into one short, tightly focused prayer that serves to focus congregational attention and prayer, transitioning the congregation from general Gathering to specific Word. Usually it follows this formula: address to God, naming God's past action, current petition based on that action, desired result of the petition, conclusion, Amen. The conclusion names *Jesus Christ our Lord* in ordinary (green)

time and the full Trinity on festival Sundays and during Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter.

## WORD

### *Emphasis for 2 Lent*

7. **First Reading** The first reading is chosen from the Hebrew Scriptures (or, during Easter, the book of Acts) to partner with the Gospel reading. Scripture readings are selected to present the scope of Scripture (to the extent possible) within a three-year cycle, a practice learned from the synagogue. Year A highlights the Gospel of Matthew; year B, Mark; year C, Luke. The Gospel of John is threaded through all three years. The Scripture readings determine the agenda and theme(s) for the day's worship.

8. **Psalm** As both Scripture and song, the Psalm both proclaims God's Word to us and expresses our praise to God. Often written using the Hebrew poetic technique of parallelism (two successive lines paralleling one another), the Psalms--the hymns of ancient Israel--are ideal for dialogical or call-and-response praise shared by worship leaders (such as cantor or choir) and assembly.

9. **Second Reading** The second reading is chosen from a New Testament book that is not one of the four gospels, most often a letter to an early Christian community written or influenced by Saint Paul. It is chosen to match the other readings except during ordinary time, when the second readings progress continuously through particular books.

10. **Gospel** The climactic Gospel ("good news") reading proclaims the good news of God's activity in the life and ministry of Jesus. It is customarily spoken from the midst of the people to enact and celebrate the incarnation: *The Word became flesh and lived among us.* (John 1:14). The gospel reading processes into the midst accompanied by symbols (cross and/or candles) and song (The Gospel Acclamation or "Gradual") to underline its pre-eminence among the readings, just as the Torah (the five books of Moses which begin Hebrew Scripture) is processed and acclaimed when read in the synagogue.

11. **Sermon** The sermon explicates God's biblical Word, explaining some of its meaning and applying it to the current life of the community.

12. **Hymn of the Day** Functioning as a musical collect, the hymn of the day further explicates the biblical text and theme(s) for the day. More so than the other hymns, it is chosen more for its words than for its music.

13. **Creed** An ecumenical creed (from Latin *credo*, "I believe") is spoken to confess out loud (to God, one another, and the world) the faith which characterizes, unifies and shapes us as the church. During ordinary time, the Apostles' Creed, originally a standard statement of belief by those about to be baptized, is said; at other times, the longer, more communal Nicene Creed ("*We believe...*") is used. It is at this

point in the worship service that any baptisms or blessings (such as installing leaders, dedicating worship furnishings, etc.) are usually inserted.

**14. Prayers of the People** The prayers of the people are a congregational response to God's Word, lifting to God the shared corporate concern for the church and the world. "Let us pray for the whole people of God" (an Eastern Orthodox liturgical phrase) calls the congregation to prayer. The prayers include petitions for the church, the world, leaders, persons in need, and the local community. Other specific, spoken petitions are also invited from individuals within the congregation. Because it is communal prayer, worshippers who offer additional petitions should phrase them in the same way, so that their prayers may be shared hospitably by the whole community. The prayers conclude with thanksgiving for saints who have died and a final commendation spoken by the presiding minister.

## MEAL

*Emphasis for 4 Lent*

**15. Greeting of Peace** "Peace be with you" was Jesus' greeting to the disciples following the resurrection (John 20). The sharing of God's peace bridges the Word and the Meal, building the Christian community which is nourished by both. An act of reconciliation, sharing the peace serves as preparation for our offering to God (*"first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift"* - Matthew

5:24) and for God's gift of Holy Communion to us. When the sexes worshiped separately, the peace was shared with a holy kiss. Now it takes a variety of forms, but its intention remains the expression of *shalom*: God's holy peace which makes us whole and one.

**16. Offering** The gifts of individuals are given discreetly, while the collected gifts of the community are brought forward conspicuously. Included among the gifts are money, gifts in kind, and the elements for Holy Communion, which point to the fact that all our gifts to God are first and ultimately God's gifts to us.

**17. Great Thanksgiving** Following the lead of Jewish meal rituals common at the time of Jesus (and probably used at the Last Supper), the Great Thanksgiving (in Greek, *Eucharist*) consists of an opening dialogue, a proper preface, the Sanctus and the Eucharistic prayer.

The dialogue between the presiding minister and the congregation (either sung or said) begins to witness to the special and sacred nature of the meal about to follow. The proper preface praises God with specific reference to the themes ("propers") of the day and leads the congregation to join the "unending hymn" of heaven. That hymn is the **Sanctus** (Latin, *holy*), the text of which comes from Isaiah's vision in the temple (Isaiah 6), John's vision of heaven (Revelation 4), and Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21). During the Sanctus, the presiding minister bows in reverence at the beginning (a human in heaven!) and, when Jesus appears (God on earth!), rises erect and greets "the one who comes in the name of the Lord" with the

sign of the cross. Following the Sanctus, the presiding minister prays the **Eucharistic Prayer** in the Jewish tradition of festively, gratefully telling God the story of God's salvation. Spanning past, present and future, the Eucharistic Prayer includes thanksgiving to the Father, remembrance of the Son (including His words of institution), and invocation of the Holy Spirit.

**18. Lord's Prayer** A foundational prayer of Christianity, the Lord's Prayer is Jesus' response to the disciples when they said, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" (Luke 11:1) followed by a doxology (Greek, *praise words*) added in the 1st century. Addressed to "Our Father," it is a prayer of community, to be said or sung in unison by all worship participants.

**19. Holy Communion** The sacrament of Christ's body and blood is the meal of the Christian community. It is also known as the Eucharist ("thanksgiving"), the Lord's Supper and the Mass (from the Latin words of dismissal). It has many and textured meanings, including a celebration of God's deliverance of Israel at the Passover, a remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice of Himself for us, an invitation to the Spirit to be present and knit our community together in the present, and a sign and foretaste of God's future activity. Communion is at once the poignant Last Supper of Christ, the victory feast of the risen Jesus and the foretaste of the heavenly feast to come. Communion connects Christians of every time and place, dead, alive and yet to be born, scattered throughout the world. Communion urges us toward a day when all God's children are fed, when no one is hungry or forgotten, when all are included at God's open

table. Communion provides us forgiveness of past sins and fuel for future Christian mission in the world.

Communion concludes with a blessing and a **Post-Communion Prayer** of both gratitude and request that the Communion just shared will have lasting effects in our lives.

## SENDING

*Emphasis for 5 Lent*

20. **Benediction**     Dating back to third century practice, the benediction (Latin, *good speech*) is the blessing the presiding minister pronounces upon the community at the conclusion of worship. The form may vary, but a standard version is the blessing spoken by Moses' brother Aaron ("*The Lord bless you and keep you...*") which is recorded in Numbers 6.

21. **Departure Hymn**     This hymn is chosen both to recapitulate the day's worship and to launch the community forward into a week of serving God. (It is often a hymn about mission.) Except in Advent, Lent and unusual circumstances, the departure hymn is usually festive and joyous, delighting in God's love poured forth afresh at Communion.

22. **Dismissal**     This brief exchange wraps up worship with the leader exhorting the community toward mission ("Go in peace, serve the Lord") and the congregation responding in grateful praise ("Thanks be to God.").

23. **Postlude** The postlude provides final musical comment and inspiration as an exclamation point upon the worship service.