



**WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO: A GUIDE TO WORSHIP**  
**AT THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, MAITLAND, FL**

## **Worship Service**

### **Why do we worship?**

Worship is our natural and free response as humans to our Creator. It is a response to the beauty, love, adoration, our deepest fears and sorrow, and our greatest joys. In worship, we unite and are brought together in common action. We worship because, as Alexander Schmemmann describes, it is our initial act of thanksgiving, “of returning the world to God.” Since we are human, worship allows for us to draw nearer to God. Additionally, in worship, we pray and we learn through our prayer, which shapes our belief – as indicated in the Latin phrase, *lex orandi, lex credendi* (“the law of prayer is the law of belief).

### **Why do we come to Church?**

We come to Church to participate in our corporate worship of the Almighty God. We gather to be enriched by the Word of the Lord and the teachings from Scripture, to share in the remembrance of the sacrifice, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and to partake in the grace of the sacrament of Holy Communion. Importantly, the Church is not an end in itself. We come to Church to be transformed and sent out into the world to aid in the restoration of all people to unity with God, participate in the restoration of unity with each other in Christ, and, as the deacon declares in the dismissal, “Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.” In coming to Church, we make present God, the Creator and source of life, and the author of our salvation.

### **Why are there candles on the altar?**

The candles are a symbol of the light of Christ. From John 8.12, we are reminded by the visible flame that Christ is the “light of the world” and from John 1.5, the “light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

### **Why is incense used?**

Incense is sometimes used to set apart and designate the sacred space of worship. It sanctifies and represents the transformation of ordinary space into the holy space. The use of incense in times of worship can be traced to the time of Moses in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Yet, its use is not limited to the past, but current usage in worship shares in the foretaste of the heavenly banquet in which incense is offered (Revelation 8.3). Additionally, incense is the image of, as well as the actual prayers being lifted up to God. In Psalm 141.2, the Psalmist states, “Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,” and in Revelation 5.8, the incense before the Lamb is the “prayers of the saints.” As such, we use it to sanctify and enhance the beauty of the liturgy, as well as out of adoration to Our Lord.

### **Why are vestments worn?**

Vestments are worn for the glory of God. Within the beauty of the liturgy, the vestments worn by clergy in one sense identify the clergy and their role within the service, signifying their special ministries. Yet, the dignified rich fabrics and designs turn our attention towards God, who by grace, works in and through us all and for whom they are offered in glory.

### **How is the Bible used in the service?**

During the service, we hear readings from four passages in Scripture – three lessons (most frequently an Old Testament passage, a New Testament passage, and a passage from one of the four Gospels) and a psalm. Within the Episcopal Church, the readings are arranged according to a lectionary – a three-year cycle of selected passages. Over the course of the three years of Sundays, nearly the entire New Testament and a significant portion of the Old Testament is read. Although the readings from Scripture constitute the majority of how the Bible is used in the service, passages and verses from the Bible are woven into the framework of our liturgy – within the prayers, hymns, and anthems. The Bible becomes not only a source of instruction as

God's Word to us, but it becomes a form of prayer. It is the language we use to respond to God, as well as a form of expression of our needs and God's limitless glory.

### **What are the two parts of the service?**

The service of Holy Eucharist each Sunday is a combination of two parts, the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Sacrament, or Holy Communion. During the liturgy of the Word, we listen to readings from Scripture and learn about God and his work in the world. The liturgy of the Sacrament is the portion of the service where we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and come to receive Communion. At Church of the Good Shepherd, we designate the end of the first part and the beginning of the second part with the exchange of peace, announcements, and beginning of offertory.

### **Participation in Worship**

#### **Why are children encouraged to attend?**

Children are not only welcome to attend, but are highly encouraged. Within the Episcopal Church, children, including infants, can be baptized. In baptism, sponsors of the child vow to "be responsible for seeing that the child is brought up in the Christian faith and life" and to help the "child to grow into the full stature of Christ." As baptized individuals, they are part of the Body of Christ. Part of learning and growing in the knowledge and love of God is through the receiving of the Sacrament of Holy Communion as well as learning in corporate worship from the reading of the Word of God. Even children not yet baptized are able to listen and learn in preparation of renouncing Satan and evil and turning to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in the Sacrament of Baptism.

#### **Why do we kneel?**

Kneeling is a posture of showing reverence and humility. In kneeling, we respond to God in thought, with or without words and in our action acknowledge the holiness of God. At Church of the Good Shepherd, we kneel as our posture of prayer and as our posture for

offering our contrition of sins. Additionally, as kneeling is a posture of displaying honor before kings, we kneel to honor and show obedience to our Lord, our King, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **When do I stand, sit, and kneel?**

Normally, we stand when we praise God and affirm our faith, sit to listen and learn from the reading of Scripture and during the sermon, and kneel to pray and confess our sins. Standing is a position of showing respect and expressing our thanksgiving and adoration. During the service, we stand at the beginning of the service, during hymns and songs of praise, for the reading of the Gospel, during the Creeds, during the exchanging of the peace, while the offerings are presented, the beginning of the Great Thanksgiving, and for the dismissal. Standing is also an appropriate position for praying; although, here at Church of the Good Shepherd, we kneel as a sign of reverence and humility when we pray. During the service, we kneel for the Prayers of the People, to confess our sins against God and our neighbor, for the Eucharistic Prayer, and for the Post Communion prayer. Sitting is a posture for learning and listening to God's Word. During the service, we sit to listen to the readings from Scripture and for the sermon.

### **Why do we cross ourselves?**

While not required, many individuals make the sign of the cross as both a form of prayer of thanksgiving and praise for Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our redemption. Additionally, it is not only a reminder of Christ's sacrifice, but a reminder too that as followers of Jesus Christ, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow him (Luke 9.23).

### **How and when do we cross ourselves?**

To cross ourselves, we draw our index and middle fingers of our right hand to our thumb, touching the fingertips to our forehead, sternum, left and right shoulders. Some individuals dip their fingertips in one of the fonts of holy water located by the doors and cross themselves

when entering and leaving the church as a reminder of their baptism. During the service, individuals make the sign of the cross during mentions of the trinity, such as “In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.” Additionally, when the deacon announces, “The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” individuals make the sign of three smaller crosses with their right thumb – one on their forehead, one on their lips, and one on their heart. If you have questions about when to cross yourself, keep an eye on the priests.

#### **Why do we bow or genuflect?**

We bow as a sign of showing respect, adoration, and reverence to our Lord. We bow at the mention of the name of Jesus Christ and as the processional cross passes by during the procession and recession. Some individuals additionally bow or genuflect (bending the knee) upon entering and leaving the pew, when they approach the altar.

#### **Why is there singing and chanting?**

As with incense, singing and chanting enhances the beauty of the liturgy. It is an expression and feeling of joy out of love, awe, and gratefulness for our Lord. It is a form of prayer of adoration and praise for our Lord and Creator, especially in times when words are insufficient to express ourselves adequately. Additionally, singing has the ability to unite us all, as it is easier to sing than to speak in unison and the sound carries throughout the Church.

#### **Why are there bells?**

Bells are normally used to mark the solemn moments of the service. We ring the bells to signify the beginning of the worship service, during the singing of the Sanctus (“Holy, Holy, Holy”) at the beginning of the Eucharist, the words of Jesus at the Last Supper, and the great Amen at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer.

#### **Why are there moments of silence?**

Silence is a vital aspect of our worship. Silence is an opportunity to offer our own silent prayers or to reflect and meditate on what has been read and taught. Additionally, silence is an opportunity to be still and experience the joy of being in God’s presence; recalling 1 Kings 19.12, when Elijah meets the Lord not in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in the “sound of sheer silence.”

#### **Why is there an offering?**

Everyone, regardless of age, has something to offer. We all are unique in our gifts and as such we use them to the benefit of His kingdom. As part of the service, we take up a collection, called the offering. The offerings are not fees or dues given out of obligation, but represent a sacrifice and are gifts of thanksgiving returned to God from the overflowing of gratitude found within our hearts. The Episcopal Church recommends a starting point of donating 10% of one’s income, called the tithe. It is not a requirement, but the Church gratefully receive any contribution as it assists in the mission and life of the Church. We grow in faith by drawing nearer to Christ. Out of our gratitude for his sacrifice and generosity, our own generosity develops as we turn the focus away from ourselves and towards giving money to that which we are grateful for and to donating to those in need. Contributions to the Church are tax deductible, allow for the continued presence of Good Shepherd as a Church, and assist in the outreach and mission to the community and the world.

#### **Communion**

##### **Why is there Communion every week?**

In understanding why there is Communion every week, it is important to understand what Communion (or the Lord’s Supper or Holy Eucharist) is. Alexander Schmemmann describes the Eucharist as “the entrance of the Church into the joy of its Lord.” Christ instituted Communion for the continual remembrance of His sacrifice, death, and resurrection. In partaking in Communion, we receive and are filled with grace and divine blessings from God, despite our own

unworthiness. We partake in Communion each week (and additionally during Holy Eucharist services throughout the week) to remember and celebrate our redemption in Christ, offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, be united with Christ in his real presence as well as with each other, and share in the foretaste of the heavenly banquet. The celebration of the Holy Eucharist is central in that it is one of the great signs of grace (Sacrament) in the Church; also evidenced by its placement in the middle of the Book of Common Prayer. As such, we enter into joy with our Lord each week with Communion.

### **What happens at Communion?**

During Communion, the gifts of Bread and Wine become for us the sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood. The Body is broken, taken, given, and eaten in Communion, uniting us to Christ in his sacrifice, filling us with grace and divine blessings from God. In Communion, we remember Christ's sacrifice, death, and resurrection, and we partake in the foretaste of the future heavenly banquet. During the service, ushers will indicate the moment appropriate to leave the pew and kneel (or stand if unable to kneel) at the altar railing to receive Communion.

### **Who may receive Communion?**

In the Episcopal Church, Communion is open to all baptized Christians regardless of denomination. Before partaking in communion, we examine ourselves, confessing our sins and repenting, and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

**Church of the Good Shepherd is a congregation of the Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida and the wider Anglican Communion**

### **Information on the Anglican Communion and The Episcopal Church,**

**Our Beliefs, and Our Work, please visit the following websites:**

Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd:

<http://www.goodshepherdmaitland.com/>

The Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida:

<http://www.cfdiocese.org/>

The Episcopal Church: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/>

The Anglican Communion: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/>