

The Order of Worship: A Suggestion for the Modern Era

Since the cultural revolution in the mid-sixties American society has become increasingly pluralistic. Large segments of our culture (higher education, business, entertainment, and the media) have become almost totally secularized. These major changes in our culture have affected our church life which, more and more, takes place in an urban environment. To meet this challenge various “experimental liturgies” have emerged and continue to be rife among us. A positive feature is that some of these activities are able “to reach” people who have had little contact with the gospel. A major danger is that our worship services will reflect the same disintegration that is typical of the general culture as a whole.

The following order of worship incorporates activities in the assembly that are time honored in the historic Christian tradition. Instead of considering these acts as isolated events designed to meet a requirement we propose an order of worship that is a totally connected activity anchored in response to God’s redemptive act for us in the life of Christ. Following the principle that true worship is to recapitulate the obedience of Christ through prayer, song, hearing the Word and feeding at the Table, we prepare to follow each week the same path of service our Savior trod.

1. Invocation of Adoration/Thanksgiving (We stand in the presence of God in recognizing his work in the creation and Exodus; in adoration and penitence as ancient Israel we await the coming of the Holy One.)
2. Hymns of Praise (The objective is to identify ourselves with the angelic choir who hailed the coming of Christ and the redemption he supplied).
3. Reading of Scripture (Reading from the Old Testament and Gospel or Epistle attest to the fact that the promised Word of God has come among us.)
4. Confessions of Sin/Supplications for Forgiveness (As in Isaiah 6 we see who we truly are before God.)
5. Sermon (As Jesus taught when he was with us so the announcement of God’s rule is proclaimed.)
6. Invitation Hymn (As Jesus called his disciples to respond – so today we are called to discipleship.)
7. Intercessory Prayers (We ask on behalf of others.)
8. Communion Hymn (As Jesus went to the garden in anguish so we follow him as he prepared to commit his all.)
9. Communion (Christ is spiritually present as the Crucified One; and through eating the bread and drinking the cup, as one body, we pledge to show commitment and love to others as was normed by the Master.)
10. Contribution (As Jesus went to Jerusalem to offer his life so we present ourselves through our gifts.)
11. Hymn of Celebration (The hymn prepares us to go forth in the power of the resurrection.)
12. Benediction.