

ABOUT OUR WORSHIP

a guide for the curious (April 2008)

introduction

If you come to church regularly—or perhaps did at one time in your life—you may have a general expectation about worship. These notes explain something about Anglican worship, and how we approach it here at St James's.

→ *Below and over the page you will find an outline of our main celebration of the Eucharist*

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 express 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 Eucharist

The Eucharist (Greek for 'thanksgiving') is often known by other names, such as the Mass, Holy Communion or The Lord's Supper. At their last supper together, Jesus broke bread with his friends and told them to do the same to remember him. Meeting to pray and break bread in each others' houses after Easter, the disciples discovered a deep sense of the presence of Christ. Later, the meal evolved into a 'liturgy' ('people's work') – a church service of thanksgiving for and celebration of everything that had come about through Jesus. It became the central act of Christian worship.

Bring your whole self to the liturgy, not just your brain. You can let the details flow over you. Liturgy has the ability to open you up inside and change things.

PART 1: PREPARATION

Hymn & Procession	⇒ The service begins with the singing of a hymn ("introit") during which the symbols of our faith – the Cross and the 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. A Collect (stress on the first syllable) is so called because it is a prayer that gathers together the thoughts and themes of the service.
Prayer of Reconciliation & 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 originates from the early fourth century and is partly based on the song sung by the angels as part of the announcement of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:14). It is joyful!
Collect of the Day	⇒ The Collect is a prayer which addresses the themes of the day. Many of the ones we use are found in <i>Common Worship</i> (the Church of England's prayer book).

PART 2: MINISTRY OF 'THE WORD'

1st Reading and Psalm	⇒ The first reading is from the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) or from the New Testament. After that we are led in the singing of a psalm (psalms are ancient songs of praise and lament), during which the Gospel texts are carried in procession around the church to bring the Gospel in the midst of the people.
Gospel	⇒ The Gospel is "proclaimed". Traditionally the Gospel has been heard standing up to show the significance we give to it.
Sermon	⇒ The preacher has the task of helping to 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 microphone' to allow for shared reflections and responses.
Affirmation Of Faith	⇒ We sometimes use the formal Creeds of the Church, sometimes other variations. All affirm a belief and trust in God revealed in Christ and express communally our shared inheritance of faith.
Intercessions and Thanksgivings	⇒ The intercessor addresses our common prayers to God - simply and sincerely. (We have some guidance notes for intercessors – see the 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. 'The peace of the Lord be with you – and also with you.'
The Gathering	We leave our seats to gather right 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>
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 our own do we give you'). We say a prayer thanking God for all the material gifts of this wondrous planet.
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>

PART 3: MINISTRY OF THE SACRAMENT

Eucharistic Prayer	⇒ Based on an ancient prayer of solemn invocation. 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 Our Father or Pater Noster. At the centre of our liturgy, it is the prayer that expresses Jesus' teaching.
The Breaking of the Bread	The fraction – the ceremonial act of breaking the consecrated bread – sits alongside the other movements of the Eucharist – the taking, the blessing and the sharing.
Distribution of Communion	⇒ Both elements of the Sacrament are received with 'Amen'. If you wish to receive a Blessing rather than Communion, please indicate to the priest. Afterwards please return to your seat (unless, on a Sunday when it is offered, you wish to go to the side chapel to receive the ministry of the Laying on of Hands).



WHAT ABOUT THE NOTICES?

Oops we nearly forgot. Notices highlighting matters of concern to our community are given immediately after the post-communion prayer and before the final hymn. Those who want to give notices are asked that they be brief.

Blessing and Dismissal	⇒ We turn to face the door of the Church; we bless one another as we prepare to leave.
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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:

The Entry Procession

- readers and intercessors taking part in the service are invited to join in.

The welcome

- we generally greet our immediate neighbours at the very beginning.

The gathering

- 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.

The fractions

- Sometimes on Sundays at St James’s the consecrated bread is raised to the four compass points to symbolise four aspects of our brokenness that are in need of healing and transformation. The ‘extended fractions’ express a recognition that the Eucharist has a universality that is outward looking, and places the sacrifice of Christ in a creation-centred context.

Lay Singers

- We aim to use music which is immediately accessible and allow both regulars and visitors to participate fully in the service. The primary role of the Lay Singers is to support congregational singing and they do this from within the congregation.

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.



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 afterwards for tea and coffee.

the prayer of the church; daily prayer

Try to 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...

Don’t confuse your Alleluias with your Amens...

Alleluia: is the anglicised form of the 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 read (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.

The Eucharist - “this is my body, this is my blood”

In the words of the Eucharistic prayer, Jesus says of the bread and wine 'these are my body and my blood'. This comes from accounts in the gospels of the last supper when Jesus gives thanks, breaks the bread and hands it out, inviting his disciples to take it. In Aramaic the words would have been quite simple: "This - my body". In effect, as he takes the bread and breaks it in his hands, he gives it to them saying "This is me". They are invited to take his humanity to themselves. In Aramaic, words like 'flesh' or 'body' were understood as expressing humanity in its entirety - the whole person.

"This is my blood..." Archbishop William Temple wrote that this would have been understood 'figuratively'. Interestingly, the bread started the meal, and the wine came right at the end. The words of Jesus "This is my blood... etc" were said only AFTER everyone had drunk, (which means that they would have had no thought that they were drinking blood). Thus they would already have shared in his life which was being poured out for them.

Vestments

For the Eucharist the clergy wear vestments derived from Sunday best clothes in Byzantium. Over a cassock and alb (a white garment) – or a cassock/alb- the 'celebrant' (or 'president') wears a chasuble 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).

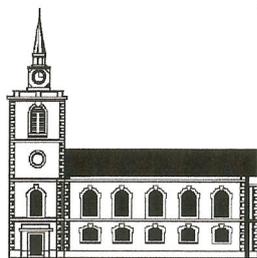
Colours

The church divides the year into different 'seasons' – for example Christmas, Lent and Easter. The colour of the vestments changes to mark each season – white for Christmas and Easter, purple for Lent. A large part of the year is known as 'ordinary time', when the colour is green. (At St. James's some of the green vestments are actually grey, known here as 'urban green'.)

Clergy

Our four clergy are available to explore ideas with you about faith and worship, and to share in the search with you for fulfilling ways to live. 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 on our website

st-james-piccadilly.org

(the Links page on the parish website is a springboard to various delights and you can join our online discussion forum). You may wish to find out more about the Church of England at www.cofe.anglican.org. Don't forget to buy the latest copy of our magazine Piccadilly Press, and Mowbrays (at Hatchards, 187 Piccadilly, just a moment from the church) has an extensive selection of books on faith and religion.

These notes have been produced by the Liturgy Group at St James's.

Constructive comments are welcome – feedback@st-james-piccadilly.org or to any of the clergy.