

*A Special Message to those who are
Worshipping with us for the first time*

If you are visiting our congregation today for the first time, we want you to know how glad we are to have you with us. We also want to take this opportunity to explain our worship service to you, so that you will know what is happening, and why.

Our congregation follows a "liturgical" order of service. This means that there is a basic framework or structure in our worship that remains essentially the same each Sunday. This also means that there are many elements in our worship that change from week to week, according to a pattern that repeats itself every year. This kind of service, which has been used by the historic Christian Church for 2,000 years, provides a proper balance of continuity and variety in each Sunday's service.

The orders of service that we follow are from the front part of the hymnal. For the convenience of worshipers, a service "guide" is printed in the bulletin. The Pastor sings or speaks some of his parts of the service. The parts of the service that are sung or spoken by the congregation always follow the wording as printed in the hymnal. The music for those parts of the service that are sung can also be found in the hymnal. The hymns that are appointed for today's service are also on the hymn board at the front of the church.

God is the primary actor and speaker in worship. In the Liturgy he speaks to us through the Scripture readings, the Sermon and also through the other components of the service that enshrine and convey his dual message of judgment against sin, and forgiveness in Christ. As God speaks to us in these ways, his Word molds and shapes our response, so that we then say back to him the things that he would want us to say. We come to church, not so much to tell God what we think, or to express ourselves to God, but in humility to learn from God, and to be instructed and guided by his Word in how we should call upon him. This is why the prayers and hymns that we use have an objective and "doctrinal" quality about them.

The Lord's Supper is offered every Sunday. We believe that participation in the Lord's Supper should be preceded by a course of instruction in the teachings of Scripture and of our church, concerning this sacrament and other important articles of faith. We also believe that such participation serves as a public testimony of unity in faith among those who are communing together. We therefore do not follow an "open Communion" practice. But even if you are not communing with us today, God's grace is still offered to you in his saving Gospel, as it is proclaimed in the Scripture readings, in the Sermon, and in the hymns.

Gathering before the Lord to hear his Word and to offer him our prayers is a very serious matter. It is not to be done in a frivolous or lighthearted manner, but with reverence and sobriety. When we enter into the Lord's presence in worship, we are, in a sense, transported into a higher realm - a sacred realm of eternal realities. Our use of symbolism and ceremony testifies to our conviction that the worship of almighty God is something special, and unlike anything else we may do in other arenas of life in this world.

We hope and pray that you will be blessed by the ministry of God's Word during your time with us. And we hope that you will come and worship with us again. You will always be most welcome in our midst, in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ!