

## Answers to the questions:

What is worship?

Why do we worship in this way?

What about baptism & communion?



**CHRIST CHURCH**  
**VENTURA**

## PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

### What Is Worship?

There are two ideas to keep in mind as we think about worship. The first is that worship is a meeting between God and His people. Worship is a re-enactment of the Exodus. God gathers His people out of the world and to the heavenly Sinai (Hebrews 12:22). He then comes to dwell in their midst in all His splendor and glory.

The second idea is summarized in the word 'dialogue'. Worship is not a performance at which God is a distant observer. God is present and is an active participant. The rhythm of worship is that of a dialogue in which God speaks and His people respond. These ideas create a sense of expectation for our worship and give shape to the entire experience.

### Why Do We Worship In This Way?

#### Prelude

Normally instrumental music is intended to heighten our sense of anticipation of entering the presence of God in worship.

#### Welcome and Announcements

This is done before the service begins. The pastor greets the worshipers and helps them to focus their attention on church family "business." Having these before worship begins also ensures that worship flows in an uninterrupted manner.

#### Silent Preparation

This time of prayer and contemplation leads worshipers to make the transition from the outside world full of noise and distraction.

#### Choral Introit

This short choral or instrumental prelude to the service focuses on God, His glory, His grace and the joy of worship.

#### Call to Worship

God, through the pastor, summons His people into His presence. The people add their voices in expectant response.

#### Invitatory

Invitation is given to praise God, to which the congregation responds by ascribing glory to the eternal and triune God.

#### Hymn of Praise

This hymn of praise is to be viewed as a procession going up into the heavenly city to meet with God. A procession of a choir singing praise symbolizes this for us.

#### Prayer of Adoration

This first prayer of the service acknowledges who God is as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that we need Him. We call upon Him to show us His mercy. This prayer normally follows a classic pattern: an address to God, acknowledgement of divine attributes, a petition, an application to our lives, and a final doxology praising Christ as the mediator of our prayers.

#### The Affirmation of Faith

The meeting with God has begun and our first act in His presence is to confess our allegiance to Him. Just as Israel reaffirmed her commitment to the one true God, surrounded by the nations, so we, as those who have been gathered from the nations, reaffirm our faith in God who has redeemed us.

#### The Word of God Read

God speaks to His people. Often this is a Psalm, reminiscent of its use in Old Testament worship. It reminds us that all of worship stands under the authority of Scripture.

#### Hymn of Thanks

This is a hymn of gratitude to God for His goodness.

#### Prayers of the People

God has spoken to us. The dialogue continues as we express to God our personal and corporate needs and praises. These prayers are intended to direct us in specific avenues of intercession; worshipers are encouraged both to pray aloud and silently.

#### The Lord's Prayer

This prayer is offered in conclusion to the prayers of the people in confidence that the Lord Jesus will answer our prayers and teach us to pray, as He did with His disciples.

#### Hymn of Glory

This is a hymn of exultation in God for the glory of His grace.

#### The Word of God Read

God speaks again to His people. We rise for this reading to show particular attention, honor and reverence for Scripture.

#### The Prayer of Illumination

This prayer precedes the sermon as a plea that God the Holy Spirit would do in our hearts what Jesus did for the disciples on the road to Emmaus so that "our hearts burn within us" as the

Scripture is explained. It is a request that what God previously inspired He would now illumine.

### **The Sermon**

We hear from God again in the Word of God preached. True preaching is opening and applying God's truth to our lives.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

This prayer asks God to seal to the hearts of His people the truth they have heard.

### **Offering**

This act of worship is a symbol of our response to God's grace. All that we are and all that we have belong to Him and we give freely because we have received freely.

### **Doxology**

We offer these "words of glory" to the triune God through our praise of Him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Prayer of Dedication**

We consecrate of our gifts and our lives to the cause of Christ in response to His goodness and grace as we serve Him in this world.

### **Confession of Sin**

The placement of ourselves in the right attitude by saying what is true, namely, that we have in fact sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we need God's forgiveness.

### **Assurance of Pardon**

The declaration that we, being repentant, are forgiven by God for Christ's sake is made on the basis of His merits alone. This is a reminder to God's people that He loves, forgives, hears and responds to them. Jesus prays for us as our advocate in heaven, who ever lives to make intercession for us.

### **The Great Thanksgiving**

Moving toward the Lord's Table, which has been set, this prayer focuses our gratitude on the redemptive work of Christ in His life, death, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly intercession.

### **The Sanctus**

This song of the angels, to which we join our voices, ascribes glory to God. The text comes from Isaiah 6:3 and Rev. 4:8.

### **Prayer of Consecration**

This prayer asks that God would meet with us at His table, and by the Holy Spirit, remind us of Christ's sufficient work, stir up faith in our hearts, set apart the elements from a common to a holy use, and mediate Christ's presence to us.

### **Words of Institution**

These words of Scripture indicate that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a perpetual ordinance established by Christ.

### **Prayer of Approach**

This prayer acknowledges our unworthiness to come to the Lord's Table and reminds us of our need for mercy through Christ.

### **The Lord's Supper**

The congregation is encouraged to repent of their sins, reflect on the greatness of the Gospel and to rejoice in thanksgiving and celebration of God's mercy as the Sacrament is observed.

### **Prayer of Commitment**

This prayer offers thanks to God for what he has done for us in these holy mysteries, and asks Him for strength to go out into the world to do His will.

### **Benediction**

God pronounces His blessing upon His people and reassures them that He will be with them all their days.

### **Dismissal**

We go into the world with the praise of Christ on our lips, to serve Him and represent His grace to those in need.

### **Postlude**

Joyous, triumphant music played to encourage us as we go into the world to be Christ's servants and witnesses.

## **What About Communion?**

The sacrament of Communion, or the Lord's Supper, is a means of grace for the people of God. All who have trusted in Christ alone for salvation are encouraged to participate. We come to this table because Christ is the Host, and has invited us to come. We come to it with great joy because in doing so we affirm that we are redeemed sinners.

Our sin is great and is not to be minimized. Yet our Savior is greater and He delights to minister to us by His Spirit in this covenant meal that the joy of salvation might be restored to us.

The pastor of the church serves the congregation at the front of the sanctuary as they come forward. The people are to receive the elements by dipping the bread into the cup.

Because of the busyness of common life, we have found our weekly communion services to be times of special and profound ministry. Communion is the covenant meal in which the covenant community celebrates and anticipates its redemption.

Parents are encouraged to come with their covenant children so that the pastor may pray with and for them and their salvation. The sick, discouraged and needy are prayed for as well. What makes this time so tender is the personal attention given to each one who comes.

If you are not a Christian and therefore not in a position to receive communion, you are welcome to come forward to ask the pastor to pray for you, any needs you have, and for your salvation. This manner of serving may be different to you but we encourage your participation and trust that you will enjoy its benefits.

## **What About Baptism?**

Scripture teaches that the children of believing parents are members of the covenant community. We baptize them trusting that everything symbolized in the sacrament is or will become a reality in their lives.

Services, which include infant baptisms, are celebrations as well as times for sober reflection. Parents make vows before God promising to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of Christ.

Congregation members promise to assist the parents in that task. The liturgy for the service reflects the joy and seriousness of the occasion as prayers, Scripture readings, explanatory remarks and a hymn focus upon the sacrament.

The practice of walking with the child into the midst of the congregation reinforces covenantal bond of the sacrament and dramatizes the multi-generational nature of the church.

*For more information on these subjects,  
please contact the pastor of the Christ Church Ojai.*

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