



Gathering

Fact Sheet 2, The Elements of Worship Series



COMMISSION
ON WORSHIP
Lutheran Church of Australia

Worship services begin with a Gathering time, as the people of God come together in His presence and prepare to hear His Word and to receive everything He has for us in worship.

There are a few elements which are usually included during the Gathering:

- Preparation begins with the **Invocation** ('In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit') which acknowledges and calls on God's presence with us and in the service, reminds us of our baptism into God's family, and lets the congregation know they are entering a time of worship. That's why the invocation is sometimes delivered from the font.
- **The Confession of Sins and the Absolution** are usually included. We humbly recall what God has already done for us, confess our sins and ask forgiveness in Jesus' name – and God forgives us. The Confession can also be held after the sermon or just before the preface to Holy Communion. Some services such as matins and vespers do not include the confession and absolution.
- There is usually at least one element of **praise**. This can be in a number of different forms:
 - A **Hymn of Praise** – a song or hymn of praise is almost always included at this stage of the service. You could begin in song, have one after the Confession of Sins and before the Collect, or both.
 - As an alternative (or in addition) to a hymn or song, praise may be expressed through a Scriptural response:
 - An **Introit** is an entrance Psalm, often combined with the Opening Sentence and the Gloria.
 - A **Canticle** is a chanted Scriptural passage, which may include congregational responses.
 - Each week a **Psalm** (or verses from a Psalm) is included in the Readings. The Psalm can be used in the gathering as a song of praise. It can be sung (there are musical settings for many psalms, which you will find in the Music section of service preparation pages), chanted as for the Canticle, or spoken. The reader and the congregation may alternate verses, or a congregational response, called an antiphon, is used after each stanza or section of the Psalm.

There are a lot of extra elements which can be added to this stage of worship.

- **The Processional** – on special occasions or feasts, such as Easter Day and Christmas, it may be appropriate to begin with a procession into the church, often led by a crucifer bearing the cross. This would be followed by the Invocation.
- **Opening Sentence** – a short few lines of scripture sung or spoken by the pastor or lay-leader, sometimes with the congregation responding. There are three general opening sentences, plus one or two choices each week in the propers. You can find each week's propers in the Liturgy and Prayers section of the Worship Planning Page. The Opening Sentence is often used before the Invocation. It can also be used after the greeting and before the Collect (Prayer of the Day), OR after the greeting before the prayer after communion OR before the closing blessing.

- **The Greeting** – “The Lord be with you/And also with you” is a Biblical greeting which assures us of the Lord’s presence with us, especially as we bring our prayers to our Heavenly Father.
- **The Kyrie (Lord Have mercy)** is sometimes used after Confession. It is an ancient cry of beggars and dependents before their Lord, which summarizes all human dependence on God. It can be in Greek (kyrie) or English (Lord), and there are several forms you can choose from.
- **The Gloria/This is the feast** The Gloria is an ancient hymn of praise to the Triune God. “This is the Feast” is a modern compilation of verses from Revelation praising God. They are not used during Lent.
- **The Passing of the Peace** is sometimes used. (“The peace of the Lord be with you. And also with you.”) The people greet each other, especially after Confession and Absolution. It expresses the peace that is ours through the forgiveness Jesus has won for us. Sometimes it is used as a simple greeting between Christians.

Having so many options to choose from may seem a little daunting. The main thing to remember is that the Gathering time is all about God gathering us into worship, and our joyful and thankful response to his grace and love. It prepares us for the first high point of worship, the Word.

Procession and Opening Hymn

- **Sometimes used.** especially for feasts and special occasions.

Invocation

- **Necessary.** A few different formats. May be combined with the Opening Sentence. Brings the people into the presence of the Triune God, covering the whole service, and reminding us of our baptism into God’s family.

Hymn of Praise

- **Almost always included.** This can be in a number of different forms: a hymn or song, a canticle (chanted Bible verses), a Psalm (sung or spoken, with or without antiphon), or an Introit

Confession and Absolution

- **Usually included.** The people humbly recall what God has already done for them, confess their sins and ask forgiveness in Jesus’ name. God forgives them. Can also be held after the sermon or just before the preface to Holy Communion.

Kyrie (Lord Have mercy)

- **Sometimes used.** After Confession. Ancient cry of beggars and dependents before their Lord. Summarises all human dependence on God. Can be in Greek or English, several forms.

Gloria/This is the feast

- **Sometimes used.** Ancient hymn of praise to the Triune God/modern compilation of verses from Revelation praising God. Not used during Lent.

The Greeting

- **Often used.** A special greeting between pastor and congregation, based on Biblical greeting. Can be used several times during the service, mostly before we pray.

Passing of the Peace

- **Sometimes used.** The people greet each other, especially after Confession and Absolution. It strengthens our shared understanding of the peace that Jesus has won for us - that we are all part of the body of Christ.