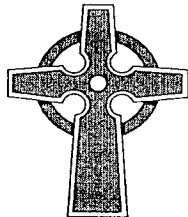

Mt. Vernon Presbyterian Church



Service of Worship

Welcome to Mt. Vernon Presbyterian Church. As many of our members and visitors come from a non-Presbyterian background, we have prepared this commentary on the Sunday worship service. Hopefully it will add to your worship experience with us.

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

Entering the sanctuary from our activities and concerns in the world, we have a time to focus, to gather ourselves, to prepare ourselves for worship. This time is an important period of centering ourselves in readiness for encountering God in worship.

Sounding of the Chimes

The chimes of the 40-rank Austin organ reminds us of the need to focus.

Prelude

After greeting those who are sitting nearby, enjoy the music of the organ or piano. The prelude is more than mere background sound; it is the first act of worship. Music for the prelude is carefully selected to reflect the season of the church year or to relate to the theme of the service. This is a good time for prayer, for silent reflection, for helping your children to look through the bulletin and locate the hymns, scripture readings, etc. For those of you with young children, a brochure for enhancing your child's worship experience is available.

Parish Life

The minister welcomes the congregation and calls to their attention the activities of the church.

Choral Introit

The choir offers a selection to further help people focus their attention on God and God's kingdom.

Greeting and Call to Worship

Often a dialogue between the people and worship leader, we call ourselves together and invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Hymn of Praise

The choir often processes to this hymn, usually a resounding hymn of thanksgiving and praise.

Opening Prayer and/or Prayer of Confession

The worship leader leads the congregation in a prayer of praise, which is coordinated with the church season or worship theme. A Prayer of Confession is usually prayed, whereby the congregation confesses its sin to God and one another, ending with assurance of God's forgiveness.

Gloria

In response to God's forgiveness, this ancient threefold response is sung, wherein praise is given to the God who reveals himself as Father (Creator of the World), Son (Jesus the Messiah), and Holy Spirit (presence of God in our lives).

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

Christians throughout history have placed great emphasis upon the reading and proclamation of scripture. As the central act of worship, the reading and interpreting of Scripture demands great care, from the minister and congregation. For the most part, the Lectionary is followed as the source for scripture lessons. The Lectionary is used by many churches throughout the world and is a table of passages assigned to each Sunday of the year. This gives the service consistency, and ensures that over a period of time the full witness of scripture will be read as part of worship. The Lectionary readings for the following Sunday are printed in each bulletin.

First Lesson

This reading is usually from the Old Testament, that part of the Bible which recalls God's relationship to creation and to God's people, Israel.

Psalter

Coming to us from the worship of ancient Judaism, the psalms have been at the heart of Christian prayer and praise across the centuries. Throughout its history the Reformed tradition has given a special place to singing the Psalms in worship. The middle section of our hymnal contains many Psalms set to music.

Second Lesson or Gospel Lesson

Gospel means "good news," and refers to the first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). If a gospel lesson is not read, a writing from one of the other parts of the New Testament, such as one of the Letters of Paul, is read.

Sermon

After scripture has been read, its message is proclaimed in a sermon or some other form of exposition, such as music or drama. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ is present in the sermon, offering grace and calling for obedience. Printed copies of sermons are available on the stand in the narthex. Taped copies may be obtained by contacting the church office.

The proclamation of God's Word in scripture and sermon invites a response of faith. We respond in song, creeds, prayer, and offering.

Affirmation of Faith

The historic faith of the church both shapes its life and expresses the hope and expectancy that are part of the Christian life. From early in the church's life, an affirmation of faith has been central in corporate worship. The creed used most often in worship here is the ecumenical version of the Apostles' Creed.

Baptism

Most appropriately, baptism is celebrated in response to God's Word read and proclaimed. In Baptism, God claims us and marks us as God's own. The significance of Baptism is not limited to the one being baptized. Those present who have been baptized are reminded of their place in the covenant community. As well, the congregation promises to love and nurture those being baptized.

Prayers of the People

Across the ages the church has prayed for the church universal, the world, all in authority, and those in distress or need. In this prayer, God's presence in the world and in daily life is acknowledged through thanksgiving, intercession, and supplication.

Lord's Prayer

The Prayers of the People is concluded with the prayer Jesus taught.

Offering

The Christian life is marked by the offering of one's self to God to be shaped, empowered, directed, and changed by God. In response to God's grace in Jesus Christ, we offer freely our lives, our gifts, our abilities, and our money, for God's service. The music sung or played while the offering is being collected is itself an offering to God.

Doxology

Doxology means "praise." As the ushers bring the offering plates forward, the congregation sings this joyful song of praise.

The Eucharist

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is regularly celebrated, at least monthly. Like Baptism, the Eucharist makes visible the promises of God. Before church governments were developed, before creeds were formalized, even before the first word of the New Testament was written, the Lord's Supper was firmly fixed at the heart of Christian faith and life.

GOING FORTH IN SERVICE

Having gathered for worship, having heard scripture read and interpreted, having sung God's praise and offered ourselves and our gifts, having prayed for our needs and the needs of the world, we go forth to serve God and neighbor.

Hymn of Commitment

Our voices join in a final hymn as we prepare to go forth. The hymns are chosen by the ministers and musicians to reflect the theme of the service.

Benediction

With arm(s) outstretched, the minister blesses us as we go forth, often utilizing a trinitarian benediction. Assured of God's peace and blessing, we are confident that God goes with us to our daily tasks.

Postlude

The organist plays a final musical offering as the congregation departs. You are invited to enjoy this last act of worship before leaving the sanctuary.

The contents of this pamphlet are drawn from a variety of sources, with the Book of Common Worship (1993 Westminster/John Knox Press) acting as the primary source.