

Liturgical Worship

We often get questions about the way church is done. Many of our visitors are fascinated with liturgical worship and wonder what it is all about.

Here are some frequently asked questions on why we do what we do.

What does Anglican mean?

The word “Anglican” means we trace the beginnings of our church to the Church of England and the Reformation of the 16th Century. The Anglican Church was founded on the Word of God as contained in the Bible and the patterns of worship recorded therein. Many of the traditions that you see in our services today actually go back thousands of years to the very beginnings of the church itself—just after Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. At St. David’s Anglican Church, we blend these ancient traditions with contemporary styles of worship creating a time of relevant and exciting worship with a firm foundation in the Scriptural and traditional history of the church.

Although the Anglican Church began in England, it is a worldwide denomination now. The Anglican Communion (the term used to describe all the Anglicans in the world) has over 70 Million members and is growing more each day. As a part of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), St. David’s Anglican Church is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Why do we read prayers and repeat things a lot?

The words we say as part of our worship services are collectively called “liturgy.” Our liturgy comes from a book called the Texts for Common Prayer. There are many different forms of this book throughout the world, but all of them have their roots in the first Book of Common Prayer written in 1552. You can think of the Texts for Common Prayer as a sort of songbook. Just like a hymnal or songbook helps everyone to worship by singing together, the Texts for Common Prayer allows everyone to worship together in other ways.

These are not just made up words, however. 80% of the Texts for Common Prayer is direct quotes from the Bible, 10% is paraphrases from the Bible, and the last 10% are teachings based on the Bible. In fact, the use of liturgy itself comes directly from the Bible. The words that we say at Communion are the words that Jesus himself used at the Last Supper. In the book of Revelation, we see a glimpse of heaven and everything there saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.” There are many other examples of the use of liturgy in the Bible, so using liturgy in the church helps us to worship in a way patterned after the way people in the Bible worshiped.

The Bible tells us that every person who knows Christ is a part of a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). Because of this fact, in the Anglican Church, the Priest or Deacon *leads* the service, but it is the people who actually *perform* the worship. In fact, the word liturgy means “the work of the people.” We are not a church where one person stands up at the front and does all of the worshiping; everyone who comes is an active participant in the worship of God. Our liturgy is a tool we use to help this happen.

Liturgy also helps us to remember God’s Word and God’s promises. Because we say the same words each week, after a while we have them memorized. Having these words stored in our memory gives us a starting point to our own prayers during the week. It really helps during those times when you just don’t know what to pray or what to say to God. Sometimes saying some of the words and prayers that we have memorized will help us get started.

To summarize, our liturgy is based on the Word of God in the Bible. Do not misunderstand: *The Texts for Common Prayer is not the Bible and should not be seen as such*. The Bible is the God-breathed Word of God; The Texts for Common Prayer is just the tool that we have to help us use the Bible in our worship.

Why does the Pastor dress like that?

In both the Old Testament and the New Testament the leaders of worship have worn special clothes to set them apart. These clothes are worn to show that the ministers are representing someone greater than themselves. Our Pastor wears a white robe (called an alb) to point away from himself and towards Christ. It is white to represent the glory and light of Christ’s resurrection. The colored piece of material on top of the *alb* is called a *stole*. It represents the “yoke” of Christ. Matthew 11:28-30 records Jesus saying, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” The stole serves as a reminder of whom we serve, namely Christ.

The minister also wears special clothing at other times during the week. This is his uniform, just like policemen, firemen, and nurses wear uniforms to designate their special jobs. The special collar that our minister wears symbolizes the neckbands that used to be placed around the necks of slaves in ancient times. This serves to show that he is serving Christ and not himself.

Why is our worship so formal?

We believe that God deserves our best. Just as there are times for formality and informality outside of church, we believe that there are times for both within the church. Sunday is the day we gather together as a group to come before God to worship him in a special way. The formal nature of our worship helps us to set this time apart from other days of the week and realize that we are worshipping a God that deserves all that we have to offer. There are many times throughout the week when informal worship is encouraged; Sundays are just a little different. Being formal does not mean being stuffy or impersonal, however. We have fun here on Sundays and enjoy the fellowship of God

and one another. At the same time, we attempt to show God the respect and awe that he deserves.

Why do we sit, stand, and kneel during the service?

Again, the answer to this question can be found in Scripture. We view worship as something that is to be done with our heart, our soul, our mind, and our bodies. In the Scripture we find that these three positions are used at different times for prayer, praise, and to honor God. Just like when we are talking with our friends and family, our body position effects our communication, the same is true when we communicate with God. Church is not all about comfort, it is about worshiping God. If standing, sitting, and kneeling help us to do that then we should do all three.

What is the Eucharist (or Holy Communion)?

People have written very large books on this subject, so this is just a brief summary. Basically, the Eucharist or Holy Communion is the way that the church follows the commands of Jesus at the Last Supper. When he finished dinner, Jesus blessed bread and wine, gave thanks to God, and gave it to his disciples. He told them “Whenever you do this, do it for the remembrance of me.” Through the Eucharist (which means “thanksgiving”) we give thanks to God for what he did for us and we remember Christ’s sacrifice for us. It is more than just a time to remember what happened 2,000 years ago. We believe that through the Eucharist we actually spiritually take part in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice.

The Eucharist is what we call a Sacrament. A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. In other words, a sacrament is something physical. It is something that we can touch and see but there is a spiritual side to it also that we cannot see or touch. A sacrament helps us to better understand what is going on spiritually, by giving us something that we can understand and take part in physically.

Because we believe that the Eucharist is a special time for those who belong to Christ (Christians) to commune with Christ, the Eucharist is only open to baptized believers in Jesus. The sacrament would not mean much to someone who does not first of all know Christ. Those who are not baptized believers are welcomed and encouraged to come to the front when everyone else does, but we would ask that instead of receiving the bread and the wine if they would cross their arms across their chest. Our Pastor will say a quick blessing over them instead.

As mentioned before, there is so much more to the Eucharist than what can fit here. The Eucharist is a grand mystery of the church and one of the main features of our Sunday worship. The Eucharist helps us to look back to what Christ did on the cross 2,000 years ago, it helps us to look forward to Christ’s return in the future, and it helps us to look out in mission as we proclaim the Gospel through the sacrament.

The main reason that we do the Eucharist is because Jesus told us to. It is not just a symbol, not just a fellowship meal, and not just another part of the service. It is a glorious mystery through which we can respond to what Christ has done for us and relate with him directly. This can be a bit confusing because there is nothing like this in the

world outside the church. St. David's Anglican Church is a comfortable place for you to learn more about these things, and we are confident that you will find beauty, majesty, and power in the Eucharist just as we do.

What is the church calendar?

In order to show that all that we do throughout the year focuses on Christ, the church has arranged a calendar organizing the year around events in the life of Christ. This too can be traced back hundreds of years. This calendar helps us to keep everything we do Christ-centered and also helps us to better understand and experience the events of his life.

Different colors are used to denote each season. The Minster's *stole* and the altar colors reflect the color of the season. The major seasons of the church are:

Advent- this season is the first season in the church year, coming forty days before Christmas. It is a season of expectation of both the birth of Christ as celebrated at Christmas and his coming again someday in the future. The color used is purple or blue, the color of royalty, to represent the coming of the King.

Christmas- this season, in the last part of December, celebrates the birth of Christ. The color is white, symbolizing joy, purity and truth.

Epiphany- The name of this season comes from the Greek word for "appearing." Observed right after Christmas, during this season we remember Christ revealing himself to us. There is a focus on growth during Epiphany, so we use the color green.

Lent- this season is the forty days before Easter. It reminds us of Christ's forty-day temptation in the wilderness where he fasted and prayed in preparation for his ministry. The color used is purple for penitence and expectation.

Easter- During this season we remember Christ's resurrection and all that he did on earth until his ascension. This is the most important season of the church year. White is used here to remind us of the glory of the resurrection and the purity from sin that came through Jesus' sacrifice.

Pentecost- this is the last season of the church year. It begins just after Easter and lasts until we begin a new Advent season in December. In this season Jesus' ministry including his miracles and teachings is emphasized. Green is used to represent the color of living things and God's creation.

Why do we use symbols like candles and the cross?

There are lots of symbols everywhere. Wedding rings symbolize the union between a husband and wife, stop signs keep us from crashing into each other, our flag represents our country, etc. These symbols help to communicate a certain message. Symbols in the church are no different. Having symbols helps us to remember things that we need to remember, keep our focus where it is supposed to be, and point us toward God in our worship. For instance, we use candles on the table at Communion to represent the light of Christ and remind us that Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me

will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (John 8:12).” The cross at the center of the church reminds us of the amazing sacrifice that Jesus made for us and keeps us focused on the fact that our reason for worship is what he did for us on the cross.

Like most of the things that we have talked about already, symbols used in church have their roots deep into Ancient Christianity and even into Old Testament Judaism. When you read both the Old Testament and the New Testament you will see the use of symbols everywhere. The use of symbols in the church again allows us to worship in a way patterned after what we see in the Bible.

How does the Anglican Church differ from the Catholic Church?

We get this question a lot. There are many differences. Much of what we believe is different from the Roman Catholics. There are differences in both worship and theology. For instance, we do not recognize the authority of the Pope as the Catholics do. The Anglican Church has its roots in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. Therefore, we believe the same things as other Protestant denominations including the Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists. Of course, there are some differences between the Anglican Church and these other denominations (that is why there are different denominations), but most of it is the same. Although some of the things that we do in the Anglican Church are more similar to the Catholic Church than some other denominations we are distinct and very different from the Roman Catholic Church.

Do I have to remember all this stuff?

The answer is: No! The most important thing for you to know is that Jesus Christ sacrificed his life on the cross for you and died for your sins, because of which you can ask for forgiveness of your sins and let Christ take control of your life. If you have not accepted Christ as your Savior and Lord you can right now, right here, through prayer. All you have to do is ask for his forgiveness, ask him to take control of your life, and ask him to come into your heart. If this is something that you would like to do, please pray for these things. If you want someone to walk through this with you please talk to Fr. Jose, the Pastor or tell the Usher at the door that you would like to talk to somebody and they will be glad to introduce you to one of our church leaders. If you pray this prayer today, please let us know so that we can celebrate with you and give you tools to help you grow in your faith.

Everything that we do in our worship is to glorify God for this Good News of his Gospel. The Gospel is the most important thing, everything else (the liturgy, the symbols, the clothing, etc.) are just tools to help us in our worship and help us grow in our knowledge and love of Christ. Come to know Christ first and foremost before anything else. Hopefully the elements of our worship will help you do that and they can become elements of your worship too.