

## What Is A Liturgical Worship Service?

What style of worship service do you prefer? Do you prefer a contemporary style of worship service where the order of service follows a basic outline that consists of things such as prayers, Bible readings, a sermon, testimonials, and upbeat songs played by a band? Do you prefer a liturgical style of worship service, which is a structured service that consists of things such as prayers, Bible readings, a sermon, congregational responses, a creed, hymns, and special songs played by an organ and other musical instruments? Or do you prefer something else? Regardless of which style of worship service you prefer, it is important to understand that no one style is better than another. Any form of worship is beneficial as long as the gospel message about Jesus is preached, and the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are administered.

Many Christian churches in the Portage area have contemporary worship services. Some have liturgical worship services, while others have both. At my church, we have liturgical worship services. Since many people know very little or nothing at all about what a liturgical worship service is like, in this column entitled, "Questions About Christianity", we will learn over the next several months what it is about. In this month's article, we will get a simple overview of the liturgy by answering this question, "What is a liturgical worship service?"

The word liturgical or liturgy comes from the Greek word *leitourgia* meaning "public service". It is formed from two words: *laos* (people) and *ergon* (work). It literally means "work of the people". In a liturgical worship service, the minister participates the most. He says many parts of the liturgy, reads Bible lessons, preaches the sermon, and administers baptism and Holy Communion. However, musicians and the congregation participate as well, such as by saying different responses, reciting one of the three Christian Creeds, and singing liturgical songs and hymns.

The liturgical worship services congregations use today slowly developed over thousands of years. Certain parts of the service were first used around 1500 B.C. Other parts were first used several hundred years before Jesus' time, while others were first used after Jesus' ascension into heaven. Around the time of the Middle Ages, more parts were added. At this time, the service was also arranged in a structured format similar to what is in use today. Many of these different parts were modified during the Reformation and continue to be modified by musicians and Christian denominations today.

Even though liturgical worship services vary from one congregation to another, most consist of two major parts called the *Ordinary* and the *Proper*. The *Ordinary* is parts of the worship service that remain the same from week to week. These parts include: Lord, Have Mercy (Latin-*Kyrie*), Glory Be to God on High (Latin-*Gloria in Excelsis*), Creed (Latin-*Credo*), Holy, Holy, Holy (Latin-*Sanctus*), and Lamb of God (Latin-*Agnus Dei*). The *Proper* is a set of lessons, psalms, and prayers that change Sunday by Sunday according to the season in the Church Year. These include: the Prayer of the Day (Latin-*Collect*), First Lesson, Second Lesson, and Gospel Lesson, Psalm of the Day (Latin-*Gradual*), Verse of the Day, hymns, sermon, and Proper Preface.

These parts are all arranged in a structured order in the worship service. The service begins with the congregation confessing their sins to God. After the congregation is assured of their forgiveness, they sing a song of praise to God. Then the congregation says a prayer to ask God to bless them through his Word. Then they hear Bible lessons and a sermon. Either before or after the sermon, the congregation confesses their faith using one of the three Christian Creeds. Then they thank God by giving an offering. After the offering, they say another prayer along with the Lord's Prayer, followed by Holy Communion. After Holy Communion, the congregation sings a song and says a prayer to thank God for receiving Holy Communion. The service ends with a blessing.

Many people think liturgical worship services are very boring. But they do not have to be. Many congregations use different versions of the *Ordinary* along with different musical instruments and choirs to change things up. Even if a congregation does not do this, liturgical worship services are very beneficial because they beautifully preach the gospel of Jesus, which people need to hear to come to faith and to be strengthened in their faith. It also allows all Christians to preach this gospel message to others as they use their different gifts to glorify God.