

WPC Liturgy Order

Call to Worship God speaks, calling his people to come and worship.

Hymn God's people respond by rising to God's call and singing praise in response to the divine call. Congregational singing is often understood as no more than a decoration of the service, a welcome coating of either culture or entertainment, or as a way of achieving audience participation. In still other cases, singing becomes a pedagogical device, designed to serve as a "clincher" of the worship service's theme. Nonetheless, singing is first and foremost of all our response of praise to God's acts.

Confession of Sin Reformed worship included a congregational confession of sin near the beginning of the service, affirming our need to have a clear conscience before worshipping God in Spirit and in truth. The practice is reflected in WPC's liturgy.

Assurance of Pardon God, for Jesus Christ's sake, declares his people forgiven.

Hymn God's people respond with thanksgiving and praise.

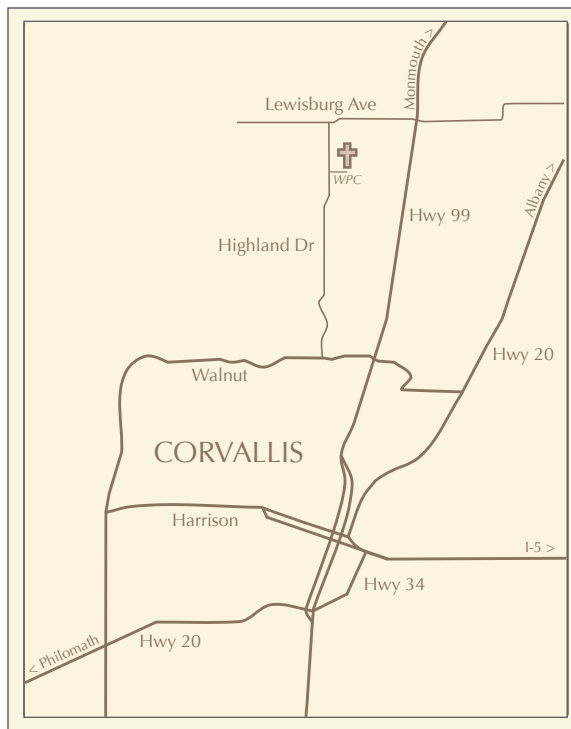
Confession of Faith The worshipers continue to ascribe glory to God by reaffirming the faith verbally.

Hymn A hymn of praise concludes this section

Scripture Reading God speaks to his people through the read Word.

Prayer The pastor speaks on behalf of the congregation in public prayer. The prayer is a response to the Word of God.

Sermon A sermon is genuinely viewed as "God's Word." Calvin's understanding of the Word preached is one of the hallmarks of Reformed liturgy: "God's voice resounds in the mouths and tongues of preachers, so that hearing ministers preach is like hearing God himself speak. God uses the ministry of men to declare openly his will to us by mouth as a sort of delegated work, not by transferring to them his right and honor, but only that through their mouths he may do his own work—just as a workman uses a tool to do his work." In other words, through the sovereign operation of the Holy Spirit the



About WPC

Westminster Presbyterian Church is committed to the evangelical proclamation of the Gospel, rooted in Biblical authority and the historic Christian faith. We are a church body devoted to the cultivation of God-centered thinking, Christ-like character, and a faith expressed in deeds of love and mercy.

WPC is affiliated with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Please join us for morning worship on Sundays at 11am. The worship service is preceded by Sunday School at 9:45am, except during the summer months. We meet again for an evening service at 5pm.

5005 NW HIGHLAND DR
CORVALLIS, OR 97330
OFFICE: 541-753-4504

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

LITURGICAL GUIDE

A Background to Liturgy

The word “liturgy” does not imply a highly formal structure of worship, such as is often supposed. The Greek root for this word simply denotes “acts of worship,” and in this sense, every church has some sort of liturgy, a more or less predictable way of conducting worship by including certain “acts” and omitting others. Liturgical considerations are based on two general principles, namely, elements and arrangement. Every church has to decide on what elements to include and how to arrange them, in order to make liturgy most conducive to the worship of God. However, choices with regards to elements and arrangement can easily obscure the most fundamental concern underlying the question of liturgy: What, after all, is worship?

Under the leadership of the Swiss Reformers, particularly Calvin, the most radical liturgical reform that the Christian church has ever known

was brought about. It is important to retain the proper meaning of “reform.”

The Reformers saw themselves not as reinventing the wheel or beginning over again, but as returning to the liturgy of the early/primitive church. Thus, it is not at all surprising that a juxtaposition of, say, the Geneva liturgy and the liturgy

of Justin Martyr (103–65 AD) shows striking similarities. The early church included two main parts in its liturgy—the service of the Word (reading & preaching) and the service of Holy Communion. Intercessory prayers formed a bridge between the two. All in all, the church services consisted of four basic elements: prayer, singing (praise), the Word (preached and as Sacrament), as well as the giving of offerings, usually at the time of the Supper. This simple division was recovered in the Reformation, at a

time when Roman Catholic services had all but abandoned the preaching of the Word, not to speak of other aggravating distortions, particularly relating to Communion and the exclusive use of Latin, a linguistic medium the common people no longer understood.

To these abuses the Reformers reacted intensely. They recognized that the liturgy in the Roman church placed stress almost exclusively on the Sacrament, whereas the early church had given equal emphasis on Word and Sacrament, and in this order. The order and balance was restored, and is also reflected in WPC’s liturgy. The sequence is crucial, since the Sacrament is meaningless without the definition of the Word, both read and preached. The Word (both read and preached) precedes the Sacrament. As is evident from WPC’s liturgical structure, offerings, singing, and praise are included as well, as they were in the early church and Reformed liturgy.

By far the most salient contribution of Reformed liturgical worship, however, is its theological rationale, and this notion corresponds with the above fundamental question of the nature and meaning of worship. The Reformers understood and practiced worship as a meeting of God and his people. Accordingly, God acts in public worship and the congregation responds in faith through the Holy Spirit. Thus, the defining aspect of Reformed liturgy is that God acts as the initiator and we react as responders. In worship,

God and his people interact in the power of the Spirit.

Included is a representative liturgy of WPC with some further comments and thoughts.



(Continued from outer side)

minister speaks the Word of God in the radical sense that God now speaks through him. In listening to church proclamation we hear God speaking to us.

Offerings Tithing is not a “necessary evil” or the church’s robbing of the innocent congregant. In giving of our material blessings to the work of the ministry, we give ourselves to God in response to his Word which has formative power as to our devotion to God through the Spirit.

Lord’s Supper Reformed theology of the Supper is distinct. Too often, communion is viewed as a mere memorial or a mode of thanksgiving (Zwingli), and in this sense an act of worship of the people. But the primary actor in the Supper is not the believer. In the Supper, God confirms the promises he has made to us in Christ. The promises of the gospel become real in the Sacrament, in that Christ acts “here and now” and we receive. He acts through the Spirit not only in confirming his promise of union with Christ, but he also effectuates it. If we approach the Supper in simple faith, we are spiritually nourished and strengthened, as God himself fulfills inwardly what he depicts outwardly and visibly in the designated elements of bread and wine. The fact that God acts in the Supper is also a strong argument in favor of frequent observance of the Supper, not to speak of correspondence with the early church’s worship, where the two high points, Word and Sacrament, formed the heart of the enduring shape of the liturgy.

Offering Deaconate After having our spiritual needs met, God’s people respond to Christ’s giving of himself to them by an offering for the relief of those in need.

Hymn God’s people praise God.

Benediction The minister puts God’s blessing on the people as the conclusion of the service.

Doxology God’s people ascribe glory to God.