



GRACE CHURCH IN HADDONFIELD
An Episcopal Church in the Diocese of New Jersey
19 Kings Highway East, Haddonfield, New Jersey 08033
(856)429-0007 (856)429-3291(fax)

E-mail: grace.office@verizon.net
Web Site: www.gracehaddon.org

Understanding Our Liturgy



GRACE CHURCH IN HADDONFIELD

UNDERSTANDING OUR LITURGY

WHAT IS LITURGY? - Welcome to the worship of Grace Church! Our services can sometimes be confusing to those who are unfamiliar with our liturgical tradition. The Holy Eucharist is central to us, but represents only one part of our rich heritage. The word “liturgy” comes from the Greek word, “*leitourgous*,” which means “the work of the people.” Perhaps you have asked yourself one of these common questions: “What’s going on?” “Where are we in the service?” “What do I do now?” “Why are we doing this?” Hopefully, this pamphlet will answer some of those questions. Let us know if this helps, and if you have other questions, please speak with the clergy or lay leadership! We want you to be part of our worship and hope you enjoy being with us.

“QUICK, DO THE SHUFFLE!” - There are so many things to shuffle – books, bulletins, inserts – and so little time! We know that this can be, and often is, confusing. However, it permits us to be flexible and draw from a host of sources both modern and ancient. We work hard at Grace Church to make the bulletin as clear as possible. Follow it carefully and you’ll understand much of the service. After a few weeks, the pattern will become clear and you will enter into the rhythm of our services. With a little patience, you will discover the riches of our *Book of Common Prayer* and *Hymnal*. Both of these books reflect our understanding of God and human life. If you need additional help, try marking the pages before the service or ask your neighbor for help.

“TO SIT, KNEEL, OR STAND, THAT IS THE QUESTION” - We move a lot in our worship. It reflects our understanding that liturgy is not “done by” the worship leaders but is an act involving everyone in the room. This expresses our full personal participation with the community at prayer. When you look around the Church, you will see liturgical practices vary greatly among parishioners. Here are some explanations of what we do: **Sitting:** We sit in order to hear Scripture read and to hear the Word of God interpreted in the sermon. We understand it to be a time of instruction. **Standing:** We stand to sing, to offer prayer or praise, the Psalms, and to hear the Gospel proclaimed. In Jesus’ time, it was the posture for prayer among faithful people. It can also be understood during the Eucharistic Prayer as a sign of our having been “raised with Christ.” Ancient councils considered standing to be the mandatory Eucharistic stance during the Easter season. **Kneeling:** We kneel for prayer and confession and recall “bending the knee of the heart.” It is a common posture for prayer. During the Eucharist, kneeling is understood as reverence for the sacrifice that Jesus made on our behalf. We invite you to try both kneeling and standing as appropriate for you at different times.

SINGING - Hymns are chosen as much for their texts as for their tunes. We hope you will follow the text if you are not singing. Look at how the hymns relate to the Scripture of the day or the Church season. Frequently, you will find connections. Baptism encourages us to sing our praises before God. We are obligated to raise our voices and join in the ancient practice of praising God. This gift belongs to all of us, young and old, regardless of our musical gifts (make a joyful noise). In light of what God has done for us, how can we keep from singing? They who sing pray twice! Anglicanism maintains the distinction between congregational singing and choir singing. We enjoy beautiful music well sung in the same way we listen to Scripture and preaching. In it we hope to glimpse God’s glory. Please note that our Hymnal has two sections. The first section contains the service music: canticles; chants and sung parts of the Eucharist. The numbers for these items are prefixed with an “S.” The second section contains 720 hymns listed without the “S.”

GESTURES – Bowing: A simple sign of reverence, bowing is appropriate when one first enters and leaves the sanctuary. People often do this when they enter and leave their pew. It is always addressed toward the altar. It is also appropriate to bow when the processional cross passes on the way in or the way out. Some people also bow at the name of Jesus (Philippians 2:10-11), when his name is mentioned in the Creed and in the Eucharistic Prayer. Finally, servers bow at the altar as a sign of respect. **Making the Sign of the Cross:** There are two versions of this gesture. The first version is made by touching the forehead, body, left shoulder and right shoulder. It is a way of signifying our unity with Christ. It may be used by anyone and is especially appropriate at the following points in the service: at the Opening Acclamation, “Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit”; at the Absolution; during the Eucharistic Prayer, when the Celebrant calls upon God to sanctify or bless us; and at the final blessing, during the words, “Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” The second version of the sign of the cross is used at the reading of the Gospel. A small sign of the cross is made with your thumb on your forehead, your lips and over your heart. It is a way of saying, “May the Gospel of Jesus Christ be in my mind, on my lips and in my heart.” There are other occasions for using this basic gesture depending upon personal preference (for example, before and after receiving Holy Eucharist). If you would like to follow this practice, try doing it when the Celebrant does.

PROCESSIONS - Our regular Sunday procession of worship leaders is a dramatic way of saying that we are starting or ending a service. On certain festival days (All Saints' and Palm Sunday) the processions may include the entire congregation, with prayers, hymns or chants appropriate to the occasion. These processions are distinct acts of worship in the context of our services.

COLORS - We vary the colors of the altar hangings, dossal and clergy vestments to indicate seasons in the Church year. In a way, they point toward the "seasons" of the heart. Colors include: **Purple:** Used in Advent and Lent. It signifies a preparing, penitential heart. In some places, royal blue is used in Advent to identify with Mary and her preparation to give birth to the Savior. Purple is also the color of royalty. **White:** Used at Christmas, Epiphany and Easter seasons, Trinity Sunday, All Saint's Day, Maundy Thursday, weddings and funerals. It signifies the pure, bright light that has come into the world through our Savior. It also points to the dazzling radiance of the risen Christ and remembers those who will be resurrected with him on the last day. **Red:** Used on Pentecost and saints days. It signifies the Passion of Christ, the fire of the Holy Spirit, and the blood of Christ. It also recalls the blood of the martyrs shed because of their faith. **Green:** Used during liturgical seasons that are not focused upon particular events in Jesus' life. It is the "ordinary" or "common" color that signifies life, growth and eternity. **Black:** Used only on Good Friday ("good" being another way of saying "holy"). It signifies the death of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and his ultimate sacrifice to save us.

VESTMENTS - Worship leaders wear liturgical vestments. They are there to help us experience the liturgy as being something important and different from our day-to-day existence. Their intent is to "neutralize" our appearance so as to help us focus upon worship rather than "who's wearing what today."

SILENCE - The silences in our service are intended to provide a time of contemplative listening and/or prayer. They are there in response to a world that would always have us doing things and being busy. Silence is a way of saying that God's time is important and not to be rushed. We invite you to honor silence and find peace and understanding.

THE PEACE - The peace is not a casual moment in the liturgy, but a joyful pause in the service. It is not just about saying "Good morning!" to your neighbor or about exchanging small talk. The peace is part of preparing to receive communion with a free heart. It is an act connected with the spiritual call to set aside our grievances with others and come to the Lord's Table at peace with one another (Matthew 5:23-24). We should consider, when appropriate, taking a specific conciliatory action with those with whom

we have a grievance. This can be done before coming to Church so that the gesture can be a truer expression of one's change of heart. Saying "Peace be with you" instead of "Good morning" can also be a way of our calling upon each other to make amends where amends need to be made.

HOLY COMMUNION - The Holy Eucharist is the central act of our worship on Sunday mornings. It is both an act of participating in the forgiveness and reconciling work of Jesus Christ and receiving spiritual nourishment. Eucharist seeks to empower us to be reconcilers in our world. Preparing for Communion, as mentioned in "The Peace", helps the Sacrament to become a life-changing force in a person's life. Holy Communion is a moment of comfort and of accountability. We understand Communion to be an expression of our baptismal covenant and is therefore open to all baptized Christians regardless of age or denomination. Practically speaking, when you come forward to receive Communion, place one of your hands on top of the other, palms up, to receive the bread. When the Lay Eucharistic Minister (LEM) offers you the chalice, you may reach up to the foot of the cup to help guide it. You may choose to receive by intinction (bread dipped in the wine), but please allow the LEM to do it for you. If you wish to receive only the bread but not the wine, cross your arms over your chest and the LEM will know not to offer you the cup. After the priest, deacon or LEM says the words of administration to you, it is appropriate to answer, "Amen." Please wait till the person after you receives before you leave the communion rail to return to your seat. If you have not been baptized, we invite you to come forward with the community for a blessing. Indicate that you seek this blessing to the clergy by crossing your arms across your chest. After the service, we invite you to speak to the clergy about the new work of faith begun in you and about the process of being baptized into the community of Christ's disciples and living out your faith.

OCCASIONAL THINGS – Incense: On high holy days (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost) we use incense to heighten the festivity or solemnity of the occasion (Psalm 141:2, "Let my prayer be set forth in your sight as incense"). It adds a sensory dimension to our liturgy and can be thought of as our prayers rising heavenward. **Asperges:** On baptismal feasts (The Baptism of Our Lord, The Easter Vigil, Pentecost, All Saints, the Bishop's visitation) following the baptism(s), the Celebrant sprinkles water from the font upon the congregation as a reminder of our own baptisms. The word "asperges" comes from the translation of Psalm 51:7 "wash me."

CONCLUSION - The Episcopal Church is very liturgical. We celebrate our love for God in Jesus Christ through rituals that involve everyone. They are grounded in the 2,000-year sweep of Christian experience and witness that speaks to the heart of today's needs. We love movement, sound, visual beauty, and the use of senses (taste, touch, fragrance) in speaking of God and our community. The rhythm and cadence of language, both modern and ancient, carries our prayers, hopes, sorrows, joys and promises. However, it is most important for us to honor the imperative of love by sharing Christ's meal of reconciliation. This is more important than being "right" in doctrine or doing liturgy "correctly." We hope our liturgy will enrich, inform and enliven you and your relationship with God.