

To Do:

- Place a sticky note in the lectionary book asking the first reader to wait until after the narrator’s description before beginning to read.
- Place sticky notes in the presider’s books to remind where to pause.

Printed:

<p>About the Vestments</p> <p>The special clothes worn by those serving in an Episcopal liturgy harken back to formal wear from the late Roman Empire – the time and place Christianity took root. The alb, the white robe, symbolizes purity. It is the garment of the baptized, reflecting the fact that every baptized believer is worthy to stand before God and serve at God’s altar.</p> <p>The stole is a mark of office used by clergy on sacramental occasions. Deacons wear the stole diagonally, over the left shoulder; priests wear them either hanging straight, or crossed at the waist. Stoles come in the various colors—white, red, green, blue, and purple – to match the liturgical season.</p> <p>In addition to people, our furniture is dressed in liturgical colors and prepared for the meal we are about to serve. A Chalice (cup), Paten (plate), Linens (for cleaning up) are set out, along with hosts (wafers made from wheat and water: these do not leave as many crumbs as conventional bread) and wine (port is often preferred for its high alcohol content and sweet taste).</p>	<p>Take</p> <p>Thank</p> <p>Break</p> <p>Give</p>
--	---

The first narration happens before the procession. The presider will offer a welcome and introduce the Instructed Eucharist, then look to the narrator to begin.

After the presider's welcome and introduction of the Instructed Eucharist.

Narrator: **The Gathering**

We Gather In God's Name

Typically, when Episcopalians gather for public worship on a Sunday, we have a service of Communion, also known as the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. We do this because this is the way Christians have worshiped since the earliest days of the Church. When Jesus instituted the first Eucharist at the Last Supper, he commanded all of his followers to continue the practice. It is the clearest, strongest way we know to tell the story of Jesus' death and resurrection and to maintain our bond with him and with one another.

The Eucharistic service is a drama with two main acts: The Liturgy of the Word and The Liturgy of the Table. The word "liturgy" comes from the Greek and means "the work of the people." We engage the Eucharist not as a group of spectators watching a group of performers, but as the people of God acting together, each with our appointed part to play.

Our service begins with the Entrance Rite. Today we begin that rite with an OPENING ACCLAMATION. The celebrant and the people participate in a dialog which proclaims our reverence and love of God, and which invokes God's presence in a special and intentional way.

The COLLECT FOR PURITY from ancient times was one of the prayers said privately by the priest. But it is appropriate to be heard by the whole congregation as a way of asking God's grace in preparation for worship, and so since 1549 it has been said aloud as a Collect. A "Collect" is simply a prayer said by the presider to "collect" the thoughts and prayers of all; at the end of a Collect, all present join in the "Amen" to make the prayer their own.

Those serving at the altar then walk in PROCESSION up to the altar. They bow and all take their places. This procession symbolizes our Christian journey of faith.

Following the Collect for Purity will be a hymn of praise to our God.

Finally, the COLLECT OF THE DAY marks the transition from the opening to the Liturgy of the Word. The Collect of the Day is a prayer specific to the day: each one is said only once per year. Often the Collect will provide a focal point for the Scripture readings and for any special observances proper to the day.

pause until after the Collect of the Day

After the Collect of the Day.

Narrator: **We Hear God's Word**

We Hear God's Word

In this part of the Liturgy of the Word we sit in order to listen to LESSONS, readings from the Bible. Silent reading was considered very strange at the time the Church first formed. The Scriptures were meant to be read aloud and heard with the ear.

The lessons we use are specified by a fixed pattern of scripture readings, called a lectionary, which allows us to hear most of the Bible within a three-year period. The Revised Common Lectionary is used by the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, and most mainstream Protestant churches. This lectionary makes sure that nothing important is omitted, and that preachers don't overlook some passages in favor of others.

It has long been a tradition among Christians that lay people – those who have not been ordained as clergy – read the first and second lessons. The first lesson is generally taken from the Hebrew Bible and the second lesson from the Epistles, the letters of the New Testament.

Between the two lessons all participate in singing or saying the psalm together. The Psalms are the ancient hymnal of the Jews and capture all of the emotional ups and downs of life.

The third reading is always from one of the Gospels. The Gospel is often read from the midst of the congregation, symbolizing the incarnation of Jesus, God in the flesh living among us. Christians have long given special importance to the gospels because that is where we hear the words and actions of Jesus. We express this importance by having an ordained person do this reading, and by standing when we listen to it.

It is our custom to stand, sit, or kneel at different parts of the service. Most of these postures are optional, but we find them useful in helping to worship with our bodies and not just our minds. Typically, we follow the biblical Jewish and Christian traditions of:

standing to praise God and to pray,
sitting in order to listen,
and **kneeling** in order to express penitence or devotion.

If you have a physical condition that makes any of these difficult, you are always welcome to adopt a more comfortable position. You may also notice that some people engage in various acts of personal devotion, such as bowing or making the sign of the cross. These also are optional, used by some in order to enhance their individual experience of worship.

THE SERMON is usually based on at least one of the scripture readings and is meant to be the connecting tissue between the ancient words of scripture and the presence of Christ in the world today. The sermon is intended to provoke a response in us: it is an invitation to appropriate the realities of the Gospel into our own lives. We maintain a prolonged time of silence after the sermon to reflect on how the sermon connects to us and how we might choose to respond to it.

Take a seat until after the homily; allow approximately 40 seconds of silence after the homily before continuing.

Approximately 40 seconds after the end of the homily, return to the pulpit and continue narration.

Narrator: **We Respond in Faith**

We Respond in Faith

THE CREED is an ancient statement of the corporate faith of the Christian Church and has been in use in a form much like the one we know since the year 381 CE (Common Era). It has been and is used by the whole church—Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant. We begin our recitation of the Creed by saying “We believe,” rather than “I believe,” because what we are doing in the Creed is joining our common faith with the faith of the church across the world today, and over the centuries. If you don’t personally believe every particular idea in the Creed, that’s OK. Someone else does! Together, with the church around the world, past, present, and future, “We believe.”

In THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE we ask God’s blessing and help for the church, the world, ourselves, and each other. In the prayers of the people, we bring our own specific concerns before God.

Before we come to God’s table, and in faithful response to all we have done so far, we acknowledge our need for God’s grace and forgiveness by CONFESSING OUR SINS. After the confession, the presider declares God’s forgiveness to penitent sinners. This is a general confession, appropriate to a public liturgy. Sometimes a general, corporate confession is not what our souls need, and a general assurance of pardon does not bring healing. Individual confession with a priest is available during penitential seasons and any time by appointment. While many Episcopalians never make a spoken, or “auricular,” confession, many others do, and such confession is a venerable part of our tradition. It was the English Queen Elizabeth I who said of individual confession, “All may; none must; some should.”

The presider exchanges THE PEACE with the congregation, and then the people exchange the peace among themselves. The peace is not a half-time break or an early coffee hour. It is a liturgical action of response to the Gospel and the absolution, and preparation for the Lord’s Table. In the early Church, people greeted each other with the Kiss of Peace. Today in the Episcopal Church, we greet each other with an embrace or a handshake, and exchange words of peace. We are to approach God’s table in love and charity with one another.

Pause until after the announcements. You may wish to resume your seat.

After announcements, with any luck, the presider will pause and look to you before the offertory sentence!

Narrator: **We Offer Ourselves To God**

We Offer Ourselves To God

The second part of the service is The Liturgy of the Table. We begin the Liturgy of the Table, or Holy Communion, with an OFFERTORY SENTENCE. This is a line from scripture that helps make the transition from the practical, behavioral nature of the liturgy of the word to the mystical, ethereal nature of the liturgy of the table.

We call what we do at the altar “Eucharist.” The word “Eucharist” means “to give thanks.” There are four essential actions that take place, in imitation of Christ, in every version of the Eucharist. These actions together form the “shape of the Eucharist.” They are:

Take, Thank, Break, Give

Take: The bread and wine are taken.

Thank: There is a prayer of thanksgiving.

Break: The consecrated bread is broken.

Give: The bread and the wine are given to the people.

Take: The bread, wine, and money carried forward during the OFFERTORY HYMN symbolize that it is our work, our abundance, and our common life that are placed on the altar to be sanctified and redeemed by God. Up until that time, these items are no more special than any other bread and wine. Part of the wonder of the Eucharist is that God enters into the everyday things of the world when they are dedicated to God, just as God enters into the everyday people of the world when we are dedicated to God.

The preparation of the bread and wine on the altar is one of the traditional roles of the deacon. Either leavened or unleavened bread may be used. We use actual wine just as Jesus did. A little water is added as it would be to table wine in Jesus’ time: this wine is meant not to make us drunk, but to nourish us. We use linen cloths on the altar in ways that are very similar to the way in which you might use linen or other special napkins and tablecloths at a fancy dinner party. In fact, both scripture and Christian tradition often compare communion to a great heavenly banquet or feast of all the saints.

The Eucharist is only ever presided over by a priest or Bishop. Our Bishop, Bishop Stokes, is the pastor of St. Thomas’ and of every Episcopal Church in the Diocese of New Jersey. He was consecrated to stand in the line of Bishops that reaches back to the very apostles who were with Jesus in an upper room in Jerusalem, sharing that last supper. Our Bishop is a symbol and token of our unity with all Christian believers around the world and through all time. A priest is one who has been ordained and authorized by a Bishop to lead the celebration of the Eucharist on that Bishop’s behalf.

Pause until all is quiet and ready for the Sursum Corda

Presider is standing at the altar, altar party is still, presider looks up at narrator before the *Sursum Corda*.

Narrator: **The Great Thanksgiving**

Take, Thank, Break, Give

Thank: Now the table is set. THE GREAT THANKSGIVING begins with the ancient greeting, “The Lord be with you,” and continues after the response with the words “Lift up your hearts”—in Latin, *sursum corda*. The *sursum corda* has been the joyous beginning of Eucharistic prayers since the third century, and serves to remind us that everything that follows is offered as a thanksgiving to God. The presider says most of the prayer with his or her hands in the “*orans*” (“prayer”) position: outstretched and uplifted. This is considered the most ancient form of prayer. It connotes an openness and acceptance toward God. It is in no sense limited to priests, nor to the Eucharist.

During the Eucharistic prayer, the presider’s eyes are always on what is happening or being said behind the altar: the presider is not performing for or engaging with the congregation, but leading the congregation in our common prayer.

The SANCTUS is the song of the angels and archangels, “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might...”, adopted from the prophet’s vision of God on God’s heavenly throne in Isaiah chapter six. The BENEDICTUS is the acclamation immediately following, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” The clergy and some others bow during the Sanctus because the angels in Isaiah were said to have covered their faces in the presence of the Lord—a practice our bow reflects.

After the Sanctus, the prayer book rubrics explain that “The people stand or kneel.” Either posture is appropriate, though the Prayer Book tends to list the preferred option first when it provides choices.

When we come to the words (“on the night that he was handed over to suffering and death...”), the presider touches the bread and the wine. A sacrament always involves the grace of God, and it always also involves a thing, a created something: bread and wine at Eucharist, water at baptism. Sacraments are a place where the spirit of God touches us in our physical being. The priest touches the bread and the wine as a sign that God’s spiritual presence is poured into these real, tangible objects.

The Great Thanksgiving concludes with the Great Amen, printed in all capital letters in your prayer book. This is the Amen said by all the people to declare the whole prayer their own. In the Episcopal Church, a priest is not able celebrate the Eucharist alone. It is the work of the people, not just a priest, that makes Eucharist.

Remain in place; pause until after the *Great Amen*.

After the *Great Amen*.

Narrator: **We Receive the Gift of God**

After the Great Amen, comes THE LORD’S PRAYER. This is the prayer Jesus gave us personally, and it sums up in full our life with God. This prayer is punctuated with the priest breaking the bread.

Take, Thank, Break, Give

Break: “FRACTION,” like “fracture,” simply means “break.” Breaking the bread is functional: bread is broken so that it may be shared. But this is no longer only bread; it is also now the Body of Christ, and the breaking of this bread reminds us of the reality of Christ’s human body, broken on the cross.

Take, Thank, Break, Give

Give: COMMUNION is now shared with the congregation. Through all of our prayers, we believe that God has now transformed the bread and wine so that Christ is truly present in them. Together they are an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace – the traditional definition of a sacrament. Everyone in attendance is encouraged and invited to receive communion by coming forward to the altar.

It is an ancient Christian practice to drink communion wine from a common cup. Though there are no recorded cases of any illness ever being spread through the common cup, we recognize that some may prefer not to drink from it for various reasons. You are welcome to receive the bread only (and not the wine), or to have the minister dip your bread in the chalice and then place it on your tongue. This is called intinction. After you have received communion, you may return to your seat for quiet prayer and contemplation.

Come receive communion along with the first group. Then you may take your seat. Return to the pulpit as communion is being cleaned up.

After communion has been cleaned up and the altar part is still.

Narrator: **The Sending Out**

Following communion the altar is cleared in much the same way that you might clear your own table after dinner, removing the dishes and cloths and storing any leftovers. Leftover consecrated bread and wine are reverently stored away in the ambry and are available to carry to those who have not been able to attend the service. A lighted candle by the ambry signifies that there is reserved sacrament inside.

The presider then leads everyone in saying the POST-COMMUNION PRAYER. This prayer thanks God for the blessing of the Eucharist and acknowledges the life and power it gives us to go out and be co-creators with God in the Kingdom of God.

[--- Omit in 2019:

Following the postcommunion prayer a Eucharistic Visitor receives a traveling communion kit containing the consecrated bread and wine to share with our shut-ins and the ill. The symbolism of carrying the elements from the altar shows that when the community cannot fully gather the gathered community will come to us. After the presider offers a blessing, a hymn and a closing procession follow.

---]

Our liturgy concludes with a BLESSING, a PROCESSION out, and a DISMISSAL by our Deacon. The dismissal is a call for us to go as Christ's servants out into the world. It reminds us that the purpose of worship is not simply to encourage and build ourselves up, but for all of us to be empowered and sent forth as ministers of Christ.

Please remain in place for the end of the service. After the procession has passed, you may take your seat again until the dismissal. Thank you for your service today!

Portions of this text adapted from Epiphany Parish, Seattle WA.

Adapted and edited by Todd Foster+. Permission to use and adapt is freely granted to others.

Sermon for 2018: Proper 20-B, Mark 9.30-37:

Our Gospel text today speaks of the disciples arguing about who among them was the greatest or most important in Jesus' little community.

Jesus responded by taking a child and explaining that ambition and drive in the Kingdom of God involves welcoming others.

One of the reasons I love the Episcopal Church is that the Liturgy speaks to me. Episcopal worship is structured, it is beautiful, and it is freighted with centuries and millennia of meaning. Episcopal worship uses The Book of Common Prayer as its primary source. The texts and patterns of worship in the prayer book are derived from the earliest surviving texts of ancient Christian worship, updated and expanded as times and circumstances have evolved. The common words of the prayer book express our most deeply held beliefs, keep us connected to the timeless elements of Christian tradition, and allow us to participate as more than just listeners.

Using the Prayer Book can be confusing at first. This is why many parishes print bulletins with the full-text inside every week. But learning to use the prayer book can be deeply empowering for an individual's life of prayer. Using the Prayer book also provides opportunity for us to welcome the visitors among us in a more personal way. If you see someone around you who seems to have lost their place in the service, consider trading prayer books with them occasionally, handing them a book already caught up to the current page and providing a helpful pointer to where we are in the text.

As you welcome another, you are welcoming Jesus into our midst. As you welcome Jesus, you will inevitably encounter God. And that, I believe, is what we are all here for.

Sermon for 2019: Proper 23-C, Luke 17.11–19:

In our Gospel today, ten lepers ask Jesus to heal them – and he does! He sends them off to practice the pattern of worship that has been established to verify and proclaim their new status as healthy and able to participate in society. In obedience the ten lepers go to do exactly that. They are seeking a kind of completeness that is promised by the law and the practices of the faith community.

But one of them, noticing that he really has been healed, gets distracted. He forgets about the requirements of the law. He forgets about the practices of the faith community. Or maybe he realizes that, as a mixed-race minority, the priests aren't very likely to treat him well anyway. And perhaps that's OK with him, because he wants something greater than a religious practice and the blessing of a priest. He wants to know Jesus. He wants to offer his thanks to Jesus in person, to clasp Jesus' feet in worship. The prejudices and inadequacies of the religious system push this man to cling to Jesus instead.

One of the reasons I love the Episcopal Church is that the Liturgy speaks to me. Episcopal worship is structured, it is beautiful, and it is freighted with centuries and millennia of meaning. Episcopal worship uses The Book of Common Prayer as its primary source. The texts and patterns of worship in the prayer book are derived from the earliest surviving texts of ancient Christian worship, which themselves were adapted from Jewish and other sources. The words and practices have been updated and expanded as times and circumstances have evolved. The common words of the prayer book express our most deeply held beliefs, keep us connected to the timeless elements of Christian tradition, and allow us to participate as more than just listeners.

But like the one leper who knew what to expect from his own religious environment, we know that the Prayer Book is not the be-all and end-all of Christianity. Being an Episcopalian is not the ultimate goal. The Prayer Book and the other particular features of the Episcopal Church are meant to be guides leading us toward Jesus, invitations to be connected to God directly and personally.

We are imperfect believers, imperfect worshipers. But we do the best we can because in doing so we honor God, and we honor the image of God we see in one another. We act with solemnity, with care and preparation, we do the chores no one will ever see or appreciate, because in all our actions we are responding to God's invitation to draw close to God.

I think it is good and right and important for us to be not only Christians, but Episcopalians. As Episcopalians, we and our prayer book have important *charisms*: gifts and graces that we are called to share with the world around us. We do not advance the cause of Christ by neglecting the special gifts Christ has entrusted into our care. Nor do we advance the cause of Christ by claiming some kind of sectarian superiority over those who worship or believe in ways different from us. Instead, we honor Christ and one another by living into what we have been given with gusto and gratitude, always open to learning from others and seeking to engage our own identity as Christ's people more deeply, more thoroughly. In our worship, we are inviting God into our midst, consenting to God's transforming power at work among us. Sometimes it may feel like pageantry or acting: but that is because we are learning to step outside ourselves and into the rhythms of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' promise to us is as sure as it was to those ten lepers. In our encounter with Jesus, we find healing. We come to church each week to train ourselves into that encounter, that we might connect more deeply and personally with Jesus each day. Thus will we, too, be healed.