

OUTLINE & EXPLANATION OF ZION WORSHIP SERVICES

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, a local congregation affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), follows the historical and liturgical traditions of the Lutheran faith founded almost 500 years ago when a Catholic priest named Martin Luther began a movement in Germany that led to a break with the Roman Catholic Church and the resulted in the Protestant Reformation.

The format of services in the Lutheran Church follows an order of worship passed to us from both the early years of the Christian church and Jewish synagogue. This order of worship is called **Liturgy** (which means “work of the people”) and includes four major sections in every service – **Gathering, Word, Meal** and **Sending**. Both spoken and musical expressions of the liturgy are used, with Lutheran services being especially noted for including much music.

Guidelines for the liturgy used for services at Zion come from the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymnbook and related resources. There are variations in the liturgy used from week to week depending upon the church season and the needs of a particular service. The service typically lasts from 60-75 minutes.

Please join the Zion family for worship any Sunday morning – the service begins at 9:15 a.m. from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend; the service begins at 10:15 a.m. during the remainder of the year. To help you understand what to expect, here’s an outline of the format of most services and an explanation of each portion of the worship.

THE GATHERING

The Gathering is the first section of the liturgy when we assemble as one single household of worshipers and prepare to worship God. We believe it is the Holy Spirit calling us together as the people of God and, as all have been united in Christ at baptism, all participate in the worship liturgy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS – *highlighting concerns and activities of the parish*

RINGING OF THE BELL – *Zion’s long standing tradition at the beginning of worship*

PRELUDE – *instrumental or vocal music designed to set an appropriate tone for worship*

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS – *our opportunity to have all sins taken away by God’s declaration in the Pastor’s Words of Absolution. We are forgiven because God says so in Jesus’ death and by his promise – not because we feel forgiven*

GATHERING HYMN - *hymns throughout the service give us the opportunity to praise and thank God. The first hymn we sing is the Gathering Hymn which calls us together as the body of Christ*

GREETING - *sometimes called the Apostolic Greeting, is a paraphrase of Paul’s salutation or blessing that ends his Second Letter to the Corinthians in the New Testament*

KYRIE- *a later addition to the liturgy, having come to the Christian Church in the 4th century. The full phrase is “Kyrie Eleison” and means “Lord have mercy” in the original Greek. This is the response of the people to each part of the prayer. On special festival Sundays and during the seasons of Christmas and Eastertide, both the Kyrie and a Canticle of Praise are sung. During the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, only the Kyrie is used. The Kyrie is omitted from worship in the long Season after Pentecost during the summer and fall.*

CANTICLE OF PRAISE - *another name for hymn. There are two traditional texts - “Glory to God” and “This is the Feast” – both of which have been set to various melodies. These are sung by us to praise Christ and signify that we are a faith centered in Jesus. Both of these hymns are almost word for word from Scripture: “Glory to God” is the hymn of the angels to the shepherds at Christ’s birth in Luke 2:14 and is sung most days of worship. “This is the Feast” is based on Revelation 5, 15, and 19 and is sung during the season of Easter and on certain festival services.*

PRAYER OF THE DAY - *once called the Collect, refers to the bringing together of the themes of the day. This prayer ends the Gathering portion of the service.*

THE WORD

The Word centers on the spoken and preached Biblical readings. It is based on the liturgy used in the synagogues during the time of the apostles and was well known to early Christians. There are typically four readings during each worship service. The readings rotate on a three-year lectionary cycle which assigns the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (and the other readings) to a particular church year that begins with Advent and ends with Christ the King. Readings from the Gospel of John are assigned to all three lectionary cycles.

FIRST LESSON - from the Old Testament

PSALM - sung or spoken

SECOND LESSON - from the New Testament

GOSPEL VERSE – a short sung response serving as a processional hymn for the one who goes to the place where the Gospel will be proclaimed. In some congregations on festival days a formal procession takes the Gospel reading into the midst of the congregation, symbolizing that Christ again comes among His people and speaks to them directly in their own time. During Lent, a Lenten Verse is substituted for the Gospel Verse as we refrain from singing “alleluia” or “hallelujah”.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION - the announcement to the congregation of the good news of Jesus Christ about to be heard

GOSPEL – the congregation stands for this reading to remember the resurrection and to show respect for Christ. The Gospels are a narrative account of Jesus’ life and ministry while on earth. Matthew, Mark and Luke are called “Synoptic” Gospels because they are alike in many ways. Synoptic means “seen together.” This is largely due to the belief of Biblical scholars that the Gospel of Mark was used as a source for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The Gospel of John is very different from the Synoptic Gospels, both in terms of structure and content.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE – children are invited to the front of the sanctuary to hear a special story from the pastor that also centers on the themes of the day’s lessons and is geared to our younger members

SERMON - the pastor’s explanation or proclamation of the Word just read, is also from the synagogue tradition and has its roots deeply embedded in Hebrew practice

HYMN OF THE DAY - especially chosen to reflect the sermon or theme of the day

CREED - recited as a Confession of Faith. The word Creed is from the Latin for “I believe”. There are three different creeds – all are ancient statements of belief that were found to be necessary to distinguish Christian from non-Christian faith. Originally, the Nicene Creed was recited only at services that included communion and the Apostles’ Creed was used at all other services. With the move to weekly communion, the Nicene Creed is used during Advent, Christmas, Easter, and on festival days while the Apostles’ Creed is used during Lent and at other times. The Athanasian Creed is sometimes recited on Trinity Sunday.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION - Jewish in origin, the central concern for prayer in the assembly is for “others”, that is intercessory prayers. The Prayers of Intercession end the Liturgy of the Word.

THE MEAL

The Meal is a sharing of the same Last Supper meal that Jesus shared with His disciples just before His Crucifixion and Resurrection. We believe that in the meal God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

PEACE – worshippers greeting one another with handshakes and the words of the Peace reminds us of the first words the Risen Christ spoke to his disciples and also begins the third portion of the worship

OFFERING - originally a gift of bread and wine for use in Holy Communion or Eucharist. Once Holy Communion was over, the remaining bread and wine were distributed to the poor. Only later did the offering evolve, for the sake of need, to monetary contributions (it became impractical to try and share actual food with the poor far away). Today in many congregations, the bread and wine are presented along with monetary offerings

OFFERTORY - music, usually an anthem by the choir but occasionally a vocal solo/ensemble or an instrumental selection, while the ushers pass offering plates to receive gifts from the congregation

OFFERTORY CANTICLE – a response sung by the congregation explaining how the simple gifts of bread and wine are presented to God whereby God uses them to be present to us. Various musical settings of “Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful” were traditionally used, but other appropriate songs are also now used; “Create in Me a Clean Heart” and “Give Thanks” are examples used here at Zion.

OFFERTORY PRAYER - the dedication of our intended stewardship of all the gifts God gives to us that we may use them for God’s purposes

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING - begins with a dialog encouraging our worship of God in Jesus Christ. Thanksgiving is “eucharistia” in Greek.

PREFACE - proclaims the praise of the assembly in words that conform to the season or day of the church calendar

SANCTUS – meaning “Holy, Holy, Holy” is a response referring to the Trinity usually sung, but occasionally spoken, by the congregation

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE - also called the Eucharistic Prayer, is a longer prayer which sets Christ’s Supper within the context of the history of salvation, culminating in Jesus Christ and the gift of his body and blood.

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION - those words Jesus used at the Last Supper, instituting the Eucharist

LORD’S PRAYER - that prayer which Scripture tells us Jesus taught his disciples. The closing portion or doxology “For thine is the kingdom, and the power...” is a later addition which praises God.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION – the Pastor invites all baptized Christians to the feast of God and the congregation responds with words of thanks

AGNUS DEI - meaning “Lamb of God”, is a sung prayer addressed specifically to Christ present in the Eucharist as a sacrificial offering once for all. The Fraction, or breaking of the bread, occurs here.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION - the reception of that which Jesus has promised to us – his Body and Blood. We, therefore, affirm that it is the Body and Blood of Christ with the bread and wine – not a mere symbol, but Christ’s real presence. Jesus Christ himself is present to forgive us and strengthen our faith. As each is able, the communing members come forward row by row to commune receive the communion elements from the Pastor and communion assistants. Communion is delivered to those who are physically unable to come forward.

COMMUNION MEDITATION MUSIC – often a hymn is sung during the serving; other times, music may be provided by the choir, a soloist or an instrumentalist

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION - yet another element of thanksgiving and praise for the gift of Jesus Christ; occasionally a Canticle is also sung here and, when used, it takes the place of the Sending Hymn.

THE SENDING

The Sending is the closing part of the service in which God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING – the spoken benediction, meaning “good word”, is the final blessing from God before we leave the worship. It begins the fourth part of the worship Liturgy – the Sending.

SENDING HYMN - challenges us to leave worship and take the love of Christ out into the world

CHORAL BENEDICTION – Zion’s choir sometimes ends a service with this final musical offering as we are sent out to live our daily life in God’s service

DISMISSAL - our charge to respond to God’s love in Jesus. Our true response to the Liturgy, and our life as Christians, begins when we leave the worship space to accomplish God’s ministry and mission in our world.

POSTLUDE – a final piece of instrumental music to end the worship