



AN
OWNER'S
MANUAL
TO
WORSHIP

2016
Lenten
Study Guide

INTRODUCTION

“Worship” is derived from a combination of two Old English words: *weorth* meaning “honor” or “worthiness” and *scipe* meaning “to create.” When we worship we are creating honor for the one who is the focal point of the celebration.

For whom are we creating honor? It is not for ourselves or for a projection of our best intentions and highest aspirations. Worship is for God whom we meet in Jesus Christ. Christ is the focus of our worship.

Creating honor takes some effort and energy, and so it is fitting that the word “liturgy” is derived from a Latin word that means “the work of the people.” All of us—not just the preacher or the worship leaders—are actively involved in this weekly work of making honor for Christ.

The amazing thing about worship is that it makes us into God’s people. Over time, if we let it, the intentional practice of worship shapes and reshapes our attitude and actions. Worship is not just something that happens. It is a deliberate activity that deepens and broadens our faith. And so, we can call worship a spiritual discipline that we do together.

The irony is that the less we focus on ourselves in worship the more we benefit from it. When we put the focus on the Triune God we are put into a right relationship with our Creator and Redeemer who fulfills us and restores our right relationship with the rest of creation. Worship as a spiritual discipline benefits us when we are not the center of it.

Given all this, I wrote this study with the following definition of worship in mind: *Worship is the intentional, communal act of recentering our lives and our life together in the life of the Triune God.* There is a lot to unpack in that sentence, and certainly there are other ways to define worship. This study is based on the assumption that worship is (1) a spiritual practice and not something we do by accident; (2) worship is something we do together and not a solitary act; (3) done in and through Jesus Christ in whose Spirit we encounter God; and (4) by focusing on God we are renewed in all dimensions of our lives.

This study is designed to help us discover the benefits of worship by refocusing our attention of Jesus Christ as the center of worship. We will explore the rituals of worship that seem small and may be taken for granted. Because worship forms us most through the

things we do and not just through the words we say, the emphasis is on the *practices* of worship and their meanings, rather than the specific language or liturgies.

There are two major aspects of worship that this study does not address: reading scripture/preaching and music. These have been omitted because each topic could be an entire study of its own and because I wanted us to focus on the other aspects of worship that are often overshadowed by preaching and music. My hope is that if we discover the significance of the other parts of worship then we will gain more from the music and the message.

Each session is designed for both personal as well as small group use. Each week, you will explore the scripture readings for the Sunday services. In addition, I encourage you to visit our worship blog each week as a companion to this study. The blog can be found on our website (www.northchurchindy.com) and at Worship@North (<https://northchurchindy.wordpress.com/>). There you will find the liturgy and links for music that will be used each Sunday. In preparation for worship, read the liturgy and

listen to the music. It will be available by the Monday afternoon prior to each Sunday.

Most of all, join us for worship each week. Bring a friend and let's "create honor" for Jesus Christ together.

Pastor Darren
Lent 2016

Session One:

How To Get Lit

CENTERING

Take several long, slow breaths and imagine the Holy Spirit moving through your breathing, coming into the center of your being with God's light and removing from you the thoughts and concerns that distract you from God.

Read this week's liturgy and listen to the music on our blog that you can find through our website (www.northchurchindy.com) or go directly to Worship@North (<https://northchurchindy.wordpress.com/>).

READ (*Common English Bible* translation)

Exodus 3:1-6

³Moses was taking care of the flock for his father-in-law Jethro, Midian's priest. He led his flock out to the edge of the desert, and he came to God's mountain called Horeb. ²The Lord's messenger appeared to him in a flame of fire in

the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was in flames, but it didn't burn up. ³Then Moses said to himself, Let me check out this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn't burning up. ⁴When the Lord saw that he was coming to look, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" Moses said, "I'm here." ⁵Then the Lord said, "Don't come any closer! Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground." ⁶He continued, "I am the God of your father, Abraham's God, Isaac's God, and Jacob's God." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

John 1:1-5, 10-16

¹In the beginning was the Word
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.

²The Word was with God in the beginning.

³Everything came into being through the Word,
and without the Word
nothing came into being.

What came into being

⁴ through the Word was life,
and the life was the light for all people.

⁵The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

¹⁰The light was in the world,
and the world came into being through the
light,

but the world didn't recognize the light.

¹¹The light came to his own people,
and his own people didn't welcome him.

¹²But those who did welcome him,
those who believed in his name,
he authorized to become God's children,

¹³born not from blood
nor from human desire or passion,
but born from God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh
and made his home among us.

We have seen his glory,
glory like that of a father's only son,
full of grace and truth.

¹⁵John testified about him, crying out, "This is
the one of whom I said, 'He who comes after
me is greater than me because he existed
before me.'"

¹⁶From his fullness we have all received grace
upon grace;

THE RITUAL: CALL TO WORSHIP

Over the centuries, people have been called to worship by the blowing of a shofar, the ringing of church bells, and the blast of electric guitars.

How do you prepare for worship? Choose the ones that are part of your normal routine:

- Pray earlier in the week or early on Sunday morning*
- Visit with friends in the hallway*
- Attend Sunday School*
- Greet guests*
- Help with the set-up or ushering*
- Read the scripture passages for that Sunday*
- Read or sing the hymns for that Sunday*
- Listen to the prelude*
- Bookmark the hymns*
- Read through the bulletin*

Which ones do you need to start doing to enrich your worship experience?

THE MEANING OF THE RITUAL: CALL TO WORSHIP

Worship begins with a choice—but not ours. God chooses to invite all of us to worship. God plants the desire in our hearts, creates the opportunity, and gives us the resources of liturgy and leadership to worship. And so, worship begins with God’s invitation that is expressed through the call to worship. God calls us to move (mentally and physically) from our everyday concerns and routines into God’s time and space.

There are several different things we can do to prepare to accept God’s invitation. We connect with one another in the hallway, and we learn about the ministries of the church through the announcements. (These joys, opportunities and concerns often come into worship through the various prayers and rituals of dedication that are done later in the service.) Then, we prepare to connect with God by quieting our minds with the music of the prelude and the choral introit. These ‘horizontal’ and “vertical” routines prepare us to orient every dimension of our lives toward the praise of God.

*How was Moses called into the presence of God?
How does worship help us enter into the experience
of the “holy”?*

*Moses was told to remove his shoes because he was
standing on holy ground. What do we need to
“remove” in order to worship?*

THE RITUAL: RECEIVING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Acts 20:8 is the first reference to candles being used in evening worship, possibly as a midnight vigil. Candles were first used around the altar and it was after 1000 AD that they were placed on the altar. In Anglican circles, Edward VI in 1547 ordered that two lights adorn the high altar to symbolize Christ as the true light, but in Eastern Orthodoxy seven candles were the tradition. Other forms of lights have been used such as a perpetual flame in front of the tabernacle containing the communion elements and the lighting of the

Paschal (Easter) candle for the Easter sunrise vigil.

What are your expectations of worship (both at North as well as at another church)?

THE MEANING OF THE RITUAL: RECEIVING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Receiving the light of Christ at the beginning of a worship service symbolizes that the presence of Christ is essential for worship. Jesus Christ is the center of Christian worship, and the presence of the Spirit of Christ makes the gathering an encounter with the divine.

His presence is essential for four reasons:

1. It is through Christ the Word as the Second Person of the Trinity that we enter into God's presence and participate in God's being (John 1:1; we become "partakers of the divine nature" as it says in 2 Peter 1:4). A couple of years ago, our confirmation class gave the best description of this: Christ is the window to God.

2. Christ reveals the truth about the world we live in, both its beauty and its brokenness. He is the light that shines on all people and gives life to all creation, and when we worship in the Spirit of Christ we can see the world from God's perspective (John 1:3-4).
3. The presence of Christ unites all believers in worship (John 1:12).
4. Christ fulfills the desires and gives purpose to our lives. We encounter Christ in worship and his presence renews us. (John 1:16).

In all these ways, we encounter Christ in worship. This encounter "ignites" our lives with faith, truth, hope and love.

And still, we are not the focus of worship. Worship is not centered on the charismatic personality of a leader. It is not organized around an ideology nor is it the glorification of one particular culture.

And yet, worship is always a cultural expression. We do not escape from the world through worship because it is inevitable that we use the language and symbols of society to worship. Worship, therefore, is always a mix of

affirming and transcending our particular cultures. This dynamic is found in the Incarnation. “The Word became flesh and made his home among us” means that Christ makes God known through the diversity of human expressions in worship while enabling us to go beyond the limitations of those expressions. When our worship becomes fixated on one particular form, it becomes idolatry. God delights in the diversity of human expressions in worship because God resides in these expressions without being contained by them.

How does seeing Christ as the center of worship reshape our thoughts and feelings about (1) ourselves and (2) the world around us?

What would happen if Jesus did not show up for our worship?

CENTRAL WORSHIP QUESTION:

Why do you worship?

What does it mean to “encounter Christ” in worship?

OTHER “LITURGIES” THAT SHAPE US:

American Christianity has been influenced by a variety of cultural dynamics that we often take for grants. In particular, two things have an impact on mainline Protestant worship: Rationalism and Consumerism. Rational thinking and the scientific method have shaped our definition of truth and how we define reality. Our consumer-driven economy permeates every aspect of society by reducing relationships to transactions and manufacturing desires.

Consider these questions:

What role should human reason play in worship?

What are the limits of reason in worship?

In what ways is Christian worship shaped by consumerism? What other things replace Christ as the center of worship (even when we use the language about Christ in worship)?

THIS WEEK

As part of your personal preparation for worship, light a candle and use it as a focal point for meditation. Read Psalm 63.

Session Two: How To Pray Out Loud

CENTERING

Recite aloud the following prayer as a way to center your thoughts and feelings on God:

Lord, open my/our heart(s) and mind(s)
by the power of your Holy Spirit,
that, as the Scriptures are read
and your Word proclaimed,
I/we may hear with joy what you say to
me/us today. Amen.

Read this week's liturgy and listen to the music on our blog that you can find through our website (www.northchurchindy.com) or go to Worship@North (<https://northchurchindy.wordpress.com/>).

READ (*New Revised Standard Version*
translation)

Joel 1:13-15; 2:26-32

^{1:13} Put on sackcloth and lament, you priests;
wail, you ministers of the altar.

Come, pass the night in sackcloth,
you ministers of my God!
Grain-offering and drink-offering
are withheld from the house of your God.

¹⁴ Sanctify a fast,
call a solemn assembly.

Gather the elders
and all the inhabitants of the land
to the house of the Lord your God,
and cry out to the Lord.

¹⁵ Alas for the day!
For the day of the Lord is near,
and as destruction from the Almighty it
comes.

^{2:26} You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the Lord your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.
And my people shall never again be put
to shame.

²⁷ You shall know that I am in the midst of
Israel,
and that I, the Lord, am your God and there
is no other.

And my people shall never again
be put to shame.

²⁸ Then afterwards
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;

your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.

²⁹ Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

³⁰ I will show portents in the heavens and on
the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.

³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the
moon to blood, before the great and terrible
day of the Lord comes. ³² Then everyone who
calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved;
for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall
be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and
among the survivors shall be those whom the
Lord calls.

Acts 4:23-31

²³ After they were released, they went to their
friends and reported what the chief priests and
the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard
it, they raised their voices together to God and
said, 'Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven
and the earth, the sea, and everything in them,
²⁵ it is you who said by the Holy Spirit through
our ancestor David, your servant:

"Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples imagine vain things?"

²⁶ The kings of the earth took their stand,
and the rulers have gathered together
against the Lord and against his Messiah.”

²⁷For in this city, in fact, both Herod and
Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the
peoples of Israel, gathered together against
your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed,
²⁸to do whatever your hand and your plan had
predestined to take place. ²⁹And now, Lord,
look at their threats, and grant to your servants
to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while
you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs
and wonders are performed through the name
of your holy servant Jesus.’ ³¹When they had
prayed, the place in which they were gathered
together was shaken; and they were all filled
with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of
God with boldness.

THE RITUAL: CORPORATE PRAYERS

Our worship is full of a variety of prayers
that are said in unison or responsively. Each
prayer functions in a different way, but all are
essential parts of worship. Indeed, one could
define the entire worship experience as a
communal act of prayer.

Each type of prayer has its own history and development. Christian prayers in worship are rooted in the Jewish *Berakah* (Hebrew, “blessing”). The litany, as a style of prayer using short fixed responses, originated in Antioch in the late fourth century. The first time we see a full-fledged prayer of thanksgiving for communion is in 215 AD by Hippolytus.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Catholic scholars sought to reclaim an ancient understanding of worship and recover ancient forms of corporate prayer. This became known as the Liturgical Movement and after World War Two it influenced Protestant scholars who revised the Great Thanksgiving (the prayer for communion) in mainline denominations.

Which of the following corporate prayers is most meaningful to you?

___ *Prayer for Illumination*

___ *Prayers of Intercession*

___ *Prayer of Confession*

___ *The Great Thanksgiving (communion)*

___ *The Thanksgiving over the Water
(baptism)*

THE MEANING OF THE RITUAL

Five things happen when the church prays together:

1. The church acts as a mediator between God and the world. One of the roles of the church is to act as a representative in both directions. As part of the priestly function of the church, we express the needs and aspirations of humanity to God, and we share God's message to the world (I Peter 2:4-5).
2. Praying together recalls and enacts God's Story. "Prayer enacts an entire cosmology," according to theologian James Smith, "because implicit in the very act of prayer is a [way of understanding] the God-world relationship."¹⁷ Our prayers remind us that we are a part of a larger story of God's creative and redeeming work and that we are a part of the larger history of God's people.
3. Praying together expresses human pathos. In corporate prayer, we bring the fullness and diversity of the human experience into the sacred dimension of worship. According to theologian Don

Saliers, liturgy is a “mutual dialogue with God’s self-communication.” An authentic dialogue conveys the aspirations and the sufferings of humanity. In doing this, liturgy “lifts up all that is human to the transforming power of communal life animated in the Spirit.”ⁱⁱⁱ

4. Corporate prayer forms individual character. By praying together we learn how to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. Like children learning how to speak from hearing their parents, Christians are taught through communal experiences of prayer.
5. Praying together shapes the church. The fellowship is deepened when we lift one another up in prayer. The mission is expanded when we pray for the world. Prayer is the channel through which the Spirit of Christ develops the spiritual unity of believers, and empowers the church not to conform to the world.

In Ezra, the people gathered in the Temple to fast and pray together. How might these

experiences have shaped their collective identity? Their personal self-understanding?

Review the types of corporate prayers. How does each one of them shape the church's identity and an individual's self-understanding?

Prayer for Illumination

Prayers of Intercession

Prayer of Confession

The Great Thanksgiving (communion)

*The Thanksgiving over the Water
(baptism)*

In Acts, how did praying together express (1) a way of remembering; (2) human desires and emotions; and (3) the church as the mediator between God and humanity?

Do our prayers in worship adequately express human aspirations and suffering?

CENTRAL WORSHIP QUESTION

Why worship together?

OTHER “LITURGIES” THAT SHAPE US

We live in a highly individualistic culture, which has become more so over the past forty years.

In what ways does individualism influence:

- *Whether we worship or not?*
- *How we participate in worship?*
- *Our expectations about worship and its leaders?*

THIS WEEK

Every day this week begin by reading the Prayer for Illumination in the bulletin. Then, read Psalm 80. Conclude this daily devotion by praying the Prayer of Confession.

Session Three: How To Shake Hands

CENTERING

Look at your hands. Think back over the past 24 hours of all the people you touched with your hands and all the tasks you did with your hands. With your palms turned upward, pray for those persons and tasks, asking for God's blessing and consecration on them.

Read this week's liturgy and listen to the music on our blog that you can find through our website (www.northchurchindy.com) or go to Worship@North (<https://northchurchindy.wordpress.com/>).

READ (*New Revised Standard Version* translation)

Micah 4:1-7

¹In days to come
the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the
mountains,
and shall be raised up above the hills.

Peoples shall stream to it,
² and many nations shall come and say:
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of
the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.'
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
³ He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far
away;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;
⁴ but they shall all sit under their own vines
and under their own fig trees,
and no one shall make them afraid;
for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has
spoken.
⁵ For all the peoples walk,
each in the name of its god,
but we will walk in the name of the Lord our
God
for ever and ever.
⁶ On that day, says the Lord,
I will assemble the lame

and gather those who have been driven away,
and those whom I have afflicted.

⁷ The lame I will make the remnant,
and those who were cast off, a strong nation;
and the Lord will reign over them in Mount
Zion
now and for evermore.

Romans 16:16-20

¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the
churches of Christ greet you.

¹⁷I urge you, brothers and sisters, to keep an
eye on those who cause dissensions and
offences, in opposition to the teaching that you
have learned; avoid them. ¹⁸For such people do
not serve our Lord Christ, but their own
appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they
deceive the hearts of the simple-minded. ¹⁹For
while your obedience is known to all, so that I
rejoice over you, I want you to be wise in what
is good, and guileless in what is evil. ²⁰The God
of peace will shortly crush Satan under your
feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with
you.

THE RITUAL: PASSING THE PEACE

The holy kiss and other signs of peace were associated with the offertory. Usually, it was done at the end of the prayer of consecration and before the Eucharist was celebrated. It also concluded the consecration of bishops as a symbol of unity.

How do you pass the peace? (circle all that apply)

“Peace of Christ” or “Good Morning”

Stay in your place or Move around

*Greet the one’s or Seek out those
you know you don’t know*

THE MEANING OF THE RITUAL

The passing of the peace represents two gifts of Christ. One, we pass the peace to symbolize our unity as the followers of Jesus. Traditionally, it was done right before the offering of the communion elements to fulfill Jesus’ command to reconcile with one’s enemy before making an offering at the altar (see

Matthew 5:23-24). Two, the ritual is a symbolic forerunner of the hope of universal peace.

What is Micah's vision of society? How do we extend the signs of peace beyond worship and into everyday life?

Paul alluded to "dissensions and offenses" in the church. What kinds of problems in the church make it difficult for the passing of the peace to be an authentic sign of our unity? How might the ritual be a part of the healing and restoration of a congregation?

How is Christian unity a gift from Christ and at the same time a command of Christ?

CENTRAL WORSHIP QUESTION

What can we do to invite and welcome more people to worship with us? In what ways can you help someone who is new to our worship to be fully included?

OTHER "LITURGIES" THAT SHAPE US

What divides people in our society? How can the church be an alternative to these divisions?

Why do people isolate themselves? How can the church help people overcome their isolation?

THIS WEEK

Get a copy of the weekly prayer requests in the “Morning Prayers” bulletin (found at the front desk and in the Chapel). Each day, pray the liturgy and the requests Monday through Friday. Each day for the psalter, read Psalm 85. Join us for prayer each or any weekday at 9:30am in the Chapel.

Session Four: How To Eat And Drink

CENTERING

Recite the “Sanctus”, which is one of the responses in the Great Thanksgiving for communion:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Read this week’s liturgy and listen to the music on our blog that you can find through our website (www.northchurchindy.com) or go to Worship@North (<https://northchurchindy.wordpress.com/>).

READ (*Common English Bible* translation)

Exodus 13:1-1

¹The Lord said to Moses: ²Dedicate to me all your oldest children. Each first offspring from any Israelite womb belongs to me, whether human or animal. ³Moses said to the people, “Remember this day which is the day that you came out of Egypt, out of the place you were slaves, because the Lord acted with power to bring you out of there. No leavened bread may be eaten. ⁴Today, in the month of Abib, you are going to leave. ⁵The Lord will bring you to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. It is the land that the Lord promised your ancestors to give to you, a land full of milk and honey. You should perform this ritual in this month. ⁶You must eat unleavened bread for seven days. The seventh day is a festival to the Lord. ⁷Only unleavened bread should be eaten for seven days. No leavened bread and no yeast should be seen among you in your whole country. ⁸You should explain to your child on that day, ‘It’s because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ ⁹“It will be a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead so that you will often discuss the Lord’s Instruction, for

the Lord brought you out of Egypt with great power. ¹⁰ So you should follow this regulation at its appointed time every year.

I Corinthians 11:23-29

²³ I received a tradition from the Lord, which I also handed on to you: on the night on which he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread. ²⁴ After giving thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this to remember me." ²⁵ He did the same thing with the cup, after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Every time you drink it, do this to remember me." ²⁶ Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you broadcast the death of the Lord until he comes.

²⁷ This is why those who eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord inappropriately will be guilty of the Lord's body and blood. ²⁸ Each individual should test himself or herself, and eat from the bread and drink from the cup in that way. ²⁹ Those who eat and drink without correctly understanding the body are eating and drinking their own judgment.

THE SACRAMENT

The Lord's Supper (also called "communion" and "the Eucharist") has a long and complex history of development. From the beginning, it was a combination of Jewish and Greek elements that the church used to express in a new way that Jesus Christ was the center of their communal life. From Judaism, the early Christians adapted the blessing of Birkat ha-Mazon and the bread. From Greek dinner parties, they adapted the libation of wine. At first, the celebration was a full communal meal, but over time it became a separate ritualistic meal of wine and bread.

Fast forward to the eighteenth century, John Wesley encouraged the Methodists to practice "constant communion." It was his desire that the Methodists partake every Sunday. But due to a shortage of ministers, American Methodists took it about four times a year. Over the past forty years, we have adopted the practice of receiving communion on the first Sunday of the month.

How do you prefer to receive communion:

- *kneeling or standing?*
- *intinction (dipping the bread into the chalice) or separate cups?*

THE MEANING OF THE SACRAMENT

Unlike the previous sessions, this section is not called “the meaning of the ritual” but “the meaning of the sacrament” because the Lord’s Supper is a sacrament. A sacrament is a type of ritual that we believe was started by Christ and is a means of God’s grace. With other Protestants, we believe there are two sacraments: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism is an initiatory sacrament and the Lord’s Supper is for the ongoing edification of believers.

As a reliable channel of God’s grace, communion has more than one meaning. In Charles Wesley’s hymnal for the Lord’s Supper (1745) he divided the songs according to stages of time. The Lord’s Supper tells us something about our relationship with Christ in the past, the present, and the future. In addition, the sacrament has meaning both for the individual and the church.

Complete the chart below to understand the six dimensions of communion. Look up the scripture references and the hymns to discover the meaning of each category:

	For the Individual	For the Church
Past	I Cor. 11:24-5 "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood"	Heb. 12:1 "For All the Saints"
Present	Jn. 6:35 "Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast" "Fill My Cup, Lord"	Eph. 4:1-6 (I Cor. 11:17-34) "Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether" "One Bread, One Body"
Future	Jude 20-21 "O the Depth of Love Divine" vv. 3-4	Rev. 21:1-8 "This is the Feast of Victory"

Which of these 6 meanings is the most familiar to you? Which one is a new perspective for you? Which ones are the most meaningful for you?

CENTRAL WORSHIP QUESTION

In the first session, we described how Jesus Christ is the center of worship. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper raises questions about the relationship between Christ and culture. Jesus Christ is universal and eternal, but the sacrament celebrating him is always performed with the stuff of a specific culture (bread, wine, language, etc.).

When does a worship service cease to be focused on Christ, and instead the particular cultural expressions take center stage?

When do diverse cultural expressions in worship help us have a better experience of Christ?

OTHER “LITURGIES” THAT SHAPE US

The Eucharist expresses that the church lives by a different set of values from the world. The sacrament forms the church into a “countercultural community.”

Using the chart in the above section, identify what you see in society as the opposite of each dimension of the Lord’s Supper.

THIS WEEK

If you read this *before* celebrating the Lord’s Supper: Read I Cor. 11:27-9 in preparation for the sacrament. Examine your life and what you need to change or ask forgiveness for as you get ready to receive communion.

If you read this *after* celebrating the Lord’s Supper: Use the Great Thanksgiving (hymnal, p. 9-10) as a personal prayer of thanksgiving. Try putting it into your own words.

Join us for communion every Wednesday morning in the Chapel from 7:30 to 7:45am.

Session Five: How To Pass The Plate

CENTERING

Read or sing the doxology:

Praise God
from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God, all creatures here below:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God, the source of all our gifts!
Praise Jesus Christ,
whose power uplifts!
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Then, count the blessings God has given you this week.

Read this week's liturgy and listen to the music on our blog that you can find through our website (www.northchurchindy.com) or go to Worship@North (<https://northchurchindy.wordpress.com/>).

READ (*New Revised Standard Version*
translation)

Ezra 3:1-7

³When the seventh month came, and the Israelites were in the towns, the people gathered together in Jerusalem. ²Then Jeshua son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel with his kin set out to build the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings on it, as prescribed in the law of Moses the man of God. ³They set up the altar on its foundation, because they were in dread of the neighboring peoples, and they offered burnt-offerings upon it to the Lord, morning and evening. ⁴And they kept the festival of booths, as prescribed, and offered the daily burnt-offerings by number according to the ordinance, as required for each day, ⁵and after that the regular burnt-offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the sacred festivals of the Lord, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill-offering to the Lord. ⁶From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt-offerings to the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. ⁷So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to

the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from King Cyrus of Persia.

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

⁶The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

⁹As it is written,

'He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.'

¹⁰He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; ¹²for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. ¹³Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by

your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, ¹⁴while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

THE RITUAL

Collections have been linked with worship from the very beginning with various offerings on altars and with the sharing of possessions in the early church. Traditionally, the offering came immediately before the prayer of consecration for the Lord's Supper because it was the presentation of the elements to be used in the sacrament. However, some traditions do not include an offering in the worship service, such as Mormon services and some contemporary "Seeker" services.

What are your earliest memories of giving to the church?

THE MEANING OF THE RITUAL

The traditional place of the offering before the Lord's Supper reminds us that our giving is a grateful response to the gift of Jesus Christ for our salvation. The offering also represented gratitude for the gifts of creation, as represented in the presentation of the bread and wine. In addition to gratitude, the collection symbolizes our dedication to the way of Christ. Our gifts are consecrated by the Holy Spirit to be used for God's mission, and through the Spirit they become a part of Christ giving himself for the redemption of the world.

Why was the construction of an altar necessary for the re-establishment of the nation in Ezra?

Altars were built in the Old Testament on sites where people had had an encounter with God so that one could meet God again and again in that place. Altars "regularized a theophany," so to speak, by

making an offering. Why is it important for us to make generosity a routine part of our lives?

What is the relationship between generosity and thanksgiving in 2 Corinthians 9?

How does giving require us to trust God?

CENTRAL WORSHIP QUESTION

Why is giving a part of worship? (Choose any that apply to you and rank them in order of importance to you).

“The offering symbolizes....

___ my gratitude for God’s blessings.”

___ my commitment to God’s mission.”

___ my support for my church family.”

___ the submission of my life to God.”

OTHER “LITURGIES” THAT SHAPE US

In *The Paradox of Generosity*, Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson describe the beliefs of ungenerous Americans that they interviewed:

- “Personal autonomy, self-preservation, and rugged individualism are key and sacred concepts in the vocabulary of the ungenerous people we interviewed.”
- “Devotion to self-interest is the most pervasive thread woven throughout our interviews....it is a thread intertwined with the fear of falling off the middle-class track of security. This clearly gives rise to a complex of stress, anxiety, insecurity, and banality.”
- “We find consistent evidence that ungenerous lifestyles associate with an apathy riddled by anxiety. Our interviews with Americans who do not practice generosity reveal that they are deeply unsettled by individual and social problems. Yet they do not think they have any obligation to respond, and even if they do, they feel inadequate to make a difference without sacrificing their ability to care for their own needs....They imagine other people as restrictions on their autonomy. Self-

preservation and financial security are the main standards by which ungenerous Americans assess their lives. This approach thus stokes an anxiety that at worst is soothed by apathy and a withdrawal from concerns beyond one's own individual concerns, and at best results in some intermittent caring, volunteering, and financial generosity.ⁱⁱⁱ"

What dynamics in society foster this worldview?

What do we say, sing and do in worship that promotes an alternative worldview of generosity?

THIS WEEK

Read Psalm 50. Reflect on 3 dimensions of generosity in your life:

1. Emotional Generosity—How am I giving emotional support to others?
2. Timely Generosity—How am I sharing my time and talents with others?

3. Financial Generosity—How am I contributing financially to the work of God?

Set 1 challenging but realistic goal for yourself in each of these three areas of generosity.

Holy Week Meditation:

How To Say Amen

BENEDICTION, BLESSING AND AMEN

Benediction comes from two Latin words, “bene” meaning “well” and “dicere” meaning “speak.” The benediction is a “good word” as the last words of worship. A blessing is a pronouncement that conveys approval and empowerment. When you are blessed, you are chosen and equipped with power and authority from the one giving you the blessing. Not all benedictions are blessings and vice versa. Sometimes the benediction is comprised of a charge to the people as well as a blessing, which is common in Presbyterian worship.

Whether it is a benediction or a blessing, it ends with “amen.” Amen is a Hebrew term that connotes being firm or faithful. In addition to “amen” appearing in scripture, it is also translated as “verily” and “truly.” The basic idea of amen is “let it be so” or “may it happen as said.” Thus, one says in response to a divine pronouncement, “amen.”

On the night of Jesus’ Last Supper he says it three times:

And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, 'Truly ["amen"] I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me'.... Truly ["amen"] I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God'.... Jesus said to him, 'Truly ["amen"] I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' (Mark 14:18, 25, 30)

In other words, Jesus is saying, "So be it that I am going to be betrayed, abandoned and killed." His amen expresses his willing commitment to the tragic steps that enact our salvation.

And so, it is fitting that we end our worship by saying amen as a response to Jesus' amen. When we say amen at the end of our worship we are affirming our desire and pledging our commitment to live out the beliefs we have said in worship. We are saying, "Let everything we have said and sung in worship become a reality for the rest of our lives."

A DAILY “AMEN” FOR HOLY WEEK

Each day of this week, beginning on Palm Sunday and concluding on Easter, read the passage for the day and reflect on the daily question or exercise to help you say “amen” to different aspects of Christ as the center of our worship.

Palm Sunday	Entrance into Jerusalem Luke 19:29-40	The Authority of Christ	What areas of my life have I not yet surrendered to Christ’s authority?
Monday	Anointing of Jesus Mark 14:3-9	The Adoration of Christ	Throughout this day offer short prayers (1-3 words) of praise for different aspects of who Christ is.
Tuesday	Jesus Washes Their Feet John 13:1-15	The Servanthood of Christ	How can I be a servant like Jesus?
Wednesday	Betrayal of Jesus Matthew 26:14-16, 20-5	The Forgiveness of Christ	What sins do I need to confess?
Maundy Thursday	The Meal of Jesus Luke 22:7-27	The Fellowship of Christ	Are there other church members I need to reach out to more often?

Good Friday	The Death of Jesus Matthew 27:32-54	The Sacrifice of Christ	Throughout this day, think of the pain and suffering in the world. With each, pray: "Into your hands we commend our lives."
Holy Saturday	The Tomb of Jesus Mark 15:42-47	The Death of Christ	Begin the day with a simple "amen." Throughout the day maintain as much silence as is possible. At the end of the day conclude with a simple "amen."
Easter	The Resurrection of Jesus Luke 24:1-12	The Victory of Christ	Throughout this day, thank God with a 1-sentence prayer of thanksgiving.

The River of Life Banner (Cover Photo)

The River of Life represents the “hiddenness” of God’s love. The new symbols give God’s presence in our lives more clarity. The river reflects power, strength and movement of God’s love. The colors represent the reflections of all colors, all life, that appear in and on the face of the river. The river of the Spirit of God overcomes all obstacles. This indifference of water flowing will move through you and you are connected to the Source— Father/Creator/Jesus Christ and the overflowing of this opens the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life.

ⁱ *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Baker Academic, 2009), 193.

ⁱⁱ *Worship in Theology* (Abingdon, 1994), 26.

ⁱⁱⁱ (University of Oxford Press, 2014), 119-20, 177.