

Lutheran Worship provides for the occasional use of metrical paraphrases of the creeds (LW 213 for the Nicene Creed and LW 212 for the Apostles' Creed). "I believe in one God" (LW 4) provides the plainsong setting of Credo III from the *Liber Usualis*.

Notes for ministers. Since the recitation of the Creed is a solemn act of confession, the presiding minister leads it from the midst of the altar, not the lectern.

Hymn of the Day

The Hymn of the Day is the principal hymn of the Divine Service. In Lutheran corporate worship particular hymns have long been associated with particular Sundays and festivals of the church year (see chapter 17 on "Hymn of the Day"). *Lutheran Worship* includes a listing of hymns chosen to relate to the readings used in the service (see LW, pp. 976–78). Hymns are designated for both the one-year pericope system and the three-year system. Repeated use of these hymns will help the congregation to become familiar with a wide range of hymns reflecting the themes of the Sunday readings.

Notes for ministers. The longer hymns may be sung in sections, for example, part at the sermon, part at the distribution, etc., or in alternation. (See Notes on the Liturgy in *Lutheran Worship: Altar Book*, p. 34, where suggestions for alternating are given.)

Sermon

The Sermon is an integral part of the Service of the Word. It is not omitted, except in extraordinary circumstances, for the church is gathered around both pulpit and altar, Word and Sacrament. Through them believers receive from the Lord and, out of thankfulness, respond in word and act.

In his first word on public worship after leaving the protection of the Wartburg castle, Luther designates the omission and abuse of preaching as two of the three serious abuses that have crept into the churches. His 1523 letter to the congregation at Leisnig (Saxony) spells out these basic principles of evangelical reform:

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First, God's Word has been silenced, and only reading and singing remain in the churches. This is the worst abuse. Second, when God's Word has been silenced such a host of un-Christian fables and lies, in legends, hymns, and sermons were introduced that it is horrible to see. Third, such divine service was performed as a work whereby God's grace and salvation might be won. As a result, faith disappeared. . . . Now in order to correct these abuses, know first of all that a Christian congregation should never gather together without the preaching of God's Word and prayer, no matter how briefly, as Psalm 102 says, "When the kings and the people assemble to serve the Lord, they shall declare the name and the praise of God." And Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 (26–31) says that when they come together, there should be prophesying, teaching, and admonition. Therefore, when God's Word is not preached, one had better neither sing nor read, or even come together.¹⁸

Luther does not restrict preaching to the sacramental service of the congregation; he also wants some interpretation of the Word to accompany its proclamation in Matins and Vespers. He goes on to recommend that Sunday morning preaching should be on the Gospel of the day, with preaching at Vespers on the Epistle or on some book of Scripture.¹⁹

The Gospel is the principal reading in each service, and will ordinarily serve as the foundation for the preaching when the congregation gathers on the Lord's Day. Traditionally, Sunday preaching in the Lutheran Church has been based upon the Sunday Gospel to a far greater degree than is the case in other churches using the pericopal system. This practice is based on the understanding that preaching in the chief service serves to interpret the Gospel and bring it into the present moment. The preacher "says what the Word says" to those whom the Word has gathered here and now, to hear it with open hearts and receive it into faithful hearts. The Old Testament serves as preparation and the Epistle for admonition and example.

The preacher will usually be a called and ordained minister of Word and Sacrament—one who has been called, set apart, and sent to his apostolic work according to the church's usual order. On occasions where the sermon is prepared and delivered by a student or candidate or some other properly designated person, his

message shall have been examined and approved by a minister of the Word—most appropriately the pastor of the congregation or the dean of the chapel, the one who is responsible for the preaching and teaching of the Word among these people.

Notes to ministers. Before the sermon a short prayer asking for the blessing of God upon the preaching of his Word is fitting. Usually the preacher, kneeling at his place during the hymn, will offer that prayer silently. An ordained preacher may bless the hearers with the apostolic greeting or give the triune Invocation. Divine Service I suggests that the votum, “The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7), be spoken at the end of the sermon.

Offering and Offertory

The Offering and the Offertory follow the Sermon in Divine Service I. A different order is observed in Divine Service II, in which The Prayers come first and are followed by the Offering and Offertory. Divine Service III also has the Prayer of the Church before the Offering. Although this order differs from the Common Service tradition, it does employ a common pattern in German Lutheranism, which has intercessions after the Sermon and then continues with the offertory sentences and the gathering of offerings.

While the Offering symbolizes the “spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1) of Christian lives offered in response to God, it also unites the faithful in an act of fellowship. Fellowship (*koinonia*) is a constitutive element in the worship and life of the apostolic congregation, as noted in Acts 2:42. Here Luke points to *fellowship* as an action of the congregation actively sharing. This concept can also extend to generosity and to gift, what has been given by the one for the benefit of the many. It is against the profaning of this fellowship that Paul speaks so strongly in 1 Corinthians 10. The gifts of fellowship that were shared included bread and wine, some of which was set apart for the celebration of the Sacrament. These gifts, representing the first fruits of creation and symbolic of the offering of the substance of bodily life, called the oblation, are offered as a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord that by means of them he might accomplish his purpose to bless his people.