Welcome to this six-week study on Deepening Worship in the Lutheran tradition. Whether you are newer to the Lutheran church, considering joining, or a lifelong member, the hope from this six-week study is that you might begin to understand more clearly the “whys” of worship. Why do we do the things that we do in church?

In the Lutheran tradition, we trust that worship is primarily about the movement of God. In the time that we gather, we believe that God comes to us in a number of simple and mysterious ways: through the presence of one another, through water, through bread and wine, through prayer, through the Word, through the sharing of the peace, through song and music, through giving. In fact, we believe that God is continually coming to us during worship, feeding and renewing our spirits, then turning us outward to be Good News for the world. What an incredible thing to proclaim!

And yet, many of us never learn how to worship. As such, worship can become rote and dry, and we may find ourselves going through the motions or confused about why we do the things we do. Enter Lent! While many might associate Lent with the giving up of chocolate or sweets, in the ancient church, Lent was primarily a time of preparation for those seeking to be baptized. As we engage in this study, we return to a traditional understanding of Lent – a time to learn and deepen one’s understanding of faith.

In this six-week study, you will be invited to examine more closely various elements of worship. You will be encouraged to take part in discussion, and you will be given a challenge/homework at the end of each session. My hope is that by the end of these six weeks, you will be surprised by how deeply meaningful worship can be.

This curriculum is not comprehensive. There is much about worship that is not covered here. The Lutheran church is blessed with an abundance of liturgical scholars, which are teachers and thinkers whose work centers on the liturgy. Several of them are listed in the bibliography, and I encourage you to read more from them, if you would like. This is just a beginning.

Blessings on this time of learning and formation. May you have a holy Lent.

Peace,

Pastor Mindy Roll
Zion Lutheran Church – Houston Heights
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Week 5 - The Whys of Worship
The Sharing of the Peace & The Offering

WELCOME:

GREETING:
P: This is the day that the Lord has made.
All: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

REQUEST FOR PRESENCE:

P: We have been claimed by the God who calls us children.
All: We, the redeemed, have been called by name.
P: As with the Israelites, God promises to pass with us through the water.
All: We will not fear, for God is with us!
P: The rivers shall not overwhelm us for God is our guide and our protector.
All: Through God’s saving grace, the waters that tested us
P: are now the waters that wash us and nourish us.
All: Great is the Fount of Every Blessing,
P: ever flowing, ever redeeming, ever claiming us as God’s children.
All: Come, let us worship the God who washes us in grace.

Opening Prayer:

Let us pray.
God of tender care, and gracious love, as our parent, you never forget your children, and you know already what we need. In all our anxiety give us trusting and faithful hearts, that in confidence and boldness we may embody the peace and justice of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Psalm 46:

1 God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
   though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

3 though its waters roar and foam,
   though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, 
the holy habitation of the Most High.

5 God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; 
   God will help it when the morning dawns.

6 The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; 
   he utters his voice, the earth melts.

7 The Lord of hosts is with us; 
   the God of Jacob is our refuge.

8 Come, behold the works of the Lord; 
   see what desolations he has brought on the earth.

9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; 
   he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; 
   he burns the shields with fire.

10 “Be still, and know that I am God! 
    I am exalted among the nations, 
    I am exalted in the earth.”

11 The Lord of hosts is with us; 
    the God of Jacob is our refuge.(Ps 46, NRSV)

Last Week’s Homework: This week, when you hear the Creed in worship, instead of saying “I believe” insert the words “I trust.” What does it mean to you when the Creed shifts from being a black and white statement of belief to a growing statement of trust? Reflect on the experience in the space below.

Introduction to this week: This week we shift into the portion of the service called “The Meal,” which begins with the sharing of the peace, followed by the offering.

Opening Exercise: What does the sharing of the peace mean to you? How do you usually do it?
Discussion:

According to Craig Satterlee, “The sign of peace was originally a full kiss on the lips, men with men, women with women. The kiss was perhaps the liturgy’s most intimate gesture next to baptismal washing and anointing. The early church warned that the kiss was to be kept ‘pure’ even as the early church kept the kiss. Our practice of shaking hands does not seem as evocative. Unlike the handshake, to exchange a kiss requires the assembly to be so serious about its faith that it is willing to transcend cultural taboos.”

Satterlee goes on to warn that the assembly must be intentional in the sharing of the peace so that it does not become a foretaste of the coffee hour. Indeed, I know many Christians who slip out before the peace and return right after it, so uncomfortable does the small talk and standing around feel. If the peace is a greeting unlike any other, then what might it mean in church?

The passing of the peace is intentionally placed in the service. We are encouraged to make peace with one another before we turn to sharing the meal together. In some ways, it is an extension of Confession and Forgiveness at the beginning of worship: as you have been forgiven by God, now go seek reconciliation with your siblings in faith so that you might share in community together.

What exactly is this peace we are sharing?

According to the ELCA, “The exchange of peace is a ministry, an announcement of grace we make to each other, a summary of the gift given to us in the liturgy of the Word. This ministry we do to each other is far greater than a sociable handshake or a ritual of friendship or a moment of informality. Because of the presence of Jesus Christ, we give to each other what we are saying: Christ’s own peace. Then, having been gathered by the Spirit around the Risen One present in the word, we turn to celebrate his meal.”

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1 Craig Satterlee, *Presiding in the Assembly* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), 54.
The exchange of peace is also a celebration: we celebrate that Christ is among us and shows up in one another. When we greet each other, we do not go simply to those we know well; we go to those we struggle to love and to those who are new to us or new to the church. The whole community – collectively - shows us Christ.

It is also significant that we share the peace. We don’t say “Howdy!” or “Greetings in the name of Jesus!” or “The love of God be with you.” We specifically wish each other the peace of Christ.

In Jewish understanding, peace is not simply as absence of conflict. According to Rabbi Harold Caminker, “Packed into shalom are concepts like wholeness, peace, security, tranquility, completeness, contentment, safety and well-being. Merely to stop fighting or to suspend strife is not shalom as Jews understand it. The Psalmist bids us: Bakesh shalom — seek peace (34:15). Dynamic, positive and restorative action is required.”3 Later he comments, “When Jews say “Shabbat shalom – Sabbath peace” to family and friends after a draining work week, we mean far more than “have a peaceful and restful day.” What we are really saying is: May you be restored to wholeness on the blessed Sabbath!”

Peace is about living in the wholeness of God, restored and complete. That’s a powerful thing to wish each other on a Sunday!

Consider a more intentional peace practice. When it is time to share the peace, and the peace has been offered to you by the presider, pause to consider what this means: the wholeness of God is yours. As you turn to those around you, look them in the eye. Try not to rush. Linger with them for a moment as you speak words of peace to them. After sharing it with those around you, look around for newcomers, visitors, people looking uncomfortable, or early sitters. Refrain from small talk or rushed greetings.

Question for Reflection: How does this change how you understand the sharing of the peace?

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Discussion on Question

After the sharing of the peace, we come to the offering. In the early church, participants brought forward food for the poor, which the church would re-distribute to those in need.

The offering is not so different today – in most churches, a single gift goes a lot of different directions: to supporting food pantries and the housing insecure; to global food efforts and disaster response; to campus and camping ministries; to new mission starts and the resources to support these; to the outreach and care ministries that happen within one’s building; to visiting the homebound and hospitalized. In fact, if you were to break down the breadth of impact from a single gift, I imagine you would be quite amazed!

It was not until seminary that I remember someone talking to me about my own giving. As a seminary student, I had almost no income, but a pastor gently invited me to consider sharing a portion of it. Not because that small amount would make a tremendous difference in the world, but because it would change me. He was right. When I started to give regularly, I became less anxious about the future and my own resources. Generosity sowed in me gratitude and trust and made me less dependent on myself. Giving is not just for others; it changes you as well.

Consider this prayer from our liturgy: “Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord."

Making an offering is truly counter-cultural, giving back to God what God has given us, and in so doing, shifting us from our own wants to the needs of our neighbors.

Question for Reflection: Why do you give? Who taught you how to give?
Discussion on Question

**Homework for the Week:** Do you know where your resources go? Consider mapping for one week where your energy, time, and possessions are directed. You will undoubtedly be surprised! How might you tweak these things to increase your own generosity?

**Fun Fact - Did you know?** Passing of the offering plate is a more recent phenomena, coming into practice in the late 19th century. In many churches, as congregants carry less cash and fewer write checks, preferring instead to give online or through bank deposit, passing the offering plate has come to a halt.

*Looking Ahead to Next Week: Next week is our final week, and we will be looking at the Eucharistic meal.*

CLOSING:
**Prayer:**
God our sustainer, we ask you to pour your powerful Spirit into all who are empty this day: Strengthen the faith and witness of those who are in the wilderness on this day. Fill the hearts of persons who are troubled. Fill the minds of men women and children who are confused. Fill the stomachs of children who are hungry. Fill the souls of people who are feeling lost. Fill the lives of all who need you, but do not know you. May your Spirit fill us all to overflowing, dear Lord, and may it inspire us to share our abundance with others, so that there will be no more empty hearts and minds, stomachs and souls. We pray all this in the name of Jesus Christ, who fills our lives with your endless grace.

AMEN

**Blessing:**

P: Go into the world in peace,
All: And take peace into a world that desperately needs it.

P: Go into the world in faith,
All: Trusting God to lead you, trusting people to receive you.

P: Go into the world with hope,
All: With God's presence before you and human dreams to carry you.

P: Go into the world with love,
All: Serving those in whom Christ lives, laboring for those for whom Christ died.

P: In the name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All: Amen.

**Bibliography**

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Lind-Ayers, Justin J. “Invigorating Our Confessions of Faith (Creeds) with the Assistance of Romans.” *Word & World* Volume 39, Number 3 Summer 2019.


Why Do I Do That?: Psycho has been added to your Cart. Add a gift receipt for easy returns. Clear, no-nonsense explanations of why we behave the way we do. This book explains how our behaviors around shame, guilt, anger and even narcissism, with practical and relatable examples to demonstrate the mechanics behind them and impact we make on others as a result. As a person who's usually cynical of psychology books as they often generalise people into statistics, this book cuts through all that to contain only the most salient analyses of our behaviour. Daily wisdom for Why does he do that?: encouragement for women involved with angry and controlling. 519 PagesÂ·2015Â·1.89 MBÂ·1.152 DownloadsÂ·New! "Each new day. It Matters, and What You Can Do To Get More The Willpower Instinct: How Self-Control Works, Why Impulse: Why We Do What We Do Without Knowing Why We Do It. 333 PagesÂ·2013Â·1.24 MBÂ·53,264 DownloadsÂ·New! life than being as coolly calculating as possible. Impulse: Why We Do What We Do Without Knowing Future Minds: How the Digital Age is Changing Our Minds, Why this Matters and What We Can Do About It. 225 PagesÂ·2010Â·1.08 MBÂ·7,713 DownloadsÂ·New! is Changing Our Minds, Why this Matters and What We Can Do About It Richard Watson ... Have you ever wondered why do we worship God? Let's dig into God's Word and see what the Bible has to say about why we worship God.Â Let's dig into God's Word and see what the Bible has to say about why we worship God. Dear Heavenly Father, please fill me with your Spirit. Cleanse my heart of all unrighteousness. Help me to see who You are. Father, help me to let go of all those things inside of me that are holding me back from truly worshiping you. Let me find You today. Let me come before you with a broken spirit and a humble heart. Help me to trust You always. In Jesus Precious Holy Name I pray, amen. Why do we worship God? The Bible says Do parents need their children to worship them? Or is it a spontaneous reciprocation? Parents provide children with love, and children grow to honor, love, and respect their parents; they become attached to the...Â Worship in Islam is an all encompassing concept of good actions, which do not mean only to follow the religious rituals. Ibadah (إبادة) is the Arabic word for worship. This refers to voluntary submission to the Creator and obedience to His preferred way. Our desire is to be a people who gather together and worship God in freedom and in Biblically expressive ways that bring honour to Him. Let's consider some of these expressions of worship and gain a biblical understanding behind why we do what we do in worship. As you read through the various points, ask the Holy Spirit to release in you a greater freedom in worship for the praise of His glory. Sing a new song.