



AN EXPLANATION OF
RITE AND CEREMONY IN
THE DIVINE SERVICE OF
THE EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH



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Abbreviations

- AC** Augsburg Confession
- AE** Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*. American Edition. Volumes 1-30: Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. Concordia Publishing House, 1955-76. Volumes 31-55: Edited by Helmut Lehmann. Fortress Press, 1957-86
- Ap** Apology of the Augsburg Confession
- ELCA** Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- ICET** International Consultation on English Texts
- LC** Large Catechism
- LC-MS** Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
- LBW** *Lutheran Book of Worship*. Augsburg Publishing House, 1978.
- LSB** *Lutheran Service Book*. Concordia Publishing House, 2006.
- LW** *Lutheran Worship*. Concordia Publishing House, 1982.
- SELK** Selbstständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche
- TLH** *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Concordia Publishing House, 1941.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Our divine liturgy is a celebration of the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here the saving action of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is proclaimed.

The divine services are celebrations of Jesus' opening the gates of heaven for us through his life, death, and resurrection. They do not commemorate the "late departed" Jesus of Nazareth, but witness to the resurrection of Christ by proclamation, preaching, praise, thanksgiving, and the Sacrament. Through the Word of God preached and the sacraments celebrated and administered, Jesus Christ is present in our midst according to his promise. He is indeed with us to the end of the age (Guide to Introducing Lutheran Worship 24).

The word "liturgy" comes from a Greek word that originally referred to a public work or duty performed by individual citizens for the benefit of the state. It is literally a "public service." In the church it came to refer to those public acts of recognizing God's grace and mercy on the part of all the people of God when assembled as the church. For this reason, people of the church should understand what they are involved in as they use the liturgy. Unfortunately, we know this is not the case. I am astounded at the number of congregants, even those who have grown up in the Lutheran Church, who are ignorant concerning essence and meaning of the Divine Liturgy. Therefore, I am compelled to compile this explanation.

At the outset, I need to point out that in the Divine Service, the Lord comes to us in Word and Sacrament to bless and enliven us with His gifts. God is not the audience and we the performers. The Divine Service is not something we do for God, but is His Service to us which is received by faith. The "liturgy" is really God's work. He gives. We receive. He speaks. We listen.

In worship a continuing dialog takes place on various levels, and liturgy is an aid in this dialog.

- God is addressing the worshipers with judgment and grace, with promise and blessing, with Word and Sacrament.
- The worshiper is addressing God with confession of sins and confession of faith, with prayer and praise.
- The worshipers address each other, mutually recognizing their sin and confessing their faith, sharing rededication to Christ and renewed commitment to God.

In this way the entire service is talking back and forth among God and His people ... truly a "public service." The Lutheran Confessions explain it as follows:

But let us talk about the term "liturgy." It does not really mean a sacrifice but a public service. Thus it squares with our position that a minister who consecrates shows forth the body and blood of the Lord to the people, just as a minister who preaches shows forth the gospel to the people, as Paul says (1 Cor. 4:1), "This is how one should regard us, as ministers of Christ and

dispensers of the sacraments of God,” that is, of the Word and sacraments; and 2 Cor. 5:20, “We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” Thus the term “liturgy” squares well with the ministry [FC XXIV.79-81] (Tappert 264).

In the Large Catechism Luther boldly says that the Lord’s day has its own particular holy work: “Here a work must be performed by which the doer himself is made holy; this, as we have heard, takes place only through God’s Word. Places, times, persons and the entire appointed order of worship are therefore instituted and appointed in order that God’s Word may exert its power publicly” (LC I.94). Then he sternly says: “You must be concerned not only about hearing the Word but also about learning and retaining it. Do not regard it as an optional or unimportant matter. It is the commandment of God and he will require of you an accounting of how you have heard and learned and honored his Word” (LC I.98). While the Divine Service is God’s work, in the liturgy, we also have “work” to do.

So, it is also true that the liturgy, as with anything that we consider important, is only as full as we ourselves fill it. It can only give as we give ourselves to it. It can only give meaning as we seek to work at drawing meaning from it. It can only affect us, as we allow it to do its work of grace! A young lad said to his father, “Dad, worship is boring!” To which the father replied, “Son, as much as you put into it, I’m not surprised you feel that way!”

When I look out upon the assembled congregation and see men and women completely uninvolved in the liturgy (as I have witnessed in past and present contexts) standing or sitting as knots on logs or looking about, I am struck with a number of thoughts. I pity the individual that is so unaffected by God’s mercy and grace as to appear so thankless. I also remember Luther’s comments in his commentary on Psalm 69, of the “lukewarm and nominal Christians let loose on the church” and that “if this kind of homage would be offered to a man it would be despised” (352). And then I think with sadness of the negative witness and example they give to their fellow worshipers – especially children – with their passive-aggressive posture. Luther would often refer to such individuals as “sluggards” and “clods.”

Rite and Ceremony

In this work I will explain both “rite” and “ceremony” of the Divine Service. “Rite” (or ritual) is the substance of the service. The Rites this booklet will be explaining are Settings of the Divine Service in *Lutheran Service Book*. “Ceremony” refers to the actions of the Liturgy that accompany the texts of the liturgy. Ceremony includes: folding hands, making the sign of the cross, standing, kneeling, bowing, genuflecting, etc. Ceremony also includes: “the outward observance of the church year ... symbols, and material objects employed in the church’s worship, for example, the church building, the altar, crucifixes, candles, and vestments. Ceremonies are solemn religious things and actions” (Lang,

“Ceremony” 6). Ceremonies are always optional and not every ceremony exists in all places.

While ceremonies can help us confess our faith through bodily action or physical things, it is important to remember that such things are not the main things in worship or absolutely necessary for worship. God gives His gifts with or without these ceremonies. (“Introduction to the Liturgy”)

Nevertheless, ceremonies *do* help us confess our faith through bodily action. Ceremony *can* and *does* teach and communicate. Our use of ceremony is intended to teach and communicate God’s presence among us in Word and Sacrament. Therefore, all the actions and gestures of ceremony are deliberate, intentional, and planned.

What, then, is the purpose of ceremonies in the liturgy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church? **Ceremonies necessarily exist to teach the faith.** As the true worship of the triune God is always anchored in the Christian’s fear, love, and trust in this one God above all things, so proper ceremonies have a didactic function in the Christian congregation. This is the intention of Article XXIV of the Apology: “The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the Word may receive faith and fear and so may also pray.”

Although the function of ceremonies is never less than pedagogical, ceremonies are more than visual aids to faith. Since worship in the name of Jesus is never without form or structure, **ceremonies serve to maintain good order** in the worshiping congregation. (Pless 224-225, emphasis mine)

In the Divine Liturgy our worship does not view the Triune God as our golfing buddy, but as the Holy and Almighty Creator of heaven and earth into Whose presence the hosts of heaven bow and cover themselves ... a most holy presence, which demands our reverence, and into which we come as beggars.

You’ve heard that actions speak louder than words. God is holy. We should, therefore, come into His presence with reverence and humility. The purpose of liturgical ceremonies is to give form and order to our reverence and remind us of Whose presence we are in. (“Introduction to the Liturgy”)

God is not a God of chaos and confusion (*1 Cor. 14:33*), therefore His divine service to the congregation is both ordered and orderly. Evangelical ceremonies reflect this order as they point to the gracious gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation which our Lord bestows through Word and Sacrament. Even as these ceremonies point to the giver and donor, they also assist us to receive these gifts in faith and reverence.

This proper use of ceremony is evident in Luther’s instructions regarding prayer in the Small Catechism. Here Luther directs the head of the family to teach those in his household to use such customs as the sign of the holy cross, kneeling, standing, and the folding of hands.

Since there is no such thing as an “informal” service, that is, a service without form, the question of ceremonies can be ignored only to the detriment of the pure

preaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the blessed sacraments. Thus, many of the ceremonies of the ancient church were not discarded, but purified of superstition and then retained in the Lutheran Church.¹

Prosper of Aquitaine (d. 455, disciple of Saint Augustine) is credited with the maxim “*Lex orandi, lex credendi*” (“the law of praying (worship) [is] the law of believing (doctrine)”). Or to put it simply “what we do in worship serves to teach what we believe.” In other words, you cannot separate form from substance.

Although ceremonies are not part of the Divine Service per se, they nevertheless bear witness to what the congregation actually believes regarding the means of grace. The posture and movement of the congregation during the service (i.e., standing for the reading of the Holy Gospel, or kneeling for the reception of the Lord’s body and blood), the manner in which the remaining consecrated elements are treated after the Communion, and the custom of reverencing the altar are examples of ceremonies that point to the congregation’s confessional position (Pless 225).

When churches use contemporary songs which speak of decision theology, or which focus more on us than on Christ ... when the Chancel is converted into a puppet theatre and the Holy place is now for entertainment ... when the sermon contains practical life lessons and psycho-babble instead of a Christ-centered Law and Gospel message ... the “*lex orandi*” is influencing the “*lex credendi*” ... and people are being taught theology ... BAD theology to be sure, but theology all the same.

The Lutheran Position

What is the Lutheran position on these ceremonies. In addition to the quote above (Ap XXIV) which clearly states that *ceremonies have vital purposes*, here are quotations from the Lutheran Confessions which make the Lutheran position abundantly clear:

- *We observe ceremonies not contrary to Holy Scriptures* – AC XV.1: “With regard to church usages that have been established by men, it is taught among us that those usages are to be observed which may be observed without sin and which contribute to peace and good order in the church, among them being certain holy days, festivals, and the like” (Tappert 36).
- *We have not abolished old ceremonies* – AC XXI.4 “For it is a false and malicious charge that all the ceremonies and all old ordinances are abolished in our churches” (Tappert 48).
- *We have not abolished the Mass*² - AC XXIV.1: “Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. Actually, the Mass is retained among us and is celebrated with the greatest reverence. **Almost all the customary ceremonies are also retained**” (Tappert 56, emphasis mine).

¹ See Apology of Augsburg Confession Article XXIV

² Mass² is the term used for the Holy Communion Service in the Lutheran Confessions.

- *We preserve the ceremonies of the past* – AC XXIV.40: “Since, therefore, the Mass among us is supported by the example of the church as seen from the Scripture and the Fathers, we are confident that it cannot be disapproved, especially since the customary public ceremonies are for the most retained” (Tappert 60).
- *We allow only catholic ceremonies* – AC Conclusion ¶5: “Only those things have been recounted which seemed necessary to say, in order that it may be understood that nothing has been received among us, in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Scripture or the church catholic” (Tappert 95).
- *We maintain good ceremonies and church customs* – Ap XV.44: “From this description of the state of our churches it is evident that we diligently maintain church discipline, pious ceremonies, and the good customs of the church” (Tappert 221).
- *We celebrate the Mass every Sunday with usual ceremonies* – Ap XXIV.1: “To begin with, we must repeat the prefatory statement that we do not abolish the Mass but religiously keep and defend it. In our churches Mass is celebrated every Sunday and on other festivals, when the sacrament is offered to those who wish for it after they have been examined and absolved. We keep traditional liturgical forms, such as the order of the lessons, prayers, vestments, etc.” (Tappert 249).

You will notice that the confessional standard is weekly celebration of the Holy Supper. This standard disappeared in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to the influences of Pietism and Rationalism. In addition to these influences, the Thirty Years War also played a part in this decline of worship at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but that is a subject is for another work.

Pietism stressed rebirth and regeneration in the life of the believer. The church was no longer seen as the community of those gathered around Word and Sacrament, but as the fellowship of those “reborn” and “regenerated.” Whereas Luther and the reformers stressed “the Word of God as address and promise, Law and Gospel, man’s response in faith, and justification as a real life event” (Precht, *Worship Resources*” 80), these were minimized by pietism. In addition:

The pietistic striving for personal consciousness of regeneration led to an under-evaluation of the means of grace, namely, the Word of God and the sacraments, the very core of corporate worship. Moreover, little importance was attached to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The pastor was more the accountable representative, witness, and example of the spiritual life of godliness. Preaching stressed the personal, revivalistic, admonitory elements in preference to sound doctrine. Stories of exemplary living and dying, the devotion of twice-born people played a prominent role. Where the sermon was based on the traditional pericopes, it was invariably supplemented with a Bible study. Moreover, the thoroughly regenerated, Pietists thought, did not need such crutches as the formal liturgy, the observance of the church year and Christian customs. Formal prayers gave way to extempore utterances by ministers as well as laity. Hymns based on the objective facts of God’s

redemptive love in Jesus Christ were discarded for hymns of human experience. The subjective and emotional held sway in corporate worship (Precht, ‘Worship Resources’ 80).

Pietism produced an unbalanced type of Christianity which overemphasized personal experience and life and conduct. By its strong opposition to “worldly pleasures” it encouraged a new type of asceticism that led to legalism and severe criticism of the “Un-awakened.” If personal Christianity was all-important, then the objective means of grace became less and less important. The historic liturgy of the church gave way to expressions of individual ideas and emotions.³ Pietism with its intensely personal limitations neither understood nor long used what remained of the rich and polished forms of the church’s historical liturgical system. (*Guide to Introducing Lutheran Worship* 14-15)

This author is profoundly convinced that much, if not most, of our current “contemporary” worship styles in the LC-MS today are nothing less than a “rebirth” and reintroduction of the heresies and consequent practices of pietism. In addition, at times, the attitudes revealed in contemporary settings indicate a sense of “superiority” ... that those who have discarded the Divine Liturgy are somehow more pious, progressive, and enlightened than their traditional counterparts. Of course, whenever we chose something as a better alternative, we must all beware of such attitudes, spoken or not.

Then there was **Rationalism**, or “The Enlightenment,” in which reason was pitted against revelation as the supreme authority.

Pietism, lacking intellectual strength, quickly played out its part—to be replaced by Rationalism or the “Enlightenment.” At least Pietism could be recognized as Christian. The Enlightenment moved beyond what it considered the “superstition” of Christianity. The ideal of happiness was substituted for the divine plan of redemption. Practical interests rather than doctrines or high spirituality were stressed in the pulpits. Scripture was minimized and the miracles explained by natural causes. Within the sphere of worship, Rationalism was wholly destructive. The service was mutilated beyond recognition. The church building became a mere place of assembly, the pulpit a lecture platform from which the minister gave moral instruction. The Sacrament of the Altar was reduced to an empty form and was no longer celebrated every Sunday and Holy Day but observed in Reformed fashion four times a year (*Guide to Introducing Lutheran Worship* 15).

Here, too, we see the reemergence of rationalism in contemporary pulpits. Exposition of the Scriptures is replaced with “life-improvement” and “self-help” lessons. Indeed, I visited an LC-MS parish in Ohio on Reformation Sunday and the sermon was a poorly crafted instruction, based on verses from Proverbs, on “How To Manage Your Money.” I also saw a video posted by an LC-MS church in a Detroit suburb, which boasted of their guest speaker, a woman, who had great expertise in the dangers of pornography. Then, there is the report from a family

³ Like so much of “contemporary worship” today.

member about a sermon in an LC-MS church in Indiana, where the “sermon” was an exposition of Rick Warren’s purpose driven theology, not Holy Scripture. My issue is not with these topics of instruction and seminars in other settings, but whether this is appropriate in the Divine Service; and I am convinced it is not! And most assuredly NOT when a parish violates the Confessions in allowing one to preach without a regular call (AC XIV); which no woman would possess. And these things are happening even in America’s so-called “heartland”!

The Church of the Augsburg Confession has obviously not fully recovered from these negative influences. It is my prayer that more and more parishes, which consider themselves confessional, will return to and follow the practice of the original Confessors. It is time to call the LC-MS back to unconditional subscription to the Lutheran Confessions so that our practice matches what we say we confess.

Occasionally, someone will quip, “these ceremonies are catholic.” Yes, they are correct (see above). These ceremonies are a part of the church catholic (universal), passed down since the apostolic period. Justin Martyr’s⁴ account of a Christian celebration of the Eucharist was written about A.D. 150.

Unfortunately, these kinds of comments are usually nothing more than emotional reactions and opinions based on likes and dislikes. Declaring accepted Lutheran ceremonies “Catholic” (meaning Roman) actually reveals an uninformed bias and perhaps an unteachable spirit. Again, let me assertively point out that the Reformation was not a revolt against the Roman Catholic Church, it’s culture, and all the beneficial things that had come down from the early church to the medieval period. The Reformation was a *purification*, a *purging* of that which was contrary to Holy Scripture and preserving that which was good and in accord with Scripture.

The Lutheran Reformers DID NOT remove all aspects of worship observed in the Roman Catholic Church of the sixteenth century. The quotes from the Book of Concord, described earlier, are clear in stating that which was retained by the Lutheran Reformers. I repeat: “To begin with, we must repeat the prefatory statement that we do not abolish the Mass but religiously keep and defend it. ... **We keep traditional liturgical forms, such as the order of the lessons, prayers, vestments, etc.**” (Ap XXIV.1) [emphasis mine]. Here it is clear that, in addition to liturgies and vestments, even the term MASS was retained. What the reformers DID was correct abuses and errors and remove those elements that were unscriptural and heretical. The first President of the LC-MS, Dr. C.F.W. Walther, also wrote:

“If you insist upon calling every element in the Divine Service ‘romish’ that has been used by the Roman Catholic Church, it must follow that the reading of the Epistle and Gospel is also ‘romish;’ Indeed, it is mischief to sing or preach in church, for the Roman Church has done this also...” (*translated from Der Lutheraner (the original predecessor to The Lutheran Witness), July 19,1853, Volume 9, Number 24, page 163*).

⁴ Justin Martyr (100-165) was an early Christian apologist.

Indeed:

Lutheran theology differs from Reformed theology in that it lays great emphasis on the fact that the Evangelical Church is none other than the medieval Catholic Church purged of certain heresies and abuses. The Lutheran theologian acknowledges that he belongs to the same visible Church to which Thomas Aquinas and Bernard of Clairvaux, Augustine and Tertullian, Athanasius and Irenaeus once belonged. The orthodox Evangelical Church is the legitimate continuation of the medieval Catholic Church (Sasse 102).

Traditional, confessional, and orthodox Lutheran Worship WILL (and should) more resemble a Mass in a Roman Catholic parish than services in a Reformed (Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc.) church. The present desire among many in the LC-MS to omit ceremony and thereby look less “Catholic” and more “Reformed” is NOT orthodox or confessional. In this writer’s opinion this “throws the baby out with the bath water.” A former LC-MS District president once wrote that this is not “your father’s Lutheran Church” (rephrasing an old Oldsmobile commercial). He is right for the most part. However, I do not agree that this is a good thing.

Guiding Principles

The principles guiding the use of ceremony are: reverence, love, order, humility and respect. We are instructed by the Spirit inspired writer of the Hebrews: *“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.”* (Hebrews 12:28 ESV, emphasis mine). It follows that if there is acceptable worship, there is also the possibility of unacceptable worship. If there is reverent worship, there is also the possibility of irreverent worship. In this author’s approach, irreverent worship is unacceptable worship. The sainted Dr. Peipkorn wrote: “...there is really only one rule of altar decorum: ‘Be reverent!’ Every other rule is simply a practical amplification of this basic charge.” (2)

What follows is a description of the historic practice and ceremonies of the church, and what I put into practice as I lead the Divine Liturgy.

The external ceremonies connected with worship serve a useful purpose. They serve to teach the young. They also identify the outward society of the church. They are vehicles of private and corporate devotion. However, if ceremonies are to have these values, they must be understood and explained. The duty to teach and patiently to explain the ceremonies of worship is the responsibility of the Christian family, the Christian school, and the church (Guide to Introducing Lutheran Worship 17, emphasis mine).

Important Distinctions

We differentiate the parts of the Divine Service as the **Ordinary** and the **Propers**. The **Ordinary** is the order of service we use on a given Sunday. In my present context we use Divine Service Setting One (*LSB* 151), Divine Service

Setting Three (*LSB* 184), Divine Service Setting Four (*LSB* 203), and Divine Service Setting Five (*LSB* 213). This commentary will explain Settings One, Two and Three, with a few comments pertaining the Setting Four.

The term **Propers** refers to the parts of the Divine Service which change each week. The Propers are:

- Introit
- Collect of the Day
- Scripture Readings
- Gradual
- Verse

Two terms assist in understanding different foci of the Divine Service: the **sacrificial** and **sacramental** acts in the Divine Service. When the presiding minister stands before the altar he faces the altar for all sacrificial acts. He faces the congregation for all sacramental acts. This signifies God's acts toward the congregation (sacramental) and the congregation's acts of worship and praise toward God (sacrificial).

When there is a free-standing altar, the presiding minister stands at the front of the altar until the Service of the Sacrament. Then he will move to the back of the altar and face the congregation. Luther himself preferred the free-standing altar. "Until the late Middle Ages the celebrant faced the people from the back of the altar/table. The introduction of relics being stacked behind the altar forced the celebrant to stand before the altar" (Guide to Introducing Lutheran Worship 28).

The Divine Service is in three parts: 1) The Service of Preparation; 2) The Service of the Word⁵; and 3) The Service of the Sacrament⁶.

⁵ Also known as "The Office of the Catechumens"

⁶ Also known as "The Office of the Faithful"

Chapter 2

THE SERVICE OF PREPARATION

The Rite

For about thousand years the **Service of Preparation** with Confession of Sins was not a part of the Divine Service. The Holy Supper and Confession were separated and the service began with the Introit. *Lutheran Book of Worship* indicates this having a Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness separate from the Divine Service (56).

The Service of Preparation was developed in the Middle Ages with an increasing emphasis on sin and unworthiness, and then only as a priest's personal preparation for the mass (the *Confiteor*, ninth cent.). Here the priests privately recited certain prayers of confession while vesting). As early as the tenth century the *Offene Schuld* ("open guilt/blame") was added to the service after the sermon. It included both confession of faith (creed) and a prayer of confession of sin and pardon (spoke by the priest in Latin), as well as the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Prayer of the Church (in German). The confession was not given to the entire congregation until the time of the Reformation (Pfatteicher 196).

Our Service of Preparation is an adaptation of the *Confiteor* and the *Offene Schuld*. By the sixteenth century elements of both were included in the Divine Service. The *Confiteor* became the *Stufengebet* (the pastor's private preparation before the service) when the service was in Latin. When the service was in German, the congregation would be led in the *Offene Schuld* at the beginning of the service. (Precht, "Confession" 364-6). In some places a service of Confession was held on Saturday evening, prior to the Divine Service the following day.

In the **Invocation**, we are not simply reminding ourselves that the God we worship is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are being named and blessed by the same Divine Name into which we are baptized. Our baptism is the foundation and impetus of our being gathered in worship.

The **Invitation to Confession**: Having acknowledged that we are gathered to worship the very God who put His Divine Name upon us in Holy Baptism, we are now invited to confess our sinfulness. In Setting Three the first versicle (*Psalms 124:8*) is from the orders of service in Nuremberg (1525), Mecklenberg (1552), and Wittenberg (1559). The second versicle (*Psalms 32:5*) was used in orders found in Strasbourg (1525), Reformation of Cologne (1543), and Austria (1571).

This portion of the Preparation in Settings One and Two are altered versions of the Brief Order of Confession and Forgiveness from *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978). *Lutheran Worship* (and now *LSB*) took the statement from *1 John 1:8-9* ("If we say we have no sin...") and made it a versicle and response.

Setting Four draws from materials from the Nürnberg Mass of Andreas Döber (1525). It also used materials from the SELK in Germany. The Pastor's address concludes with the words of the tax collector in Jesus' parable (*St. Luke 18:13*)

The **Silence** allows for personal and private application of the words of the introductory versicles. We examine ourselves and then publicly confess our sins.

The **General Corporate Confession** that follows is a prayer which has general statements of confession between the sinner and the Savior. In Setting

Three the Confession in the left column is from the Saxony Church Order of 1581. It has been in all Lutheran Service books from the *Kirchen-Agende* of 1856 (the first official service book of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod) until 1912 (*the Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*).

The Confession in the right column (setting Three, *LSB* 184) is from Philip Melancthon's Church Order for Mecklenberg (1545). This was later adopted in Wittenberg (1559) and was used in the Common Service of 1888. "The expression 'we are by nature sinful and unclean,' based on Article II, 1 of the Augsburg Confession, is unique to Lutheranism in its structuring of various preparatory rites. This confession is followed by the simple declaration of grace" (Precht, "Confession" 403).

The Confession in Settings One and Two comes from Divine Service II of *Lutheran Worship*. Although it was included in *Lutheran Book of Worship* it was not the original work of the ILCW. It resembles the penitential rite in the *Common Book of Prayer*. (Precht, "Confession" 404). The Commission on Worship added "we are by nature sinful and unclean" and "we justly deserve your present and eternal punishment." These statements were sorely absent in *LBW*. (See the explanation of the Commission's report of *LBW* issues in **ADDENDUM A: Lutheran Worship (LC-MS) in America**, page 56). The actual Confession in Setting Four is very brief.

The **Absolution** (left column in Settings One, Two, and Three; right column in Setting Four) is a general corporate announcement of forgiveness. This form "has its roots in private confession" (Guide to Introducing Lutheran Worship 22). Grammatically, this is an indicative-operative declaration. The Lutheran Reformers and the Lutheran Confessions know of no such "group" absolution. In the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions, the sacrament of Holy Absolution is only offered individually and personally. It is one-on-one between the penitent and pastor (or father-confessor). Therefore, I only use this form of absolution for individual absolution as I desire to be faithful to the Lutheran Confessions as contained in the Book of Concord. There is also concern that confession not become a mechanical matter.

"It is desirable to separate the confession of sins from the eucharist proper. **There are genuine problems involved in pronouncing absolution over an entire congregation.** Unbaptized persons may be present. But confession and holy absolution, because they are a return to baptism, are obviously meant only for those who have been baptized. There is also the possibility that persons may be present who, although they have been baptized, should not be absolved, for example, excommunicated persons.⁷ **The ideal solution to such problems is a return to the regular use of private confession and absolution.** (See the AC XI, XXV.13; Ap XI) (McClellan 23-24, emphasis mine).

Lang goes so far as to suggest the following:

⁷ or persons currently under church discipline.

... letting Private Confession and Absolution fall into disuse by substituting the General Confession before the Sunday service for it ... may betray a denial, or perversion, or a misunderstanding of the truths of the Christian faith” (“Ceremony” 12).

And Walther also informs:

On Luther's advice, in almost all of the church orders of the sixteenth century churches in fellowship with the Wittenberg church, the exclusive use of private confession and Absolution was established, and general confession was not permitted. In the 1542 church order, signed by Luther, it says: “If any preacher should assemble those who want to commune in the morning and speak a general Absolution to them: that should by no means be done.” (122, emphasis mine)

Why then, is the indicative-operative formula in our hymnal? I wish I had an explanation. It did not appear in any Lutheran worship books until *The Lutheran Hymnal* was published in 1941. It was then erroneously retained in subsequent hymnals, *Lutheran Worship* (1982) and *Lutheran Service Book* (2006). *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978) also does not have the indicative-operative corporate absolution.

Dr. Precht gives the following historical account:

Interestingly, the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (1912), the first official English hymnal of the Synod, predecessor to *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941), prescribed this second form of confession with its declaration of grace for The Order of Morning Service or the Communion. Thus it was used for both noncommunion and communion services. **The first form** (“O almighty God, merciful Father) **found no place in the 1912 hymnal.** In preparing and producing *The Lutheran Hymnal*, the Intersynodical Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics of the then Synodical Conference prescribed the first form with its indicative-operative absolution for the Order of Holy Communion, prescribing the Mecklenburg (1545, 1552) form with its simple declaration of grace for the service without Communion (Precht 403, emphasis mine).

It is noteworthy that the *Liturgy and Agenda* (1918), and the 1931 edition of the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* lacked such a formula, as did also the *Service Book and Hymnal* (1958) published by the American Lutheran Church; now a part of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).

Unfortunately, and perhaps an “unintended consequence,” the inclusion and use of a “corporate” absolution in the Divine Service has contributed to the overall decline of individual (or private) confession and absolution among Lutherans which is precisely what the Reformers spoke against. *The Augsburg Confession* (1530) XI.1 clearly states: **“It is taught among us that private absolution should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse”** (Tappert 34, emphasis mine). In addition, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession declares that “Absolution may properly be called a sacrament of penitence” (Ap XII.41). The Apology of the Augsburg Confession also clearly states “The genuine sacraments,

therefore, are Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution (which is the sacrament of penitence)" (Ap XIII.4).

Finally, I must also add Precht's quote of Christard Mahrenholz on the value of corporate confession:

Private confession and corporate confession complement each other and keep each other mutually healthy. Private confession helps us to take corporate confession seriously and to confess specific sins. Corporate confession encourages us also to beg for forgiveness of unstipulated sins and to renounce all tormenting self-respect. ("Confession" 360)

The **Declaration of Grace** in the right column (*LSB* 151, 167, and 185), announces the Gospel and offers to the congregation a solution to sin. Here the pastor declares that by God's grace and mercy, for the sake of Christ, our sins are forgiven. This was "originally intended as a general or group confession in preparation for public worship" (Guide to Introducing Lutheran Worship 34)).

The Declaration of Grace in Settings One and Two (right column, *LSB* 151 and 167), is a modification of the form used in Mecklenburg (1545, 1552). Brought over from *LBW*, the LC-MS Commission on Worship added the statement "may the Lord who has begun this good work in us bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" which is based on *Philippians 1:6*. Unfortunately, this text has been made optative, rather than declarative, as a direct quote would have been understood (e.g., "*the Lord who has begun this good work in us WILL bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Setting Four has a Prayer for Forgiveness (left column) in place of a declaration of grace.

When Lutheran Worship was introduced in 1982, congregations received the *Guide to Introducing Lutheran Worship*. With regard to the Holy Supper and corporate confession it stated: "Though it is neither theologically nor liturgically necessary that a congregational act of confession precede the Holy Communion, custom and pastoral discernment may indicate the need for it most of the time" (25). In my present context, and until such time when Private Confession is more widely practiced, we use the Confession and Declaration of Grace at every Divine Service.

The Ceremony

At the **Invocation** baptized worshippers may make the sign of the cross upon themselves as a remembrance of Holy Baptism.

The Sign of the Holy Cross is a confessional gesture. It is made with the hand disposed as for a blessing from the head ("My Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven") to the breast ("and was incarnate for me") to the right side ("and was crucified for me") to the left side ("and entered into my heart"). . . . This method of making the sign of the Holy Cross is older than the method in common use in the Roman Catholic Church where the right hand crosses from the left shoulder to the right (Piepkorn 5).

If we were to name the **Invocation** with its Latin name (as we do at other parts, (e.g., “Kyrie,” “Sanctus,” etc.) this would be “**In Nomine.**” There are differences of opinion as to whether the presiding minister faces the altar or the congregation. The rubrics for *Lutheran Service Book* allow for either. This is dependent on what the presiding minister believes is significant in this action. I believe, as do others, that this is more than simply invoking, or calling on God. The pastor here is naming God’s people with a baptismal blessing. *Lutheran Service Book* (184) includes the ceremonial rubric⁸: “*The sign of the cross ✠ may be made by all in remembrance of Baptism.*” For this reason, I face the people, place my left hand upon my breast, and make the sign of the cross over them with my right hand. This action matches the action of the Benediction at the end of the service. I like to think of the Invocation and Benediction as the “bookends” of the service. Now the people of God may call upon God and approach Him in the confession of sins, because they are baptized, and have His Divine Name.

Occasionally I am asked why the pastor holds his hand in a certain way (with the thumb and first two fingers extended and the last two fingers bent) when making the sign of the cross over the people. In this way we mimic the nailed hands of Christ as they are often depicted on the crucifix. This is a modification of the Roman Ceremony in which the hand is open and flat.

It is unfortunate that many Lutheran Naves are designed without kneelers in the pews. Where kneelers do exist, and for those who are able, kneeling is a proper posture for the **Confession** of sins. It signifies contrition and humility. Since I have the availability of the Altar rail, I regularly kneel.

In the **Declaration of Grace** in the right hand column (*LSB* 185, 151, 167)⁹, the presiding minister faces the congregation until he says, “He that believes and is baptized...” He then turns by his left to the altar and says “Grant this Lord, unto us all.” This change of position accents the “sacrificial” (see above) character of these words.

Whenever the presiding minister is facing the congregation and then turns to the altar he turns toward his left (to the Epistle side of the altar). He turns back to the congregation in reverse (toward his right). This is the remnant of ceremony that existed prior to the Reformation. When the presiding minister was assisted by a deacon, the deacon stood to the presiding minister’s left (as they faced the congregation). Turning toward the deacon was recognition of rank and a sign of respect as the presiding minister never turned his back on him.

To show that this is preparatory, the presiding minister leads this portion of the liturgy from outside the chancel area.

⁸ from the Latin *rubrica*, lit. a law with its title written in red; from the Latin *ruber*=“red,” an instruction.

⁹ This is a prayer for forgiveness in Setting Four (*LSB* 203, left column).

Conclusion

In the preparatory part of the Divine Service we have emphasized:

- the meaning and significance of our baptism. As baptism is the beginning of the Christian life and the foundation on which that life in Christ is built, so we are here reminded of the Divine Name into which we are baptized.
- the need for daily confession ... of daily dying to the old Adam and rising in the new life. It is therefore appropriate that we begin the Divine Service in this way.

Chapter 3

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD: Part 1

The Rite

After the preparatory rite the Divine Service now properly begins with the **Introit** as the start of the Service of the Word. “Introit” is a Latin word meaning “he enters into.” The Introit uses Psalm, Scripture and liturgical verses to announce the theme of the day.

Lutheran Service Book gives the option to use a Psalm or Hymn. This work will discuss using the appointed Introit.

The Ancient Church began its chief Service with the Psalms; singing them *antiphonally*, i.e., by two choruses of the congregation, or by the precentor and the whole congregation; or *hypophonically*, the precentor merely beginning, and the congregation repeating his last words (*App. Constl.*, ii., 57); or *epiphonically*, the congregation responding in fixed doxologies. By the time of Basil the Great this song had been naturalized in the Eastern Church, and it was rendered familiar in the West, especially through Ambrose, and rapidly spread there. The Roman bishop Coelestinus I. (422-432) ordained that on every Sunday and Festival, while the congregation was assembling, an appropriate Psalm, called *Introitus*, should be sung antiphonally by a double choir (*Liber pontif.*, c. 42; Bona, *de rebus liturg.*, p. 312: *olim integer Psalmus cani consuevit*). Gregory the Great, in his antiphonal zeal, which extended to all the parts of the Service, went a step further, and made the Introit to consist of only certain verses of a Psalm. Gregory the Great, says Bona, selected one Antiphon from them for the Introit, and others for the Responsory, the Offertory, and the Communion. Introits taken from the Psalms were called *regular*; and the few taken from other books of the Bible were called *irregular*. A series of Sundays before and after Easter (*Invocavit* to *Exaudi*) got their names from the first words of their Introits. (Horn, “Outlines” 56-7)

The first verse of the Introit is the antiphon. The antiphon is a refrain which begins and ends the Introit (or Psalm). The final antiphon is sung after the **Gloria Patri** (“Glory to the Father”), also known as the “Lesser Doxology.” This is traditionally chanted or said in conclusion of a psalm or canticle. It dates back as far as the seventh century. In addition to being an ascription of praise, it is also a confession of the Holy Trinity (Precht, *Hymnal Companion*, 15). The Gloria Patri is omitted from the Introit and Psalm during Holy Week.

Normally, the **Gloria Patri** is sung before the final antiphon. But in Setting Three it appears to stand alone after the Introit. Some parishes make the mistake of chanting or speaking the Gloria Patri in the body of the Introit and then repeating the Gloria Patri by singing the version in the Hymnal. Another mistake, is to omit the Gloria Patri from the Introit and sing the hymnal version afterward. I see two better options.

- One is to chant the beginning antiphon and verses of the Introit, then sing the Gloria Patri in the hymnal and afterward chant the final antiphon

before singing the Kyrie. I would recommend using Psalm Tone C which is the same Key as the Gloria Patri (*LSB* 186).

- The other option would be to chant the entire Introit, with the Gloria Patri, using the same Psalm tone throughout, skipping the musical version of the Gloria Patri in the hymnal, and continuing with the Kyrie.

The music of the Liturgy has been chanted since the early centuries of the Christian Church. In fact, many musical settings in our hymnals are modified Gregorian, Anglican and Scottish chants. The Lutheran Reformers made every effort to retain the chanting of the Psalms. Our hymnal continues this very fine tradition, as each Psalm is marked for chanting (*LSB* xxvi). As Lutheran people have chanted for centuries, our worship includes the option of chanting by pastors and assisting ministers. Chanting was mostly dormant from the introduction of *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941) until it was restored in *Lutheran Worship* (1982). One reason for this is that *The Lutheran Hymnal* was published in 1941 while *The Music for the Liturgy* with all the music for chanting did not come out until 1944. The separation of the chant music from the hymnal, together with the three year wait for such music, undoubtedly hindered the practice until it disappeared in many congregations.

For the leader who is able to chant, not chanting deprives the congregation of a liturgical experience that is rightfully due. I have prepared a booklet "*Chanting In the Evangelical Lutheran Church.*" This is available in the church Narthex, and online at our website www.belctx.org. A simple rubric is "chanting follows chanting and speaking follows speaking." For example, if the congregation's "Amen" is chanted, then the presiding minister chants the collect. If the Presiding minister speaks the collect, the congregation should speak the "Amen." This is why, occasionally, I will chant the Gospel acclamations (see p. 28 below) in the Divine Service when the congregation's response is chanted.

The **Kyrie** (from "Kyrie, eleison" or "Lord, have mercy") is a cry to the Lord for help and strength. In ancient times, the crowds would shout as the king entered their town. The church has taken over this prayer to greet its King Jesus Christ in the Divine Service. As the people long ago expected help from their king, so we Christians expect blessings from our Savior. This is our prayer that God would never stop offering that mercy we heard about just few moments ago in the declaration of grace. It is our recognition that we live only by His mercy, and we know that our only hope lies in His continuing mercy.

Setting Three is a threefold Kyrie while Settings One and Two use the Ektene¹⁰ form of the Kyrie. This form came to the Western Mass from the Eastern Church. This became a litany¹¹ in which petitions would be introduced by the deacon and the congregation would respond to each one by praying "Kyrie, eleison." Historically, we find this form in use in the Roman church already in the fourth century. It appears that during the time of Gregory the Great (sixth century), that only the "Kyrie, eleison" was used without the supplications, hence the threefold form in Setting Three.

¹⁰ Greek for "earnest" or "fervent"

¹¹ From the Greek, *litaneia* or "supplication"

The **Hymn of Praise~Gloria In Excelsis** (Latin for “*Glory To God In The Highest*”), also called “The Greater Doxology,” is an elaboration of the song of the angels over the fields of Bethlehem, which appears in *St. Luke 2:14*. The opening refrain is followed by three stanzas of praise:

1. The first to God the Father,
2. the second to God the Son in His relationship to the Father.
3. The third, also addressed to Christ, includes a reference to the Holy Spirit and returns at the end to the theme of the glory of the Father, echoing the opening refrain.

The music of the “Gloria” in Divine Service Setting Three, is an arrangement of the OLD SCOTTISH CHANT. The ICET texts in Settings One and Two come from the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978). The music in Setting One was composed by Richard Hillert. The music in Setting Two was composed by Robert Nelson.

The Gloria also came into the Western Mass from the Eastern church in about the fourth century. According to tradition, it was first used by the Pope at a Christmas Midnight Mass. This is not unlikely since the hymn is based on the angels’ announcement of the Nativity. From there it’s use on Sundays and Feast days was authorized by Pope Symacchus in the late fifth or early sixth century; though for many centuries using it at Mass was the privilege of Bishops alone (Cobb 183).

In Settings One and Two there is a second option for the Hymn of Praise: “Worthy is Christ.” These two contemporary hymns¹² celebrate the resurrection and are based on *Revelation 5:9-13; 19:49*. The text, written by John W. Arthur, was released in the 1970 publishing of the Commission on Worship’s *Contemporary Worship 2* (See Addendum A, Lutheran Worship (LC-MS) in America, page 51). It is reminiscent of the *Dignus Est Agnus* in the Cantic section of *The Lutheran Hymnal* (122). Setting Four provides a new text, written by Stephen P. Starke with a tune that is a German folksong: ES FLOG EIN KLEINS WALDVÖGELEIN.

In Setting Three the Kyrie and Hymn of Praise are both used. The Gloria is omitted during Advent and Lent due to the preparatory and penitential aspects of these seasons (except for Festivals during these seasons and on Holy Thursday). Since this setting follows Luther’s Formula Missae, this section remains invariable. However, in Settings One and Two, the Kyrie and Hymn of Praise are optional and seasonal. Some mistakenly and incorrectly use the “Gloria” for non-sacramental services and “Worthy is Christ” for sacramental services. However, the latter is a festival cantic and is to be used during the Easter season and at Festivals and Feasts. The following usage chart may help:

¹² Setting One was composed by Richard Hillert, music professor at Concordia University Chicago; and Setting Two was composed by Ronald Nelson, organist and composer at Westwood Lutheran Church, St. Louis Park, MN. Both settings are from *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978).

<u>Season</u>	<u>Kyrie</u>	<u>Hymn of Praise</u>
Advent	✓	----
Festivals during Advent	----	Gloria in Excelsis
Christmas – Epiphany 2	✓	Gloria in Excelsis
Sundays after the Epiphany	----	Gloria in Excelsis
Transfiguration	✓	Gloria in Excelsis
Lent	✓	----
Festivals during Lent	----	Gloria in Excelsis
Sunday of the Passion	----	----
Holy Thursday	✓	Gloria in Excelsis ¹³
Easter Season and Pentecost	✓	Worthy is Christ
Trinity Sunday	✓	Worthy is Christ
Pentecost Season	----	Gloria in Excelsis
All Saints	----	Worthy is Christ
Lesser Festivals	----	Worthy is Christ
Christ the King	✓	Worthy is Christ

The **Salutation** is not merely a greeting, but a bestowing of the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon the people. It is not a pious wish for the Lord’s presence among us. It does not begin with “may...”. It is an indicative declaration of blessing. We exchange prayers for God’s presence among us as pastor and people speak to each other of the presence that gives our being together its meaning.

The **Collect of The Day** is a bridge serving both as the conclusion of the entrance rite and as a preparation for the readings. The Collect gets its name from the ancient practice of gathering or “collecting” prayer requests from the people at worship. Today we use it as the prayer which collects the thoughts and theme of the day, as expressed in the Introit and Scripture Readings, in a unified petition brought by the pastor on behalf of the people. The collect should not be prayed in unison by the whole congregation (see comments on the ceremony on page 25). The collects for the seasons of the church year have come to us from the rich treasury of the church’s heritage.

The Ceremony

The **Introit** gives the preparatory part of the service more significance since now, for the first time, the Pastor “enters” the chancel area and goes to the altar. As he approaches the altar he may pray *sotto voce* (softly, inaudibly): “I will go the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness.” In some parishes, the presiding minister (and assistants) will genuflect and kiss the altar as they arrive at the altar for the Introit. Ceremonially, genuflecting is the same as bowing, it is an act of profound reverence, respect and humility. Kissing the altar is a sign of affection. The presiding minister may turn by his right and move to the missal stand at the Epistle corner of the altar and then chant the introit. “Since the introit as actually the beginning of the service proper, the presiding minister may make

¹³ This is particularly appropriate because of the connection between the Holy Supper and the Incarnation. This is expressed in the Hymn of the Day “*O Lord, We Praise Thee*” (LSB 617) in the words “May Thy body, Lord, Born of Mary...”

the sign of the cross on himself as he reads the first words of the introit” (McClellan 38).

In an old Norwegian custom the arms are crossed over the chest during the **Kyrie**, otherwise, the hands are held together in the customary posture for prayer.

During the **Gloria in Excelsis**, the presiding minister chants the first phrase in the “orans”¹⁴ position, bringing his hand together when the congregation joins singing. The presiding minister and congregation mimic the biblical narrative as the presiding minister alone chants the opening refrain (the solo angel) followed by the congregation joining together in praise (the angelic chorus).

In Setting Three the presiding minister may bow his head at the words “worship Thee,” “give thanks,” “Jesus Christ,” and “receive our prayer.” The sign of the cross may be made at the conclusion at the words “Thou only, O Christ.” In Settings One and Two: the presiding minister may bow his head at the words “we worship you,” “we give You thanks,” “Lord Jesus Christ,” and “receive our prayer.” The sign of the cross may be made at the conclusion at the words “Most High, Jesus Christ.”

The presiding minister turns by his right, faces the congregation and extends his hands in the blessing of the **Salutation** at which time the people bow their heads. Then the people respond with a blessing to the pastor at which point he bows his head.

As common as the congregational response “and also with you” has become, since the later part of the twentieth century, it fails to reflect the intent of the original response “and with your spirit.” The congregation’s response to the pastor is more than the return of a simple greeting. In the original, reference to the “spirit” was meant to be an acknowledgment by the assembled congregation that the man who spoke this blessing upon them was truly speaking for the Lord and speaking the very blessing of God upon them. In *Lutheran Service Book*, the literal translation is only used when it is chanted (namely, Setting Three, Matins and Vespers). The general response “and also with you” is used (both spoken and chanted) everywhere else, primarily because this has been so imprinted in our memories.

Luther calls the salutation a “little ordination.” The people give the pastor their blessing and “permission” to go forward and act on their behalf. It is akin to tying the rope around the High Priest’s ankle when he goes in the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament Tabernacle and Temple. In prayer, the celebrant is about to enter into the Most Holy Place for the people. Their blessing upon him signifies their desire for him to go and fulfill his ordination vows. This is the primary reason the collect should not be prayed in unison by the whole congregation. Then he will pray the **Collect** holding his hands in the orans posture for prayer.

The Introit, Kyrie, Gloria, and Salutation/Collect became the traditional entrance rite of the Christian Church. This reflects what used to be the elaborate entrance the Pope used to make into the churches of Rome. The Entrance Psalm, which in the Introit shrank to the fragment of a Psalm, with the response and the Gloria Patri, and the Kyrie, and the Gloria In Excelsis were all sung in procession;

¹⁴ orans - From the Latin “praying” or “pleading” – a prayer posture with elbows to the side, hands outstretched, and palms up.

the Collect was then said at the conclusion of the entrance when all were in their places.

Note: the congregation remains standing from the Introit through the Collect.

Chapter 4

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD: Part 2

The Rite

In the middle ages the **Old Testament Reading** was deleted from the Divine Service. It was also absent in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941). In recent years its use has become more and more prevalent. Our Christian faith is built on and springs out of Old Testament roots. We hear a Word from the Lord as it was given to people long ago, but that is still important for us today. We remember and are instructed by the God of our fathers. This reading usually relates to the Gospel for the day. During the Easter season, the Old Testament Reading is replaced by a reading from *Acts*.

The **Gradual** is an arrangement of Psalm and Scripture verses for each season of the church year. “Gradual” comes from the Latin *gradus* meaning “step,” Originally this was chanted from a step of the altar. The Gradual is a response to the first reading and a bridge to the second reading. It is a traditional part of the liturgy and should not be omitted, unless a **Psalm** is spoken or chanted in its place. In the Early Church there is evidence that psalms were read between the reading at the time of Tertullian (first and second centuries). We do not, however have clear evidence that this was a responsive reading until the fourth century. This practice of singing between the Scripture readings goes back to the Hebrew Synagogue where Psalms were sung between the readings.

In our hymnal, the Gradual is different from its historic form. The term “Gradual” is now generic and designates the Scripture and Psalm verses between the readings. Originally, however, this consisted of two parts; “the first part was sung between the Old Testament lesson [sic] and Epistle, the second between the Epistle and the Gospel. When the number of lessons was conventionally reduced to two¹⁵, the two separate settings were combined into one” (Piepkorn 21).

The **Sequence Hymn**: “Traditionally a sequence hymn was sung after the Gradual psalmody. Technically a Sequence Hymn is one that has been written specifically for this point in the service” (Piepkorn 21).

The **Epistle** is usually a portion of one of the letters of one of the Apostles, and is read in the Divine Service today just as it was read in the first century to its first recipients. At times this reading is from the Acts of the Apostles or the Revelation of St. John and is called the Second Reading rather than the Epistle.

The formula for announcing the readings is very simple. In *Lutheran Service Book* the formula is unfortunate. I prefer “The Old Testament reading for [Sunday in the Church year] is written in ...” (rather than “is from”). This reinforces the teaching that the Word of God was “*written for our instruction*” (*Romans 15:4*). It is not necessary to include the verse locations of the readings.

The appointed **Alleluia** and **Verse**. In the fourth century (Milan) the Alleluia was sung during the Gospel Procession. In the Mozarabic Rite of the sixth–eighth centuries (in what is now Spain and Portugal), it was sung after the Gospel. In the mid-sixth century, in Rome, it was only used at Easter, while in Africa it was used

¹⁵ as in *The Lutheran Hymnal*

every Sunday. By the sixth century the Alleluia was sung in Rome for the entire Easter season. Its extension to further use is attributed to Gregory the Great.

In Setting Three, the congregation may chant just the Alleluia (which means “praise the LORD”) or chant it before and after the verse. The verse is chanted by the pastor (or may be chanted by a cantor or a choir). There are special verses appointed for each Sunday of the Church Year and they match the theme of the readings and the Gospel of the Day. These provide a bridge connecting the first two readings and the Holy Gospel. During the Easter Season, we may use a nine-fold Alleluia in Divine Services Three and Four. “The Alleluias are sung at the beginning, middle, and end of the appointed verses” (LSB: Liturgy Accompaniment Edition 189).

In Settings One and Two the Common Alleluia and Verse or the optional Verse for Lent are ICET¹⁶ liturgical texts with music composed by Hillert (Alleluia Verse in Setting One and Lenten Verse in Settings One and Two) and Nelson (Alleluia Verse in Setting Two). The Verses in these settings come from *Lutheran Worship* (1982).

In the **Holy ✠ Gospel** we hear a reading from the accounts of Jesus’ life and message, death and resurrection. When the Gospel is announced the people greet Christ, who comes in the Gospel, with the acclamation “Glory be to Thee, O Lord.” When the reading is concluded the people sing out again in joy, “Praise be to Thee, O Christ.”

In the **Creed** (from the Latin “credo,” meaning “I believe”) we express our unity in the faith -- the core beliefs confessed by the Holy Christian (i.e., catholic) Church wherever it is found. The use of the Creed was originally in connection with the Sacrament of Baptism. But as the church increasingly found herself battling Christological heresies it found its way in to the Divine Service (or Mass). The Nicene Creed has traditionally been associated with the celebration of Lord’s Supper. The Apostles’ Creed is used at other services. If Holy Baptism is celebrated within the service, the Apostles’ Creed is confessed at the Baptism and the Nicene Creed is also confessed at this point in the service. If there is a Baptism but no Lord’s Supper, the Apostles’ Creed is omitted here to avoid needless duplication of the same creed.

The Ceremony

“Historically, none of the **Readings** at the Divine Service were read from the Lectern, which was reserved for use at ... Matins and Vespers, if there was a lectern at all. ... Actually the lectern is an ornament that a Lutheran church can well dispense with ...” (Piepkorn 19). Anciently (and today in churches with no lectern) these were read from the “horns” (corners) of the altar. In the Old Testament, the altar in the Tabernacle and Temple actually had horns at each corner. The corners curved up to keep the sacrificial animals from rolling off. We no longer have such corners, but have retained the nomenclature. The Old Testament and Epistle were traditionally read from the Epistle side (the right front

¹⁶ International Consultation on English Texts (1969-1975). This is a group of English-speaking scholars from major denominations who translated common texts apart from the Roman church

corner as one faces the altar). Then the Holy Gospel was read from the Gospel “horn” (the left front corner as one faces the altar). Then the sermon on the Holy Gospel was preached from the pulpit. For this reason, I find it interesting and unfortunate that most Lutheran chancels have the pulpit on the Epistle side, rather than the Gospel side of the altar.

The pastor should not make eye contact with the congregation as he reads. It is important to note that this is God’s Word, not his. At the conclusion of the reading he may pause before he looks up to the congregation saying: “This is the Word of the Lord.”

It is inappropriate for the pastor to make any interpretation to any of the readings whether before, during or after a reading. In this way we preserve the perspicuity of the Scripture and avoid undue human influence upon the work of the Holy Spirit. The people of God are allowed to hear the Word of God as it stands. There is a time for the interpretation of God’s Word and this is the Sermon (or Homily).

The reading of Scripture is a time of awe-filled attention and reverence. Movement in and out of the Nave and private conversations are inappropriate; and show disrespect to our Lord, the pastor, and our fellow worshipers. That Almighty GOD would even give us His Word to read and hear, is a gracious gift to be received with humble and reverent gratitude. *“The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him” (Habakkuk 2:20).*

The pastor and any assistants face the altar during the **Gradual (or Psalm)**, and the **Alleluia and Verse**. The people stand in honor of Christ as they prepare to hearing the Gospel. This marks the Holy Gospel as distinct from the other readings because now we hear the very words and deeds of Jesus Himself.

At the announcement of the **Holy ✠ Gospel** the presiding minister may make the sign of the cross upon his forehead, lips and heart. This corresponds to the prayer: “The Lord be in my mind, on my lips and in my heart, that I may worthily proclaim the Gospel.” If a deacon reads the Gospel, he may ask the presiding minister for a blessing, at which time he will make the sign of the cross on the deacon’s forehead, lips and heart and pray the same prayer.

There may be a Gospel processional, especially on Festivals, when the crucifer and taperers lead the officiant into the midst of the nave. This signifies that when the Gospel is read Christ is in the midst of the people and that this Gospel is taken into the world. During the Gospel processional the Book is held high. When the Processional Cross is used (carried by crucifer), it leads the Gospel processional into the Nave. The crucifer may be flanked by taperers (acolytes carrying processional torches/candles) which proclaim Jesus and His Word as the “Light of the world.”

After the reading of the Holy Gospel the presiding minister may kiss the book with the prayer spoken *sotto voce*: “By the words of the Gospel may our sins be done away.”

Since the **Creed** is a solemn confession the presiding minister leads it from the altar. Any assistants also face the altar. The congregation may join the presiding minister in the ceremony of the Creed. “As the celebrant ... says, ‘God,’ he may bow his head. He may also bow his head at the Holy Name of Jesus and,

if he wishes, at the words ‘worshiped and glorified.’ He may bow from the waist at the words, ‘And was incarnate’ and remain bowed through the words, ‘Was crucified also for us;’ he raises himself erect again before the words, “Under Pontius Pilate.’ (The explanation given for this was that the soldiers of the Roman procurator knelt and bowed before Our Lord in mockery during His Passion)” (Piepkorn 26).

Bowing during the creed at ‘*And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit ... and was crucified*’ “expresses reverent awe over God’s grace in becoming man in order to redeem us. Luther speaks at length about the meaning of these words and how we should show our appreciation and reverence for the Incarnation” (Lang, “Ceremony” 69). He illustrates this with a colorful story of the devil assaulting a “coarse and brutal lout ... so hard it made his head spin” for standing “there like a stick of wood” (Lang, “Ceremony” 69-70)

We make the sign of the cross upon ourselves at the end of the Creed signifying our confession that it is only by the cross of Christ that we will be a part of “*the life ✠ of the world to come.*”

Chapter 5

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD: Part 3

The Rite

The **Hymn of The Day** is the chief hymn of the service. This hymn follows the theme of the readings and sets the stage for the sermon. The singing of hymns has been traditionally been a strong feature of Lutheran worship. Since the Reformation, Lutherans have been noted for their interest in the singing of hymns of high quality embracing a large number of traditions, particularly that of the chorale. Luther himself stimulated interest in hymn singing by writing the words and music for many hymns. In fact, until the time of Luther, congregational singing was non-existent; all chanting and singing was only by priests, monks, and choir.

The Lutheran Church follows the advice of the apostle Paul to teach and admonish *“one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16).*

The **Sermon** or **Homily**¹⁷ is the living voice of God’s Word today. As God’s appointed speaker and the chief teacher of the congregation, the pastor sheds light on the meaning of the Scriptures and shows how their message applies to the contemporary situation. The Sermon is not just a number of off-hand remarks, but a carefully prepared proclamation of God’s message of salvation, repentance, and growth in faith. We believe that pastors “do not represent their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the church’s call, as Christ testifies (*St. Luke 10:16*), ‘He who hears you hears me.’ When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they do so in Christ’s place and stead” (Ap VII and VIII 28).

“Yes, I hear the sermon; but who is speaking? The minister? No indeed. You do not hear the minister. True, the voice is his; but my God is speaking the Word which he preaches or speaks. Therefore I should honor the Word of God that I may become a good pupil of the Word” [What Luther Says 1125].

The Sermon was an integral part of the liturgy in the earliest days of the church, and again, came from the Jewish practice of expounding the Scriptures in the Synagogue. We have New Testament evidence of this in the practice of St. Paul (cf., *Acts 13:15 ff*).

The **Votum**: *“The peace of God which passes all understanding” (Philippians 4:7)* is an optional benediction at the conclusion of the Sermon which brings the Liturgy of the Word of God to a close according to tradition. In *Lutheran Service Book*, however, the Liturgy of the Word continues through the Prayers, and so using or deleting the Votum is optional. I conclude sermons with both the Votum and the Trinitarian formula.

The **Offering**: As a response to God’s goodness, Christians offer their gifts and their very lives to Him.

¹⁷ from the Greek *homilia*, “companionship by communication” or “speaking with”. Used in 1 Corinthians 15:33, St. Luke 24:14, and in Acts 24:26. The discipline of sermon preparation and delivery is called “homiletics.”

“One of the functions of the royal priesthood is to offer sacrifices. These consist of sacrifices of self, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. We express this offering also in the material gifts of money, in which are included the bread and wine used in the Sacrament of the Altar” (Lang, “Ceremony” 101).

The Offering is placed in the Lutheran service after the proclamation of the Word of God, for it is only after He has spoken to us that we can properly respond to Him. We also correctly call it the “**Offering**” and not “The Collection.” We are freely “offering” our gifts to God, they are not being “taken” or “collected.” In our understanding and practice the offering replaces the “altar call” of the reformed churches (having an emphasis on “decision theology”). It is in this action, in the presentation of a tangible gift, that we respond to the Word read and proclaimed, giving and re-committing ourselves to God and His mission in the world. This is why “every-Sunday” proportionate giving is the biblical pattern. In this way our offerings are always a part of our worship, they are our weekly action response to the hearing of God’s Word. Each Sunday we hear God’s Word and each Sunday we respond.

The **Offertory** in Setting Three, a versification of *Psalm 51:10-12*, is sung as the gifts are presented, and asks God to prepare us for renewed living to His glory. We sing the offertory to express gratitude for all of God’s blessings, dedicate ourselves to God, and request His continued blessings. The Words “Create in me a clean heart” not only help us to understand the liturgical meaning and action of the offering but also assist us in preparing for the Service of the Sacrament. The tune of the Offertory is from a melody by J. A. Freylinghausen. In my current context the order of the offering and offertory as found in *Lutheran Service Book* is reversed. We do this because, historically, the Offertory followed the offering. The order in *LSB* is an unfortunate carry over from *TLH*.

In Setting One, the Offertory is a versification of *Psalm 116:12-13, 17-19* which first appeared in *Worship Supplement* (1968). The offertory “Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful,” also found in both *LBW* and *LW*, was removed from Settings One and Two, but appears as a hymn in the liturgical sections (*LSB* 955). The text was written by John W. Arthur. The tune was composed by Richard Hillert.

The **Prayer of The Church** should also be understood as a response to the proclamation of the Word of God. It is part of our ongoing responsibility as the baptized people of God to pray for ourselves and for the world, bringing petitions, intercessions and thanksgiving before His throne of grace. Here we lay before God our prayer for “the whole people of God ... and for all people according to their needs.”

As has been customary since ancient times, members are invited to offer petitions and thanksgivings through prayer requests. The whole congregation responds after each portion of the prayers to underscore that the prayers are of the church, and not just of the pastor or worship leader. We typically use two responses: one is called “responsive prayer” e.g., **P** Lord in your mercy; **C** **Hear our prayer**; and the other is the “Ektene”¹⁸ response, e.g., **P** Let us pray to the

¹⁸ Greek for “earnest” or “fervent”

Lord **☩** Lord, have mercy. A third form is the Bidding Prayer. This had “its origins in the prayer of the faithful from the Early Church. In offering each bid, the deacon would bring the needs of the people before God and whole Church. The priest, symbolizing the intercessory work of Christ, spoke the prayer itself, while the people affirmed it with the “Amen” (*Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book* 406). The prayers are concluded by saying the final commendation, to which the people respond with a forceful “AMEN.” St. Paul indicates, in *1 Corinthians 14:16*, that it was the practice of the church to audibly speak such an “Amen” to prayers and thanksgivings.

The Ceremony

If the **Hymn of the Day**, or any other hymn, has a concluding Trinitarian doxology (marked with the symbol of a triangle in *LSB*), all stand in reverence and Praise to the Triune God.

It is most appropriate that the **Sermon** is preached from the pulpit. This gives the proclamation of the Word of God an architectural anchor. This distinguishes the preaching of God’s Word from a lecture, presentation in a business meeting, a casual or even motivational speech. The sermon is also not a break from but the continuation of the liturgy during which the presence of God is still recognized.

As the **Offerings** are received, instrumental or choral music is played, and the presiding minister prepares the Lord’s Table and himself for the sacramental meal. It is at this point that I go to the sacristy and put on the chasuble¹⁹ (a traditional Eucharistic vestment). Some wear the chasuble for the whole service. I chose to wear it after the sermon for a number of reasons: 1) it is a visual cue that in the transition from the Office of the Catechumens (Word) to the Office of the Faithful (Sacrament) something extraordinary is about to take place; 2) this was the example set by my catechist, Rev. W. A Kimberley (†); and 3) this is an option set forth in a rubric of the *Worship Supplement* (1969): “While the monetary offerings of the people are being gathered, ... the ministers may don vestments appropriate to the celebration of the Eucharist” (*Worship Supplement* 65).

In preparing the Lord’s Table, the presiding minister will remove the veil from the sacred vessels. The veil is a reminder of St. Paul’s words that we “*see in a mirror dimly*” (*1 Cor. 13:12*) and are not capable of fully comprehending the mystery of Christ’s bodily presence in the Holy Supper. The veil is folded in thirds, and then again in thirds and set aside. The paten²⁰ and chalice²¹ are uncovered, and the chalice is filled with wine.

Some parishes provide a *lavabo*²² for the presiding minister to wash his hands. This is both practical and ceremonial. The Lavabo ceremony, which includes the recitation of the Psalm *Lavabo* (Psalm 26, or at least verses 6-8: “*I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD, proclaiming*

¹⁹ For more information on the chasuble, please consult the booklet I have also prepared: “Vestments in the Evangelical Lutheran Church.” This is available in the narthex, and online www.belctx.org.

²⁰ from Latin *patina*, “pan, shallow dish”

²¹ from Greek *kulix*, “cup”

²² Latin, “I shall wash,” from which we derive the word “lavatory”

thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds. O LORD, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells”), goes back to the fourth century, being described in lectures of St. Cyril. As the celebrant recites the Psalm he may wash his hands over the lavabo, or a server (with the lavabo in his left hand and a towel over his left arm), may pour water from a cruet onto his hands held over the lavabo. The presiding minister washes and dries with the towel, returning the towel to the server’s arm or the credence table. He then finishes reciting the Psalm concluding with the **Gloria Patri** (see page 21).

As a part of his personal preparation for receiving the Holy Eucharist, the presiding minister uses this time to pray the following (*sotto voce*):

- ✠ “O Lord Jesus Christ, Who said to Your Apostles, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you,” regard not my sins, but the faith of Your Church, and grant to her that Peace and Unity which is according to Your will, Who lives and reigns one God, now and forever. Amen.”
- ✠ “O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, Who according to the will of the Father, and by the cooperation of the Holy Ghost, has by Your death given life to the world; deliver me by this Your Most Holy Body and Blood from all mine iniquities and from every evil, and make me ever to cleave unto Your Commandments, and suffer me never to be separated from You, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns one God, now and forever. Amen.”
- ✠ “Let the partaking of Your Body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I, though unworthy, do presume to receive, according to Your lovingkindness be profitable to me for the receiving of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns one God, now and forever. Amen.”

In the early church it was at the **Offertory** that the people brought food and other gifts for the poor and for the support of the clergy. They came in an offertory procession singing Psalm verses. The custom was to dedicate these gifts to God’s service. What we have in the offertory today is our expression of this ancient tradition and ceremonially helps us understand that in presenting our gifts before God they are dedicated for use to His service.

It is appropriate that the ushers reverence the altar when receiving the **offering** plates and returning them to the acolyte or pastor. When receiving the plates from the ushers after the offering the acolyte or pastor should also reverence the altar before placing the offerings on the credence shelf. The offering plates should not be placed on the altar.

In Settings One, Two and Four, *LSB* gives the option to exchange “the peace of the Lord” after the **Prayers of the Church** (*LSB* 159, 175, 207). Even though not practiced in my present context, this is a welcome change from the peace being shared in the service of the sacrament (as it was in *LW*) which effectually destroyed the solemnity and reverence which “The Great Thanksgiving” (see page 37) had just created. This was especially true in parishes where unnecessary disorder and commotion was created when people left their places, roaming and

meandering about the nave rather than just greeting those nearest to them. This option is also more in line with the practice of the early church where the “Kiss of Peace,” as it was known, came before the offering. This was done in keeping with the biblical injunction to be reconciled before bringing offerings to the altar (*St. Matthew 5:24*).

As early as the middle of the second century, the Service of the Sacrament followed the Service of the Word. But the transition between the two involved the exit of any who were not communicants. They would leave the assembled congregation and the deacons and subdeacons would close the doors (hence the term “closed” communion) and stand guard. This happened before the prayers and the exchange of peace. Later they were not dismissed until after the prayers. The dismissal of the catechumens still remains in the Byzantine rite.

Chapter 6

THE SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT: Part 1

The Rite

We now reach the climax of the Divine Liturgy in the celebration of the Holy Supper. The following parts of the liturgy help the worshipers partake of the Holy Sacrament thoughtfully, thankfully, and joyfully.

The Confessions call the Sacrament of the Altar by a variety of names. It is known as the Supper, the Lord's Supper, the Holy Supper, the Sacrament, the most venerable Sacrament, the Holy Sacrament, the Sacrament of the Altar, the Mass. Less frequently it is also called Communion, the Lord's Body, the Eucharist, the Liturgy, the Synaxis²³, and Agape. Surprisingly the construct "Holy Communion," the current favorite of Lutherans in the United States, never occurs in that form in the Confessions. It seems to have been imported into the Church of the Augsburg Confession from the Church of England. It is with good reason that Lutheran Worship has reverted to the name Divine Service (Gottesdienst) for the chief service of the church. (Guide to Introducing Lutheran Worship 19-20)

Preface means "introduction." This is the beginning of "The Great Thanksgiving" which continues through the Lord's Prayer and Words of Institution. This dialog is found in the *Egyptian Church Order*, dating back to before A.D. 215, and is as follows:

- the *salutation/response*: "The Lord be with you. And with thy spirit."
- the *Sursum corda*: "Lift up your hearts. We lift them up unto the Lord."
- the *Vere dignum*: "Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God. It is meet and right so to do."

Here the pastor and people get ready to celebrate the Holy Meal. First, the pastor and people recognize the need for God's presence as the pastor once again enters into the Most Holy Place by daring to speak the Words of Jesus over bread and wine. They then agree that our focus in this liturgy is not worldly, or the lunch that will follow the service, or our activities at home that afternoon or coming week. We lift up our "hearts unto the Lord" because that is where our attention is to be. This is followed by the proper giving of thanks.

Then we remember God's acts in our behalf in the expanded "**proper**" or **seasonal Preface**. Most of these prefaces are based on the Latin prefaces of the sixteenth century (Tridentine period)²⁴. The preface for Advent is of Lutheran origin since the Latin Mass had no preface for the season. What we have today apparently first appeared in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941) and was prepared by the Intersynodical Committee of the Synodical Conference. The Prefaces for Epiphany, Lent and All Saints are also of Lutheran origin, as is the Proper Preface for All Saints, being written for *Lutheran Worship* (1982). The Proper Prefaces

²³ Greek, Σύναξις, "gathering together"

²⁴ Specifically: Christmas, Passiontide, Easter Ascension, Pentecost, Holy Trinity, Apostles and Evangelists, and weekday prefaces.

for the Baptism of our Lord, Transfiguration, Presentation of our Lord, The Annunciation/Visitation, and St. Michael and All Angels are the most contemporary, composed for *Lutheran Service Book*. *LSB* also added two additional “Common” Prefaces to the one provided in *LW* for use on Sundays after Pentecost. The conclusion of the preface joins our worship “with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.”

The earliest Christian practice was to move from the dialog to an extended praise of the Father. By the fourth century, it had become customary to break this section with a hymn called the **Sanctus** (Latin for “Holy”) The text of the Sanctus is a series of acclamations based on the cry of the angels which accompanied Isaiah’s vision of God (*Isaiah 6:3*). Then we move from Isaiah’s temple to Palm Sunday and the praise with which the people greeted Jesus as He entered Jerusalem on His way to the cross (*St. Matthew 21:9*). We join them in spirit by singing their words as we anticipate Christ’s coming in the Sacrament. As he rode humbly and unassuming into Jerusalem on a donkey, so now He will come to us in simple bread and wine.

The Sanctus is composed by Richard Hillert in Setting One, is from an eleventh century Plainsong adapted by J.S. Bach and an arranged by Ronald Nelson.

Settings One and Two add a **Prayer of Thanksgiving** after the Sanctus. In Luther’s day it was here that an “Admonition to the Communicants” was spoken. This prayer in *LSB* is an adaptation of the Swedish *Kyrko-Handboken* of 1942 and a prayer from *Agende I* (1963) of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD). The conclusion of this prayer is from the conclusion of the Prayer of the Church that as used in Setting I of *Lutheran Worship* (1982).

In the **Lord’s Prayer** we continue our preparations for receiving the blessed body and blood of Christ by humbling ourselves before the Father in the prayer Jesus, himself taught us. This becomes the table prayer of the congregation.

“From at least the third century, Christians have also confessed a special connection between the Fourth Petition (“Give us this day our daily bread”) and the bread now to be set apart for God’s purpose by and according to his own Word and blessing. It is the bread above all other bread, bread that feeds us as the children of God” (Precht 426).

It is proper to chant this prayer to set it apart from the many other ways Christians use this prayer. The chanting of the Lord’s Prayer by the presiding minister and the congregation’s singing the doxology reminds us that the doxology was not originally a part of the Our Father, but is a liturgical response to the prayer and is based on King David’s prayer after the offerings for the Temple were received (*1 Chronicles 29:11*).

With the **Words of our Lord** (Words of Institution or *Verba*) the presiding minister recites the words Jesus spoke when He took the bread and wine of the Passover and gave them the new significance so central to our worship. These are the very Words of Christ which make the elements of bread and wine a sacrament. The Large Catechism teaches: “When the Word is joined to the external element, it becomes a sacrament” (LC V.10).

Chanting the Words of Institution in the Divine Service is a uniquely Lutheran tradition. You can thank *Luther*, not Rome. The practice of Luther's day was for the Words of Institution to be recited inaudibly by the priest. Luther believed these Words of Christ should be heard. Setting the words to music is unsurpassed in serving that purpose. Luther arranged the chant that is used for Christ's words of Institution in Divine Service Setting 3. Luther also composed chants for the Epistle and Gospel readings. He was hardly opposed to chanting (cf. Luther's *Deutsche Messe* 1526).

The **Pax Domini** (Latin for "*Peace of the Lord*"), the greeting of peace which Jesus spoke on the first Easter, is proclaimed before we approach the altar to receive Him. In the Lord's Supper, the body and blood of Christ are truly present in, with, and under the bread and wine.

In *Lutheran Service Book* (2006) the congregation response in the Pax changed to "Amen" in all of the Divine Services. In *Lutheran Worship* (1982) the response was "And also with you" in Divine Service II (First & Second Settings). The welcomed change highlights the fact that the Pax is not a pious wish of the presiding minister and people for one another, but rather, is a confessional declaration that the peace that passes all understanding is here present in the body and blood of Christ. Luther described the Pax as an "a *public absolution* of the sins of the communicants, the true voice of the gospel announcing remission of sins, and therefore the one and most worthy preparation for the Lord's Table, *if faith holds to these words as coming from the mouth of Christ himself*" (AE 53:28-29 emphasis mine).

The **Agnus Dei** (pronounced *ahn-yoos day-ee*, Latin for "*Lamb of God*") uses John's title for Christ, "*Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world*" (*St. John 1:29*). It became a part of the Latin Mass in the late seventh and early eighth century by Pope Sergius I. This is the first distribution hymn and is a final prayer for mercy. We sing this confessing that now, after the consecration, what is on the altar is, in fact, the very body and blood of Christ, the "Lamb of God" sacrificed "to take away the sin of the world;" freeing us from the bondage of sin and death.

The text contains a three-fold confession of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice in fulfillment of prophecy and a prayer for the mercy and peace which his death on the cross won for us. Originally "*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis*" was repeated three times. It is thought that eleventh century was influenced the last stanza to be changed from "*miserere nobis*" (have mercy on us) to "*Dona nobis pacem*" (grant us peace).

The tune in Setting Three is an arrangement of BRAUNSCHWEIG which appeared in the Brunswick Church Order of 1528. The Tunes in Settings One and Two are composed by Richard Hillert and Ronald Nelson respectively. The version used in Divine Service Four comes from *Hymnal Supplement 98* (1998) and is a paraphrase of the canticle written by Stephen P. Starke (text © 1998) and set to a familiar seventeenth century tune, ANGELUS, by Georg Joseph (*LSB* 831, 844, 920)

The **Distribution** - What happens now is all at God's initiative! We are purely receivers. While the meal is being distributed, the congregation sings one or more hymns. The choir or a soloist may also make a musical offering.

The Ceremony

The presiding minister takes the orans posture for the **Proper Preface**. He bows at the waist at the beginning of the **Sanctus** and then stands erect at the first "Hosanna." This ceremony expresses the awe of the worshipers as they join in the hymn of the seraphim around the heavenly throne. At "Blessed is He," he makes the sign of the Cross.

The presiding minister again takes the orans posture for the **Lord's Prayer** until the congregational response "For thine is the Kingdom..." at which time he joins his hands. The presiding minister may make the sign of the cross at "Deliver us from evil."

In some churches the old tradition of ringing a bell (or chimes) during the Lord's Prayer (some three times, some after each petition) is still practiced. "This is a survival of the practice of ringing a small, handheld bell at the consecration" (Precht 426). This practice originated in the ringing of a church tower bells during the consecration "a total of seven strokes, the first at the beginning of the consecration, three at the consecration of the hosts and three at the consecration of the chalice" (McClellan 46).

When reciting the **Words of Our Lord** the presiding minister lifts a host from the altar at the words "took bread." With particular distinctness, attention and reverence, he chants "This is my Body" and makes the sign of the cross over all the hosts. After the words "This do in remembrance of me" he again lifts the host, bows and prays (*sotto voce*): "My Lord and my God." He then removes the pall²⁵ from the chalice. He lifts the chalice at the words "He took the Cup" raising it above the corporal²⁶ and then replaces it. Then he touches each vessel containing wine to be consecrated to indicate that he is including it in the consecration. Again, with particular distinctness, attention and reverence, he chants "this is My blood" and makes the sign of the cross. He elevates the chalice and prays (*sotto voce*): "We therefore pray thee, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood." If the presiding minister used a large host for the consecration, he will break it into smaller pieces to be used to commune himself and assistants.

The Lutheran Confessions do not specify the type of bread or wine for use in the Supper.

"Historically, however, Lutherans desired to play down the symbolic association of bread and wine that would give the impression that Christ's body and blood are merely being symbolized with bread and wine. For that reason there was a retention of wafer bread and a preference for white or

²⁵ Pall (from Latin *palla* "cover"), A stiff board covered in linen and embroidered with a cross used to cover the top of the chalice.

²⁶ The corporal (from *corpus*, "body") is a square linen at the center of the altar upon which the sacred Communion vessels are placed. In the fourth century, Pope Sylvester makes reference to the exclusive use of linen upon which the sacred vessels were placed, because Christ was buried in a clean linen shroud.

amber rather than red sacramental wine in the Evangelical Lutheran Church” (Guide to Introducing Lutheran Worship 20).

The purpose of the **Pax** is a confessional declaration that the peace that passes all understanding is here present in the body and blood of Christ. For this reason the presiding minister now lifts the host with the chalice and may make the sign of the cross with the host over the chalice.

During the singing of the **Agnus Dei** by the congregation the presiding minister may say the following prayer (*Domine non sum dignus*) three times: “Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my soul shall be healed.” Traditionally, he strikes his breast three times with the extremities of the last three fingers of his right hand.

“Thereupon, in accordance with the best Lutheran precedent, the presiding minister administers the Holy Communion to himself. In accordance with the Church’s historic practice, he would do this even though there may be another clergyman present who might administer the Holy Communion to him” (Piepkorn 36).

“The presiding minister and the assisting ministers receive the body and blood before the distribution to the congregation. This is in contrast to the practice in some parishes, where the ministers receive last or after the assistant(s). Those who distribute the holy gifts should themselves taste of the holy gifts first. The forgiven offer the forgiveness through the distribution of the Holy Sacrament. In keeping with historic precedent, it is proper that the presiding minister communes himself and then communes the assisting ministers. It is both awkward and unnecessary for the presiding minister to be communed by one of the assisting ministers before (or after) he communes them” (Guide to Introducing Lutheran Worship 29).

The presiding minister prays (*sotto voce*): “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for me, preserve my body and soul unto everlasting life. Amen” and receives the host. He then prays (*sotto voce*): “What shall I offer unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will receive the chalice of salvation and call upon the Name of the Lord” He removes the pall and raises the chalice as high as his breast and says (*sotto voce*): “The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for me, preserve my body and soul unto everlasting life. Amen.” He then receives the sacred Blood. He covers the cup with the pall.

At the **Distribution** and reception of the Body and Blood of Christ communicants may kneel as they are able. It is customary for communicants to bow before kneeling and to bow again upon dismissal. The presiding minister says “The true body of Christ, given for you.” The communicant responds, “Amen.” In doing so the communicant is confessing, “Yes, I believe the bread the pastor has given me is the Body of Christ.”

The more ancient and natural practice is that the bread is placed in the communicant’s hand. The medieval custom of placing the bread on the communicant’s tongue had its origins in preventing the taking away of the host for superstitious use. An ancient practice taught communicants to place the right

hand on top of the left to make a “throne” for Christ. Receiving the host on an open palm is much more desirable than taking it with one’s fingers. First, it decreases the possibility of dropping the Sacred Body of Christ on the floor. Second, it is more dignified and shows a humble and respectful *receiving* rather than *grasping* the precious gift.

The assistant and presiding minister say “The true blood of Christ, shed for you.” The communicant again responds, “Amen.” In doing so the communicant is confessing, “Yes, I believe the wine I have received is the Blood of Christ.”

The use of one chalice is not only historically more desirable, but also has more theological significance than the individual cups which introduces an individualistic spirit that can hinder the significance of the communal nature of the sacrament. “Various chemical and bacteriological studies have established the hygienic safety of the common cup” (Pffatteicher 244). “It should be borne in mind, however, that neither the Lutheran Confessions nor the Lutheran liturgy envision the use of individual cups in the celebration of the Holy Communion Service” (Lang, “Ceremony” 45). The reason for use of individual cups is neither scriptural or confessional, and certainly not a traditional Lutheran practice.

The church of the Augsburg Confession has traditionally used the single chalice for the consecration of the wine and the distribution. The use of glasses, tiny chalices, or small cups is a recent innovation dating to the early part of the 20th century. It was introduced to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in imitation of those American Protestant denominations that had given up the use of wine in the Sacrament and substituted the use of grape juice. Without the alcoholic content of the wine, the use of a single chalice was considered unsanitary because of the danger of contagion. Since the Church of the Augsburg Confession communes with wine, the use of individual containers is not necessary (Guide to Introducing Lutheran Worship 29).

Unfortunately, culture has become a dominant force sweeping good ceremony and symbol aside. The idea of drinking after another has become repulsive to some, even though this is a “holy” communal meal in which we are sharing the very blood of our Lord. At the Last Supper Jesus took one cup of wine and said to His disciples “Take this and divide it among yourselves” (*St. Luke 22:17*). In addition, the notion that the Lord would allow His Supper to carry germs making one ill is ludicrous. St. Paul says that the cause of sickness and death after partaking is NOT biological, but spiritual, namely, eating and drinking unworthily ... profaning the body and blood of the Lord (*1 Corinthians 11:27-30*). That being said, the following must also be considered:

This historical review must not be seen as a prohibition of the use of individual glasses nor a denial that the Lord’s Supper is present because they are used. Rather, the hope is a deeper awareness of the record of these matters and loving concern for others. That concern would be that though some may not wish to receive from the common chalice, others would not be prohibited from doing so. This would be in keeping with what their brothers and sisters

in Christ have done down through the centuries and with what Jesus used when giving this gift of unity (Wieting 141, emphasis mine).

Disposable cups should never be used. “Disposable cups of plastic or paper are the product of a garbage-producing, throw-away culture that respects neither the creation nor the sacramental element” (Pfatteicher 244). If individual cups are used they are to be made of glass or metal, and will be ablated²⁷ before they are washed.

When receiving the Chalice, the communicant should only tip the base of the cup, and should never take hold of the cup thus recognizing that this cup contains nothing less than the sacred blood of our Lord, therefore, we touch it only slightly.

While Lutheran clergymen will be careful to instruct their people that they are not to adore the bread and the wine as such, they will also be careful to instruct their communicants that ‘No one ... can and will deny that Christ himself, true God and man, Who is truly and essentially present in the Holy Communion in the right celebration thereof should be adored in spirit and in truth.’ (FC, SD, VI.126) (Piepkorn 39).

The communicants are dismissed and the presiding minister makes the sign of the cross over the communicants. The communicants may also make the sign of the cross upon themselves at the blessing and dismissal from the Table. The moment of reception is an intensely personal appropriation of what is being celebrated as a congregation. It is a good practice to offer a silent prayer of thanks when we return to our pews.

The Latin term *reliquiae* is used for the remaining Body and Blood of Christ. What remains on the altar is the Body and Blood of Christ and remains so until consumed. At the conclusion of the distribution the presiding minister empties all remaining individual cups of the Blood of Christ into the chalice. The presiding minister (and assistants, if necessary) consumes the remaining hosts and empties any crumbs into the chalice. He then consumes the chalice. In this way the *reliquiae* is not comingled with unconsecrated elements for the next Supper. Such a practice was so abhorrent to Luther he declared that any “clergyman who did so be expelled from the churches for despising God” (Wieting 142). Nonetheless, carelessness with the *reliquiae* compromises the doctrine of the real presence.

The chalice is then ablated with clear water, obtained from the cruet, which the presiding minister will also consume. The purificator²⁸ is then used to wipe out the cup and is then placed inside the cup and the cup is set back on the corporal. The pall is placed over the cup and all the sacred vessels are covered with a veil. When individual cups are used, they too should be ablated before washing. The water which has rinsed any remaining blood of Christ from the individual cups is then poured to the ground or in a *piscina*.²⁹ To simply wash the cups without abluting is irreverent. We do not pour the blood of Christ “down the drain” as so much wash water.

²⁷ i.e., rinsed

²⁸ The linen used to cleanse the rim of the chalice.

²⁹ A drain in the sacristy that goes to directly the soil. It is not proper to pour the remains of the sacramental elements into a common drain.

Chapter 7

THE SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT: Part 2

The Rite

The **Nunc Dimittis** (Latin for ‘*now depart*’) follows as a concluding thanksgiving for the Sacrament. “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart” is Simeon’s Song from *St. Luke 2:29-32*. God promised Simeon that he would see the Messiah before His death. Upon seeing the Infant Jesus in the temple, Simeon praised God saying that now he could depart in peace. Now we also praise God for having revealed to our dying eyes so great a salvation as He has offered to us in the Holy Supper wherein Christ was truly present for us!

The Nunc Dimittis comes to us from the Greek liturgy and was used as early as the fourth century as a Canticle in the Office of Vespers, then used in the Latin Office of Compline, and became an alternate canticle for the *Magnificat* when Lutheran orders simplified the Office of Vespers. It does not appear in the Divine Service of the Roman or Anglican rites. Johannes Anglicus wrote a German hymn versification of the canticle in 1530. However, it is difficult to determine when the Nunc Dimittis became a part of the Divine Service in the Lutheran church. It is not included in Luther’s *Formula Missae* (1523) or *Deutsche Messe* (1526). It also is not included in the *The Kirchen-Agende* of 1748 (see ADDENDUM B: Examples of German Worship in the Sixteenth & Eighteenth Centuries, page 59) or the Saxon *Kirchen-Agende* (1856). It is included in Leohe’s *Agende* (1844), the 1868 *Church Book*, and the *Common Service* of 1888.

The tune of the Nunc Dimittis in Setting Three is based on Plainsong, Tone V - SOEST, 1532; PFALZ, 1557. Settings One and Two use the same tune composed by Richard Hillert with an ICET text.

Settings One and Two include an alternate **Post-Communion Canticle**, “*Thank the Lord*,” composed by Richard Hillert and Ronald Nelson respectively, and may be used throughout the church year except during Lent.

In the **Thanksgiving** and **Post-Communion Collect** we again offer special thanks to God, and pray that God would use the power of the Sacrament to make us more and more like Christ. The prayer “*We give thanks to You, Almighty God*” is the traditional Lutheran post-communion prayer from Luther’s German Mass of 1526. Notice the emphasis in each prayer of service to God and love to one another. This is indeed the purpose of the Holy Supper, to strengthen our faith in love and service.

The **Salutation** and **Benedicamus** (Latin for ‘*bless we.*’) is a very ancient part of the Service of the Sacrament and should not be omitted.

The service concludes with the **Benediction**. The Benediction is a biblical text, called the “Aaronic Benediction” from *Numbers 6:23-27*. This is the blessing God first gave to Aaron and the other priests to speak to the people of Israel. This is the final sacramental feature of the service. It is not simply a prayer for blessing. It imparts a blessing in God’s name, giving positive assurance of God’s grace and peace to each one who receives it by faith. Since the Benediction is a declaration and not a pious wish, it should never begin with the words “Now” or “May”.

Traditionally, the Benediction concluded the service, however, now it is customary that a **Hymn** is sung as a concluding hymn of praise.

We are finally dismissed with the first century **Dismissal**. The priest would challenge the people to depart in peace as they also go out to serve the Lord, and the people respond, with a joyful response of thanksgiving in God's gracious inclusion in His work of ministry.

The Ceremony

We bow during the first part of the Gloria Patri in the **Nunc Dimittis**. According to ancient tradition, the Gloria Patri was omitted in the Nunc Dimittis from the fifth Sunday in Lent through Holy Saturday. Now it is common for the Gloria Patri to be omitted from its usual locations in the Divine Service during Holy Week.

The presiding minister chants the **Thanksgiving** and prays the **Post-Communion Prayer** in the orans position. The ceremony of the **Salutation** here is the same as in the Service of the Word and the beginning of the Service of the Sacrament.

In the **Benediction**, the presiding minister bows at each reference to the Divine Name, Yahweh, which here is translated "Lord." The presiding minister also makes the sign of the cross over the congregation. The Benediction (Old Testament) is a mirror image of the Invocation (New Testament).

After the hymn there may be a time for personal and **Silent Prayer**. Rather than looking around or using it to reshelve our hymnals, this should be a time of personal and prayerful application of the service to our own lives. Here we may thank God for the opportunity to receive His gifts, ask for a renewing of faith and discipleship in which His Holy Word fills our hearts, minds, bodies, actions, and words wherever we may be; at work, play, school, and home.

Chapter 8

A FEW OTHER MATTERS

The Sign of the Cross: “Crossing oneself was practiced by Christians from the earliest centuries and may go back to apostolic times. We know that it was already a common ceremony used daily in A.D. 200” (Lang, “Ceremony” 72) “Since the third century, Christians have made the sign of the cross as a remembrance that in Holy Baptism God makes us His own children” (Stauffer 8). “It is one of the traditional ceremonies that was most definitely retained by Luther³⁰ and the Lutheran Church in the sixteenth century Reformation” (Lang, “Ceremony” 72). Making the sign of the cross is an action which reminds us of our Baptism.

The holy cross is the symbol of our salvation. We were signed with it when we were baptized. It is the sign by which the church blesses people and things (Lang, “Ceremony” 73).

It is a praiseworthy custom to cross ourselves at the beginning and end of all services (the invocation and benediction) and at the following places: at the passing of the processional Cross; at the end of the Gloria in Excelsis; at the end of the Creed; during the Sanctus at “Blessed is He;” at the Pax Domini; upon receiving Christ’s holy body and sacred blood, and at the dismissal from the Holy Supper.

Bowing: “It is a confessional custom to bow the head at the Holy Name of Jesus, toward the Crucifix if at the altar, toward the book if the Holy Gospel is being read ... It is likewise proper to bow the head at the opening words of the Gloria Patri whenever it occurs, and at the Sanctus.” (Piepkorn 5) Bowing at the Gloria Patri “is a humble acknowledgment of the glory of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.” (Lang, “Ceremony” 69) It is also appropriate to bow when a processional cross passes by.

Candles: For the celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar, at least two candles traditionally stand upon the altar, one on the extreme right and the other on the extreme left. These are called *Eucharistic lights*. But if the two are the only candles ever placed on the altar, their use need not be restricted to the chief service. They may be lighted at every service.

“Two candles are usually placed on the altar, representing the divine and human natures of Christ” (Stauffer 20).

“Lighted candles are a symbol of Christ as the Light of the world. They also express the glory and joy of our holy religion. In the chief service Christ the Light comes to us in both Word and sacrament. This may be the reason for the traditional minimum of two lights for the celebration of Holy Communion” (Lang, “What an Altar Guild” 54).

³⁰ See the “Daily Prayers” section of Luther’s Small Catechism.

“Six candles is a Counter-Reformatory Roman use. Candelabra as substitutes for the two single candles are a Protestant sentimentality. The Epistle³¹ candle is lighted first; the Gospel³² candle last; they are extinguished in reverse order” (Piepkorn 3).

The Altar is 1) a symbol of the sacrifice, 2) The Lord’s Table from which we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and 3) A symbol of God’s presence. This is why we direct our worship to the altar and show reverence to it. The only items on the altar are: Candles, the Crucifix, Eucharistic vessels and elements, and the Missal stand. Flowers and offering plates should be placed on credence shelves.

“Since the altar is a symbol of the constant presence of God and since it serves as the focus of devotion in the church (except during the reading of the Gospel when the focus of attention shifts to the book), it is appropriate to salute the altar with a profound bow when first entering and last leaving the sanctuary and to bow moderately whenever crossing, approaching, or leaving the midst” (Piepkorn 4).

The area where the congregation is located for worship is called the **Nave**, from the Latin *navis*, since the Christian church is traditionally compared to a ship. The **Chancel** is comprised of two sections; a section within a section. The area above and beyond the nave, and beyond the chancel rail (i.e., the communicants’ rail) is the chancel. This is called “liturgical east” (whether or not it is actually east). The section within the chancel where the altar is located is called the **Sanctuary**. While this term is often used (i.e., by some Protestants) to refer to the whole worship space, it is properly used only of the altar area. The platform step upon which the altar stands is called the **predella**.

Lent: During the penitential season of Lent, we “sacrifice” the use of “Alleluia” until the Resurrection of our Lord (commonly known as Easter). The Alleluia and Verse is omitted, as is the “Gloria in Excelsis.”³³

Advent: during the preparatory season of Advent we omit the “Gloria in Excelsis” until the Nativity of our Lord (commonly known as Christmas).³⁴

³¹ The Epistle side of the altar is liturgical south (the right as the congregation faces the altar).

³² The Gospel side of the altar is liturgical north (the left as the congregation faces the altar).

³³ Except on Holy Thursday. See footnote on page 24.

³⁴ Except for festivals during the season. See chart on page 24.

Chapter 9

CONCLUSION

Look back over the Divine Liturgy and the commentary provided here you will find three things. The Liturgy ...

... HELPS US REMEMBER OUR PAST:

- ✠ It helps us remember our failures of the week(s) past as we confess our sins.
- ✠ It helps us remember the grace and mercy we have received as we give thanks and praise.
- ✠ It helps us remember that the forces of sin, Satan, and death are curtailed by a gracious hand that took hold of us in our baptism.
- ✠ It helps us remember the needs that have confronted us as we have brought our prayers to the heavenly throne.

... HELPS US UNDERSTAND OUR PRESENT:

- ✠ It reminds us that we are part of a multitude of people who have been part of the holy, catholic and apostolic church through the ages and have lived and died confessing the basic truths proclaimed in the Divine Liturgy.
- ✠ It reminds us that we are not alone in our sin but are joined with those who also confess their sins in the presence of God and one another.
- ✠ It reminds us that we are not alone, but are surrounded by people who will support us fellow members of the family of God who join in confessing our faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- ✠ It reminds us that we share the common needs of our neighbors and all humankind as we offer our prayers to God.
- ✠ It reminds us that we are part of all human history that knows it can live only by the cry, "Kyrie eleison (Lord, have mercy upon us)!"

... HELPS US LOOK TO THE FUTURE:

- ✠ It directs our focus to God in all that is done throughout the liturgy.
- ✠ It turns our attention to the heavenly banquet prepared for us in eternity through the bread and wine of the Holy Supper in which the crucified and risen Savior makes himself present for us granting both forgiveness and hope as we await His final appearing.
- ✠ It sends into a new week and our daily tasks with the very name of God imprinted on our hearts and lives in the benediction.

ADDENDUM A

Lutheran Worship (LC-MS) in America

In spite of the negative effects of the Thirty Years War, Pietism, and Rationalism on confessional, liturgical worship, the historic service, together with its customs and theology, yet survived in parts of Germany; notably Saxony, Mecklenburg, and Nürnberg. In the nineteenth century, many of confessional Lutherans migrated from Germany to America. One of these groups came from Saxony, Germany in 1839. They settled in St. Louis and Perry County, Missouri. This was the beginning of what is now the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod founded in 1847.

How did Lutherans in America worship? Because they came from different parts of Germany, they brought with them different hymnals which also varied in both texts and music. There were three main resources used by the German Lutherans in America.

... the *Kirchen-Agenda* of 1771, included in the *Vollständiges*³⁵ *Kirchenbuch* of that year, that the immigrant pastors brought with them to America for their use—the last in the long line of theologically sound Lutheran, liturgical, apostolic, catholic, and confessional stance.

... the subsequent 1812 *Kirchenbuch*, commonly referred to as the Saxon Agenda ... Herein the disastrous effects of Pietism and Rationalism are clearly in evidence. Walther occasionally refers to its troublesome deficiencies in his *Pastoraltheologie*.” (Precht, “Worship Resources” 86)

...the *Agenda für Christliche Gemeinden* (1844 prepared by Wilhelm Löhe pastor in Neuendettelsau, Bavaria, the founder of the Synod’s Concordia Theological Seminary, since 1976 located in Fort Wayne, Indiana. (Precht, “Worship Resources” 84)

It must be noted that there were other resources in use in America. Other Lutherans from northern and central Europe had arrived in America much before the Saxons. They bought their own hymnals, and a variety of customs This article, however is focused on worship in the Missouri Synod, so these other resources will not be considered here, except to note their influence on the Common Service (1888) and the Liturgies and Agendas which have followed to the present.

Of primary concern to the Saxon immigrants was the matter of a confessionally sound hymnal for use in corporate worship.

Moreover, the orthodox texts of many of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century hymns had been altered to suit the spirit of Pietism and Rationalism. One can readily imagine the confusion in worship that such diversity would create. The solution was to publish a new hymnal.

As early as November 1845, the need for producing a new hymnal for the confessional groups of Lutherans was presented to Trinity congregation

³⁵ i.e., “complete”

(*Gesamtgemeinde*: federated congregation) in St. Louis by C. F. W. Walther, its pastor. After giving its ready approval, the congregation soon proceeded to appoint a committee to implement the project. In August 1847 the hymnal appeared with the title *Kirchengesangbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden ungeänderter Augsburgischer Confession*³⁶, the work of “several Lutheran pastors in Missouri,” with Walther undoubtedly as the leading figure. Simply a text edition, it included 437 hymns, prayers, antiphons, Luther’s Small Catechism (Inchirdion), and the Augsburg Confession.

...this hymnal constituted an important contribution to the confessional—liturgical revival of the 19th century begun in Germany. This hymnal remained in use until the Synod’s gradual transition from German worship services to English with these changes in three editions: the addition of the Epistle and the Gospel pericopes and the history of the Destruction of Jerusalem in 1848; six hymns in 1857; and 41 additional hymns in 1917. (Precht, “Worship Resources” 88-9)

I call attention to two sections of notable importance in the first Constitution of the Missouri Synod (1846):

- “Article I: Reason for forming a Synodical Organization. #6. The unified spread of the kingdom of God and to make possible the promotion of special church projects.(Seminary, agenda, hymnal, Book of Concord, schoolbooks, Bible distribution, mission projects within and outside the Church.)”
- “Article IV: Business of Synod. #10. To strive after the greatest possible uniformity in ceremonies.”

The issue of a sound orthodox hymnal having been dealt with, the Synod then dealt with the issue of publishing an agenda containing the Order of the Divine Service. In 1856, the LC-MS published its first official agenda.

Of particular interest to this author is that the *Hauptgottesdienst* (Chief Service) outlined in this agenda indicates the following:

- The pastor chants the intonation “Glory to God in the highest.”
- The Antiphon is responsively chanted by pastor and congregation.
- The Preface and Proper Preface chanted by the pastor.
- Lord’s Prayer is chanted by the pastor; and the congregation sings “For thine is the kingdom ...”
- Words of Institution are chanted by the pastor.

As early as 1857, the founding of English speaking congregations was encouraged by the Synod. This precipitated the need for English worship materials. There were English Hymnals used in the Synod, appearing as early as 1879, but none of these were official hymnals published by the Synod. Concordia

³⁶ Complete citation: *Kirchengesangbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden ungeänderter Augsburgischer Confession* darin des seligen Dr. Martin Luthers und andere geistreichen Lehrer gebräuchlichste Kirchen-Lieder enthaltend sind. (Church hymn book for Evangelical Lutheran congregations of unaltered Augsburg confession in it are the most common church songs contained by Blessed Dr. Martin Luther and other witty teachers.

Publishing House published *Hymns of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, for the Use of English Lutheran Missions* in 1886. In 1905 Concordia Publishing House published the *Hymnal for Evangelical Lutheran Missions*, which became known as the “Grey Hymnal.”

As far as the liturgy was concerned, pastors either translated from German books or borrowed existing English resources. But this caused a lack of uniformity in worship for the English parishes. Eventually, Concordia Publishing House produced English liturgical materials: *Liturgy and Agenda* in three editions: 1917, 1921, and 1936. Precht notes: “this became the predecessor to *The Lutheran Agenda* (1948) ... the companion to *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941) (“Worship Resources” 96-7).

Finally, the first official English Hymnal of the Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book appeared in 1912³⁷. In addition to 567 hymns, it also contained the Common Service, Matins, Vespers, Introits and Collects, making it a service book and hymnal.

With the United States’ entry into World War I in 1917, together with anti-German attitudes in America, the switch from German to English was more profound. However, in some places the transition caused less uniformity, and in some congregations the Common Service was reduced and shortened to the point worship was now indistinguishable from that found in Reformed churches. Some pastors, influenced by revivalism sought to eliminate liturgy completely.

In some places in America German Lutherans were considered pro-German, and being Lutheran was to be unpatriotic.³⁸ Nevertheless, English membership in the LC-MS increased.

In time people wanted better translations of some hymns. They wanted to sing other German hymns that had been previously omitted, and there was a desire to include hymns from the traditions of England, Scandinavia, Slovakia, Bohemia, France, etc. So, in 1929 the Synod proposed the publication of a new hymnal. That new hymnal, titled *The Lutheran Hymnal*, was published in 1941.

In comparison to its predecessor, its expanded liturgical section (167 pages against 112) as well as its hymn section (660 against 567) offered congregations a considerably greater liturgical and hymnological spread. The addition of chorales from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Germany, as well as treasures from England, Slovakia, and Scandinavia, greatly enriched the hymn corpus. Hymn text contributions came from no less than 15 different denominations, some necessarily altered theologically to make them suitable for Lutheran worship. What is particularly noteworthy is the concern

³⁷ In 1975 the Ministerium of New York (Lutheran) published the first English Liturgy, which was a translation of the liturgy compiled in 1786 by Rev. Henry Muhlenberg. Fredrick H. Quitman also prepared an English liturgy for the New York Synod in 1817. Notably, there were liturgies provided by Pennsylvania Ministerium and the New York Synod (1855); the *Hymn Book for Use of Evangelical Lutheran Schools and Congregation*, published for Norwegian Lutherans by the Lutheran Publishing House: Decorah, Iowa (1879); the Church Book (1868, 1870) influenced by Charles Porterfield Krauth; and the “Washington Service” of the General Synod. These are merely mentioned here in passing as this article is focused on resources used by the Missouri Synod.

³⁸ For instance, my wife’s Lutheran mother was born in Old Glory, Texas. Originally, it was named New Brandenburg, but anti-German sentiment caused this West Texas town to change its name.

of this hymnal and its immediate predecessor for orthodox texts rooted in sound, biblical, confessional theology and the retention of the rhythmic form of the chorale. (Precht, *Worship Resources* 99)

As an aside, I have been accused of attempting to return to sixteenth century Lutheranism. The person who made such a claim considers himself a theologian *par excellence* because he took a few theology courses in another denomination. Unfortunately, he reveals his ignorance in that Lutherans in the eighteenth century had already appeared to have accomplished the very thing he accused me of doing. The *Common Service* (1888), which became the basis for “The Order of The Holy Communion” of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, was based on the ‘consensus of the pure Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century.’³⁹” (Schalk 104). Moreover, Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century bear witness not only to the worship and devotion of the people Germany and Europe in that era, but also to the early and medieval catholic church. Indeed:

A church that forgets and dissociates itself from its past will become confused about its identity and uncertain of its message. So, too, in worship. The past is not only important in itself, it has a very real effect on the present. Those who do not remember the past are not only condemned to repeat it, they are also condemned to a rootless, shallow practice. Memories can enrich and enable congregations to understand how they came to be where they are. Their worship experience ought to teach them how to value the past without becoming stuck there, to treasure their roots precisely because such roots enable them to grow in the present. (Precht, “Commission” 131)

Recommendations to revise *The Lutheran Hymnal* were made at the Synod Convention in 1956 (St. Paul, MN) by the Synod’s Committee on Hymnology. This was a revision, not a new hymnal, and would transpose some hymns into a lower key, key signatures with many sharps or flats would be changed to make it easier for less advanced musicians. There was also talk about providing another additional musical settings for the liturgy.

But at the Synod Convention in 1959 (San Francisco) it was determined that the majority of congregations were not desirous of a revised hymnal. There were some criticisms of the hymnal but most valued it highly. Nevertheless, the Committee felt that a complete revision should be available in 10 to twelve years.

At the 1965 Convention (Detroit) the Committee reported its progress and set 1970 as the target date its completion. This report had to be written well before the Convention. Before the Convention Workbook was available in April 1965, there were 16 resolutions submitted by congregations in favor a new hymnal which would be a cooperative undertaking of all Lutheran bodies in America. A final resolution to that effect was presented to the Convention and passed.

Missouri Synod president, Dr. Oliver Harms, sent invitations to the presidents of the various Lutheran bodies in America, and in 1966 representatives from six

³⁹ 16TH century liturgies that were considered most important were: the Formula Missae (1523), the Deutsche Messe (1526); Brandenburg-Nuernberg (1533); Wittenberg (1533); Saxony (1539) and Mecklenburg (1552).

Lutheran bodies met in Chicago and formed the ILCW (Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship). The Commission included eight individuals from the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), seven from the American Lutheran Church (ALC), seven from the LC-MS, and one from the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Church (Slovak), and one from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada.

Because the ILCW wanted to involve congregations in the consideration of the new hymnal's content, it encouraged the LC-MS Commission on Worship to proceed with an earlier proposal to publish a *Worship Supplement* that would contain some of the hymns and liturgical resources that were to be included in the formerly planned revision of *The Lutheran Hymnal*. The *Worship Supplement* was published in 1969 prior to the Synod's Convention (Denver). It's influence on the new ILCW hymnal was substantial.

From 1969 until 1976 the Commission published the *Contemporary Worship* series of 11 booklets. These were published cooperatively by Concordia Publishing House, Augsburg Publishing House, and Fortress Press. This series was intended to give congregations opportunity to review available hymn and liturgy resources.

In the summer of 1977 the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada approved the ILCW proposals and authorized the publication of the *Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW)*. The absence of approval from the LC-MS was not accidental.

LBW was the great debate the Synod's 1977 Convention (Dallas). Almost 100 overtures from congregations and groups of the Synod questioned continuing involvement in the ILCW. There was very little support for the very project that had been approved at the Convention in 1965. Resolution 3-04A ("To Deal with the Proposed Lutheran Book of Worship") was adopted by the Convention. A blue-ribbon committee would be appointed to study and recommend on of three options: 1) adopt *LBW*, 2) adopt *LBW* with revisions and/or modifications; 3) reject *LBW* and propose an entirely new hymnal. In addition the convention approved a new by-law to insure the doctrinal purity of worship books and liturgies in the Synod.

In this author's opinion, a number of factors contributed the lack of support for *LBW* in the LC-MS. The gradual breakdown of fellowship with the ALC (altar and pulpit fellowship began in 1969) after it set the Scriptures aside and ordained women into the pastoral office (December 1970). Fellowship finally ended in 1981. During this time, the LC-MS also experienced the removal of a seminary president charged with false doctrine (1974), the subsequent "walk-out" by students and faculty, and the secession of like-minded congregations from LC-MS and the formation of a new Lutheran body: The Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC). These issues heightened the need for a "smell test" for the doctrinal content of any joint venture.

The result was a recommendation of a completely revised edition of *LBW* and a detailed report was sent to all congregations in 1978. This report included the following issues:

- Theological problems in hymnody and liturgy.

- 63 objectional hymns: including the Virgin Mary as co-redemptrix, sharing in the suffering of Christ (*LBW* 110)
- Lack of scriptural basis Baptism, Marriage, and Burial rites
 - No mention of original sin or the empowering Word in Baptism Rite
 - Universalism in the Baptism Rite
 - Baptism rite uses language that is too vague. Prayers after the Baptism imply that the Holy Spirit comes apart from the Sacrament but at the prayer
 - The unction comes after the Baptism. This obscures the meaning of the water which when connected to the Word is where we receive the Holy Spirit.
 - The Preface and Post-Communion prayer for use when the Holy Supper is celebrated at a marriage is not supported by Scripture.
 - The burial rite contains unscriptural concepts. The burial service should state that ONLY those who die in the saving faith, namely confidence in Jesus Christ as Savior, enter heaven. *LBW* does not clearly state this. In addition, *LBW* includes a petition that “we may be gathered to our ancestors” which is clearly not in accord with Holy Scripture.
- The listing of less than orthodox theologians and mystics on the calendar: George Fox, Toyohiko Kagawa, Soren Kierkegaard, Nathan Soderblom, and Albert Schweitzer.
- Prayers that speak of unionism (acknowledgment of and joining together in worship and work of those not united in doctrine ... also known as ecumenism)
- Prayers that implied the ordination of women. Any reference to the pastor being male was absent.
- Blatant disregard for the sinful nature existing from conception (*LBW* translation of Psalm 51:6)
- Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness” substituted “We are in bondage to sin” in place of the traditional “we are by nature sinful and unclean” (which is based on AC II.1)
- Evading the recognition of original sin (Ap II; FC I)
- Reception into Membership does not indicate that those who come from other denominations have been catechized.
- Making the Words of Institution a part of a prayer implies that the Holy Supper is something we make possible. The Words of Institution are a declaration, they are to be proclaimed to God’s people, not prayed to God.
- The translation of the Psalms was from the Episcopalian *Standard Book of Common Prayer*. *LW* recommended using the NIV.
- There are also issues in the Daily Offices that will not be covered here.

The committee commented:

“It is not a pleasant task to point out aberrations and ambiguities in materials gathered together by fellow Christians. We pray that those who were a part

of the project do not receive our report as a judgment against them.” But aberrations and ambiguities there were. (Sauer 119)

The final report stated:

The *Lutheran Book of Worship* contains many fine materials, in both the liturgical and the hymnic sections. Furthermore, as an example of graphic art, it is outstanding. When therefore the ... Committee’s (initial) report recommends a revision of the LBW, it does so recognizing that on the one hand, there are many good, positive features, and that on the other hand there are a number of serious theological defects that make it unsuitable for use in its present form by congregations in our Synod. These are primarily matters of sound doctrine in accord with Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Suitability for use in our churches is grounded in this. (Sauer 126)

In 1979, the Convention (St. Louis) adopted the proposed hymnal (Resolution 03-01). In 1982, the LC-MS published a new hymnal, *Lutheran Worship*. In addition to the Common Service, *Lutheran Worship*, adds two different musical settings (structurally these are not much different from the Common Service). The music for these new settings was written by two contemporary composers.⁴⁰ The language was updated. “You” instead of “thee” and “thou.” And with the exception of references to the Godhead, the language in liturgy and hymns was gender-neutral (you instead of thee/thou). Omitting the Order of Morning Service Without Holy Communion was a subtle encouragement to weekly celebration of the Holy Supper.

The early eighties witnessed what Bishop James Crumley of the Lutheran Church in America called “diverging courses” between the Missouri Synod and his church body. The final publication of two hymnals, similar yet different in content, is truly evidence of changes among Lutherans in America during that decade. (Sauer 129)

In 1997, Synod’s Commission on Worship began planning for a new hymnal. That same year the Commission also began working on another hymnal supplement, which was published in 1998 as *Hymnal Supplement 98*. It contained a new setting for the Divine Service and three prayer services including a new setting for Evening Prayer. In 2001 the plan for field testing proposed materials for the new hymnal was approved. In 2004 *Lutheran Service Book* was approved by the Synodical Convention (St. Louis). In 2006, one year ahead of schedule, *LSB* was published.

LSB brought us a combination of the best of *TLH*, *LW* and *HS98*. Here are summaries of what is included:

- **Divine Services:**
 - “The Order of The Holy Communion” (*TLH*, p. 15)
 - both musical settings of Divine Service Setting II (*LW*, pp. 158, 178)

⁴⁰ *LW* Divine Service II, First Setting (which is Divine Service Setting One in *LSB*) is the work of Richard Hillert, music professor at Concordia University Chicago; and *LW* Divine Service II, Second Setting (which is Divine Service Setting Two in *LSB*) is the work of Ronald Nelson, organist and composer at Westwood Lutheran Church, St. Louis Park, MN.

- A modification of the Divine Service in *HS98*.
- an expanded version of Luther's Deutsche Messe of 1526 (*LW*'s Divine Service III)
- **Daily Offices:**
 - The Office of Matins is much improved combining elements from both *TLH* and *LW*
 - The Office of Vespers and Compline are the same as *LW*
 - Morning and Evening Prayer are primarily drawn from *LW* with a few changes
 - Evening Prayer also uses elements from *HS98* and adds a new setting for the Magnificat which uses Anglican chant in the verses that follow a refrain
- **Hymnody:** Some hymns that were altered in *LW* were restored in both text and musical arrangements

ADDENDUM B

Examples of German Worship in the Sixteenth & Eighteenth Centuries

Here is a description of a typical service in Wittenberg in 1536 written by an unsympathetic observer:

At the seventh hour we returned to the city church and observed by which rite they celebrated the Liturgy; namely thus: First, the Introit was played on the organ, accompanied by the choir in Latin, as in the mass offering. Indeed, the minister meanwhile proceeded from the sacristy dressed sacrificially [i.e. in traditional mass vestments] and, kneeling before the altar, made his confession together with the assisting sacristan. After the confession he ascended to the altar to the book that was located on the right side, according to papist custom. After the Introit the organ was played and the *Kyrie eleison* sung in alternation by the boys. When it was done the minister sang *Gloria in excelsis*, which song was completed in alternation by the organ and choir. Thereafter the minister at the altar sang *Dominus vobiscum*, the choir responding *Et cum spiritu tuo*. The Collect for that day followed in Latin, then he sang the Epistle in Latin, after which the organ was played, the choir following with *Herr Gott Vater, wohn uns bei*. When it was done the Gospel for that Sunday was sung by the minister in Latin on the left side of the altar, as is the custom of the adherents of the pope. After this the organ played, and the choir followed with *Wir glauben all an einen Gott*. After this song came the sermon, ...delivered on the Gospel for that Sunday... After the sermon the choir sang *Da pacem domine*, followed by the prayer for peace by the minister at the altar, this in Latin as well.

The Communion followed, which the minister began with the Lord's Prayer sung in German. Then he sang the words of the Supper, and these in German with his back turned toward the people, first those of the bread, which, when the words had been offered, he then elevated to the sounding of bells; likewise with the chalice, which he also elevated to the sounding of bells. Immediately communion was held. ... During the communion the *Agnus Dei* was sung in Latin. The minister served the bread in common dress [in a cassock?] but [he served] the chalice dressed sacrificially [i.e. in mass vestments]. They followed the singing of the *Agnus Dei* with a German song: *Jesus Christus [unser Heiland]* and *Gott sei gelobet*. After the sermon the majority of the people departed. ... The minister ended the Communion with a certain thanksgiving sung in German. He followed this, facing the people, with the Benediction, singing "The Lord make his face to shine on you, etc." And thus was the mass ended. (Wolfgang Musculus, "Travel Diary;" quoted in Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism*. Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 195-96.)

The following is an eighteenth century description of seventeenth and eighteenth century worship in the Lutheran Church by Rudolf Rocholl, *Gesch. d. ev. Kirche in Deutschland*, 300. It shows the retention and purification of ceremonies:

According to the Brunswick Agenda of Duke Augustus, 1657, the pastors went to the altar clad in alb, chasuble, and mass vestments. Sacristans and elders held a fair cloth before the altar during the administration, that no particle of the consecrated Elements should fall to the ground. The altar was adorned with costly stuffs, with lights and fresh flowers. "I would," cries [Christian] Scriver, "that one could make the whole church, and especially the altar, look like a little Heaven." Until the nineteenth century the ministers at St. Sebald in Nuremberg wore chasubles at the administration of the Holy Supper. The alb was generally worn over the Talar, even in the sermon. [Valerius] Herberger calls it his natural Sæetuch [seed-cloth], from which he scatters the seed of the Divine Word. The alb was worn also in the Westphalian cities. At Closter-Lüne in 1608 the minister wore a garment of yellow gauze, and over it a chasuble on which was worked in needlework a "Passion." ... The Nicene Creed was intoned by a Deacon in Latin. Then the sermon and general prayer having been said, the Deacon with two Readers and two Vicars, clad in Mass garment and gowns, went in procession to the altar, bearing the Cup, the Bread, and what pertained to the preparation for the Holy Supper, and the Cüster [Verger] took a silver censer with glowing coals and incense, and incensed them, while another (the *Citharmeister*?) clothed and arranged the altar, lit two wax candles, and placed on it two books bound in red velvet and silver containing the Latin Epistles and Gospels set to notes, and on festivals set on the altar also a silver or golden crucifix, according to the order of George of Anhalt in 1542. The *Preface* and *Sanctus* were in Latin. After the Preface the communicants were summoned into the choir by a bell hanging there. ... The minister said his prayer kneeling with his face to the altar, with a deacon kneeling on either side. He arranged the wafers on the paten in piles of ten, like the shewbread, while the *Introit* and *Kyrie* were sung. The responses by the choir were in Latin. Up to 1690 the Latin service was still said at St. Sebald's and St. Lawrence's. Throughout this (eighteenth) century we find daily Matins and Vespers, with the singing of German psalms. There were sermons on weekdays. There were no churches in which they did not kneel in confession and at the Consecration of the Elements. (Horn, Edward T. "Ceremonies in the Lutheran Church." *Lutheran Cyclopaedia*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899, pp. 82-83)

The Kirchen-Agende (1748)

The Hymn “Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist” or a verse of “Komm, heiliger Geist, Herre Gott”

The Confession of Sins: spoken, the pastor at the altar
Exhortation
Confession
Kyrie paraphrase

The Gloria in Excelsis sung in the metrical version “Allein Gott in der Hoeh’ sei Ehr”

The Salutation

The Collect for the Day taken from the Marburg hymn book

The Epistle

The Hymn - “the principal hymn selected by the pastor, from the hymns in the Marburg Hymn-book”

The Gospel

The Creed - “the pastor repeats devoutly the Creed, in verse, ‘Wir glauben all”

The Hymn either “Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier” (Sr “Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend”

The Sermon - limited, according to the Agenda, to three quarters of an hour or at most one hour
Prayer or Exordium
Lord’s Prayer
Text/Gospel (read again)
Sermon

The General Prayer or Litany (or Communion service; see below)

Preparation of Bread and Wine

Versicles spoken between pastor and congregation,
Salutation/Response an abbreviated spoken Sanctus
Sursum corda
Sanctus (no Benedictus)

Exhortation to the Communicants and paraphrased Lord’s Prayer (from the Deutsche Messe of 1526)

The Lord’s Prayer

The Words of Institution - pastor directed to “pray” these words

The Invitation

The Distribution of the Elements

The Thanksgiving Versicle (Benedicamus)

The Post-Communion Collect (Luther)

The Aaronic Benediction and The Trinitarian Blessing

(“Handbook” 288-9)

ADDENDUM C

Why is the Lutheran Church a Liturgical Church by Rev. David Jay Webber

*1. The Lutheran Church is a liturgical church because it is a **catholic** church.*

The Lutheran Reformers of the sixteenth century were not sectarian innovators who set out to create a new church, but they acknowledged, and rejoiced in, their continuity with the church of the apostles and ancient Christian Fathers. They recognized that many of the centuries-old liturgical customs which they had inherited were both useful and beneficial, and they saw no reason to discard them. With humble gratitude Confessional Lutherans embrace the edifying liturgical usages of the pre-Reformation catholic church as important components of their own heritage and identity. They do not believe that such historic Christian customs are unique to the Roman Catholic Church (or to any other individual church body or denomination).

In the forms for public worship which they employ, Lutherans do indeed “remember” and “imitate” those who have served the cause of Christ’s unchanging Gospel throughout the church’s history. The main elements of the historic Lutheran Liturgy are not distinctively “Lutheran” and do not simply reflect the culture of sixteenth-century Germany and Scandinavia (or of twentieth-century America). They reflect instead the faith and devotion of God’s people of all times and places.

...our churches dissent from the church catholic in no article of faith but only omit some few abuses which are new and have been adopted by the fault of the times although contrary to the intent of the canons... (Augsburg Confession, prologue to XXII,1 [Latin])

...nothing has been received among us, in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Scripture or to the church catholic. (Augsburg Confession, epilogue to XXVIII,5 [Latin])

...no novelty has been introduced which did not exist in the church from ancient times... (Augsburg Confession XXIV:40 [German])

We gladly keep the old traditions set up in the church because they are useful and promote tranquility, and we interpret them in an evangelical way, excluding the opinion that they justify. Our enemies falsely accuse us of abolishing good ordinances and church discipline. We can truthfully claim that in our churches the public liturgy is more decent than in theirs, and if you look at it correctly we are more faithful to the canons than our opponents are. (Apology XV:38-39)

On holy days, and at other times when communicants are present, Mass is held and those who desire it are communicated. Thus the Mass is preserved among us in its proper use, the use which was formerly observed in the church and which can be proved by St. Paul’s statement in I Cor. 11:20 ff. and by

many statements of the Fathers. (Augsburg Confession XXIV:34-35 [German])

Since, therefore, the Mass among us is supported by the example of the church as seen from the Scriptures and the Fathers, we are confident that it cannot be disapproved, especially since the customary public ceremonies are for the most part retained. (Augsburg Confession XXIV:40 [Latin])

...we do not abolish the Mass but religiously keep and defend it. In our churches Mass is celebrated every Sunday and on other festivals, when the sacrament is offered to those who wish for it after they have been examined and absolved. (Apology XXIV:1)

*II. The Lutheran Church is a liturgical church because it is an **orthodox** church.*

Its historic worship forms are thoroughly Biblical and evangelical in content, and therefore serve as faithful guides in orthodox Christian worship. The chief articles of Christian doctrine (the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, sin and grace, etc.) are deeply embedded in the unchanging parts of the Service (the Ordinary), and they become deeply embedded in the minds and hearts of Christian worshipers through the disciplined, weekly repetition of those texts. The annual cycle of festivals and seasons in the traditional church year reminds worshipers of the important events in salvation history.

The weekly sequence of Scripture readings and other Propers appointed for each Sunday of the year exposes worshipers to “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). The historic Liturgy provides a proper balance of continuity and variety in each Sunday’s service. Through the words of the Liturgy, worshipers are able to hear God’s timeless message to his people, and to respond with prayers of thanksgiving, praise, and petition that have been molded and shaped by that message. The Liturgy focuses the worshipers’ attention on the objective Means of Grace and the unchanging truths of Holy Scripture, rather than on their own subjective and unreliable emotions. It thereby helps them to remain faithful to St. Paul’s directive: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16, NIV).

The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the Word may receive faith and fear and so may also pray. (Apology XXIV:3)

...the chief purpose of all ceremonies is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ. (Augsburg Confession XXIV:3 [German])

...ceremonies are needed especially in order that the unlearned may be taught. (Augsburg Confession XXIV:3 [Latin])

III. Conclusion

The Lutheran Church is a liturgical church, but its various branches are not obligated to adhere to the rubrics of any one particular rite. The sixteenth-century liturgical orders of the various branches of the Church generally did follow the basic outline of the Western catholic Mass, but they often differed from each other in many details. The Lutheran Church acknowledges that God's Word has not bound Christian worshipers to any specific liturgical forms or ceremonies (beyond the divinely-instituted Means of Grace), and that all Christian churches therefore are, in principle, free to modify or change their liturgical practices.

However, the Confessions of the Lutheran Church are also very clear in their teaching that such modifications or changes are to be made only when there are good reasons for them, and only in ways that are fully in keeping with the Church's Biblical standards of liturgical solemnity and doctrinal purity.

Lutheran congregations are not required to be "high church" or "low church," but they are required to be churchly. The Confessions accordingly do not endorse the substitution of frivolous "Church Growth" gimmicks for the public Divine Service, and they do not condone whimsical and arbitrary alterations of "the pattern of the sound words" of the established Liturgy (2 Timothy 1:13). St. Paul reminds us that "God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33), and he tells us to "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). St. Paul's insights on the exercise of Christian freedom apply to the question of unnecessary deviations from the historic Lutheran (Christian) Liturgy: "'Everything is permissible' -- but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible' -- but not everything is constructive" (1 Corinthians 10:23-24,). The basic liturgical policy of the Church of the Lutheran Reformation can aptly be summarized in the words of the well-known witticism: "If it's not broken, don't fix it."

With regard to church usages that have been established by men, it is taught among us that those usages are to be observed which may be observed without sin and which contribute to peace and good order in the church, among them being certain holy days, festivals, and the like. Yet we accompany these observances with instruction so that consciences may not be burdened by the notion that such things are necessary for salvation. (Augsburg Confession XV:1-2 [German])

Among us the ancient rites are for the most part diligently observed, for it is false and malicious to charge that all ceremonies and all old ordinances are abolished in our churches. But it has been a common complaint that certain abuses were connected with ordinary rites. Because these could not be approved with a good conscience, they have to some extent been corrected. (Augsburg Confession, epilogue to XXI, 4,5 [Latin])

...the community of God in every place and at every time has the right, authority, and power to change, to reduce, or to increase ceremonies according to its circumstances, as long as it does so without frivolity and offense but in an orderly and appropriate way, as at any time may seem to be

most profitable, beneficial, and salutary for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the edification of the church. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration X:9)

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