



COME, LET US WORSHIP IN A NEW WAY

**A worship resource for in-person
worship during times of pandemic**



**South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.

Come, let us **Worship** in a new
way

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Thank you - "Come, let us **worship** in a new way" has been prepared for congregational use in the South Dakota Synod by: Rev. David Bacon, Rev. Benjamin Eisele, Rev. Dr. James Fowler, Rev. Dr. Ramona Hayes, Rev. Patrick Jenkins, Rev. Justin Kosec, Rev. Dr. Heidi Kvanli, Rev. Chris Matson, Rev. David Schoeld, Rev. Alexandra Smith, Rev. Renee Spichal Larson, Rev. Matthew Spoden, Rev. Jonathan Steiner, Rev. Dr. Richard Swanson, Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Whillock, Rev. Constanze Hagmaier, Bishop

Thank you to this devoted group of leaders, who carefully discerned practices for us to gather for in person worship during a time of pandemic.

Foreword

Dear Church, Siblings in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit! - There is no doubt in my mind that worship is at the heart of our congregational life. What is true for us today has always been true for God's people throughout the ages. We can find one of the earliest references to worship in Genesis 4:3 *"In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord."* Since this early form of worship, styles and liturgies have continually evolved to adapt to ever changing circumstances of the worshipping communities. Take the story of the Exodus for example. Worship in Egypt looked much different for God's people over the course of 400 years of slavery than it did in the wilderness, where for 40 years the Israelites under Moses' leadership had to adapt their place of worship and style of worship to the ever-changing landscape and circumstances of their pilgrimage. Upon entering the promised land, worship once again began to take a new shape, adapting from a nomadic lifestyle to a domesticated lifestyle. While David was eager to build a temple for God's people, so that they finally would have a place of worship that was permanent, it wasn't until Solomon that God was ready for His people to erect a permanent place of worship and institute permanent rituals.

I have said before that 2020 can be compared to the time of the Exodus. During this time of pandemic, we have seen lots of changes and adaptations to the way we worship due to changing circumstances. Worship is always contemporary, meaning that it always reflects its time and age and equips God's people of that age to live out their faith in daily living. I commend you this worship resource as a contemporary form of worship in times of a pandemic, where almost everything we hold dear such as speaking and singing in unison, physical touch and celebrating the sacraments need to be either omitted or altered to protect our neighbor. May it serve you as a guide to in person worship.

In Christ's service,
Bishop Constanze Hagmaier

Preface

The task force for worship commend this resource to the congregations of the South Dakota Synod as a resource for worship in times of a pandemic. The foundation for all suggested adaptations is the Evangelical Lutheran Worship's Service of the Word.

It is the task force's hope that adapting our ways of worship during a time of pandemic for the sake of our neighbor's wellbeing and protection bears ample opportunities to take a fresh look at the ways we worship together. A new way of gathering as God's people and worshipping together bears the opportunity to teach, learn and remember why we worship the way we do, and what each liturgical piece of the service says about God and our relationship to God and neighbor.

The proposed liturgy invites us to spend much time in silence, which can be uncomfortable for some at first. Experience teaches that the more we practice silence, the more comfortable we become leaning into it. You may also want to experiment using soft instrumental music during the periods of silence to allow those who are uncomfortable with it to relax as they learn to lean into this new form of worship. Soft instrumental background music may also be helpful for worshipping communities who broadcast their worship on the radio as it avoids "dead air".

Please review the following guiding techniques as you discern, implement and teach contemporary alterations to your in-person worship.

- **Teaching Opportunity:** Remember you can take moments before worship to explain new liturgical practices; or pause before the appropriate moment to invite and provide additional instructions.
- **Mouthing words of the liturgy:** Without expelling air, mouthing the words still allows your body to participate in the language of the liturgy. You can invite people to mouth the words of the liturgy rather than participate vocally.
- **Body language and ASL:** Spoken language is only one part of human communication. Invite people to use liturgical gestures like signs of the cross, bowing, kneeling, sitting, and standing. Also learn and incorporate appropriate signs from American Sign Language. Play with different gestures and postures for prayer--like lifting up hands. Invite people to move their body in place.
- **Avoid or minimize unison speaking:** Omit the number of occasions when people speak in unison or at least shorten unison responses. For instance, rather than pray the entire Lord's prayer in unison, a leader could pray the prayer out loud, while the gathered community prays silently in their hearts and is invited to conclude the time of prayer with "amen."

- **Minimize movement:** Rather than invite the whole congregation to move through the sanctuary, look for opportunities to minimize movement. Leave offering baskets in the Narthex, for instance.
- **Incorporate silence:** Often, we try to fill every second of our worship service with sound. Use this opportunity to invite people into moments of intentional silence. Dr. Richard Swanson, Augustana University and task force member, offers this thoughtful scriptural reflection on the power of silence. “Elijah had defeated the 400 prophets of Ba’al, and now he was hiding in a remote cave, afraid for his life. There is a violent wind, so strong it breaks rocks. There is a catastrophic earthquake, shaking the earth and shattering it. There is a raging fire, roaring and crackling and destroying. The voice of God is not in the wind, not in the earthquake, and not in the fire. And then, according to some translations of the Bible Elijah hears a ‘still, small voice.’ I have always loved that phrase. It doesn’t quite catch what the Hebrew is saying, but the phrase is beautiful. The Hebrew is better rendered as ‘a voice of sheer silence.’ It is the voice of God. And it is sheer silence. Imagine that. In this service you will meet silence at many points where you might expect singing, or confessing, or responding. It will feel odd, perhaps. In those odd silences, listen for the voice of God. As we worship together in these strange times, may we hear the voice of God in the unexpected silences.”
- **Whispering:** Whispering quietly expels less air than boisterous singing, but a loud stage whisper is no better than speaking. You can invite people to whisper; just know it is not necessarily preferable to speaking.
- **Use Presented Song and Cantors:** Omit congregational singing. Presented singing--rather than congregational song--is preferable when attempting to minimize aerolization and disease spread. If your congregation expects a sung liturgy, invite a cantor to sing it for them. Invite your best singers to offer musical leadership on behalf of the congregation. Or carefully select pieces of prerecorded music that can lead worshipful moments. Share lyrics of the songs to aid listeners’ worship participation; or, if you use screens in worship, compose a “visual hymnal” with interesting images for your slides. Invite the worshiping community to engage their five senses as they listen. For instance, what do you visualize as you listen to the song?
- **Instrumentation:** Creatively use instruments like handbells to mark moments of silence or prayer; or to provide congregational response. Give bells or other instruments to each parishioner for liturgical responses. Please make sure that proper personal hygiene is practiced using these instruments as well as good cleaning practices of the instruments before and after use.
- **Entering the Space:** Tape every other row off to enforce physical distancing. Families can sit together. And alternate rows between worship services. Utilize

greeters at all entrances to hand out masks as worshipers enter the sanctuary. Task ushers with directing traffic flow during Holy Communion and upon entering and exiting the sanctuary. Leave all doors open. Remove all tables and chairs in the gathering spaces to avoid crowding. Have various designated mask and sanitizer stations throughout the building available and stocked. Offer electronic sign in opportunities to assist with potential contact tracing. While this is not required, it can be helpful to those who are visitors and indicate that they would like to be contacted in case of an outbreak.

- **Use of Water:**
 - Only use water visually, discourage people from dipping their hand/finger into the baptismal font.
 - Asperges (Sprinkling) is strongly discouraged also.
- **Digital Community:** Be mindful that while some are eager to return to in person worship, others are not as comfortable. Therefore, be as inclusive as possible of the worshipers that participate in worship digitally. Make sure that they receive the very same instructions and invitations as the worshipers who are physically present in worship.
- **Engaging the five senses:** The proposed liturgy encourages to foster an environment where all five senses (touch, smell, see, hear, taste) are used. All participants are encouraged to experience worship through these five senses, e.g. as a hymn is played, invite the worshipers to imagine what this hymn would taste like, if it were food, or as you listen to the psalm of the day, what do you hear?

Liturgy

- **Welcome & Teaching Moment**

The leader can use this time to:

- Welcome people to worship
- Introduce the “theme” for the day
- Offer necessary announcements
- Teach about contactless worship
- Invitation to spend time in silence to prepare for worship

- **Invocation**

L: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen

Alternative Practice:

The pastor opens their arms as a sign of welcome, and then makes the sign of the cross. Worshipers could either bow their heads forward as a sign of receiving the greeting and/or reciprocate the greeting by making the sign of the cross themselves.

- **Confession and Forgiveness**

P: Let us confess our sins.

C (Spoken by a cantor, while congregation simultaneously confesses silently):
Lord God, we have been given life, but have not lived. We have enjoyed the wonder of Your creation, but often failed to praise you as Creator. We have sought pleasure to enhance life, and forget that real life is given through a cross at Calvary. Jesus gave up his life that we might live. Come Holy Spirit and touch our hearts that our sins may be forgiven and abundant life be renewed in us. In Jesus Name. Amen

L: Hear the word of the Gospel! The God of all the universe has loved you with an everlasting love that forgives sins and makes all things new. Hear the word of the Gospel! Jesus Christ, the Son of God died on the cross so that our relationship with God would be made right. Hear the word of the Gospel! Go forth in God’s Name, loving your neighbor and spreading this Good News to all. Amen.

Alternative Practices:

Remembrance of Baptism

Spoken: *The pastor would lead the liturgy as outlined in the ELW pg. 97. Instead of the congregation responding affirmatively with “amen”, they would be invited to bow silently, or as a sign of thanksgiving, e.g during Lent and Advent or the congregation could clap, e.g. during all other seasons.*

Silent:

1. *The pastor would silently pour a jug of water into the baptismal font.*
2. *The pastor would point at the water and then spread the arms open indicating that the promise of baptism is for all who are gathered.*
3. *The pastor, along with the congregation, would do a speechless sign of praise:*
 - *Raise hands up in the air as a sign of praise, those who cannot or would prefer not raise their arms could either cup their hands together as a sign of receiving the promise or fold their hands together as a sign of a prayer of thanksgiving.*
 - *Clap hands together as a sign of praise, or even stomp on the ground to make a joyful noise for our baptismal promises.*
4. *The pastor and the congregation would make the sign of the cross by holding their finger slightly away from their forehead to avoid touching. If distancing was appropriate the congregation could make a contactless sign of the cross for their neighbor.*

- **Gathering Music**

Instrumental only

- **Kyrie**

Instead of singing as a congregation, two cantors would lead the congregation, while the worshipers sing the response silently in their heart or mouth the music. If it is impossible to maintain the recommended physical distance by the two cantors and accompanist, the musician would accompany the congregation's silent heart's song or humming.

- **Canticle of Praise**

A cantor could lead the congregation, while the worshipers silently sing along in their heart or mouth the words. Humming might also be an option. Worshipers may also be invited to clap or stomp along, to tap their feet or move their body in ways that underlines and emphasises joy in response to God's amazing grace.

Alternative Practice:

Omitting the Kyrie and/or the canticle of praise, e.g. during the season of Lent.

- **Greeting**

L (*The leader may extend their arms in greeting*): The Lord be with you.

C (**mouth the words silently**): **And also with you.**

Alternative Practice:

The congregation may simply respond with the same hand gesture. The leader then invites the assembly to silent reflection.

- **Prayer of the Day**

It is common practice that the worship leader is the only one praying loud, therefore the task force recommends to continue with this practice. The congregation may respond with “amen” spoken in unison or a silent nod of the head.

Alternative Practice

The worship leader may invite the congregation to quietly pray the prayer of the day. The worship leader concludes the designated time of prayer with a spoken “amen” on behalf of the congregation.

- **Word**

- Responses: All of the readings call for some kind of response. During this extraordinary time, here are two possibilities:
 - An assisting minister (sufficiently distant from the assembly) speaks both the call and response.
 - Silence may be part of the response.
- Children’s Sermon: Invite the children to stand in the pew. This practice will identify where they are, and at the same times maintains the recommended physical distancing practice. - Use this time to teach the contemporary format and how it shapes our worship and daily life.
- First & Second Reading: Read by a lector, or the worship leader to avoid movement. They may also be omitted from public worship and advised to read at home during the time of household devotions.
- Psalm: The lector may lead the congregation in a responsive reading of the psalm. While the lector reads out loud, the worshipping community answers by mouthing the response only.

Alternative Practices:

1. *Invite the congregation to listen to an instrumental piece of the psalm for the day and meditate on the words.*
2. *Invite the congregation to read the psalm and memorize one verse or phrase that will feed them throughout the week.*

3. *If your community has a media ministry play a video of the psalm that will engage the five senses of worshipers.*

- Gospel Acclamation: The accompanist plays the acclamation and a cantor leads the singing, while the congregation silently joins or mouths the words only. The congregation may accompany the cantor and accompanist by clapping or stomping along, swaying, through using rhythm instruments or other appropriate body movement.
- Gospel Reading: Read by the preacher. The assisting minister/pastor announces the gospel portion in the fashion most familiar to the assembly:
L: “The gospel according to Some may choose to add: “the nth chapter. And others might tack on “beginning at the nth verse.”
L: The assisting minister/pastor then responds on behalf of the assembly: “Glory to you, O Lord.”
At the conclusion of the reading, the assisting minister/pastor says,
L: “The Gospel of the Lord,” and then responds on behalf of the assembly, “Praise to you, O Christ.” Again, silence may be part of the response.
- Sermon: The preacher should be careful to maintain sufficient distance from the assembly. This will be more difficult, perhaps, for those whose style is to walk around as they preach. Silence for meditation may follow.

- **Hymn of the Day**

Instrumental only, but with an invitation to engage all five senses to fully experience the hymn. If sufficient distancing is possible, a soloist or ensemble may sing the Hymn of the Day, while the assembly follows the words.

Note: It would be effective to take care that the manner of playing (loud/soft, aggressive/gentle, etc.) matches the words of a particular verse or refrain. This may be difficult for some of our musicians, second-nature to others.

*Alternative Practice:
Purposeful silence.*

- **Creed**

If there is not a comfortable or safe way to say the Creed it may be omitted. A representative or the pastor may say the Creed on behalf of the congregation.

Alternative Practices

- *Use sign language to confess the creed*
- *Utilize a slide show depicting images of each line of the Creed. You could use subtitles, or either a representative could still confess the words, or soft music could accompany the slides.*
- *Physical objects or other forms of art can be used to express the imagery of each stanza of the creed.*
- *Hand signals, these can be practiced while there is one reader or even silently led by the minister/lay person.*
 - *For God the Father, have congregation members lift their hands up with palms facing up as high as they are comfortable lifting them.*
 - *For Jesus the Son, either have congregation members look at a cross in the sanctuary, or make a cross using their hands or arms.*
 - *For the Holy Spirit, have congregation members point in different directions.*

● **Prayers of Intercession**

We have a ready resource for congregational participation in the Prayers of the People: the bidding prayer. The worship leader states “bid” and the congregation prays silently.

Alternative Practices:

- *Teach a simple gesture (such as folded “prayer” hands) that the congregation can use while the worship leader reads the congregational response.*
- *Teaching ASL for both the line that closes the petition and the congregational response. For example, “Lord in your mercy” would be spoken and signed by the worship leader, and “Hear our prayer” spoken by the worship leader and signed by the congregation.*
- **Peace**
 - Teach ASL (American Sign Language) for peace
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-C5WhR2tHLw>
 - [More Options](#)
- **Offering**
 - A brief instrumental piece.
 - Stewardship video clip.
 - Narrative budget sharing moment
 - Giving Jar

- **Holy Communion**

- Traditional practice (not recommended, even when wearing gloves).
- Only households are invited to come forward together. They will be communed at the table. The next household will be invited forward only after the previous household is seated again.
- Serve the wine/juice in the circular communion trays laid on tables. Use every other circle so they don't touch the nearby glass when they pick theirs up. No one will assist in serving.
- Speak of the validity of one element communion shared as worshipers exit.
- Use the pre-wrapped cup and wafer purchased from religious book stores. Have worshipers pick it up as they enter church. Set aside for use later in the service.
- During communion, blessings will not include the sign of the cross on the forehead, or a contactless sign of the cross may be offered.
- Please also refer to the synod's resource "Extending the Table, Expanding Participation" for a deeper discernment process and other variations of celebrating the Eucharist during the time of a pandemic.

- **Lord's Prayer**

- Mouthing the Lord's Prayer in unison or silently joining the worship leader as she/he prays loud.
- The worship leader prays one petition at a time, allowing time between each for the congregation to silently pray, either by repeating that petition or treating each petition as a "bid" and inviting the congregation to pray specific prayers the "bid" brings to mind.
- Motions for the Lord's Prayer. There are several videos with motions for the Lord's Prayer online. Langford Lutheran Parish created their own and it can be found at <https://1drv.ms/v/s!AjzmtQBAjbeRg49qTTLxRkQToGwhVw>.

- **Benediction**

Traditionally spoken by the worship leader over the worshipers, therefore no changes are proposed. The community may respond with a mouthed "amen" or any other sign of acclamation, such as clapping or stomping their feet.

- **Sending Hymn/Song**

Instrumental only, invite any appropriate boy movement as described above.

- **Dismissal**

- P Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
or
- P Go in peace. Christ is with you.
or
- P Go in peace. Love and serve your neighbor.
or
- P Be at peace. Serve the Lord.

Congregational responses could include:

- C “Thanks be to God” using sign language (ASL)
or
- C Giving a “thumbs up” sign. (A non-verbal indication of, “Okay, we will,” which is the typical dismissal response for Lutherans Outdoors.)
or
- C Hands folded in prayer position and a nod, indicating “amen,” or “yes.”

Resources

Hymns/Singing

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/09/arts/music/choirs-singing-coronavirus-safe.html>

https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/boisi/pdf/s091/Welcome_address_to_freshman_at_Boston_Conservatory.pdf

<https://acda.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ACDA-COVID-19-Committee-Report.pdf>

Reopening

<https://vimeo.com/429775905>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHnmYejbbgc>

Whispering

Whispering should be a relative safe practice. A study suggests that “more particles are released when speech is voiced, which involves vocal folds vibration, rather than whispered, which does not.” (Asadi, S., Wexler, A.S., Cappa, C.D. et al. Aerosol emission and superemission during human speech increase with voice loudness. *Sci Rep* 9, 2348 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-38808-z>)

Lord's Prayer

- Praying the Lord's Prayer as a Body Prayer by the Anabaptist Disabilities Network
<https://www.anabaptistdisabilitiesnetwork.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/Lords%20Prayer%20body%20prayer.pdf>
- Corporate Embodied Prayer by Connie C. Bull
http://alumni.iws.edu/pdf/Embodied_Lord%27s_Prayer.pdf
- The Lord's Prayer in Movement by Lorraine Kisly
<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/lorrainekisly/2019/04/01/the-lords-prayer-in-movement/>
- Lord's Prayer Hand Motions (for Memorization) by Mimi Patrick <https://ministry-to-children.com/lords-prayer-hand-motions-for-memorization-help/>