



Queensland  
Churches Together

# CHRISTIANS IN DIALOGUE

## How we Worship

### The origins of Christian worship and the riches of the different Western traditions of worship

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## **HOW WE WORSHIP**

Anglicans, Lutherans, Roman Catholics and Uniting Church Christians each have their own distinctive way of worshipping God on Sundays, as do Christians of other traditions. The material in this folder is designed to assist Christians in small interchurch groups to discuss their different ways of worship and to pray together, and so to take another step along the road to Christian unity.

We would encourage those who use this material to visit churches other than their own and experience for themselves the way other Christians worship.

This material has been prepared by the Christians in Dialogue task force which was set up by the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane, the Lutheran Church Queensland District, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane and the Uniting Church Synod of Queensland.

Further copies of How We Worship are available from:  
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Each of the four sessions in How We Worship has an article to centre the discussion, a set of questions to help start discussion, and a set of prayer resources. Each set of prayer resources consists of a psalm in praise of God, a prayer for Christian unity, a reading from Mark's Gospel, and an affirmation of faith. These prayer resources are offered to assist the group to pray. Someone should lead the prayer. Just how the prayer resources will be used is for each group to decide. They might want to add other elements to the prayer, or they might use the resources as they are set out. Some of the resources could be used at the beginning of a session and some at the end, or the group could decide to use them all in one longer period of prayer. The readings each record a miracle cure. They are included in this program in the hope that they will inspire reflection on the need to cure of the sickness of Christian disunity. There should be a short pause after the Gospel reading for reflection



# Leader's Guide

## 1. Gathering

People coming to a group for the first time will often have some anxiety –

- ◆ Will I know anyone?
- ◆ What will be expected of me?
- ◆ Did I switch off the oven?
- ◆ It is important to help them through this first awkward stage. Have all your preparations done well beforehand so that you are able to greet each person warmly on arrival, introducing them to one another, and perhaps having tea and coffee available.

## 2. Beginning

- A. When all have arrived get the session started by giving them a clear statement of what the group is about - Welcome the group
- ◆ who we are;
  - ◆ why we're here;
  - ◆ when we will finish.

It might go like this: "Welcome to my place, and I'm delighted that each of you has been able to make it. We are a group of people from Churches gathered together to reflect and share our ideas on ... (*name of study*). Tonight we will be looking at Study One .....

- B. Then invite the members to introduce themselves saying:
- ◆ who I am;
  - ◆ why I'm here;
  - ◆ what I hope to get out of the program.

Lead yourself by giving a short response to each of the three areas. Then invite each of the others to do likewise. Don't worry if some respond to only one or two of the areas.

- C. Then distribute copies of the program.

Encourage participants to listen to one another's ideas with respect.

## 3. Opening Devotion

- A. You may wish to play some music quietly in the background and give the group a few moments to reflect on the opening devotion. Then call for volunteers to lead it.
- B. You might like to choose an appropriate song for the group to share

## 4. Reflection on the Topic

Invite a couple of people to read the teaching. Encourage the readers to pause between each section.

## 5. Discussion

Allow a few minutes of quiet time to reflect on the questions. Encourage participants to share responses to each question but there is to be no pressure put on anyone to speak. Be sure to make some response to each speaker if only to say e.g. "Thank you John". This makes sure the participant feels that he / she has been heard.

## 6. Closure

Thank the participants for their participation. Check to ensure venue is right for next session.

## Closing Devotion

### Cuppa

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## SESSION 1: The Service of the Word

### How We Worship: The Origins of Christian Worship and the Riches of the Different Western Traditions of Worship - 1989

#### Introduction

Uniting Church people who come from Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian traditions, and Lutherans are familiar with a Sunday worship in the form of The Service of the Word and, on regular occasions, the Lord's Supper. Most Anglicans, and all Roman Catholics, are familiar with a Sunday worship which unites word and sacrament in the one service each Sunday.

#### Jewish Synagogue Service

The Service of the Word can be traced back to its origin in the Jewish synagogue worship service. The synagogue worship would have been familiar to the first Christians since most of them were Jews. When they gathered in the synagogue to worship the Lord they would have heard Old Testament passages read and they would have listened as someone reflected on the meaning of those passages for their lives. They would have joined in singing the psalms, and saying the prayers of praise and supplication. The synagogue worship had a simple, clear-cut format which allowed everyone present to participate.

After their conversion the Christians continued to worship in the synagogue and they also gathered in their homes to break bread in memory of Jesus, as he had directed. When the Christians were eventually expelled from the synagogues they combined the elements of the synagogue service with the Lord's Supper.

#### Early Christian Service

Perhaps the oldest description of Christians at Sunday worship was written by St Justin Martyr in Rome in the middle of the second century:

*On the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. When the reader has finished the president in a discourse urges the imitation of these noble things. Then all stand together and offer prayers. When we have finished the prayer, bread is brought and wine and water.*

By the end of the third century the Service of the Word had developed a clear structure with a greeting by the priest, a reading from the Old Testament and a reading from the New Testament each with a psalm in response, a reading from the Gospel, a sermon, and the prayer of the faithful.

Over the centuries this simple order of the Sunday worship service gradually changed. Some elements were eliminated and new ones were added. By the sixth century the Service of the Word began with a greeting and psalm 43. Then followed the *confiteor*, or confession, with its absolution. An opening hymn called the introit was sung followed by the response *kyrie eleison* (Lord have mercy) and the *gloria in excelsis* (glory to God on high). An opening prayer was said. Then there was a reading from an epistle followed in response by a verse from the psalms and an alleluia verse. Then followed the Gospel reading, the sermon and the Nicene Creed. So the Old Testament reading and its response psalm, and the prayer of the faithful had been eliminated, and a number of elements had been added.

## **Medieval Worship**

One outcome of the rapid growth of Christianity was that Sunday worship changed its character. Instead of the small congregations, as in the time of Justin Martyr, in the cities there were large numbers accommodated in substantial churches. Sunday worship was no longer a community activity, as it originally was, with a simple, somewhat informal format. It became a sacred action performed by the clergy which inspired awe rather than participation on the part of the people.

By the Middle Ages the Sunday worship had been taken over by the clergy and the role of the people had become that of spectators watching what the priest and the assistant clerics did at and around the altar, which in the large churches was some distance from most of the people. The priest recited the Mass in Latin, a language which only few people could understand. The focus of eucharistic piety became the act of seeing the consecrated host and the chalice when they were lifted up by the priest during the Mass. Hearing what the priest read or said had become of no importance for the congregation.

## **Reformation**

The reformers wanted the Sunday worship to become again a communal activity in which all would participate. Both Luther and Calvin wanted the Sunday worship to be a celebration of word and sacrament but, accustomed as the people had by then become to attending Mass each Sunday but not receiving communion, they were not ready for frequent communion. The reformers had to compromise and the pattern throughout the reformation churches became a quarterly celebration of the Lord's Supper and the normal Sunday worship became the Service of the Word.

The very heart of Luther's reformation was a recovery of the word of the Gospel to the centre of the Church's life. A primary concern of the reformers was that the people be instructed. They were ignorant of even the most fundamental teaching of the Gospel. So the reformers placed a strong emphasis on preaching. For them preaching was not simply a commentary on the readings. The readings and preaching together brought the word of God before the people. Preaching together with the sacrament became the centre of worship in Lutheran and Reformed Churches.

## **Worship Reformed**

The only change that Luther made in the order of the first part of the Mass was to introduce hymns in the vernacular and the Lord's Prayer. Calvin, however, changed the Service of the Word more drastically, believing that he was returning to the pattern of the early Church. His service began with a prayer of confession and absolution. The commandments were sung, extempore prayer offered, and a psalm sung. A prayer for illumination was said followed by the lesson and the sermon. A long prayer of intercession, a petition, and the Lord's Prayer preceded the concluding blessing.

The Reformation in England was influenced by the reformers on the continent and this is evident in the Book of Common Prayer which Cramner, Archbishop of Canterbury, prepared to be a guide for the English clergy in leading Sunday worship. The Service of the Word opened with the Lord's Prayer and then followed the prayer for purity and the commandments. A greeting was given followed by the prayer of the day and another for the king. After the reading of a portion of the Old and New Testaments, the Apostle's Creed was

said. The sermon was followed by the intercessions, and, if the Lord's Supper was not to follow, the service was then concluded.

The Methodist revival movement in the Church of England in the eighteenth century led to the establishment of a separate tradition. Methodist worship is characterised by its use of hymns.

### **Modern Reforms to Worship**

In the living memory of many of us there was a way of worship in each of our traditions which was unchanging. We grew into it from childhood, knew it well, and loved it. The Roman Catholic Church had made some adaptations to its worship patterns at the Council of Trent which followed the Reformation, but basically the Mass the world over stayed the same as it had been in Medieval times. While the Anglican Church in Australia continued to use the Book of Common Prayer as the pattern for its Sunday worship, Australian Lutheran, Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian worship was more influenced by traditions developed in their local congregations.

Sunday worship in most traditions has changed significantly in recent decades. Historians, with access to material which was not available to scholars in previous generations, have discovered how the Church has worshipped in every age. This research has led us to simplify the pattern of our Sunday worship, to remove additions which are no longer helpful to our worship, and to model present day worship patterns on that of the early Church.

The Second Vatican Council saw the Roman Catholic Church reform its Sunday worship so that it has become more like that of other traditions. At long last Roman Catholics were able to participate in the Mass in their own language. They have been encouraged to worship the Lord in song on Sundays, and the importance of the Service of the Word which precedes the Lord's Supper has been rediscovered.

Sunday worship in the congregations of the Uniting Church in Australia since union in 1977 has been changing. The publication of the Australian Hymn Book, which coincided with the inauguration of the Uniting Church, has been influential in resourcing worship, and the publication of *Uniting in Worship* in 1988 means that Uniting Church congregations have available resources which reflect the best aspects of the long tradition of Christian worship.

Australian Anglicans and Lutherans have also modified their Sunday worship services in recent years. An Australian Prayer Book still partly influenced by the principles of the Book of Common Prayer, was published by the Anglican Church in 1978. It has led to greater participation by the congregation in Sunday worship. The Lutheran Church of Australia published new orders of service for Sunday worship in the 1980s which reflect the work of their scholars and has led to more uniformity in the way Lutheran congregations in Australia worship on Sundays.

One result of all of our churches changing their patterns of Sunday worship so that they more nearly correspond to the way the early Church worshipped is that our worship services now have much in common.

## Questions to Help Discussions

1. We believe that God speaks to us in the scriptures and that the scripture readings are essential to Sunday worship. How do the scriptures help you to worship God?
2. How important is the preaching in your church's Sunday worship? How much time is given to it? Give some examples of how the preaching helped you to see the meaning of the scripture readings for your life.
3. From what we know of the early Christians, fellowship characterised their worship on Sundays. How is Christian fellowship built up in your church, and how does the fellowship show itself in Sunday worship?
4. While most churches use hymns and creeds in their Sunday worship some emphasize these more than others. How important are they in your church's Sunday worship?

## Resources for Prayer

### Psalm of Praise: Psalm 8

O Lord, our Sovereign,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.  
Out of the mouths of babes and infants  
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,  
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heaven, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have established;  
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God  
and crowned them with glory and honour,  
you have given them dominion over the work of your hands,  
you have put all things under their feet.

All sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field,  
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Sovereign,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

## **Prayer for Unity**

### **Leader**

We come together to worship you, you are our dear and loving God. Yet we come admitting that we constantly fail to be the kind of people you would have us be. We sometimes find it hard to love our neighbour. We can be suspicious, neglectful, and critical; we can make our neighbour our enemy. You know how easily we can make enemies of almost anyone, even our friends. Break down the barriers we build. Banish suspicion. Fill us with love for one another.

### **Response**

Father, draw us closer together by the gifts of your Spirit, for the sake of your Son.

### **Gospel Reading: Mark 1:40-44**

A leper came to him and pleaded on his knees: "If you want to," he said, "you can cure me". Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. "Of course I want to!" he said. "Be cured!" And the leprosy left him at once and he was cured. Jesus immediately sent him away and sternly ordered him, "Mind you say nothing to anyone, but go and show yourself to the priest, and make the offering for your healing prescribed by Moses as evidence of your recovery".

### **The Nicene Creed (Agreed Version)**

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God,  
Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father,  
who with the Father and the Son  
he is worshipped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come.  
Amen.

## SESSION 2: The Lord's Supper

### How We Worship: The Origins of Christian Worship and the Riches of the Different Western Traditions of Worship - 1989

#### Introduction

For many Christians the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper follows the Service of the Word in their worship every Sunday. For other Christians, they are joined together less frequently. Some churches include both the Service of the Word and the Sacrament under the one title such as the "Mass" for Roman Catholics, "Holy Communion" for Anglicans, and the "Service of the Lord's Day" for the Uniting Church. A growing number of churches call the combined service the "Eucharist" which means "thanksgiving".

#### New Testament

What Christians now do at the Lord's Supper on Sundays is based on the words and actions of Jesus at his last meal with his disciples. In the oldest account of the occasion which we possess, St Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, writes:

*I have received from the Lord what I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night that he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me'.*

(1Cor11:23-25)

We know from the New Testament that the first Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper when they gathered in one another's homes for meals. The bread was blessed, broken and shared at the beginning of the meal, and the wine was blessed and the cup passed around at the end of the meal. The blessing and sharing of the bread and wine was a Jewish meal custom. The blessings were really prayers of thanksgiving to God for his goodness in providing for his people. The Lord's Supper that we now celebrate has developed from this Jewish meal prayer of thanksgiving.

#### The Early Church

By the second century the Lord's Supper had become somewhat formalised in the way it was celebrated, doubtless because the gatherings had become so large that they had to be held in halls. St Justin Martyr, writing in the middle of the second century, described what happened after the Service of the Word:

*On finishing the prayers we greet each other with a kiss. Then bread and a cup of water and wine are brought to the president of the brethren and he, taking them, sends up praise and glory to the Father of the universe through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and offers thanksgiving at some length that we have been deemed worthy to receive these things from him. When the president has given thanks and the whole congregation has assented those whom we call deacons give to each of those present a portion of the consecrated bread and wine and water, and they take it to the absent.*

The core of this action is the thanksgiving during which the words of institution would have been recited. This part of the Lord's Supper came to be known as the great prayer of thanksgiving.

### **Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

The oldest record we have of words used in the great thanksgiving comes down to use from the Roman priest Hippolytus who wrote in the early part of the third century. The prayer begins with the celebrant calling on the people to lift up their hearts to God and they are invited to make the prayer of thanksgiving their own. God is then thanked for all that he has done for them in Jesus Christ. After the Last Supper narrative and the words of institution, there follows a summary of what is being remembered, and the bread and wine are offered to God. After the Holy Spirit has been invoked to strengthen the Church, there is a prayer praising the Trinity, and the great thanksgiving ends with the people assenting to it with the Amen.

### **Roman Canon**

In Rome, as time passed, the simple structure described by Hippolytus was added to. Prayers used during the great prayer of thanksgiving were recorded in collections called sacramentaries and became standardised. Other documents recorded what the celebrant was to do during the Mass. The word Mass comes from the Latin which the priest used to conclude the Lord's Supper. It seems that by the time of Pope Damasus, who was bishop of Rome in the second half of the fourth century, the entire great prayer of thanksgiving had become standardised at Rome and became known as the Roman Canon, "canon" meaning "rule". It was about this time, too, that the Mass began to be said in Latin instead of Greek so that it could be easily understood by the ordinary people. It continued to be said in Latin all over the world until the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.

### **The Priest's Mass**

Although the Lord's Supper in the early Church had been an expression of the worship of the people, as the centuries passed it became almost exclusively the priest's prayer. By the end of the Middle Ages the original simple structure had been complicated not only with additional prayers but also by a great deal of ceremonial. The people were no longer able to make the prayers their own since they could not understand the Latin used by the priest and which, in any case, he recited silently. The only aspect of the Mass which was then available to them was the visual image of the priest extending his arms, bowing, kissing the altar, making signs of the cross over the bread and wine, and elevating them and genuflecting before them. The additional ceremonial was meant to foster a sense of reverence and mystery.

### **The Consecration**

The recitation by the priest of Jesus' words of institution began to be accompanied by distinctive gestures. The priest adapted his actions to the words in a dramatic fashion. These realistic gestures reinforced the growing opinion at that time that it was precisely as the words of institution were spoken that the bread and wine were transformed into Our Lord's body and blood. This emphasis on the words of institution eventually overshadowed the other parts of the Mass.

## **Christ's Presence**

In the eleventh century, there appeared a marked change in the attitude of both the priest and the people towards the bread and wine after the words of institution. The priest, even when praying with outstretched arms, began to hold the first finger and the thumb pressed together after the consecration because it was thought that they had touched the physical body of Our Lord. The consecrated bread and wine were regarded with such reverence that fear of receiving them unworthily led to infrequent communion by the people. As we saw in the first session, the people now became intent on seeing and adoring the consecrated elements as they were elevated by the priest after the consecration. This emphasis on the change that took place at the consecration eventually obliterated the understanding of the Mass as a continuous action which moved progressively through a number of stages all of which had their own importance.

## **Luther's Reforms**

The sixteenth century reformers brought about fundamental changes to the way in which the Lord's Supper was celebrated by their followers. Luther set out to reform the medieval Mass on the basis of his doctrine of justification by faith. He replaced the whole Roman Canon with the words of institution because he considered that the canon taught the medieval theory that the Mass was in itself a sacrifice which man offered to God, whereas for Luther it was a proclamation of God offering us forgiveness of sin. The meaning of the word "sacrifice" is still debated today, and is sometimes the cause of misunderstanding between churches. As a result of Luther's abolition of the Roman canon the tradition of the great prayer of thanksgiving was lost in the Lutheran tradition and has only been recovered in recent times.

## **English Reforms**

In England, Cranmer's 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* contained, a service headed "The Supper of the Lord, and Holy Communion commonly called the Mass", which was an adaptation of the traditional great prayer of thanksgiving. The 1552 edition of the Prayer Book, under the influence of more radical reformers, contained drastic changes so that all that remained was a prayer of thanksgiving for redemption and the words of institution. In all subsequent revisions of the Prayer Book, the wording of the Lord's Supper has been revised, however slightly, in the direction of restoring elements from the traditional great prayer of thanksgiving.

## **Recent Reforms in Our Churches**

The changes made to the way in which Roman Catholics celebrate the Lord's Supper following the Second Vatican Council have been considerable. Catholics now have, in addition to the Roman Canon, which itself has been modified, three new eucharistic prayers for general use, and a number of others for particular occasions. These changes have been aimed at restoring the best features in the long tradition of the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The Anglican Church of Australia is currently using An Australian Prayer Book 1978, which is now in its seventh printing, together with the Book of Common Prayer, to order its Sunday worship. It contains two orders of service for Holy Communion. The first order has two forms for the Lord's Supper, and the second has four forms of the great prayer of thanksgiving.

In 1966, when the Lutheran Church of Australia was established by the union of the then two Lutheran churches in this country, an order of Service with Communion, which had been developed over a number of years, was introduced. It was based on the worship services used

by the Lutheran churches in the USA and Germany. In 1987, an alternative form of the Service with Communion was published which included a prayer of thanksgiving before the words of institution and a prayer asking the Father to send the Holy Spirit on the church after the words of institution.

The Uniting Church in Australia has been developing resources for its Sunday worship since its establishment in 1977. A series of worship booklets were published between 1980 and 1985 which reflected the worship practices of each of the three traditions which had united to form the new church. The experience gained in using these orders of service resulted in the publication of a comprehensive collection of worship resources titled *Uniting in Worship* in 1988. This contains the order of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper with nine alternative great prayers of thanksgiving. Some of these contain the narration and words of institution from the Last Supper, and others provide for them to be recited before the great prayer of thanksgiving in the tradition of Calvin's reform.

### **Growing Convergence**

Whereas the Roman Catholic Church has simplified the way in which it celebrates the Lord's Supper by removing aspects which tended to clutter the essential action, other churches have restored some aspects which had been discarded by the reformers in the sixteenth century. The result has been that the worship in each of our traditions has become alike in the essentials.

### **Questions to Help Discussion**

1. All our churches teach that Christ is present in a special way when the Lord's Supper is celebrated but the explanation of how he is present is not always the same. How do you believe Christ to be present at the Lord's Supper?
2. Some churches which have had a tradition of celebrating the Lord's Supper in each of the congregations every Sunday now find because of the shortage of ordained ministers that this can't always be done. Other churches which haven't had a tradition of the Lord's Supper every Sunday are now moving in that direction. How important is the frequency of the Lord's Supper for congregations?
3. The kinds of elements used at the Lord's Supper, and the manner of receiving Communion, vary from church to church. What kind of bread and wine are used at your church? How is Communion distributed? Are there other differences in the way in which the churches celebrate the Lord's Supper?
4. Some churches offer Communion to members of other churches while others will not do this. What is your church's position and what are the reasons for the position taken?

## **RESOURCES FOR PRAYER**

### **Psalm of Praise: Psalm 135:1-7, 13-14**

Praise the name of the Lord;  
give praise, O servants of the Lord,  
you who stand in the house of the Lord,  
in the court of the house of our God.

Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good;  
sing to his name, for he is gracious.  
For the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself,  
Israel as his own possession.

For I know that the Lord is great;  
our Lord is above all Gods.  
Whatever the Lord pleases he does,  
in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.

He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth;  
he makes lightning for the rain  
and brings out the wind from his storehouses.

Your name, O Lord, endures forever,  
your renown, O Lord, throughout all ages.  
For the Lord will vindicate his people  
and have compassion on his servants.

### **Prayer for Unity**

#### **Leader:**

O God, help us to visualise your kingdom with its rich diversity of peoples, each with their life-style, each with their gifts. Preserve us from believing that unity depends on sameness. Dear God, give us a burning desire to learn from others and to value others, make us glad that you can take all our different parts and fashion from them a unified whole. Make us, we pray, truly The Body of Christ.

#### **Response:**

Father, draw us closer together by the gifts of your Spirit, for the sake of your dear Son.  
Amen.

### **Gospel Reading: Mark 1:29-33**

On leaving the synagogue, Jesus went with James and John straight to the house of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law had gone to bed with fever, and they told him about her straightaway. He went to her took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her and she began to wait on them.

That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were possessed by devils. The whole town came crowding round the door, and he cured many who were suffering from diseases of one kind or another.

## **The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ,  
his only Son, Our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again  
to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.  
Amen.

## SESSION THREE - THE CHURCH'S CALENDAR

### HOW WE WORSHIP

Each of our churches has its own calendar intended to regulate worship on Sundays and other days of the year, but they all use the same three year cycle of readings from the scriptures for Sunday worship.

#### SUNDAY

Any discussion of the calendar by which the churches arrange their worship needs to begin with the significance of Sunday for Christians. From the beginning Christians set Sunday aside for worship. Even though the first Christians were Jews and for some time they continued the Jewish practice of the Sabbath day, they also worshipped together on the Lord's day.

John's gospel tells us that the apostles began the custom of assembling for worship on the first day of the week on the Sunday following Our Lord's resurrection [John 20:26-27]. All the gospel writers agree that Sunday was the day on which the resurrection took place and Sunday became the day on which Christians celebrated the resurrection. St Paul takes it for granted that Christians assemble every first day of the week [1 Cor 16:2]. We know from the Book of Revelation 1:10 that they called the day the Lord's day. Attendance at the weekly assembly was considered necessary for a Christian even during times of persecution.

In the ancient world the names of planets were used to name the days of the week. The early Christians applied their own symbolism of light to the day named after the sun. St. Jerome, writing in the fourth century, shows how Christians have adapted the name of the first day of the week.

*The Lord's day, the day of the resurrection, the day of Christians. That is our day. It is called the Lord's day because on it the Lord ascended victoriously to the Father. When pagans speak of it as the day of the sun, we gladly agree for on this day the light of the world the sun of justice, arose and salvation is hidden in the shelter of his wings.*

#### SEASONAL CALENDAR

##### Easter

Towards the end of the second century Christians were celebrating one particular Sunday each year in a special way. Christians prepared for Easter by fasting for several days. Then there was an assembly for prayer which lasted all through the Saturday night and closed at dawn on Easter Sunday with the baptism of new Christians and the eucharist.

For a long time Easter was the only feast celebrated by Christians. It became the centre of the church's year and for many centuries it was the preferred time for adult baptism. Easter is a moveable feast because the early Christians followed the Jewish custom of using the lunar calendar for their festivals. In 325 the council of Nicaea urged all Christians to celebrate Easter on the Sunday that followed the full moon after the spring equinox.

By the fourth century the fast in preparation for Easter had been extended over a period of forty days and became the season of Lent, and the all night assembly had been extended over three days. What was celebrated was the entire Christ event - incarnation, passion and death, resurrection and glorification.

Almost as soon as Christians began celebrating Easter they extended the festival over fifty days. During this time the newly baptised were integrated into the life of the Christian community by specially selected scripture readings, prayers and preaching at the Sunday assemblies. The penitential acts of fasting and kneeling were not allowed during these fifty days.

### **Pentecost**

The Jewish Pentecost was a harvest festival which Jews celebrated on the fiftieth day after their Passover celebration. As time passed Christians began celebrating the sending of the Holy Spirit on that Sunday and that day's connection with the Easter season began to fade from memory. Eventually, the Sundays following were designated as Sundays after Pentecost and this period of the year became the Church's season of Pentecost.

### **Christmas**

It was not until the fourth century that we find any evidence of the Church celebrating Our Lord's birthday as a feast day. The gospels don't give a date for Our Lord's birth. It is thought that 25 December was chosen by the Church at Rome in response to the Roman emperor Aurelian in 274 establishing a festival to celebrate the birth of the sun god on 25 December. It is certain that by 354 the Church at Rome was celebrating Christmas since it is recorded in a calendar which was prepared in that year by a Greek artist for a rich Christian citizen of Rome. As time went on the Church adopted the practice of preparing for Christmas day over a period of four Sundays and this time became known as the Season of Advent.

### **Epiphany**

Epiphany originated in the East about the same time as Christmas originated in the West. There it was the original feast of God's manifestation, celebrating both Our Lord's birth and baptism. When Rome began to celebrate Epiphany on 6 January it associated with it the adoration of the wise men. The period between Epiphany and Lent became known as the time after Epiphany.

So by the fourth century the Church had in place its seasonal calendar built around the two feasts of Easter and Christmas. This seasonal calendar with its moveable feasts has more or less remained the same to the present day. All our Churches arrange their worship according to this calendar.

## **THE CALENDAR OF SAINTS**

The Church from its earliest days recognised the witness given by those who died for the faith. The word martyr meant witness. The veneration given to the martyrs was eventually extended to all those who in their lives gave exemplary witness to the Christian faith.

### **Martyrs**

The early Christians would assemble at the tombs of those who had suffered martyrdom on the anniversary of the martyr's death which for them was the martyr's birth into new life. We have a letter written in 155 about the martyrdom of St. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who was burnt at the stake. In parts it reads:

*We gathered up his bones, more precious to us than jewels, and finer than pure gold and we laid them to rest in a spot suitable for the purpose. There we shall assemble, as occasion allows, with glad rejoicing and with the Lord's permission we shall celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom. It will serve both as a commemoration of all who have triumphed before, and as training and preparation for any whose crown may still be to come.*

When they assembled at the tomb of martyrs the Christians would celebrate the eucharist. The martyrs quickly came to be regarded as having powers of intercession and so when Christians assembled for worship they prayed to the martyrs and miracles were attributed to their intercession. During the fourth and fifth centuries the veneration of the remains of the martyrs became widespread in the Church and relics of martyrs were eagerly sought after. Eventually every church had a relic of a Saint embedded in the altar table.

### **Saints**

In the same way as they honoured the martyrs the early Christians also honoured the apostles and others who had escaped martyrdom but who had suffered mistreatment for Our Lord's sake. When the persecutions ended a new concept of holiness developed. The ascetics who lived a life of self-denial and virgins who consecrated themselves to God were venerated after their death. Each country and region had its own saints whose veneration was incorporated in their public worship.

In medieval times saints' feast days had so multiplied that in 993 the bishop of Rome was forced to establish a formal process to restore order to the massive list of saints. This was a beginning of a single universal calendar of saints which would be common to all Christians in the West until the Reformation. By the late Middle Ages devotion to the saints had become so intense among Christians that they were in danger of replacing Our Lord as the only mediator with God.

### **Mary**

The early Church soon began to give the mother of Our Lord special honour. By the fifth century all regions of the Church had established feast days near Christmas in honour of Mary. The first Marian feast not associated with a feast of Our Lord was established on 15 August by the Church of Jerusalem about 430. The feast became focussed on Mary's death and it is probable that belief in Mary's assumption into heaven grew out of this feast. The commemoration of Mary's birth, the presentation in the temple and the annunciation all originated in the Jerusalem Church. By the early seventh century these four main Jerusalem Marian feasts had been adopted in the West. In the following century the custom of commemorating Mary in the eucharist on Saturdays when no other Saint was commemorated was introduced. Feasts in honour of Mary continued to multiply and by the Middle Ages Mary had become for most Christians the source of mercy to whom they turned to placate Our Lord who himself had become a remote figure of divine justice.

### **REFORMATION**

Whereas at the council of Trent the Roman Catholic Church was concerned to remove the distortions which characterised popular devotion to Mary and the saints, the reformers rejected devotion to them as idolatry and removed their statues from their churches. They recalled that the New Testament writers had called all Christians saints so they opposed the showing of special honour to particular Christians. Their attitude is expressed in article 22 of the Church of England's Articles of Religion of 1562.

*The Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration, as well of Images as of Reliques, and also the invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.*

The nineteenth century saw the reintroduction of special honour to Mary and the saints in the Anglican Church when statues made their appearance in some Anglican Churches in England.

## **AUSTRALLAN CALENDAR**

The calendars of saints in our four churches reflect our different traditions. The Roman Catholic calendar is more extensive than the others. The Lutheran Church honours a short list of saints all of whom are named in the New Testament. The Anglican Church and the Uniting Church have calendars which include names of saints which we all honour, but they also include names of modern Christians. Unlike the Lutheran and Roman Catholic calendars they contain names of Christians from the other traditions such as Pope John XXIII, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German Lutheran pastor who opposed Hitler, and the French Roman Catholic priest Paul Couturier who worked in the 1930's and 40's for Christian unity.

## **QUESTIONS TO HELP DISCUSSION**

1. There are customs associated with the different seasons of the Church year. What are these customs? Are they common to all our churches?
2. For most Australians Christmas and Easter are no more than holidays. What should the churches be doing to share with non-church going Australians, and Australians of different faiths, the meaning of these Christian festivals?
3. Some churches celebrate many saints' festivals during the Church year, and other churches honour prominent Christians. How does the annual calendar of seasons and saints' days help the churches to worship?
4. What do you understand by the term "communion of saints"?

## **RESOURCES FOR PRAYER**

### **Psalm of Praise Ps 145:1-9**

I will extol you, my God and King,  
and bless your name forever and ever.  
Every day I will bless you, and praise  
your name forever and ever,  
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;  
his greatness is unsearchable.

One generation shall hand your works to another,  
and shall declare your mighty acts.  
On the glorious splendour of your majesty,  
and on your wondrous works I will meditate.

The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,  
and I will declare your greatness.  
They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,  
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

The Lord is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
The Lord is good to all,  
and his compassion is over all that he has made.

### **PRAYER FOR UNITY**

Lord God, save us from ever being content with the scandal of our disunity. Make us keenly aware how difficult it is for a divided church to witness to the unity that you want for the world. Open our eyes to all the riches and the glories which other traditions have preserved and bring to us their gifts. Help us to be honest about our real differences but to love one another so that all may know that we are your disciples.

#### **Response:**

Father, draw us closer together, by the gift of your spirit, for the sake of your Son. Amen.

### **GOSPEL READING Mark 8:31-37**

Returning from the district of Tyre, he went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, right through the Decapolis region. And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then looking up to heaven he sighed; and he said to him, "Ephphatha", that is "Be opened". And his ears were opened, and the ligament of his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly. And Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, the more widely they published it. Their admiration was unbounded. "He has done all things well," they said "he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak."

### **A CONTEMPORARY AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

We are not alone, we live in God's world. We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit. We trust in God. We are called to be Church: to celebrate God's presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

## **SESSION FOUR - SETTING FOR WORSHIP**

### **HOW WE WORSHIP**

#### **The Place of Worship**

After Christianity was legalised by Constantine, the simple house church used by the early Christians became a large structure modelled after the style of Roman law courts. The alcove at one end of a hall where the magistrate was enthroned became in the Christian basilica the place where the bishop presided at worship. These churches became progressively more elaborate in their appointments. Churches became like theatres where the people attended ceremonies performed by the priest. Many churches resembled throne rooms where the king of heaven presided in the tabernacle on the high altar. Churches modelled on the gothic cathedrals were divided into two areas by a screen, the nave where the people assembled, and the chancel where the sacraments were celebrated. The screen, called the rood screen, often had a large crucifix mounted on it.

The reformers of the sixteenth century removed the elaborate ornamentation from the churches in an attempt to return to the simplicity of the New Testament house church. When they built their own churches they were designed so that people could easily hear the preaching. The pulpit became the centre of attention and the division between the nave and the chancel was minimised.

#### **The Altar Table**

In the early church altars were tables made of wood. When Christians began to venerate the martyrs altars were built of stone over the martyr's grave. Altars in time came to resemble stone coffins. As we saw in session three, custom eventually required that every altar had the relics of a saint set into the altar table. Originally there was only the one altar in a church but because the relics of every martyr and saint had to have its own altar, and because priests were expected to say Mass everyday, altars multiplied. In Australia the older Roman Catholic and some Anglican churches still have side altars as well as the high altar.

Originally the altar had been free standing and the people would gather round it during Mass. Eventually altars were moved into the chancel and put against the wall at some distance from the people. The priest was then forced to say Mass with his back to the people. Altars became very elaborate with a high ornamented back. Candles and crucifix were placed on the altar or on the ledge which became part of the altar.

The reformers replaced the elaborate stone altars with simple wooden altars so that they were portable and could be moved nearer the people. Today in most churches altars are free standing and the presiding minister stands facing the people when celebrating the Eucharist.

#### **Reservation of the Sacrament**

The practice of reserving some of the consecrated bread stems from the second century. The sacrament was kept so that it could be taken to the sick and to those in prison.

Even though the reception of communion by the people diminished during the Middle Ages devotion to the sacrament during the Mass grew and was extended to the reserved sacrament. A service of worship called benediction developed during which the reserved host was exposed on the altar and the priest blessed the people with it. Devotion to the sacrament culminated in the establishment of the feast of Corpus Christi in the thirteenth century. Originally the sacrament had been reserved in the sacristy or in a wall cupboard near the altar called an aumbry, but by the sixteenth century it was reserved in the tabernacle on the altar.

The reformers could find no justification in the New Testament for reserving the sacrament. They taught that Our Lord gave himself with the bread and wine during the eucharist but that no change took place in the bread and wine which would justify devotion to the reserved sacrament. Roman Catholics and some Anglicans continue to reserve the Sacrament. Since the reforms following the Vatican Council Roman Catholics have moved the tabernacle from the altar to another part of the church to distinguish devotion to the reserved sacrament from the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

### **Pulpits**

It was only in medieval times that pulpits in the form of raised platforms made their appearance in churches. In earlier times the bishop preached from his throne which was behind the altar. With their renewed interest in the scriptures and preaching, the reformers made the pulpit more important than it had been so that in their churches it was made as central as the altar table, often being placed behind and above the table. In their churches the Service of the Word was read in a loud voice from a reading desk in the nave of the church. The pulpit with its attached reading desk was in many cases a towering structure which gave the impression of being the centre piece of Sunday worship in churches of the Reformation.

Pulpits have been a significant architectural feature in all our churches. In recent times however they have been replaced by more simple reading stands on which is placed the lectionary, the book of readings from the scriptures. Preaching is done from this stand or elsewhere in the front of the church.

### **Baptismal Fonts**

The original fonts were shallow pools and they were not in the main body of the church but in separate baptisteries. Those to be baptised stood in the pool and water was poured over the head and the body. The newly baptised were then clothed in a white garment and joined the assembled people in the church for the eucharist. In the Middle Ages, when many infants but few adults were baptised, fonts became much smaller and were placed on a stand in order to make it easier for the priest to handle the infant. Baptisms then became private family events rather than the public celebration of a sacrament. These fonts were usually located near the door of the church to remind the people that it was through baptism that they had entered the church assembly.

After the Reformation, Anglican churches retained fonts near the door while Lutherans placed the font near the altar and the pulpit so that the sacrament could be administered in full view of the people. The followers of Calvin dispensed with fonts and used basins placed near or on the altar table when required. Most Uniting Church churches now have a font near the altar table.

The custom which Roman Catholics have of dipping the fingers of their right hand in blessed water and marking themselves with a cross when they enter a church is to remind themselves of their own baptism.

### **The Posture for Worship**

Standing was the posture adopted by the first Christians when they gathered to worship as it had been in the synagogue. There were no pews in churches in the early centuries and there are no pews in the older churches in Europe to this day. There are references to standing for prayer in both the Old and New Testament. Standing at Sunday worship came to symbolise the resurrection. Not until the fourteenth century did any form of seating appear in the nave of churches.

Kneeling was another posture for prayer, particularly for private prayer. Luke in 22:11 tells us that Our Lord knelt to pray on the Mount of Olives. Kneeling at worship became more popular for Christians perhaps because it had penitential associations. Bishops and councils tried to discourage the practice on Sundays and during the Easter season. In the Middle Ages kneeling in adoration of the sacrament after the consecration at Mass began to develop, and on the rare occasions when people received communion they did so on their knees. When this practice of kneeling during Sunday worship became widespread kneelers were introduced into churches.

Today Anglican, Roman Catholic and most Lutheran churches are equipped with kneelers since congregations in these churches kneel for some parts of their Sunday worship. Uniting Church congregations don't use kneelers since they have had the custom of sitting for prayers. More recently the Uniting Church is encouraging its members to stand for prayers during Sunday worship.

When they sing during Sunday worship, Anglican and Uniting Church congregations stand, while Lutherans sit, and Roman Catholics either stand or sit.

When receiving Communion, Anglican, Lutherans and Roman Catholics go up to the altar where Anglicans and Lutherans usually kneel and Roman Catholics now usually stand. Communion is distributed in a variety of ways in the Uniting Church. Some congregations kneel or stand at the table while others sit in the pews and the elders distribute communion to them.

### **The Minister**

The ordained minister presides at Sunday worship in each of our churches. There is provision for lay people to lead services but this is the exception. The clergy in the Anglican, Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches are expected to follow set directions in the way they preside at worship whereas the minister in the Uniting Church has the freedom to be flexible.

The recent reforms in the Roman Catholic Church have seen the priest's gestures at the Lord's Supper simplified with the elimination of multiple crosses and genuflections.

### **Vestments**

Scholars agree that in the early centuries the dress worn by the one who presided at worship did not differ from everyday clothing that people wore. Most of today's vestments can be traced back to imperial Rome. The alb derives from the white Roman tunic that men then wore. The chasuble, the outer garment traditionally worn by Roman Catholic and many Anglican priests, derives from the poncho-like outer garment worn by Roman lower classes. In the fifth and sixth centuries when Germanic tribes invaded Rome they brought with them their custom of wearing trousers. Eventually all men wore trousers but those who lead Christian worship continued to wear the traditional clothing over their street clothes.

In the Middle Ages, when the priest had his back to the people when he celebrated Mass, the backs of chasubles were decorated with symbols and images. From the thirteenth century both sides of the garment were cut back to the shoulder because the richly brocaded material made arm movement difficult.

The reformers in an attempt to emphasize the priesthood of all the people of God eliminated the traditional vestments. Their ministers then began to wear academic dress when they lead worship. Today Roman Catholic and many Anglican priests wear the alb, chasuble and stole when they celebrate the Lord's Supper. Lutheran pastors wear a cassock and surplice, or alb, and a stole, and Uniting Church ministers usually wear an alb, scarf or stole.

The colour of chasuble and stole in some churches varies with the seasons of the church year to remind the congregation that there should be a changing emphasis in their worship from season to season. During the season of Lent, for example, which is a time of penance in preparation for Easter, the vestments are purple. Some Uniting Church congregations are beginning to use coloured stoles to indicate seasonal changes.

### **Stations of the Cross**

A distinctive feature of Roman Catholic churches, and some Anglican churches, is the depictions of Our Lord's passion and death placed on the walls of the church. These were first introduced in the churches in the Middle Ages. They depict Our Lord's journey from the house of Pilate to Calvary. Most of the events come from the scriptures, but a few, like Veronica wiping the face of Our Lord, are legends.

### **QUESTIONS TO HELP DISCUSSION**

1. Our places of worship are different. Things found in some churches are not found in others. What are these differences? Explain the meaning of things special to your church.
2. God speaks to us through our senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste. What sense experiences are available to assist worship at your church? How helpful are these to you?
3. What leadership roles do lay people have at Sunday worship in your church? Why is it that the minister presiding at Sunday worship wears distinctive clothing?
4. How important is it to have distinctive buildings in which to worship? In what ways do modern church buildings differ from the older churches?

### **RESOURCES FOR PRAYER**

#### **Psalm of Praise (Psalm 145:10-18)**

All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,  
and all your faithful shall bless you.

They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom,  
and tell of your power.

To make known to all people your mighty deeds,  
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The Lord is faithful in all his words,  
and gracious in all his deeds.  
The Lord upholds all who are falling,  
and raises up all who are bowed down.

The eyes of all look to you,  
and you give them their food in due season.  
You open your hand,  
satisfying the desire of every living thing.

The Lord is just in all his ways,  
and kind in all his doings.  
The Lord is near to all who call on him,  
to all who call on him in truth.

### **PRAYER FOR UNITY**

Dear God, we rejoice in the rich variety of men and women with whom you have peopled the earth. We thank you for our varied gifts and rejoice in our diversity. Save us when we are tempted to make this diversity a reason for division. Enable us to recognise in ourselves the tell-tale signs of prejudice. Make us willing not so much to protect our own interests as to defend the rights of those in need.

#### **Response:**

Father draw us closer together, by the gifts of the spirit, for the sake of your dear son. Amen.

### **GOSPEL READING: (Mark 10:46-52)**

They reached Jericho; and as he left Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (that is, the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting at the side of the road. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout and to say, "Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me". And many of them scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he only shouted all the louder, "Son of David, have pity on me". Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here". So they called the blind man. "Courage," they said "get up; he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he jumped up and went to Jesus. Then Jesus spoke, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Rabbuni," the blind man said to him "Master, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has saved you". And immediately his sight returned and he followed him along the road.

### **A NEW TESTAMENT AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (Col 1:15-20)**

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations or rulers or powers - all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first born from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.