

Guide to Worship

UKirk at Ole Miss

"In worship, through Word and Sacrament, the church is sustained by the presence of Christ, joined in worship to the One who is the source of its life, and empowered to serve God in the world."

- Book of Common Worship of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Worship in the Reformed Tradition

Scripture says that Christians are to be people who are not conformed to the world, but transformed in the renewing of our hearts and minds. Worship is about gathering in community to be renewed by God so that we might together be transformed. We might say that worship in the reformed and presbyterian tradition typically takes place in four different acts: the first act is **adoration**, where the community together expresses praise and gratitude and gives glory to God. The second act is **confession**, where the community together admits it's sinfulness and brokenness, and recognizes it's need for God. The third act is **proclamation**, where the community hears the good news of Jesus Christ proclaimed in scripture and in reflection. Finally, the fourth act is **dedication**, where we are bound together with God and one another in communion and sent back out into the world to live out the good news of Jesus Christ in faith.

The Order of Worship

Adoration

- Welcoming
- Passing of the Peace
- Songs of Praise

Confession

- Call to Confession
- Prayer of Confession
- Assurance of Pardon

Proclamation

- Scripture Reading
- Homily and Reflection

Dedication

Communion

Prayer of the People

Benediction

Adoration

The first act of worship is adoration, where the community together expresses praise and gratitude and gives glory to God. Adoration is about recognizing the sovereignty, majesty and mystery of God, and about celebrating that the world belongs to a God of love. The central act of adoration and praise usually takes place through music and singing, although it may also take place in other ways as well, such as reading of a litany or psalm.

Welcoming: At UKirk, worship begins with a time of welcoming and announcements, usually lead by a student intern. The time welcoming begins with the tradition Christian greeting:

Leader: The Lord be with you

Community: And also with you

Leader: Grace and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Following the greeting, the leader continues, welcoming the community to worship, particularly new students, followed by a time of announcements for the UKirk community, including opening up the floor for announcements from the community.

Passing of Peace: Following the welcoming and announcements the leader invites students to greet one another with the peace of Christ. The passing of the Peace of Christ is an ancient Christian ritual. As students greet one another, they are invited to say:

One: The peace of Christ be with you

Other: And the peace of Christ be with you.

The passing of peace also serves as a way of welcoming new students to the UKirk Community. Students are encouraged to take a moment to speak to those around them, introduce themselves, and welcome one another to worship.

Song of Praise & Adoration: Following the passing of the peace UKirk worship typically continues with a time of music and singing, lead by the student musician. The student musician begins playing as way of signaling the end of the passing of the peace. The community together may sing one longer song or two or three shorter songs. Lyrics to the songs will be projected on the screen. The student musician should do his or her due diligence to be sure a variety of music is sung. The focus

of worship during praise and adoration ought to be on God and the community, and therefore the student musicians job is lead the community in singing, and not to perform.

Confession

The second act of worship is confession, where the community together admits it's sinfulness and brokenness, and recognizes it's need for God. Confession is an important and ancient act of worship where the community as a whole and believers as individuals recognize our faults and misgivings, and confess our sinfulness: we confess that we fail to live our lives as the people God made us to be. We confess our sinfulness and brokenness as a way of preparing our hearts to hear the good news of Jesus Christ proclaimed, and as way of preparing ourselves to be sent out into the world.

Call to Confession: After the singing has concluded, a student liturgist— newly selected each week — begins the act of Confession with a short statement explaining the importance of confession and inviting the community to join in the confession.

Prayer of Confession: This prayer is the central act of confession. Typically, at UKirk Worship, the prayer of confession is said as a litany, in call and response form with the student liturgist leading. This litany of confession ought to be new each week, and whenever possible ought to speak to the themes of that week's Scripture readings and homily. The words to the litany will be projected on the screen. The litany of confession ought to end with a time of silent confession, followed by an invitation to the words of the Kyrie Elison:

Leader: All God's people say together...

Community: Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy upon us.

Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: The time of confession concludes with a brief statement of that reminds and assures the community that even though we are sinful and broken, we still belong to God, for in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

Proclamation

The third act is proclamation where the community hears the good news of Jesus Christ proclaimed in scripture and in reflection. The Christian faith is about looking to Jesus Christ so that we might come to discover who God truly is and who we truly are. Scripture is a witness to the

good news of Jesus Christ, and therefore guides the community as we together reflection on Christ, and seek to discover God and ourselves.

Scripture Reading: Following the assurance of pardon, the student liturgist reads the Scripture selection for the evening. The weekly Scripture passages are either selected by the UKirk Ministry's Lectionary for College Students, or by the Campus Minister/speaker of the week. The Scripture reading should begin by stating the passage:

Leader: Our Scripture reading for the evening comes from (book, chapter verse). Let's listen together for God's word to us.

The Scripture will be projected onto the screen. Typically, the Common English Bible translation will be used. When the reading of Scripture concludes, the leader says:

Leader: This is the word of the Lord

Community: Thanks be to God

For a fuller description of how UKirk at Ole Miss approaches the Bible, see UKirk's Bible Study Guide.

Homily/Reflection: Following the Scripture reading, a time of Homily and reflection begins. Typically, the homily is delivered by the Campus Minister, although at other times the homily is delivered by guest speakers. The homily ought to be about 10-12 minutes long, and does not need to be a full sermon, so to speak. The use of media is encouraged. The homily ought to be relevant and applicable to the spiritual and faith lives of Christian college students, and ought to touch on at least one of the five spiritual themes outlined in UKirk's Mission Statement document.

Dedication

Finally, the fourth act of worship is dedication, where we are bound together with God and one another and sent back out into the world to live out the good news of Jesus Christ in faith. The dedication is about offering ourselves as a community to the service of God. The central act of the dedication is the sacrament of communion, which is one of the oldest traditions of the Christian faith, and which since the beginning has been the central act of Christian worship.

Communion: The celebration of communion has always been the heart of regular Christian worship, and as such is the heart of our regular worship at UKirk. The reformed tradition believes that communion is a sacrament, meaning that it both *signifies* our covenant community with God and one another, and it *seals* us into that covenant community. Communion at UKirk is

administered by the Campus Minister or by another ordained pastor, and is administered with permission and oversight from St. Andrew Presbytery.

Communion begins with an *Invitation to the Table*, where the pastor briefly explains the purpose and meaning of communion, and invites the community to partake. All those in covenant faith in Jesus Christ are invited to the table.

Communion continues with a *Prayer of Thanksgiving*, where the pastor gives thanks for the bread and wine of communion, while also giving thanks for the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The prayer of thanksgiving continues with an *epiclesis*, where the pastor asks the Spirit of God be poured out on the bread and wine and to be poured out on the community.

After the prayer of thanksgiving, the pastor says the *Words of Institution*, used by Jesus at the last supper and affirmed by the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians:

Pastor: On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took bread, and after he had given thanks for it he broke it (breaking the bread) and said, "This is my body, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, this is the cup of salvation in my blood (pouring out the wine) every time you drink it, do this in remembrance of me." For whenever we eat this bread and drink of this cup, we proclaim the crucified and risen Lord until he comes again.

At UKirk Communion is served by *intinction*: students are invited to come forward, break off a piece of bread from the common loaf and dip the bread in the common cup. As students come forward, the student musician plays instrumental background music. Therefore the student liturgist is served first. Each week, the student liturgist helps the pastor serve the communion, taking one the elements. As each student is served, the server holding the bread says:

Server: This is the Body of Christ

The server holding the cup says:

Server: This is the Cup of Salvation

Community Prayer: After all have been served, the pastor or another worship leader enters into a time of prayer for the community. The community prayer begins with an invitation from the leader:

Leader: Scripture tells us that we are one body of many members, and when one of us rejoices, we all rejoice together, and when one of us suffers, we all suffer together. What joys and concerns to we have to share with one another?

Students are then invited to lift up requests for both prayers of joyful celebrations and prayers of concern for those facing suffering. After each request is lifted up, the leader says:

Leader: Lord in your mercy

Community: Hear our prayers

As prayer requests are expressed, a UKirk student may write the prayer requests on the prayer wall. When all prayer requests have been heard, the pastor or worship leader closes with a brief prayer of celebration and concern, that ends by inviting the community to say the Lord's prayer together:

Community: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever, Amen.

Benediction: Finally, worship concludes with a brief blessing that sends the community back out into the world to live out the good news of Jesus Christ as a community transformed by God rather than conformed to the world. The benediction ends with traditional doxology:

Leader: May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever, Amen.

The Language We Use in Worship

In reflecting reformed theology, UKirk at Ole Miss is very careful and intentional about the language we use in liturgy and music, particularly in two areas:

In liturgy and music, we try to use **gender-inclusive language**. This means that instead of using words like “man” or “mankind” to describe all human beings, we try to use “humanity” or “humankind.” Instead of saying “brothers,” we try to say “brothers and sisters.” The idea is to use language that recognizes all human beings.

In the same way, we do not believe that God is male or female, so at UKirk we try to avoid using gender specific pronouns like “he” and “him” in reference to God in liturgy or music, though sometimes language does demand using a pronoun. Of course, Jesus Christ— was male human being— is the exception to this rule: it is always appropriate to refer to Christ as “he” in liturgy and music. We should also not be hesitant to use gender-specific biblical imagery, such as “Father” or “Son.”

At UKirk at Ole Miss, we also try to use **community oriented language** in our liturgy and music as a way of reflecting our reformed theology, which focuses on our covenant community with God and one another. For this reason, we try not to sing or pray with pronouns like “I” or “me” and prefer to use pronouns like “us” or “we.”