

### **Parting Blessing**

The Lord has the last say in the worship service as He sends His people home with His blessing of peace. We may leave His presence having our faith strengthened by the preaching and being equipped with renewed commitment to live a life pleasing to Him. After the blessing, the congregation trickles out of the building, gathering informally in conversation and fellowship. All in all the whole service takes about 1hr and 15 minutes.

### **Twice on Sunday?**

Yes, we come back once again in the afternoon to meet with the Lord. And why wouldn't we? As part of celebrating the Lord's Day, we are glad to have the opportunity to gather twice with His people. We are thankful to be able to praise Him and receive His good gifts a second time. When you are thirsty, you look forward to a cool drink and even to a refill – that's what worship is like for God's people. The afternoon service is much like the morning with only a few differences. For example, instead of reading the law, we publicly profess our faith by singing the Apostles' Creed. But the key difference lies in the type of sermon we hear. Whereas in the morning the preaching is based on one text of Scripture, the afternoon sermon explains a teaching of the Bible that is learned from several texts (e.g. the Trinity, how we are saved, how we are to live, etc). The church has long ago summarized the Bible's major teachings in a written confession called the Heidelberg Catechism. This Catechism then serves as a guide for the Scripture teaching but the basis of the message remains the Bible. Catechism preaching is geared especially to teach the young people the main doctrines of the Bible.

### **What About You?**

And that's how we worship God. It's simple, Biblical, and beautiful - why don't you come and worship with us? God is calling you too!

Here are the precise orders of worship for morning and afternoon:

#### **Morning Service (10:00 a.m.)**

1. Elders and deacons (Church Council) arrive
2. Announcements
3. The congregation confesses its dependence on the LORD by reciting the Votum together
4. The minister conveys the Lord's greeting to the congregation
5. Congregational Singing
6. The Ten Words of the Covenant (10 commandments),
7. Congregational Singing
8. Prayer
9. Reading of Holy Scripture
10. Congregational Singing (standing)
11. Reading of the Text
12. Ministry of the Word
13. Congregational Singing - responsive song
14. Prayer Offertory
15. Congregational Singing -- closing song.
16. Benediction (divine blessing)

#### **Afternoon Service (3:00 p.m.)**

1. Elders and deacons (Church Council) arrives.
2. Announcements
3. The congregation confesses its dependence on the LORD by reciting the Votum together
4. The minister conveys the Lord's greeting to the congregation
5. Congregational Singing
6. Prayer (for the opening of the Word).
7. Reading of Holy Scripture
8. Congregational Singing (standing)
9. Reading of the Heidelberg Catechism
10. Ministry of the Word
11. Congregational Singing - responsive song
12. Profession of Faith
13. Prayer (thanksgiving and intercessions)
14. Offertory
15. Congregational Singing -- closing song.
16. Benediction (divine blessing)



## **What is a Worship Service?**

Twice every Sunday, the church gathers together to meet with her God – that is the essence of worship. Why do we worship? Simply put, because God calls us to. He wants to maintain a relationship with His people. God has given us the Bible as His Word, and from there we hear Him call us to meet with Him in worship. We gather in order to honour, praise, and glorify Him. We do this because God is our Creator and our Saviour. At the same time, we receive from the Lord wonderful gifts – forgiveness of our sins, peace with Himself, and His continued care over our lives.

## **Receiving God's Gifts**

How do we receive these gifts? God gives them to us especially through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we listen, we hear from the Bible all about God's gifts, how he has sacrificed His own Son to save us from our sin, how He has sent His Holy Spirit to give us faith and even live in our hearts. It's really amazing what God has done! As well, we hear God's will explained in the preaching so that we understand how we are to live as Christians, as God's holy people.

## **Worship Service Tour – Enter in!**

Well, you ask, what actually takes place inside the church building every Sunday?

Let's take a walk through a typical Sunday morning worship service.

Members and guests usually begin to take their seats in the auditorium at about 8:30 AM. In the background you will hear the organ playing songs which help focus people's attention on the coming meeting with God. A member of the Church Council will greet you at the door and the usher will be happy to provide you with a Bible and song book if needed. As the usher directs you to your seat, you will see various families seated around you. God wants all His people to worship Him together. Infants and toddlers are cared for in a nursery, but as soon as the children can sit in church they do so.

## **Dress Code?**

You will notice, too, that most people are dressed up. Please don't mistake this for elitism or snobbery. All we are trying to do is to show honour and respect to the Lord God as much as we can. Much like if we were to have an audience with the Queen where our whole attitude, demeanour, and dress would reflect our respect for her Royal Majesty, so when we meet with the King of Kings we want to show Him honour in every way.

## **Praise and Blessing**

We use a song book which contains the 150 Psalms of the Bible put to music as

well as 65 Hymns based mostly on texts of Scripture. As much as possible we want to keep the Word of God on our lips as we praise Him! With a bit of practice, you'll be singing them as well as anyone!

The service formally begins as the minister issues a call to rise and worship God. The congregation responds by confessing her trust in the Lord alone to which the minister responds by giving God's greeting of peace on His behalf. Throughout the service you will find a back-and-forth interaction as God and His people come together and speak together.

## **Reflecting on the 10 Commandments**

After singing a song of praise, we then listen to God again through the reading of His law, the 10 Commandments. Why read the law? That may sound like an odd thing to do, but it is an important act of worship. The 10 Commandments show us how God wants us to live. They act as a mirror for our lives and a standard of perfection to strive for. As we listen and compare our lives to God's law, we realize every week how our lives do not match up. Our sin is made clear to us and we are humbled before the Lord.

But the amazing thing is we are not led to despair! Instead we are driven into the arms of our Saviour Jesus Christ! In the prayer after the law, we publicly confess our sins and then seek forgiveness for them in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Because God has promised forgiveness, we do not go away dreading or doubting, but we continue our worship in humble confidence that we stand right with God again. It's a beautiful moment—our guilt has been cleared away! Even more, we are given the Holy Spirit to help us fight against sin and to show how thankful we are to Him. In the end, the law shows us how to be thankful to God!

## **Taking in God's Word**

After the law, singing, and prayer, we then read a portion or two of Scripture that is related to the "text" of the sermon. The morning sermons are based squarely on one text of Scripture. After singing a song to prepare our hearts and minds for the hearing of the gospel, we then set to work listening to the preacher explain God's Word from the selected text. Each sermon is about 35 minutes in length. It takes up the most time in the worship service for one key reason - because God wants us to be instructed by the preaching of His Word (Romans 10:14-17). You won't see any visual aids nor will you hear a lot of personal anecdotes or funny stories. But you will hear a Bible passage explained, the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ trumpeted, and how we Christians should live outlined. As we listen, the Holy Spirit makes us understand and believe God's Word, and then helps us to live it out each day.

## **Offering of Thanks**

After the sermon is over, the congregation responds with a song of praise chosen in connection with the message of the sermon. After singing, a prayer of thanksgiving is offered. Following this, the congregation again responds to the gospel message by bringing a thank-offering to the Lord. Yes, this is indeed a financial gift dedicated to the Lord, but please do not misunderstand this as a payment for the service or even as support for the minister. Not one penny of the offering goes to support the minister - that is done by the voluntary contributions of the members on their own. The offering is given to show your thanks to the Lord for His salvation as just proclaimed, and all the monies are distributed to the poor and needy, whether in the congregation, or community or the world. The offering is accompanied by a song of thanksgiving.