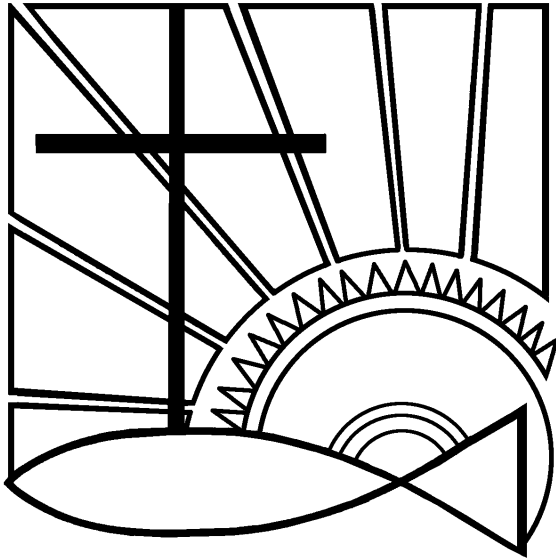


A guide to  
**WORSHIP**  
at McClure United Church  
Edmonton, Alberta



*Introduction to "A Guide to Worship"*

This booklet is prepared as way of explanation for those who may have little background or understanding of Christian Worship. We hope it is helpful to you in understanding the worship service here at McClure. Not all of the things listed here may be part of the service that you attend, and they may be in a different order than on these pages. We hope simply that this booklet may assist you in understanding what is happening during the service and why some of the things that we do in worship happen as they do. The minister will be glad to try answer any questions you may have; and we always appreciate comments; "bricks" as well as "bouquets" about our services. We are always striving in our worship to acknowledge, and point to, the God we worship; the God of Abraham and Isaac; the God made known to us through Jesus of Nazareth; the God who moves among us as "Spirit". Thank You for joining us for worship today. May God Bless you today, and always.

**Sources**

*This booklet is adapted from St. Paul's United Church, Edmonton; Grosvenor Park United Church, Saskatoon; and St. David's United Church, Calgary and from Dr. David Newman's book Worship. It has been edited and adapted to McClure's worship style by the worship Committee of McClure. January, 1997. The introduction was added December 2008.*

## ***WORSHIP IS:***

### ***(1) COMMUNICATION***

God speaks to us; we listen to God, though at times we want to do all the speaking and little listening. As Christians we believe the Word of God was made flesh in Jesus Christ and the scriptures lead us to that Word. We respond with expressions of praise, thanksgiving and commitment. These are the basic to Christian living.

### ***(2) WORK and WORSHIP***

Worship and Work go hand in hand. Liturgy from the Greek “Leitourgia”, means “work of the people”; and Worship is derived from the Anglo-Saxon meaning Worth-ship or Worthy. It is WORK to listen, to learn, and to respond to God’s word and to live an involved Christian life.

### ***(3) CELEBRATION***

When we celebrate God’s word we are revering, honouring, and praising God’s name. We are rejoicing in God’s work through our worship.



**The United Church Crest**

## **...THE GATHERING OF GOD’S PEOPLE...**

### ***THE PRELUDE AND INTROIT***

- a) the Prelude marks the beginning of formal worship and sets the tone of what is to follow. Through music the congregation is helped to make the transition from the informal atmosphere which marks the time of gathering to one of silent anticipation.
- b) The Introit, when sung, is a musical anticipation of the Call to Worship.

### ***THE CALL TO WORSHIP***

The call to worship verbalizes the prelude’s message: it is time to stop, to rest, and to be aware that we are standing on holy ground. We are here to worship God: Creator, Redeemer and Holy Spirit.

### ***PRAYER OF APPROACH***

The opening prayer sets the tone for worship, prepares us for and reminds us of God’s presence. Occasionally this prayer is combined with the Prayer of Confession.

### ***HYMN OF PRAISE***

This hymn is a strong expression in words and music of praise to God. The praise of God is the frame-work of Christian Worship and is the focal point of the Christian Church. Thus, this hymn should be one that reinforces our beliefs as well as opening up the theme of the service.

### ***GOD SPEAKS TO THE CHILD IN ALL OF US***

Commonly referred to as “Theme Conversation” – or “Story Time”, this part of the service acknowledges the importance of children as part of the church family. The reading is based on the Seasons of the Spirit Curriculum which is sometimes used by the Church School and is an integral part of family worship during our Sunday morning service.

### ***PRAYER with the Children***

This teaches the children how to pray to God, thanking God for our blessings and asking God to “take care” of certain (named) people, places, things.

### ***PRAYER OF CONFESSION***

As guilt and shame are a major elements in human nature, they can often produce psychological and spiritual problems. Thus, the Prayer of Confession gives worshippers opportunity to admit their guilt and feelings of unworthiness before God and to experience healing through God’s gracious forgiveness. This prayer also helps us to reflect upon our role in a sinful society and gives us guidance for our future actions in Christian context.

### ***KYRIE ELEISON***

The “Kyrie” is sometimes used as part of the Prayer of Confession. It is part of an ancient Greek prayer that means “Lord have mercy”.

### ***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON***

Guilt without forgiveness is destructive. The assurance of pardon is a proclamation of God’s word of love for all Christians. It is a strong reminder that humans, not possessions or achievements are foremost in God’s love.

### ***CHOIR ANTHEM OR SOLO***

Music has long been an important part of our response to God. It provides yet another medium which touches us emotionally and intellectually in our worship. Traditional or contemporary music sung individually or in chorus music is a pleasant emotional tribute to God.

## **...WE LISTEN FOR GOD’S WORD...**

This is a time for growing in understanding of God’s word to us. The Word was made flesh in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see John 1:1-18). The Christ-event is a beacon which

illuminates the entire Bible, all parts of which must be read and interpreted in its light. We follow the Revised Common Lectionary for the weekly Scriptures. This is a three year model used by many churches throughout the world and provides a chance to hear a variety of the scriptures during this 3 year cycle. They also are chosen to harmonize with the special Themes in the Church Year.

The reading of Bible passages by lay members of the congregation helps to emphasize that the Word of God is for the whole community of the church and that the whole church community is called to engage in ministry and in the “work” of worship.

### ***PRAYER FOR GRACE***

This prayer assists us to listen, focus and be receptive to God’s unconditional love for us.

### ***INTRODUCTION TO THE SCRIPTURES***

This part of the service puts the scripture reading in a context so that we may better understand them.

### ***HEBREW SCRIPTURES/OLD TESTAMENT***

The story of God’s involvement in human history began long before the birth of Christ and is recorded in the Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures. Without those early Hebrew Scriptures our understanding of God’s word would not be as meaningful.

### ***PSALM***

The reading of a psalm is a ritual link with our liturgical history, which has its roots deeply imbedded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, the Psalm is meant to reflect the Hebrew Scripture passage read during the same Sunday service. It is to be thought of as a congregational prayer rather than as another scripture lesson, and is a strong symbol of our bond with our ancestors in the faith.

### ***EPISTLE***

This passage, from the New Testament or Christian Scriptures (other than the gospels), puts us in touch not only with the experience and

witness of the apostolic (early) church, but with its commentary on the life and work of Christ.

### ***GOSPEL***

The Gospel for Christians is the basis of our scriptural understanding. It is the authoritative voice that tells the story of Christ's life, death and resurrection. It records the role of the Holy Spirit as it influences and directs Christ's life and the lives of his followers. We hear the Gospel in the expectation that the Holy Spirit will move within us to bring light and understanding as we journey through life.

### ***SERMON***

The sermon seeks to bring the scripture to life in terms of today's world. It brings out the background and content of Biblical passages and endeavors to draw out their meaning for daily life.

It strives to be sensitive to pastoral needs within the congregation and to what is happening in the community, the nation and the world. It is a means of helping worshippers to hear more clearly what God is saying to them and to provide spiritual sustenance and inspiration in their everyday lives.

### ***THE HYMN***

This hymn is chosen to reinforce the message of the sermon. It allows the worshippers an opportunity to react emotionally and with pleasure, as well as to become part of the service as a whole.

## **...WE RESPOND IN FAITH...**

Worship is a two-way street. God speaks to us, but we must respond to God's word.

### ***A SHARING OF McCLURE ACTIVITIES AND CONCERNS***

This period is an integral element of our liturgy, not an interruption. In making reference to the various activities and ministries of the church, it reminds us in concrete ways that worship always sends us into action in the world. We are a community of believers – a team

involved in many activities within and outside the church.

### ***A SHARING OF OUR GIFTS AND TITHES***

We sometimes refer to this part of the service as the "collection". It is true that contributions to support the work of the church are collected, but it is more than a matter of gathering in the envelopes and loose cash. Money is a powerful symbol. It represents the sweat of our brows, our time and talents, our hopes and our dreams.

What we do with our money tells the story of where our priorities lie. The giving of financial gifts is an important symbol of what we are prepared to give in response to what God has given us. That is why we call it the "offering" rather than a "collection."

It is a time of meditative response, when we renew our commitment to God and offer ourselves in God's service. It is one of the high points of the liturgy.

Music is played during the offering to provide an appropriate atmosphere for silent meditation.

### ***DOXOLOGY / OFFERTORY HYMN***

This is a form of praise to God, sung as we present our offering to God.

### ***PRAYER OF DEDICATION***

The placing of gifts on the plate and the accompanying meditations are individual forms of offering. In the dedication of our offering the congregation joins together to express its corporate act of commitment. It is an act in which individuals affirm their bond with the worshipping community in awareness that the offering of oneself to God means working in union with other Christians in the mission of the church.

### ***PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE***

Here the congregation focuses its response:

a) Toward God, as thanksgiving is expressed for the rich gifts and opportunities which God has given us, and

b) Towards others (Intercession) as prayers are offered for individuals, the church and the world.

### ***THE PRAYER OF JESUS / LORD'S PRAYER***

The Lord's Prayer was taught to the disciples by Jesus, and has been used by Christians in worship through the centuries. It anchors our liturgy in the Christian Scriptures, and expresses our solidarity with the universal church in heaven and on earth. (*sometimes spoken or sung*)

### ***HYMN***

The concluding hymn, chosen like the others in keeping with the theme of the service, usually seeks to express the challenge and direction of our Christian ministry. It may also be a prayer asking for God's help and guidance as we live and minister in Christ's name in the world. It is in most cases a vigorous hymn which ends the service on a strong note.

### ***THE COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION***

This is a ritualized "sending out" in which the people, as a last word, are reminded of God's call to action and are promised God's blessing and support.

### ***THE CHORAL AMEN/BLESSING***

A variety of Choral Blessings are used. It is the congregation's affirmation of the commission and of the blessing and of all that was said and done in the service of worship.

## **SACRAMENTS**

The United Church celebrates two Sacraments.

### **The first is the Sacrament of Baptism.**

Baptism is about belonging, therefore, it marks our initiation into the Christian faith. When we are baptized we become members of the church family, the body of Christ. Through Baptism we are reminded

of God's unconditional love.

It is here that the one being baptized or their parents make promises and the faith community pledges support.

Youth and adults are invited to affirm these vows at Confirmation. This is a time to say "Yes" to the baptismal vows that were taken on your behalf as a child. Baptism is celebrated within the community.

### **The second is the Sacrament of Communion.**

In the Sacrament of Communion (or Lord's Supper or the Eucharist) the Church acts out the drama of God's love for humankind. People hungering for faith, hope and love are fed and then sent out to share with others.

At McClure, all are invited to share in this meal. For centuries, churches in the Western world restricted this sacrament to those who could "understand". In Orthodox churches, children are initiated into sharing from birth. The growing ecumenical consensus is that all baptized persons which include children, shall be welcomed to share in the Sacrament of Communion.

Most often we celebrate using the style of our Methodist roots. This means we come forward and receive communion at "stations". Here the people receive a piece of bread and a small cup of juice and "consume" the elements at the station.

At times we celebrate according to our Presbyterian heritage when communion is served in the pews using small glasses and pre-broken bread. Whichever style is used, the meaning remains the same. Normally, we celebrate communion the first Sunday of the each month as well as at other designated times. Communion is both a remembering of Christ's life and a celebration of his nurturing, loving presence with us as a community of faith.