

# Introduction to the Orders of Worship

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*Joy overwhelmed me when I heard the words, "We will go to the house of the Lord."  
Psalm 122:1*

## Preface to the Finnish original

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This book, *Jumalanpalvelusten kirja*, contains orders (agendas) of worship necessary in the life of a congregation. Services included here are a communion service ("Mass," *messu* in Finnish), a service of the Word (*sanajumalanpalvelus*), a weekday communion service (*viikkomessu*), a family service and the daily hours of prayer. This book also includes special agendas for services on some important days of the church year.<sup>1</sup> Some texts and songs for worship have been placed in a section of their own. Music is provided for each of the series of liturgical music and for other music needed in worship.

The orders of worship are flexible in structure, making it possible to implement them in various ways. This book includes a plenty of optional material, such as prayers, topics of intercession, dozens of alternative prayers for the hours, and an appendix to the series of liturgical music.<sup>2</sup> This policy expresses of the view held by Christians in the early centuries of the church and carried over into the Lutheran theology of worship, namely that local congregations must be able to make use of their own traditions, customs and resources (Augsburg Confession, Article VII). Similar freedom also applies to the use of symbols in worship, which is explained in detail in a separate guidebook.<sup>3</sup>

Worship services include a communal confession of sin, but private counseling is also necessary. An opportunity for private counseling and confession should also be arranged for worshippers, as pointed out in the rubrics.

### WORSHIP SERVICES WITH OR WITHOUT THE LORD'S SUPPER

The main service of a congregation is usually order for a communion service. A main service is held every Sunday and also on special church holidays as stipulated in the Church Order (chapter 2, clause 2). The order for a service of the Word or a family service may also be used as the main

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<sup>1</sup> The Finnish *Jumalanpalvelusten kirja* includes special agendas for a vesper on the First Sunday of Advent, a service of the Word on Christmas Eve, a communion service on Christmas night, services early on Christmas morning and the night of New Year, a communion service on Ash Wednesday, an evening service during the Holy Week, a communion service on Maundy Thursday, a service of the Word on Good Friday, prayer at the hour of Jesus' death, two agendas for a communion service on Easter night and an agenda for an evening service on All Saints' Day. None of these agendas is included in these materials translated into English.

<sup>2</sup> Only a small part of this material has been translated into English.

<sup>3</sup> This separate guidebook, *Jumalanpalveluksen opas* ("Palvelkaa Herraa iloiten"), has been approved by the Bishops' Conference in September 2000 to supplement the orders of worship. The manual ("Church handbook") itself, including orders of worship, a lectionary and agendas for occasional services and other sacred rites, has been approved by the General Synod, the highest decision-making body in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

service. It is also possible to hold a service of the Word by following the order for a communion service, and omitting the Lord's Supper.

In any case, worship in a congregation is centered in the communion service. The basic structure of the communion service is repeated in many special orders of worship, so that instructions and materials for a communion service can be applied also to them. A communion service should, by its very nature, be prepared and held as teamwork. It is good practice to appoint a working team for the preparation of each service, so that lay parishioners are involved alongside church workers. The pastor who is to lead the service (presiding minister, *liturgi* in Finnish) should lead also the preparation. Congregations should make general plans for worship services several months at a time.

When services are prepared choices must be made between various alternatives. These selections are guided by the size and resources of the congregation, the time of the church year, and the age distribution and circumstances in the lives of those who are expected to gather for worship. Sometimes it is useful to pass out copies of the order of worship to all who come to church.

People are usually called to worship by ringing church bells. Local customs are followed in ringing them. Upon arriving in church, a Christian quiets down for prayer. It may also be possible to light a prayer candle. Each congregation is to decide upon a suitable way to bring prayer requests for the prayer of intercession.

Those who serve in various tasks during worship gather together well before the start of the service for a time of prayer led by the presiding minister.

Various possibilities for assigning tasks in a Sunday service are presented in detail in the guidebook for worship (*Jumalanpalveluksen opas*). Basic principles are outlined here:

The **presiding minister**, an ordained pastor, leads worship and is responsible for the service as a whole. In a communion service the presiding minister sings or reads the invocation, greets the people and says some introductory words, leads the prayer of the day and the eucharistic prayer and the Lord's Prayer, greets the people with peace, leads the distribution of the elements and the prayer of thanksgiving, and finally invokes God's blessing on the assembly. Often the presiding minister also reads the gospel lesson, and may also have other tasks. It is recommended, however, that someone else takes the lead in singing or reading parts of the service, such as the Kyrie litany, Gloria in Excelsis, the prayer of intercession and the *Benedicamus*. It is good for the coherence of the service if the presiding minister delivers the sermon.

It is good for an **assisting pastor** to lead communal confession and declare forgiveness and to help in the distribution of the elements.

The **church musician** (*kannttori* in Finnish) leads and is responsible for music in a worship service. A church worker acting as a **deacon** may lead the Kyrie litany and the prayer of intercession, read the gospel lesson, invite the people to greet each other with peace, and say the words of dismissal.

**Lay members of the congregation** should be asked to read the first and second readings from the Bible and to take part in the prayer of intercession. Music also offers many opportunities to individual parishioners. They may take care of practical tasks, such as decorating the church with the sexton, receiving and greeting others at the door of the church, and collecting the offering. Lay persons properly designated to assist in distributing communion may help pastors with this task.

At the beginning of the service, those who serve the assembly in various tasks may enter as a procession during a hymn or musical presentation. A cross and candles are carried ahead of them

from the door to the altar. The presiding minister comes last. At the end of the service, a procession may exit in the same order. All worshippers join this procession to leave.

It is recommended that the prayer of intercession be prepared together with parishioners. Important topics of prayer include the Christian church and the local congregation, the spreading of the gospel, public authorities, peace on earth, people in various kinds of difficulties, and matters of current interest. The intercession should include time for silent prayer.

In the orders of worship, parts intended to be sung by the pastor (**P**) or the assembly (**A**) may also be said. These include the invocation and greeting, calls to prayer, the opening dialogue of the eucharistic prayer, and the greeting of peace.

The nature of various parts of the service suggests how the pastor and those serving as readers should be positioned during the service. The use of the altar and the space around it also depends on the effect that distances within the building have on the flow of the service; the sense of togetherness; the architecture of the church; traditions of the congregation; and the number of people serving in various tasks. It is good to make a local plan in each congregation for the way in which the space around the altar of the church is used during worship. Decisions should be explained to churchgoers.

#### DAILY HOURS OF PRAYER

Orders of worship for devotions in the morning (Laudes), at noon (Ad sextam), in the late afternoon or evening (Vesper) and late evening (Completorium) represent the Western tradition of canonical hours of prayer. Agendas are also provided for a “moment of prayer” (a simplified order for any hour of the day) and a “prayer of light” (Lucernarium) that can be added to the beginning of a devotion in the evening or late evening.<sup>4</sup>

Prayer at a canonical hour can be led by a pastor, some other church worker, or any Christian. These times of prayer are occasions of public worship, but they are especially suitable for gatherings of small groups in a congregation. Individual Christians may also follow these orders of worship in their private prayer life. These agendas for daily hours of prayer, similar to the longer orders for worship services, provide alternative ways of worship that allow for differing abilities and gifts of those who participate.

#### SPECIAL SERVICES ON IMPORTANT DAYS OF THE CHURCH YEAR

To highlight special times of the church year, special orders of worship have been developed from the regular ones. Special readings, music and prayers have been included, and the orders of worship are presented in greater detail than usual. It is also possible to use normal orders of worship on special holidays.

#### TEXTS AND SONGS FOR WORSHIP

Most of the prayers and songs designed for worship services are printed in a section of their own. This has been done to encourage their use in many kinds of services and to avoid repeating the same texts (e.g. confessions of sin and absolutions) in many orders of worship. Many of the alternative texts in this section are meant to be examples that can be freely modified, such as models for

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<sup>4</sup> None of the orders for daily hours of prayer is included in these materials translated into English.

introductory words and prayers of intercession. Some of the songs in this section of the manual are also included as numbered appendices in new editions of the church hymnal.

### TUNES FOR SINGING THE LITURGY

It is stated in the Church Order (chapter 2, clause 5) that hymnals and liturgical tunes approved by the General Synod are to be used in main services. Temporarily, however, other suitable songs and tunes may be used.

In this book, the orders of worship themselves and the texts and songs that supplement them are followed by music for four musical settings of the liturgy for worship services.<sup>5</sup> These settings have been approved by the General Synod, and any of them may be chosen as being most suitable to the congregation and the time of the church year.

Some alternatives within the musical settings of the liturgy are provided. The first alternatives of the fourth setting is especially suitable for family services. The order of worship for a family service includes alternatives where parts of the liturgy are sung so that a pastor or singer sings a line that is then repeated as an echo by the assembly.

Music for liturgical singing can also be found in an appendix at the end of the book and the section of supplementary texts and songs.

## Explanation of symbols

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- A** Assembly
- P** Pastor
- R** Reader
- \*** The assembly stands.
- +** The pastor makes a sign of the cross upon the assembly to give a blessing.
- (+)** The pastor or reader may make a sign of the cross upon the assembly to give a blessing.
- [ ]** Words in brackets may be omitted.

Indented items may be omitted.

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<sup>5</sup> Translations of the liturgy into English have not been made to music. For music, one should refer to the original Finnish manual. The General Synod has also approved an official manual for Swedish-speaking congregations in Finland; the liturgy in Swedish has its own melodies.