

Communion Service

(Messu)

Communion services are at the heart of life in a congregation. When held on Sunday, the Lord's day, a communion service is a weekly Easter celebration. The structure of liturgy is flexible, allowing for variation according to local traditions, resources, and the time of the church year.

The proclamation of God's word and the sacrament of holy communion are the core of the service. The prayers, confession and praise by the assembly are inseparably linked to them. The good works of the triune God and the whole history of salvation are present in a communion service, encountering people and the circumstances in which they live.

In addition to main services on Sundays and church holidays, this order of worship can also be used on Sunday evenings, weekdays, and special occasions. Principles outlined in the Foreword of this manual are to be followed in the preparation and celebration of a communion service.

Alternatively, a service may be started with confession and forgiveness (# 4).

An opportunity for private counseling and confession for worshippers should be arranged either before or after the service.

All who come to worship and those with various tasks in the service prepare themselves with prayer.

A separate order of worship for a service of the word is provided, but such a service may also be held following the structure of a communion service, omitting part III (the Lord's Supper). In that case the collection is made during a hymn following the creed, and the Lord's Prayer is said after the "Amen" of the prayer of intercession (# 18).

I Gathering

1. Opening hymn

Instead of a hymn, a psalm, choir music, or an instrumental prelude may be used.

During the hymn or musical presentation those serving the assembly may enter in procession, during which the assembly stands.

2. Invocation and greeting

The invocation and greeting may be sung or spoken.

Invocation

P In the name of the Father, and of the B Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A Amen.

Greeting

P The Lord be with you,

A and also with you.¹

¹ Literally, the Finnish wording of the response means "So also with your spirit."

3. Introductory words

Introductory words may be freely formulated, taking into account special features of the day and the service. These introductory words may be shaped so as to lead directly to the confession. Generalized examples may be found in SUPPLEMENT ONE.

4. Confession and forgiveness

Confession and forgiveness may occur after the sermon (# 15).

Confession of sins

The confession may be read in unison. Kneeling is a possibility. The confession may be divided into parts with interpolated sentences, with sung verses of prayer, or with periods of silence. The confession may include silent personal prayer preceded by an exhortative or introductory phrase, such as "Hear my silent confession." Suitable stanzas of a hymn may be used as the confession of sins. Examples for confession of sins are in SUPPLEMENT TWO.

Declaration of forgiveness (Absolution)

The "Amen" following the declaration of forgiveness may be sung or spoken. Some alternative declarations of forgiveness are in SUPPLEMENT THREE.

– the declaration

A Amen.

Prayer of thanksgiving

The prayer may be read in unison.

Dear heavenly Father,
you forgive our sins for Jesus' sake,
and we bring our thanks to you.
Help us to depend on your grace in our life.

A Amen.

or

God, our Father,
we thank you for the way that Jesus has opened up
for us to come to you.
Strengthen our faith, revive our hope
and kindle renewed love among us.

A Amen.

or

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits.
He forgives all my iniquity
and heals all my diseases.
He redeems me from the grip of death
and crowns me with love and compassion.

A Amen.

5. Psalm of the day

The psalm may be sung or spoken.

If a psalm has been used in place of the opening hymn (# 1), it is omitted here.

6. Lord, have mercy (Kyrie)

ALTERNATIVE A

Kyrie litany

The Kyrie litany may be sung or spoken. This translation has not been set to music.

R Lord God, our heavenly Father.
You have created us, and we are yours.
Hear the prayer of your children.

A Lord, have mercy. [Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy upon us.]

R Lord Jesus Christ, atonement for our sins.
You have risen from the dead;
come and stay among us.

A Lord, have mercy. [Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy upon us.]

R Holy Spirit, Comforter,
You are the true source of joy.
Open our hearts to give you our thanks.

A Lord, have mercy. [Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy upon us.]

or

R In peace let us pray to the Lord.

A Lord, have mercy.

R For the peace from above
and the salvation of our souls
[let us pray to the Lord].

A Lord, have mercy.

R Let us pray for peace to the whole world.
Let us pray for the endurance and unity
of the Church of God.
[Let us pray to the Lord.]

A Lord, have mercy.

R Let us pray for the congregation that meets in this house,
and for all who invoke the name of the Lord.
[Let us pray to the Lord.]

A Lord, have mercy."

R Let us pray to the Lord
to pardon, defend
and protect us.
[Let us pray to the Lord.]

A Lord, have mercy.

ALTERNATIVE B

Lord, have mercy

A Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

***7. Gloria in Excelsis and a hymn of thanksgiving to the Holy Trinity**

The Gloria and the hymn of thanksgiving are omitted during the seasons of Lent (starting on Ash Wednesday) and Advent (from the Monday following the First Sunday in Advent).

Gloria in Excelsis (Luke 2:14)

R Glory to God in the highest

A and on earth peace among people whom he loves!

Hymn of thanksgiving

A suitable hymn to give thanks to the Holy Trinity is sung. Alternatively, the Laudamus may be read.

Laudamus

A We thank you, we honor you,
we bring you adoration and praise!

R We give you thanks
because of your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly king,
almighty God and Father!

[A We thank you, we honor you,
we bring you adoration and praise!]

R Lord, only Son of the Father, Jesus Christ,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.
You who take away the sin of the world,
receive our prayers.
You are seated at the right hand of the Father;
have mercy on us!

[A We thank you, we honor you,
we bring you adoration and praise!]

R You alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the highest one,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit
in the glory of God the Father.

A Amen.

8. Prayer of the day (the Collect)

Any part of this prayer (the call to prayer, the prayer itself or the amen) may be sung or spoken. The call to prayer may be followed by a time for silent prayer.

If the prayer of intercession is included in the Kyrie (# 6), that prayer may be concluded with the prayer of the day.

P Let us pray.

– the prayer

A Amen.

II God's Word

9. First reading

The reader announces the passage. The assembly remains seated during the reading.

The passage or a part of it may be sung.

The acclamations that follow may be sung or spoken.

– the reading

[R This is God's Word.

A Thanks be to God.]

10. Response

A psalm, hymn, song, instrumental music or a time for silent meditation may follow the reading.

11. Second reading

The reader announces the passage. The assembly remains seated during the reading.

The passage or a part of it may be sung.

The acclamations that follow may be sung or spoken.

– the reading

[R This is God's Word.

A Thanks be to God.]

12. Hymn of the day

*13. Gospel reading

The gospel is announced with words such as, "Let us rise to hear the holy gospel."

Before and/or after the gospel, Alleluias may be sung. Alleluias are omitted during Lent.

The gospel lesson or a part of it may be sung.

The acclamations that follow may be sung or spoken.

– the gospel lesson

[P/R This is the holy gospel.

A Praise to you, O Christ.]

14. Hymn

This hymn may be replaced with other music.

15. Sermon

The gospel reading or one of the earlier readings is the text for the sermon.

If the sermon is followed by confession and forgiveness (see # 4 above), the creed is said after the declaration of forgiveness. In this case a hymn or some other music leading to penitence may precede the confession of sins.

*16. Creed

Either the Apostles' or Nicene creed is said in unison. Other accepted English wordings or a hymn paraphrase of the creed may be used. In that case, the following hymn (# 17) is omitted.

Apostles' Creed

A I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ,
God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
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,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come 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 the life everlasting.

or

Nicene Creed

A 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 was made man.
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 and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped 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.

17. Hymn

This hymn may be replaced with other music.

18. Prayer of intercession

The prayer of intercession may be combined with the Kyrie (# 6). In that case the prayer is divided into sections with the words "Lord, have mercy" (Kyrie litany).

It is recommended that the prayer of intercession be prepared together with members of the congregation. Important topics include prayer for the church and the local congregation, and the spreading of the gospel, prayer for public authorities and for peace, prayer for those in various kinds of trouble, and prayer about current matters. When names of deceased members of the congregation are announced, the prayer should include intercession for the bereaved. There should also be time for silent prayer.

It is possible to divide the prayer into parts with interpolated sentences, with sung verses of prayer, or with periods of silence.

Examples for the prayer of intercession are in SUPPLEMENT FOUR.

The call to prayer and the amen may be sung or spoken.

On Sundays, names of newly baptized members of the congregation, couples soon to be married or newly wed, as well as names of the deceased are announced before or during the prayer of intercession. Music or symbolic elements such as lighting of candles may accompany these announcements.

P Let us pray.

– the prayer

A Amen.

III The Lord's Supper

19. Preparation of the Lord's table

A hymn is usually sung as an offertory while the pastor (possibly with assistants) prepares the Lord's table. Offerings of money are collected during the hymn. The beneficiary of the offering is announced before the hymn, and the offering may be blessed after the collection is completed. The hymn may be replaced by a choir piece or instrumental music.

20. Eucharistic prayer

Opening dialogue of the prayer

P The Lord be with you

A and also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

A We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

A It is right to give thanks and praise.

Preface

The preface may be sung or spoken.

Beginning of the preface

P Truly it is right and salutary
to give thanks to you at all times and in all places,
holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ending of the preface

Some seasonal alternatives are in SUPPLEMENT FIVE.

He has suffered and died for us
and opened for us the way to eternal life.
We thank you for this gift from heaven,
and with all your angels and saints we sing our praise to you:

or

You have given him to die and raised him from the dead
that we would be saved from the power of sin and death
and receive eternal life.

We thank you for this gift from heaven,
and with all your angels and saints we sing our praise to you:

***Sanctus**

After the Sanctus, the assembly may remain standing until the Agnus Dei.

A Holy, holy, holy Lord Sabaoth!
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest!

Prayer and the words of institution

This prayer and the words of institution may be sung.

Holy Father, giver of all life, you are praised by the universe you made. You did not abandon your creation to be ruled by sin and death; instead you sent your only Son to become a human and to save us. We thank you for the redemption that you have prepared for us by his perfect sacrifice on the cross. He paid our debt and made peace between you and us.

*Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed,
took bread, blessed (✙), broke the bread
and gave it to his disciples, saying,
"Take, eat; this is my body
which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

*In the same way he took the cup, thanked (✙) and said,
"Drink from it, all of you.
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
which is shed for you
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink from it,
in remembrance of me."*

We rejoice for everything that your Son has done for our sake, and we celebrate this holy meal in which we take part in the mystery of redemption. We recall his death, resurrection and ascension to heaven. We wait for his return in glory.

[A We proclaim his death.
We witness his resurrection.
We wait for his coming in glory.]

Send your Holy Spirit to bless us that we will receive in faith the body and blood of your Son. Unite us with him and with one another. Help us to present ourselves as a living sacrifice in Christ that you might receive honor and thanksgiving.

Through him, with him, and in him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honor and glory belong to you, almighty Father,
always and forever.

A Amen.

or

We praise you, O God, O fountain of holiness. Your grace is unending, and your kingdom is eternal. You have given life to all creation. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. You created us in your own image. You promised all nations the blessing you gave to Abraham. You led your chosen people from slavery to freedom. Through the prophets you gave a promise of a new covenant, and when the fullness of time had come, you sent your Son. He proclaimed your kingdom and was obedient in all things to the point of death.

*Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed,
took bread, blessed (✙), broke the bread
and gave it to his disciples, saying,
"Take, eat; this is my body
which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."*

*In the same way he took the cup, thanked (✙) and said,
"Drink from it, all of you.
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
which is shed for you
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink from it,
in remembrance of me."*

Gracious Father, we recall our Lord Jesus, who was sacrificed for our sake. We believe that he has risen from the dead and will come one day in glory. Trusting in him we are waiting to enter the great feast of heaven.

[A We proclaim his death.
We witness his resurrection.
We wait for his coming in glory.]

Send us your Holy Spirit that we will receive in faith the body and blood of Christ. Help your people to keep awake and pray and to abide in faith and love until Jesus Christ, our great intercessor, arrives in his glory.

Through him, with him, and in him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honor and glory belong to you, almighty Father,
always and forever.

A Amen.

or

Lord, our God, you are almighty and holy.
You gave life to all creation
and created us in your own image.
You did not forsake us to be ruled by sin and death;
instead, through the prophets, you promised a day of salvation.
When the time had come, you sent your Son.
He was born a human and redeemed us on the cross.
In him you made peace with us.
We pray:
Send us your Holy Spirit and bless these gifts, this bread and wine,
by which we take part in the body and blood of Christ,
as we celebrate the holy supper as he himself has commanded us to do.

*Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed,
took bread, blessed (✙), broke the bread
and gave it to his disciples, saying,
"Take, eat; this is my body
which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."*

*In the same way he took the cup, thanked (✙) and said,
"Drink from it, all of you.
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
which is shed for you
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink from it,
in remembrance of me."*

We recall the suffering of your Son and its saving power;
we recall his death, his joyous resurrection and his ascension to heaven.
We wait for his return in glory.

[A We proclaim his death.
We witness his resurrection.
We wait for his coming in glory.]

Give us your Holy Spirit,
that we will receive in faith the gift of communion.
Make us one body in Christ,
and lead us to deeds of love
that you might receive honor and thanksgiving.

Through him, with him, and in him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honor and glory belong to you, almighty Father,
always and forever.

A Amen.

or

Heavenly Father, Creator of all,
with gratitude we recall what you have done for us:
You sent your Son to save the world.
He became a human, was one of us, but without sin.
He fulfilled your will in every way
and accepted suffering and death
to redeem us from bondage.

*Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed,
took bread, blessed (✙), broke the bread
and gave it to his disciples, saying,
"Take, eat; this is my body
which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."*

*In the same way he took the cup, thanked (✙) and said,
"Drink from it, all of you.
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
which is shed for you
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink from it,
in remembrance of me."*

Gracious Father,
we now fulfill this command
to celebrate the holy supper in remembrance of your Son
and so proclaim his death until he comes.

[A We proclaim his death.
We witness his resurrection.
We wait for his coming in glory.]

We pray:
Send us your Holy Spirit,
that we may trust the promise of forgiveness
and receive in faith
the body and blood of your Son for our salvation
until we meet him in your kingdom.

Through him, with him, and in him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honor and glory belong to you, almighty Father,
always and forever.

A Amen.

21. Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is spoken or sung in unison.

Other accepted English wordings of the Lord's Prayer may be used.

A Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

22. Greeting of peace

After this greeting, participants in the service may be invited to greet one another with words of peace, such as "The peace of Christ be with you."

P The peace of the Lord be with you

A and also with you.

*23. Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)

The Agnus Dei may be sung during the distribution of the bread and wine.

The pastor may choose to break the bread during the Agnus Dei.

A Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
grant us peace.

24. Communion

Invitation to communion

P Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.
Come; for everything is ready now.

or

P Jesus says, "Come to me,
all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest."

or

P Come, receive the body of Christ.
Come, drink from the fountain of immortality.

Distribution

Singing of hymns or presentation of other music may take place during the distribution.

The one who gives bread says:

The body of [our Lord Jesus] Christ, given for you.

The communicant may answer: Amen.

The one who bears the cup says:

The blood of [our Lord Jesus] Christ, shed for you.

The communicant may answer: Amen.

Words to conclude the meal

After these words, the vessels used for communion are covered (and removed to an auxiliary table).

The words may be followed by a time of silence.

P We have received the Lord Jesus Christ.
May he protect and keep us until eternal life.

A Amen.

or

P May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ
preserve our spirit, soul and body
[, the entire being of each of us,]
until eternal life.

A Amen.

25. Prayer of thanksgiving

Any part of this prayer (the call to prayer, the prayer itself or the amen) may be sung or spoken.

A suitable hymn may be used as a prayer of thanksgiving.

P Let us pray.

P Lord, almighty God,
you let us partake of the holy supper.
We thank you for this gift and pray:
Allow us together with all your saints
to partake of the feast of heaven in the end.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
always and forever.

A Amen.

or

P We thank you, Christ, for the gift of your holy supper.
You have come as the answer to our prayers;
you came as the bread to meet our need.
Help us to be your answer
to those who lack what we have in plenty.
Help us to hear the cry that you heard,
to see the pain that you saw,
and to serve the humanity that you served.
Praise be to you forever.

A Amen.

or

P Holy God, giver of life,
we thank you for your gift,
the body and blood of Christ,
given at this meal to be a fountain of eternal life.

Encourage us with the power of your Spirit
that we might spread to all the world
the news that Christ is risen.
Praise be to you,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
now and forever.

A Amen.

IV Conclusion

26. Praise

If a hymn has been sung as a prayer of thanksgiving (# 25), this hymn is omitted.

Benedicamus or a hymn of praise is used. Praise at this point is, omitted on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Quiet Saturday (Easter eve).

Benedicamus

R Let us praise the Lord!

*A Thanks be to God! Alleluia!

or (during Lent from Ash Wednesday to the Wednesday of the Passion Week):

R Let us praise the Lord!

*A Thanks be to God! Amen.

*27. Benediction

The benediction may be sung.

P The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.
In the name of the Father, and of the B Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A Amen.

Dismissal

The dismissal is said just before the people leave.

P/R Go in peace, and serve the Lord with gladness.

28. Concluding music

A hymn, choir music, or an instrumental postlude is suitable here.

During the music a cross can be carried to the door. The assembly follows the cross and exits in procession.