

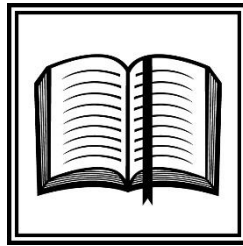
# *In the* **HOUSE** *of the* **LORD**

## INTRODUCTION

### **A Course in the Basics of the Christian Faith Based on the Historic Worship of the Christian Church**

This course is designed to give the student an overview of the basics of Christian doctrine (teaching). It uses the outline of the traditional worship service of the Christian Church. The historic liturgy presents all the basic Christian doctrines in an appropriate order. We will follow the order of “The Divine Service” in *Christian Worship Supplement* and “Service of Word and Sacrament” in *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. The intent is that the student will grow in faith and knowledge of Christian doctrine as well as in understanding and appreciation of the worship of the Church.

The class is based on this premise: “What we believe influences how we worship, and how we worship reflects what we believe.”



### **Introduction to Lutheran worship**

Why is worshiping God in the House of the Lord so important?

- 2 Chronicles 6:18 *“Will God really dwell on earth with men? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!”*
- Genesis 28:16-17 *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.”<sup>17</sup> He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.”*

It is in the house of the Lord where we meet our God. We have an intimate conversation with Him. We tell Him our greatest and darkest secrets. He declares how much He loves us through His Son living, dying and rising for us. We tell Him our desires and our fears. He admonishes the proud, soothes the hurting, and comforts the despairing. We let Him know that so much of our lives are lived apart from Him and His will for our lives. He invites us to dine with Him at His holy Table. All of this is done in one place – the House of the Lord.

As King Solomon was building the temple in Jerusalem, he realized the immensity of what he was building for God. He prayed, “Will God really dwell on earth with men? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built” (2 Chron 6:18)! The heavens cannot contain

our Lord. Yet He still deigns to dwell among us in His temple, His church, His house.

Perhaps Jacob was the first to grasp the depth of God dwelling on earth among His people. After Jacob's dream about the connecting of heaven and earth, he prayed, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven" (Gen 28:16-17).

**Worshiping God means giving praise and thanks to Him for all He has given to us in Christ Jesus. Worship literally means "worth-ship" – that God is worthy of our praise.**

The worship services in the house of the Lord are where the people to whom we minister – both members and visitors – meet their God face-to-face. They hear His voice through spoken, sung, and read Word. The people respond with their prayers and praise. God gives His sacraments. The people present their offerings. The people come into God's presence with the invocation of the Triune God and they leave God's house with His threefold blessing. We'll discuss all of this more throughout our lessons.

What does the word "liturgy" mean?

Liturgy is a word you might hear the pastor use to refer to the worship service. "Liturgy" means "work." The liturgy is first of all God's work: He gives, we receive. The liturgy is also, then, the work of God's people: We receive blessings from God and we give Him thanksgiving and praise in return.

Our English word "liturgy" (Greek "leitourgia") comes from two Greek words from which we get "laity" (Greek "laos") and "energy" (Greek "ergon"). Christians use this word to describe the willing service they give to God in worship because of what God has first done for them. The liturgy is a beneficial pattern to help God's people do what God would have us do.

The liturgy presents an order to the service. We don't just do what feels right to us in our culture. We use words and songs that have been used by Christians for centuries and even millennia. They are words and songs that have crossed ages and cultures. One of the great joys of the Lutheran liturgy is that we connect with Christians from various times, cultures and languages. We have in common that God is at work in His liturgy, giving us what we need, no matter the time, culture or language. We need Christ's forgiveness, the faith provided by the Holy Spirit, and the blessing of our heavenly Father.

The liturgy is also referred to as "service" like "worship service" or "Divine Service" or "Service of Word and Sacrament." God first of all serves us with His gifts of forgiveness, Word and Sacraments. Then the worshippers serve God with their gifts of thanksgiving, praise and offerings.

One of the unique aspects of the Divine Service is how it brings the whole body of Christ together. The liturgy connects us with Christians from various times cultures and languages. The Divine Service is the one place where the whole body of Christ comes together. In nearly every other activity of the church, we are somehow divided -- by gender, by age, by our position in the church, by whether or not we can sing. But in the Divine Service we are all together in one place, at one time, using elements of worship that have been used by our fellow believers at all times.