

Service of the Word

When God's people gather for worship a service of the Word may be used. This outline draws on classic patterns of Reformed worship and is offered as one model. It is simple and adaptable, having a three-fold structure based around the reading and exposition of Scripture:- preparing to hear God's Word; hearing God's Word and responding to God's Word. The resources which follow provide a variety of material for a service of the Word. They are drawn from a wide range of liturgical voices and are indicated by the numbers in brackets.

Preparing to hear God's Word

Call to Worship (1)
Hymn / Song
Prayers of Approach, Adoration and Confession (2)
Assurance of Pardon (3)

Hearing God's Word

Theme Introduction
Prayer for Grace or Collect for the Day (4)
Reading from Scripture
Psalm or Hymn or Song
Reading(s) from Scripture
Hymn or Song
Sermon or other Exposition of the Word

Responding to God's Word

Hymn or Song
An Affirmation of Faith may be used
(optional eg. R&S 759, 749, 752)
Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession (5)
The Offering (6)
Hymn or Song
The Blessing (7)

(1) Call to Worship

Let us worship God.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

O God, your loving kindness is better than life itself;
our lips shall give you praise.

So we will bless you as long as we live
and lift up our hands in your name.

or

Jesus invites us to a way of celebration,
meeting and feasting with the humble and poor.

Let us walk his way with joy.

Jesus beckons us to a way of risk,
letting go of our security.

Let us walk his way with joy.

Jesus challenges us to listen
to the voices of those who have nothing to lose.

Let us walk his way with joy.

Jesus calls us to follow the way of the cross,
where despair is transformed by the promise of new life.

Let us walk his way with joy.

or

We are God's people.

How good it is that we have all come
– women and men, young and old –

to worship God who creates us;

how good it is that we are gathered

to meet Jesus Christ – God's living word;

how good it is that we seek together

signs of the Holy Spirit,

whom we cannot catch or subdue.

Come, let us worship God.

(2) Prayers of Approach, Adoration and Confession

All-holy God,
you call us together to be your holy people,
and so we join to give you praise
 for the joy of our creation;
 for our redemption in Christ;
 for the empowerment of your Spirit.

Gracious God,
fill our hearts with your love
and our lives with your glory
as we come before you in worship and prayer
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Intimate God,
we praise you because you know each one of us;
the worries that nag us, the achievements we are proud of,
the hopes and expectations that we hold,
half-recognised, in our hearts.

We praise you for what we know of you;
the ways in which you have welcomed and met us,
your quiet, constant, presence in our lives.

And we praise you for what we do not yet know;
the mysteries of your creation,
the questions that baffle us,
the wonders of discovery awaiting us.

Unknown God,
may we be open to meet with you in unexpected ways;
discerning your presence in what is strange to us,
and seeing the familiar with newly-opened eyes.

Amen.

or

Wise and Holy One
you are
beyond our imagination
beyond our understanding
beyond our humanity;
and because you are beyond us
we turn to you for sanctuary
we come to you for protection.

Wise and Holy One
you are not completely beyond our imagination,
because Jesus Christ shows us what you are like;
you are not completely beyond our understanding
because Jesus Christ teaches us the way;
you are not completely beyond our humanity
because Jesus Christ is one of us.
And because you are beside us
we can walk alongside you as a companion
we can speak honestly with you as a friend
we can keep silence with you as a lover.

Wise and Holy One
not completely beyond us,
not only beside us but deep within our being.
Spirit of God
when we feel confused,
help us to make sense of life and offer it to others;
when we feel abandoned,
help us to know your love and share it with others;
when we feel at a loss,
help us to rediscover hope and offer it to others;
when we fail to love you,
help us to know your forgiveness and share it with others;
encourage us to leave what is past and travel on,
with you and all your people,
into your glorious future.

Amen.

and/or

God of love and mercy,
we come before you
knowing that we are in need of forgiveness.

We have sinned against you
in our speaking and in our silence;
in our thinking and in our thoughtlessness;
in our actions and in our inaction.

We have sinned against you,
in not loving you with our whole heart
and soul and strength;
in not loving our sisters and brothers in Christ.
Grant us, O Lord, your forgiveness,
restore us in the image of your Son,
and lead us along the way to your kingdom,
to the glory of your name.

Amen.

or

O God,
we have come together to turn to you
as your people have gathered before.
With Christians over the centuries and across the world,
with all your people of all places and times,
we have come.

We bring with us everything we are,
all our gifts and talents,
all that we do well and for good.
We bring our weakness
and our sorrow
and every way in which we fail.

We come in the hope and expectation
that we shall find you here in this company of people,
as the scriptures are read and interpreted
and as the music and the words touch our spirits.

We pray that as we learn to follow Jesus, your Son,
we may be saved from all that harms us,
that we may become the people you made us to be
and that we may find strength to do good in the world
so that your will may be done.

God the Creator, we praise you.
God in Christ, we turn to you.
God the Comforter, we call upon you.

Blessed be God, forever.

O God of justice,
we have heard your commandments
and they are a gift to us.
Yet we have failed always to live by them.
For this we are sorry and we turn to you for forgiveness.
We have not loved you wholeheartedly.
We have failed in love to our neighbours
and to our selves.
We have not loved our enemies
or blessed those who do us harm.
We live in an unjust world,
where many are hungry,
and there is little peace.

Lord have mercy upon us.

(3) Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news!
Who is to condemn?
It is Christ Jesus,
who died,
yes,
who was raised,
who is at the right hand of God,
who indeed intercedes for us.

Romans 8:34

So if anyone is in Christ,
there is a new creation:
everything old has passed away;
see, everything has become new!

2 Corinthians 5:17

Amen.

Receive God's gift of forgiveness
and be at peace.

or

O God,
your heart is full of mercy.
May we hear and trust your words to each of us:
'Your sins are forgiven.'
May we forgive each other
and forgive ourselves.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

(4) Prayer for Grace

O Lord, heavenly Father,
in whom is the fullness of grace and wisdom,
enlighten our minds by your Holy Spirit,
and give us grace to receive your Word
with reverence and humility,
without which no-one can understand your truth.
For Christ's sake.

Amen.

or

Eternal God,
who longs for us to know all good things
and to walk along a peaceful path,
open the eyes of our hearts
that we may see the way to life,
open our ears that we may hear the truth,
and open our lips that we may praise you,
this day and all our days,
in Jesus' name.

Amen.

(5) Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Loving God,
we give you thanks and praise
for all that you have done for us.

For your whole created universe
bursting with life and infinite possibilities,
a universe created and yet still being created.

For the beauty and fragility of our spinning planet,
the blue oceans, swarming with life,
and the green and verdant earth.

For our fellow human beings,
people of many colours, of many languages,
of many abilities, yet all your children.

We give you thanks
for the life, death, and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ.
For the message which he brings,
for the life in us which he renews,
and the example he has given us to follow.

We give you thanks for the Holy Spirit,
sweeping through all of life with boundless energy,
at once as gentle as the breath of a child,
and yet as fierce as a raging storm,
lifting us up in your grace.

Hear us, Lord,
as in our own hearts and minds
we give you thanks for your presence in our lives....

Silence

For all these things we give you our joyous praise,
through your Son, Jesus Christ
and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

or

God, Maker and Lover of all,
we know that your way is not always easy;
that peace is not given lightly,
that sometimes justice comes only through struggle.

We pray for the places in your world
where we long to see justice
and dream of peace.

We remember especially the peoples of...
where conflicts seem so long-standing and complex
that we cannot imagine resolution;
and we pray for wisdom and reconciliation....

We remember communities divided by poverty and racism,
especially...
where the gaps between privilege and powerlessness
seem to grow ever wider;
and we pray for justice and healing.

We remember your church,
sometimes fragmented and confused,
where in spite of division,
your people seek to live out the Gospel;
and we pray for joy and a new sense of the Spirit's power.

We remember our friends, neighbours and ourselves,
especially...
in those areas of our lives where we struggle
to be true to what we have learned of you;
and we pray for faithfulness and courage.

God, Maker and Lover of us all
who summons us in Jesus to the way of the cross,
and empowers us to live by your Spirit,
hear our prayer.

Amen.

or

Liberating God,
we bring our prayers for those whose lives are limited,
by their own attitudes or beliefs,
by the pain of their circumstances,
by the actions of others,
seeking for all confidence to journey in freedom.

We pray for those worn down by illness,
or exhausted by caring for others,
longing to feel the freshness and energy
of a bright new day.

We pray for those confined by oppression,
their opportunities limited by prejudice,
longing to experience the possibility
of travelling on an open road.

We pray for those limited by their own lack of self-worth,
held back by doubts and fears, and repeated rejection,
longing to walk with the confidence
of striding out freely along their own path.

We pray for those trapped in poverty,
their energies sapped by the struggle against greed and injustice,
longing to know the abundance
of an earth where resources are freely shared.

Amen.

(6) Offering Prayers

Eternal God
we come with these gifts
to offer our sacrifice of praise
and the service of our lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

or

Loving God, we bring these our gifts,
in thanksgiving for all that you have given us;
asking that we may be servants of others
and witnesses to your love.
In the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

or

Generous God
we bring our gifts to you
with cheerfulness and joyful hearts.
Give us courage that with these gifts
we may also offer our minds, bodies and spirits,
ready and willing to show the truth of the Gospel in our lives.

Amen.

(7) Blessings

May the God of hope
fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

Amen.

or

The blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with you, now and forever.

Amen.

or

May the God whose longing is for justice
and whose passion is for the freedom of all
strengthen us to work for all that makes for peace;
and the blessing of the living God,
Creator, Redeemer and Spirit
be with us all, now and always.

Amen.

or

Let us go out into the world
as bringers of love
as makers of peace
as messengers of hope
knowing that the blessing of God, the source of life,
of Jesus Christ, the way to life,
and of the Holy Spirit, the sustainer of life,
is with us today, tomorrow and forever.

Amen.