



CELEBRATING THE EUCHARIST

WITH ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA
+ + + EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Unpublished Work

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by

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NOTE

Throughout this book pink sidebars labeled
WONDERING
 invite further action and reflection on the liturgy
 for people of all ages. Green sidebars labeled
INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN
 suggest ways to help younger
 children participate more fully.

CREDITS

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WHAT IS THE EUCHARIST?

The liturgy of the Eucharist is at the center of our life together.

Christians all over the world have celebrated the Eucharist for thousands of years.

The Eucharist is our most joyous celebration. And the Eucharist is our most important work. We all share in the celebration and the work of the Eucharist:

babies and children, teenagers and adults,
members and visitors, strangers and friends.

We celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday, through every season of the church year and also at weddings, funerals, and other occasions.

When we celebrate the Eucharist we connect with God, and with each other, and with all God's people in every time and place.



THE SHAPE OF THE EUCHARIST

The Eucharist has two main parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Table.

Our church building has two main parts also: the seating area and the rotunda.

The shape of our church is like the shape of the Eucharist.

WONDERING

All people are created to worship and serve God.

Because God connects us and makes us all part of one body, we all share responsibility for supporting one another— young and old— in the worship and work of God.

What are the gifts of being connected with and responsible for others?

What are the challenges?

WONDERING

Pay careful attention to the sacred architecture, art, and objects you encounter in the liturgy and in the **EXPLORING THE CHURCH** section of this book.

As you encounter each liturgical space or object ask:
Why is this special?

What is it for?

How does it help you pray?

What does it remind you of?

How does it make you feel?

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

We celebrate the Liturgy of the Word in the seating area.

What happens in the Liturgy of the Word is something like what happened when Jesus went to the synagogue to pray, teach and learn.

The Liturgy of the Word includes Gathering, Listening for the Word of God in Scripture, Silence, Sermon, Sharing, Song, and Prayers.

INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

Help orient young children to the liturgy by whispering short reminders about what's happening. For example, say: "Now is a gathering time...now is a listening time...now is a praying time.... now is a singing time..."



THE LITURGY OF THE TABLE

We celebrate the Liturgy of the Table in the rotunda.

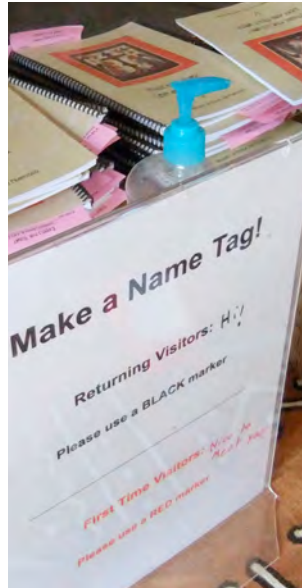
What happens in the Liturgy of the Table is something like what happened when Jesus shared his Last Supper with his friends, on the night before he died on the cross.

The Liturgy of the Table includes Walking to the Table, the Peace, the Great Thanksgiving, Communion, the Collection, Special Blessings, the Carol, and the Dismissal.



GATHERING

The Eucharist begins when the community gathers for worship. The ringing church bell calls us to stop whatever else we're doing, and gather together. When we gather, prayers and songs, candles and incense help us get ready to celebrate the Eucharist with our hearts, minds, and bodies.



INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

Encourage children to help the community prepare for worship by helping with set-up, ringing the church bells, joining in the songs, and lighting the candles and the incense.



WONDERING

Watch closely whenever the incense is burning. Notice how the clouds of smoke rise, swirl, and spread out to fill the entire church.

How is the burning incense like prayers?

LISTENING FOR THE WORD OF GOD

Once everyone has gathered, we begin listening for the Word of God. God is always speaking, but sometimes we forget how to listen. In the Liturgy of the Word, we practice listening for God.



SCRIPTURE

We listen for the Word of God in the Scriptures; different people read aloud stories, poetry and songs from the Bible. We hear different stories during each season of the church year.

WONDERING

Look up the Scripture readings appointed for the day:

www.lectionarypage.net

What do you notice?

What do you wonder?



INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

Picture Bibles and story Bibles help prepare children to recognize and understand the Scripture readings during the service. Help children find and read the Scripture readings before and during the liturgy. Encourage older children to volunteer to read Scripture aloud in the liturgy.



WONDERING

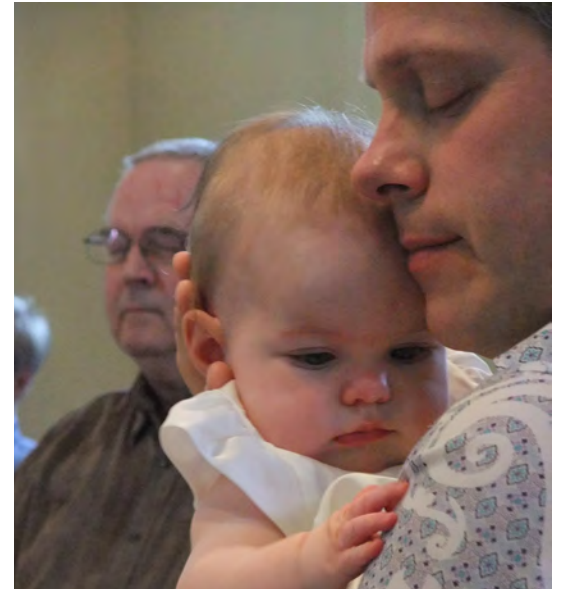
The Gospels are Scripture stories about Jesus. Because these stories are so precious to the community, we often stand up when they are read. Standing up is a way to show respect.

How does standing up change the way you listen?

SILENCE

We listen for the Word of God in the silence.

When the bowl bells ring, we enter the silence. In the silence we listen for God with our whole bodies, and with our hearts.



WONDERING

Listen carefully, and see how far into the silence you can still hear the sound of the bell. Can you hear it throughout the entire silence? Can you feel the vibration?

Pay attention to your own breath. Follow the air as it moves in and out of your body. Can you hear it? Can you feel it?

What else can you hear and feel in the silence?

SERMON

We listen for the Word of God in the sermon.

The preacher's stories, questions, and ideas can help us understand the Scriptures in a deeper way.



INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

Many people listen best when they have something to do with their hands. Working with clay, finger labyrinths, or yarn may help children stay anchored and attentive during the Liturgy of the Word.



WONDERING

Even when we don't understand all the words and ideas that are spoken, the practice of listening—with ears, body, and heart—prepares us to hear God speaking in our lives.

What is the practice of listening like for you?
What makes it easier?
What makes it more difficult?

SHARING

We listen for the Word of God in our lives.

God is speaking in each person's life, and each person has a story to share.

We share our stories, listening to each other and to the silence.



WONDERING

Practice listening for God in stories, in silence, and in your everyday life.

Whenever you read a story—in the Bible, a book, or the newspaper— ask “I wonder where I am in this story, or what part of this story might be especially for me?”

Set aside a few moments each day to enter the silence.

Take time regularly to share stories about your life with others.



SONG

We listen for the Word of God in songs.

We sing together a lot during the liturgy. Singing is for everyone. If you can breathe, you can sing.

The Bible says, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!”



WONDERING

In the Bible the word for “spirit” and the word for “breath” are the same.

What is the connection between breath and spirit for you?

What is the connection between spirit and singing for you?



WONDERING

Sometimes we celebrate God’s Word by singing “Alleluia!” and carrying the Gospel book around the church, for everyone to touch or kiss. What are other ways we show joy and affection in the liturgy?



PRAYERS

In the Liturgy of the Word, God speaks to us.

In the prayers, we speak to God.

Prayer is important work. It is work that belongs to all of us.

Where there are needs, we pray for God's mercy. Where there are blessings, we give thanks to God.

We pray using our own words, and we pray using shared words.

Even when only one person is speaking or singing, we are all praying together.

We pray the Lord's Prayer, a prayer Jesus taught his friends more than 2,000 years ago.



WONDERING

We speak prayers, and sing prayers.
We sign prayers and dance prayers.

We pray in many languages. Sometimes we pray in sign language. Sign language may help people who are hard of hearing, as well as pre-literate and pre-verbal children, participate more fully in the prayers.

Sometimes, we pray by humming, or droning. Can you feel the prayers vibrating around you, and in your own body?



INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

Help sign prayers in the liturgy, and encourage younger children to join. Start by learning the prayers: search for "Sing and Sign with St. Gregory's" on YouTube.

Encourage children to join in humming and droning, and to practice offering their own prayers aloud in the liturgy, as well as at home, at mealtime or bedtime.



WALKING TO THE TABLE

After the prayers, we all move toward the Table singing, carrying the bread and wine. We are offering the bread and wine to God. We are offering ourselves to God, too.

INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

Encourage children to help lead the procession by playing percussion instruments or carrying the bread, wine, cross, and incense to the Table.



WONDERING

Sometimes we do a very old dance step, called the *tripudium*, to go up to the Table... you put a hand on the shoulder of the person in front of you, and dance three steps forward and one step back, in a long line.

How does this dance step reflect your faith and life?

THE PEACE

Jesus said, "Peace is my last gift to you.
My peace I give to you."

Before we share God's feast, we always
share God's peace.

We share God's peace with a kiss, a hug, a
touch, or a word.

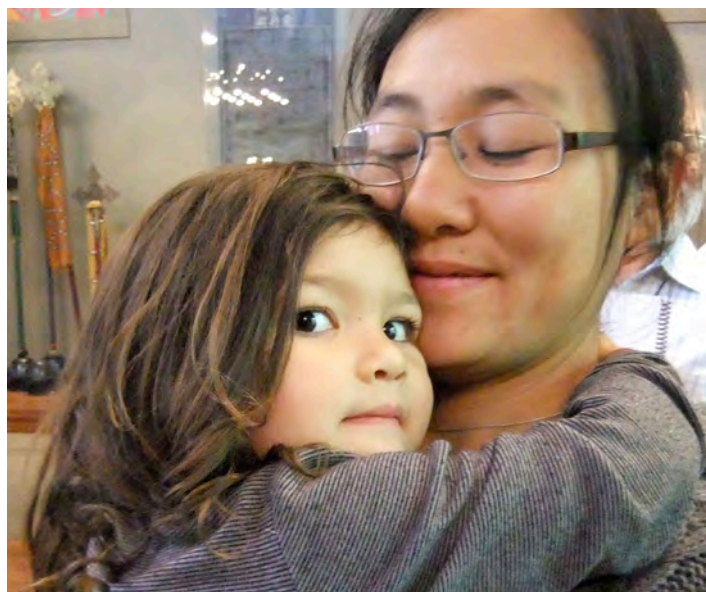
**"THE PEACE OF
THE LORD BE
WITH YOU ALL."**

**"AND ALSO
WITH YOU."**



WONDERING

Take a deep breath and feel God's peace
fill your whole body. Can you feel God's
peace move among us as you greet each
person?



THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

After we share the Peace we gather very close to the Table and join the priest, lifting up our hearts, hands, and voices to offer the prayer of Great Thanksgiving.

The priest and people lift up their hands for the Great Thanksgiving in an ancient prayer position called the *orans*.

What is happening is a great mystery. As we pray, the life of God is filling the bread and wine, and the life of God is filling us.



INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

Encourage children to help bless the bread and wine by joining in the drone, raising their arms in the *orans* position, and singing or signing the songs during the prayer of Great Thanksgiving.



WONDERING

Explore praying in different positions—arms lifted, arms folded; head lifted, head bowed; eyes open, eyes shut; kneeling, standing. How does your prayer change when your body posture changes?



WONDERING

We are all blessing the bread and wine, and each person's participation makes our prayer at the Table stronger. Notice what happens during the prayer.

What do you see?

What do you hear?

What do you feel?

COMMUNION

After we bless the bread and wine, we share communion with each other, standing together around the Table.

People carry bread around and offer it to everyone. We share the wine, passing the cup to each other.

As we share the bread and wine, Jesus is becoming part of us, and we are becoming part of Jesus and part of each other.



**"THE BODY
OF CHRIST."**

"AMEN."

**"THE BLOOD
OF CHRIST."**

"AMEN."



WONDERING

The Eucharist is not the only feast we share around the Table. After the liturgy we often share snacks and coffee. Sometimes we share groceries, giving away free food at The Food Pantry. Sometimes we share a whole meal, for example on Maundy Thursday or at the Supper Service. How are these other feasts like communion?



THE COLLECTION

The gifts we share in the Liturgy of the Word and Table remind us how greatly God loves us. We want to say “thank you” and share that love with the world. One way is by bringing our money to the Table and sharing it to help the work of the church.



INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

Even very small children can come up and put money in the basket at the collection.

SPECIAL BLESSINGS

We offer special blessings for people who are celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, and other special occasions. We lay our hands on them and sing to bless them. Sometimes we even bless animals!



WONDERING

In the Bible, God says, "I will bless you, so that you will be a blessing."

What does it mean to you that God blesses you?

What are the ways we bless other people with our words and bodies in the liturgy?

What are the ways we bless other people with our words and bodies in the world?



THE CAROL

After Communion we join in a big circle to sing and dance a final song together. We sing and dance below, as the saints sing and dance above us.



INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

Encourage children to help lead the carol by playing percussion instruments with the other musicians in the center of the circle. Help children watch and listen closely to the other musicians, as everyone learns to play together.

THE DISMISSAL

The liturgy is over, but our celebration of the Eucharist is never over. Now the Eucharist is inside us. Now we can carry the celebration with us out into the world!

"LET US BLESS THE LORD!"

"THANKS BE TO GOD!"

WONDERING

What parts of the Eucharist do you think are the most important? Mysterious?

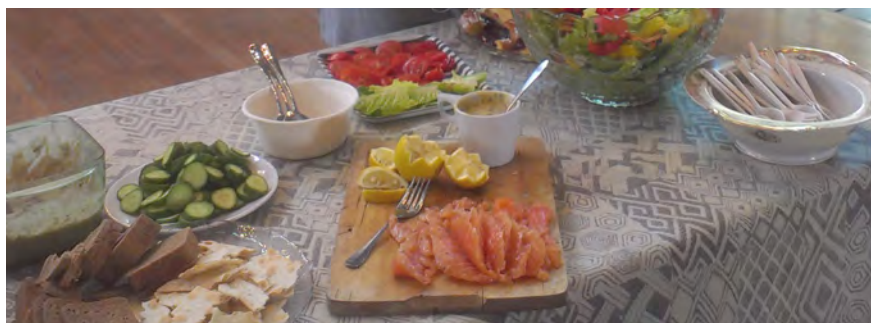
What parts of the Eucharist make you feel connected? Curious? Included? Left out? Confused? Peaceful? Energetic? Strong?

What parts of the Eucharist can you help with at church?
Do at home?

INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

Encourage children to help with the set-up and clean-up of the church.

Remind children that we all work together to make the church a beautiful place for people to pray.



COFFEE HOUR AND CLEAN UP

After the service we share food and drinks, and we also share the work of cleaning up the church.

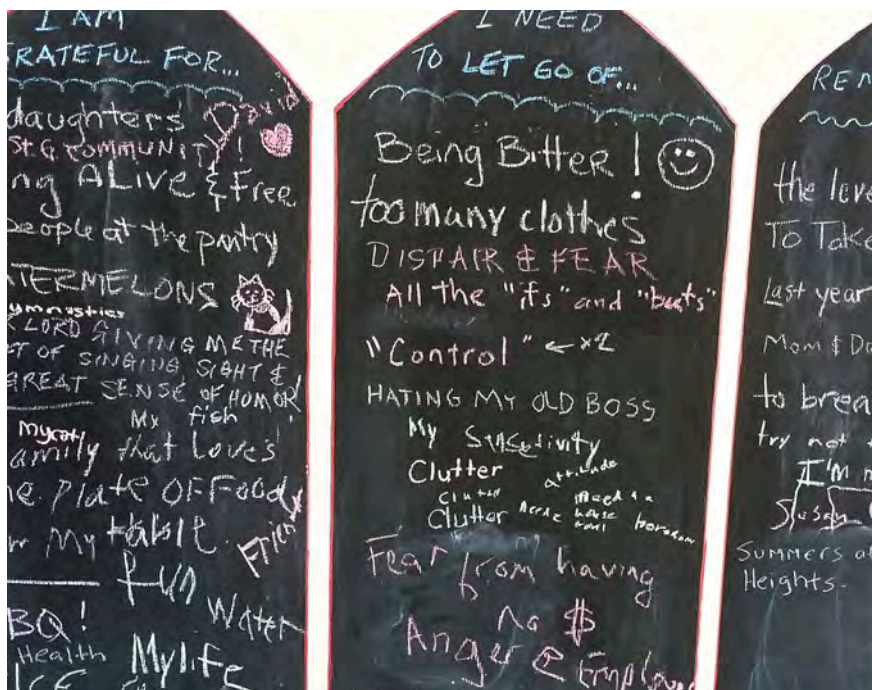


SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

EXPLORING THE CHURCH

The church is filled with special places and beautiful objects that help the community pray.

We treat these places and objects with care and attention, because they are holy. This practice prepares us to treat everything with greater care when we go out into the world, because everything God makes is holy.



THE SHRINE: As you come up the front steps to the church, you see a blackboard with people's prayers written on it. Anyone who comes by is welcome to write a prayer.



FRONT DOORS: When you look up, you see a mosaic that shows Mary carrying Jesus inside her. Moses and St. Gregory are next to her.

The carvings on the red front doors show creation.



ROTUNDA: This is the big room right inside the front doors.

There is a labyrinth pattern on the wooden floor in the rotunda.

ICONS: At the entrance is a candle between two stands holding icons. Icons are holy pictures of holy people. There are icons all around the building. Many of these icons were painted by people from our church.

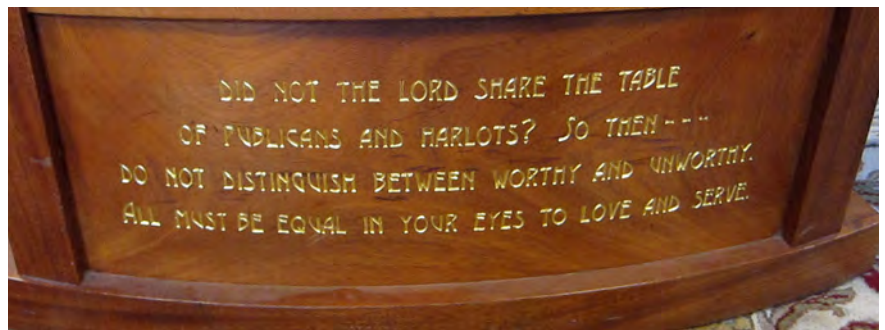
Icons can help us pray. As you look into an icon, or greet the icon with a gentle touch or kiss, remember that God is with you and in you.

Just as you pray for other people in the liturgy, you can ask the saints in the icons to pray for you.



TABLE: The Table is the place, right in the center of the rotunda, where people come to be fed. This is where we bless the bread and wine, and we share communion standing around the Table.

Look at the bottom of the Table. On one side are words in Greek from the Gospel of Luke, saying about Jesus, “This man eats with sinners!” On the other side are words written by Isaac of Ninevah. They say, “Did not the Lord share the table with publicans and harlots? So then—do not distinguish between worthy and unworthy. All must be equal in your eyes to love and to serve.”



CHALICE: The cup that holds the wine we share at communion is called a chalice.



PATEN: The plate that holds the bread we share at communion is called a paten.



ROTUNDA CEILING: Look above the Table. Way up high, near the very top of the rotunda, are words in English and Greek written by Gregory of Nyssa: “The one thing truly worthwhile is becoming God’s friend.”



WONDERING

What does it mean for you to become God’s friend?



DANCING SAINTS ICON: All around the rotunda is a large icon with ninety-one dancing saints and four animals.

The saints are people from many different places, times, and religions who can help point us toward God. The saints dance above, and we dance below, with Jesus leading the dance.

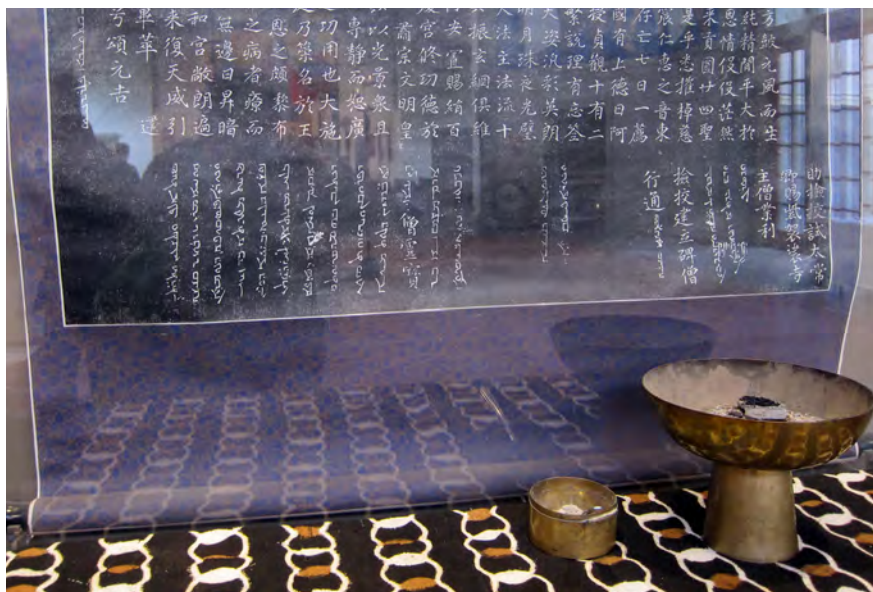
Get a booklet from the display behind the welcome table and read their stories or visit www.allsaintscompany.org



INSTRUMENTS: Under the Table is a basket of percussion instruments. Psalm 150 says "Praise God with tambourine and dance!"

Drums and rattles help us praise God in the liturgy. With practice you can learn to play the instruments in ways that support the song, dance, and praise of the whole community.

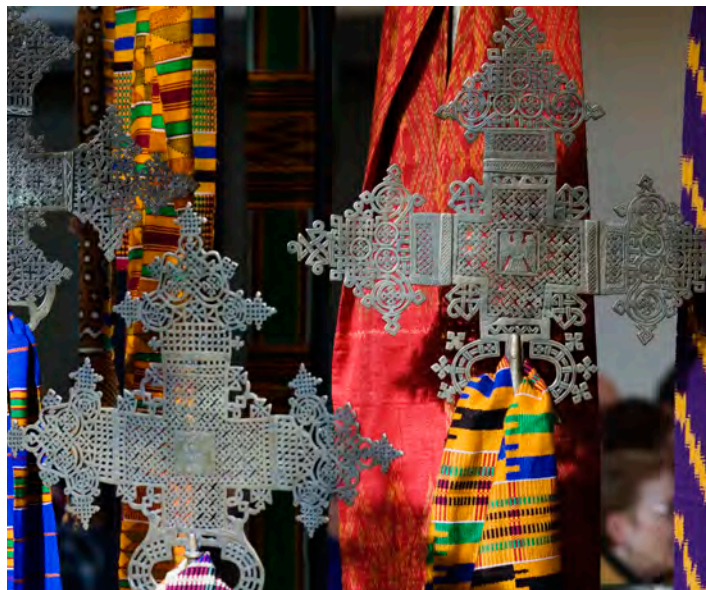




GIFT TABLE AND CHINESE SCROLL:

The little table under the icon of Jesus dancing holds the bread and the wine that we will use for communion. When it's time for communion, people go get the bread and wine and carry them to the Table. The scroll above it is a rare copy of a Chinese stone carving telling the story of early Christians in China.

CROSSES: There are many crosses in the church. Some crosses have an image of Jesus or a saint or angel on them. Others are just a shape. How many crosses do you see in the building?



WELCOME TABLE: Under the icon of the tiger is the welcome table. Here you can find music books, paper nametags for visitors, and someone who can answer questions.

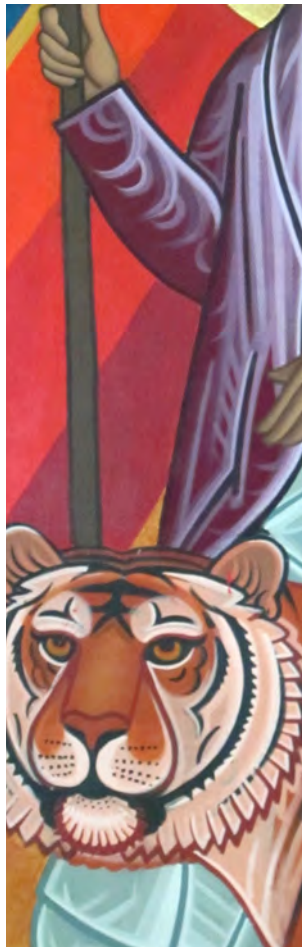
The whole community shares in welcoming everybody to worship.

WONDERING

What helps you feel welcome when you go somewhere new?

How can you help others feel welcome at church?

ALTAR LAMPS: The altar lamps hang above the Table in the rotunda. They burn oil that gives light whenever we celebrate the Eucharist.



BUTTON CLOSET: Under the icon of the horse is the button closet, where we keep buttons with names on them. We feel connected when we call each other by name, so we ask everyone to wear some kind of nametag during the liturgy. You can make a button for yourself instead of a paper nametag.

Also in the button closet are extra books, playdough, and art supplies for use in the liturgy. You can get a tray for yourself.

VESTRY: The vestry is under the icon of the bear; it's where leaders get ready for the liturgy.

The vestry is also the place where we keep special fabrics to make the church beautiful. The colors and textures of the fabrics in the church change with the seasons of the church year: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost.



What colors and textures do you see in the church? How do these colors and textures reflect the church season?



VESTMENTS are special clothes the leaders wear for the Eucharist. The vestments remind us that the Eucharist is a special celebration and help us spot the leaders.

There are white robes, called albs, and brightly colored coverings, called chasubles. Ordained priests and deacons also wear a special strip of cloth over their shoulders called a stole. Sometimes people wear fancy hats!



UMBRELLAS: Sometimes people carry umbrellas around the church. They make our celebration more festive and help people know where to look. The umbrellas come from south India.



CHAPEL: The chapel is under the icon of the wolf. It is a quiet place where people can sit and pray.

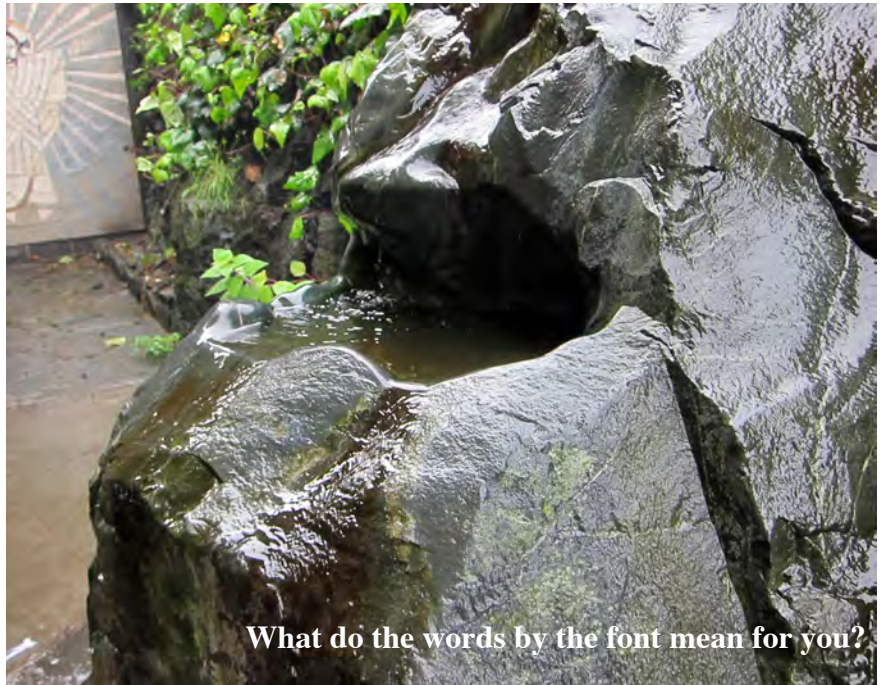


BAPTISMAL FONT: The font is outside; it's the place people come to be baptized.

In baptism, a person is sealed by the Holy Spirit, and marked as Christ's own forever.

The water flowing from the rock reminds us of a time God made water flow from a rock in the desert. You can also see this image in the icon behind the Presider's Chair.

Right outside the doors to the font you can find the words, "Our forebears were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea and all ate the same spiritual food."



COLUMBARIUM: The columbarium is near the font, and it holds the ashes of people who have died.

The door of the columbarium shows an image of Jesus rising out of the grave.



GONG: The gong calls us to attention.



CHURCH BELL: The church bell hangs high above the presider's chair. The church bell calls us to gather for worship, and calls us to rejoice when we sing alleluia.

PRESIDER'S CHAIR: The preacher sits on the presider's chair for the sermon.



BOWL BELLS & HANDBELLS: The cantor rings the bowl bells and handbells to help us know when to begin and end the times of silence.



WEDDING ICON: Behind the presider's chair is an icon we call "The Wedding." It illustrates a sermon by Gregory of Nyssa. It means, "Inside this church, your soul is marrying Jesus, and God is blessing the wedding."



DEACON'S CANDLE: Jesus says, "I am the light of the world." The light from a candle reminds us that the light of Christ is always shining in and among us. A leader carries the deacon's candle during the service.

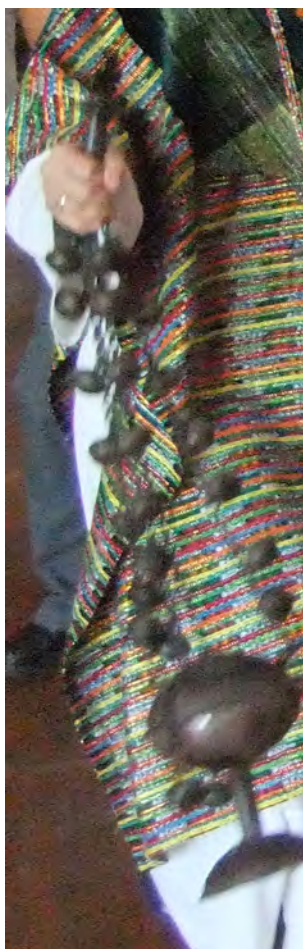
OIL LAMP: The oil lamp usually stands near the lectern in the seating area. It comes from India.



MENORAH: The menorah usually stands near the lectern in the seating area to give light to the readings. Menorahs are also used in Jewish homes and synagogues.



THURIBLES & INCENSE: A thurible holds the burning incense. Some thuribles are big bowls that can sit on a table or stand alone. Some thuribles hang from chains, so a leader can carry and swing them in a procession. Burning incense can look and smell beautiful. Incense can help us see and smell our prayers and blessings.



GOSPEL BOOK: The Scripture readings for each service are found in the Gospel book. It is a sign of God's Word, which is always with us. Sometimes we carry the Gospel book around for people to touch or kiss.

LECTERN: People stand at the lectern to read the Scriptures.



SHRINE: The shrine looks like a little house behind the lectern. Sometimes it holds the Gospel book. Sometimes it holds special oils for blessing and healing. Sometimes it holds bread and wine that have already been blessed. It comes from Japan.



PAINTINGS & ICONS: On the walls in the seating area there are pictures of Jesus being baptized, St. George killing a dragon, and Mary holding the baby Jesus.



ST. GREGORY'S CORE VALUES

MAKING LITURGY THAT SHOWS WHAT WE BELIEVE

Every time we celebrate the Eucharist we create the liturgy together.

At St. Gregory's, our liturgy reflects what we believe God is doing within and among us: glorifying strangers, calling all people into full participation, showing affection, and making all things new.

We ground our liturgical choices and practice in these values.



WONDERING

Reflect on your own experiences in the liturgy and consider:

How do we express, enact, and experience our core values in the liturgy?

How might we embody these values more fully in the liturgy, and in the world?

Core Value: Glorifying the Stranger

We believe God comes to us as a child and as a stranger.

Therefore, we strive to honor and welcome others, especially the strangers and children among us.

We all share responsibility for welcoming strangers and children, explaining clearly what we're doing, and inviting everyone to participate in the entire liturgy. We commit to making church safe for everyone (www.diocal.org/safechurch); we expect that the whole community worships together, and that children are never unsupervised.



WONDERING

When have you welcomed a stranger or a child, and encountered God?

What allows you to know you're safe at church?

INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

Try to greet everyone, especially younger children, by name.

If possible, get down and greet children at eye level.

Show visiting children where to find playdough and books.

Core Value: Full Participation

We believe God invites each person and all humankind to be part of God's saving work.

Therefore we invite all people to participate fully together in worship and work.

Worship is not a performance, or something done by experts; everyone has something to offer.

There are lots of different ways to participate in the liturgy. We participate by singing, dancing, reading and leading. We participate by listening, praying watching, and waiting. Sometimes we participate by just showing up!

WONDERING

What sorts of participation are easier for you? What sorts of participation are more difficult for you?

What might it look or feel like for you to participate more fully in worship?



Core Value: Affection

We believe God binds us to one another in love and service, living as parts of one body.

Therefore we strive to show each other affection, listening, respect and connection.

We touch one another in dances; we pray aloud for one another; we listen to each other's concerns; we work together, giving and receiving support.



WONDERING

When the community gathers for worship, what helps you feel loved? Heard? Respected? Connected?

Think about others in the community during worship: the choir, liturgical leaders, readers, visitors, children, parents, elders, people with disabilities.

What can you do to help them feel loved? Heard? Respected? Connected?



Core Value: Transformation

We believe God is always at work making all things new, transforming and changing us.

Therefore we strive to participate in God's work of making things new, and to be made new ourselves, both as individuals and as a community.

We take risks; we try new things; we look forward to new people joining our community and changing us.

WONDERING

Transformation is God's call and God's promise for us.

Transformation can be both wonderful and scary.

How does your participation in the liturgy change or transform you?

How does your participation in the liturgy change or transform the liturgy? The church community? The world?



CORE VALUES: THE BOTTOM LINE

- Everyone, without exception, is invited to participate in the liturgy fully.
- By participating in worship, we are transformed from consumers to active makers of community.
- Transformed people transform the church and transform the world.

COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS FOR WORSHIP

When we gather for worship we expect everyone in the community—visitors and members, children and adults—to demonstrate love and respect for each individual, for God, and for the worshipping community as a whole.

Following basic safe church policies, along with common sense and courtesy, helps us do this. (See our Safe Church handout and visit www.diocal.org/safechurch)

Ultimately, our life together in the Spirit is not about rules and regulations, but about relationships.

Instead of merely relying on a list of rules, we must continually ask ourselves, “How do my actions affect other members of the community?”

Children should expect adults and older children to provide patience, understanding, instruction, correction, guidance, encouragement, and practical support.

Adults should expect children of all ages to participate fully, respect the needs and feelings of others, and provide leadership in developmentally appropriate ways.



INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

It can sometimes be challenging for children and adults to negotiate conflicting needs during worship. When another person's behavior in worship bothers you, always connect before you correct.

Begin by affirming the value of that person's presence and participation in worship, for example, “Sally, I'm glad you're here today.”

Then communicate your needs and concerns with clarity and compassion. “It's hard for me to listen to the reading when you're banging on the drum.”

Finally, take responsibility for your own feelings and experiences. Be willing to keep working together towards a solution that respects the needs of each individual and the needs of the whole community. “Can I get you something else to do with your hands while the readings are happening, so you can keep busy and I can hear the readings?”

The practice of being in relationship is hard work, and it is central to the Christian life. The liturgy offers us space to engage this practice every week at church. And the liturgy nourishes and strengthens us to continue this practice every day at home, school, work, and throughout the world.



INCLUDING YOUNGER CHILDREN

It is important for children to understand a few concrete rules and expectations. Like “Children are an important part of the community, so children need to participate with the community all during worship.” And, “At church, children must always be supervised by a parent or designated adult.”

Beyond these basics, however, it is vitally important for children and adults to learn to reflect on what it means to be part of a community.

Regularly encourage children to join you in conversation about how to live in community.

