

Liturgy in *Glory to God*

This is one in a series of articles introducing Glory to God, the new Presbyterian hymnal.

Introduction

“Glory to God in the highest heaven” (Luke 2:14). The Christian story begins with worship—the heavenly hymn of the heavenly host, singing praise at the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. *Glory to God*, the 2013 Presbyterian hymnal, also begins with worship—almost fifty pages of liturgical texts:

- The Service for the Lord’s Day, including the Lord’s Supper
- The Sacrament of Baptism and the Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant
- Services for Daily Prayer
 - Morning Prayer
 - Midday Prayer
 - Evening Prayer
 - Prayer at the Close of Day
- Other Texts for Worship (in English, Spanish, and Korean)
 - Nicene Creed
 - Apostles’ Creed
 - Lord’s Prayer

- The Law of God
- Summary of the Law
- A Brief Statement of Faith

This essay will help you make good use of these worship resources as your congregation welcomes the arrival of the new Presbyterian hymnal, *Glory to God*.

The intent of these liturgies is not to dictate a set order of service but to provide one exemplary, accessible model for Reformed worship in the twenty-first century.

Old, New, Borrowed, Blue

The worship resources in *Glory to God* are simultaneously traditional, contemporary, ecumenical, and Reformed—or to put it another way: “old, new, borrowed, and blue.” They are *old*—ancient, in fact—rooted in the earliest patterns and

practices of the Christian tradition: gathering around Word and sacrament to celebrate Jesus' resurrection on the first day of the week; welcoming new members of Christ's body through washing with water and the anointing of the Spirit; keeping daily disciplines of study, self-offering, devotion, and prayer. They are *new*—reflecting contemporary changes in Christian worship, fresh approaches to liturgy and language, and recent initiatives toward sacramental renewal. These worship resources are *borrowed*—in the sense that they draw on a wealth of wisdom from the larger church and demonstrate our deep commitment to ecumenical dialogue. And they are “true blue”—faithful to the principles at the heart of the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition: the centrality of Scripture in Christian faith, life, and liturgy; the presence of Christ in Word and sacrament as “notes of the church”; a dynamic relationship between form and freedom through the ordering of the Word and the gifts of the Spirit; and the value of worship in the vernacular or common language of the people of God.

The liturgical texts in *Glory to God* are largely drawn from the 1993 Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship* (BCW), and are designed in accordance with the Directory for Worship (DFW) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). However, as indicated above, they also take into account two decades of further development in the church and culture. The intent of these liturgies is not to dictate a set order of service but to provide one exemplary, accessible model for Reformed worship in the twenty-first century. Careful readers will see that the rubrics (red print) in each section provide multiple options, encourage creativity, invite spontaneity, and rely on the leading of the Spirit in all things. The word “may”—emblematic of the freedom and flexibility in these rubrics—is found nearly one hundred times in fifty pages!

The Service for the Lord's Day

The Service for the Lord's Day provided in *Glory to God* follows the Presbyterian *Book of Common*

Worship in presenting a fourfold pattern for Sunday worship: gathering, Word, Eucharist, and sending. Those who are familiar with the fivefold order of worship in the 1989 PC(USA) Directory for Worship may wonder: What about “Responding to the Word?” The Service for the Lord's Day in *Glory to God* reflects the conviction that *everything* in Christian faith, life, and worship is a response to God's gracious initiative in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Accordingly, *everything* that happens in Sunday worship—from beginning to end—is a response to the Word who gathers, teaches, nourishes, and sends us. The Affirmation of Faith and Prayers of the People (found under “Responding” in the DFW) are placed in the Word section of the liturgy in *Glory to God* (as in the BCW); similarly, the element of offering (found under “Responding” in the DFW) becomes the first part of the liturgy for the Eucharist or Lord's Supper (as in the BCW).

Furthermore, the Service for the Lord's Day in *Glory to God* assumes that Word and Eucharist are integrally related—that is, that the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments belong together in the church's worship on the Lord's Day. This is a deeply Reformed conviction, one that can be traced to John Calvin's understanding of the church and desire for its worship. It is a pattern of worship that comes to us from the earliest Christian communities, as the second-century testimony of Justin Martyr demonstrates. Most importantly, it is rooted in the biblical account of Jesus' own interpretation of Scripture and breaking of bread on the day he rose from the dead (Luke 24).

Gathering

Through this first movement in the Service for the Lord's Day we enact our identity—as the people of God, redeemed by Jesus Christ, united in the Spirit as members of Christ's body. All the elements in the liturgy for gathering serve this end: we hear sentences of Scripture as the voice of the

Word of God who calls us to worship; we greet one another in Jesus' name; we sing praise to the glory of God, the giver of our life; we call on the power of God's Word and Spirit as we meet for worship; we confess our unworthiness to enter God's presence but give thanks for the grace of Jesus Christ, in whose name we are forgiven.

The rubrics suggest leading the confession and pardon from the baptismal font, pouring water as the Call to Confession is spoken and lifting water at the Declaration of Forgiveness. These actions—new to the Service for the Lord's Day in *Glory to God*—reflect a decade of work toward sacramental renewal in the PC(USA) and a deeper emphasis on the meaning and mystery of our baptism. The intent is to offer a regular opportunity to remember one's baptism—a sign of the gift of Christ's grace and the calling to walk in newness of life to the glory of God.

The music ("Lord, Have Mercy," "Glory to God") provided here and elsewhere in the Service for the Lord's Day is from a setting by the popular and prolific Presbyterian composer Hal Hopson. By having music embedded in the liturgy, these resources remind worship planners of the power of music to engage the congregation as full participants in prayer and praise. This setting was chosen for its simplicity, strength, and "singability"; many other service music settings are provided in "The Church at Worship" section of *Glory to God*.

Word

In the service of the Word we not only hear the ancient words of Scripture but listen for the voice of Jesus Christ—the living Word—who continues to speak to the church, to the world, and in our daily lives. Because we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ through the Word read and proclaimed, we begin with a Prayer for Illumination. The eucharistic prayer (or Great Thanksgiving) and Thanksgiving Over the Water in baptism contain similar prayers for the pres-

ence of Christ in the power of the Spirit. Next there are readings from Scripture—ordinarily from the Old and New Testaments as a witness to the full measure of God's revelation. The liturgy in *Glory to God* offers guidelines on how the readings of the Revised Common Lectionary might be used most effectively in worship; scriptural and lectionary indexes in the back of the hymnal will help worship planners to match hymns with these and other Scriptures. As in the *BCW*, there is the option of special responses to frame the reading of the Gospel; these words do not seek to elevate one reading over others but to lift up the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word to whom the Scriptures bear witness. Through the sermon that follows, the teaching elder (or pastor) seeks to open God's Word to the congregation, inviting them to open their lives to God and be transformed.

After the Scriptures and sermon, other actions flow from the reading and proclamation of the Word: an Invitation to Discipleship, a song of commitment or praise, an Affirmation of Faith, the Sacrament of Baptism (see below) or another pastoral rite of the church, the Prayers of the People, and the sharing of Christ's peace, if not included earlier in the service. The rubrics note that it is especially appropriate for a ruling elder or deacon to lead the Prayers of the People, either from the Lord's Table or from the midst of the congregation. This suggestion seeks to encourage greater engagement on the part of other ordered ministries (besides pastors) in the nurture of the congregation, the discipline of prayer, the ministry of pastoral care, and the mission of the church in the world.

Eucharist

Eucharist means "thanksgiving." It comes from the Greek verb *eucharisteo* that frequently appears when Jesus breaks bread with his disciples—both with the loaves and fish beside the sea and at the Passover meal before his death. Paul uses the

same word when he recounts the institution of the Lord's Supper in his first letter to the church at Corinth. The word "Eucharist" helps to convey the essential nature of this sacramental meal as a joyful feast of gratitude for God's grace in Jesus Christ. It may be used alongside other terms for the sacrament: Lord's Supper, emphasizing the institution of the meal by the Lord Jesus Christ, and Communion, suggesting the common bond of the Spirit that unites those who share this feast.

Ruling elders or deacons may lead the prayer of dedication, reflecting their respective roles as stewards of the community's gifts and leaders in the church's service to the poor.

The structure of the eucharistic liturgy is shaped by the Gospel stories of Jesus' meals—in the feeding of the multitude, on the eve of his death, and on the day of his resurrection. Each of these accounts reveals another fourfold pattern in the action of Jesus: taking, blessing, breaking, and giving. The church has "translated" these Greek verbs into elements of the eucharistic liturgy: offering gifts, giving thanks, breaking bread, and distributing it among the people.

The eucharistic liturgy in *Glory to God* thus begins with offering—not only the presentation of financial gifts but the preparation of the table and the collection of food for the hungry, as a rubric indicates. Ruling elders or deacons may lead the prayer of dedication, reflecting their respective roles as stewards of the community's gifts and leaders in the church's service to the poor. The invitation to the table provided in *Glory to God*

frames the movement from Word and Eucharist with a reference to the Emmaus story of Luke 24 (cited above).

With a few exceptions, the great thanksgiving in *Glory to God* is "all rubrics"—encouraging presiders to learn the ancient form of the liturgy while inviting seasonal variation, creative development, and extemporaneous prayer. The exceptions are worth noting. First, the words of institution are provided in the midst of the eucharistic prayer (one of three options in the DFW). This placement keeps the narrative of Jesus' meal "on the night before he died" at the *center* of the rite; at the same time, it allows for other words from Scripture (see below) at the breaking of the bread, setting the stage for a joyful feast with the *risen* Lord. Second, the prayer for the Holy Spirit is "spelled out," both because of its significance in Reformed sacramental theology (highlighting the role of the Spirit in the efficacy of the Sacrament)

and because of its importance in ecumenical dialogue. Third, a Trinitarian doxology concludes the prayer, recapitulating the Trinitarian structure of the whole great thanksgiving. As noted above, embedded musical responses point to the role of music in enhancing congregational participation in the prayer.

After the Great Thanksgiving, the contemporary, ecumenical version of the Lord's Prayer is provided. This choice reflects the Reformed value of worship in the common language of the people (versus a form of English that hasn't been spoken for several hundred years). The breaking of the bread follows, with suggested words from John 6:35 and 15:5; evocative and easily memorized, these sentences of Scripture will help set the tone for a resurrection meal. Suggestions of congregational songs from *Glory to God* are offered for singing during the

Communion of the People—another effective way to enhance the celebration of the sacrament. Following the Prayer after Communion, words are provided to accompany the extended service of communion, in which deacons or ruling elders take the message of the gospel, the bread, and the cup to homebound or hospitalized members immediately after worship. This is another new development in *Glory to God*, encouraging other ordered ministers to exercise their spiritual gifts in pastoral care.

Sending

In the rite of sending, the church is commissioned for participation in God’s mission. The service of God in public worship prepares the way for the service of God in public life. The Greek noun *leitourgia* (meaning “work of the people”), from which we get the word “liturgy,” conveys this double sense of public worship and public work or witness. The Hebrew verb *’avad*, used repeatedly in Exodus, also captures this dual meaning: “Let my people go, so that they may worship me” (Exod. 9:1).

A rubric at the beginning of the sending indicates that this is a good place for “brief announcements related to the church’s mission.” Placing such announcements here will help to show how the church’s service in the world flows from the service of worship. The hymn, psalm, or song that follows should convey the church’s commitment to Christ’s mission, as a grateful response to God’s grace. Notice that the blessing precedes the charge in this order of worship (another new development in *Glory to God*). This order is a “missional” move; it reflects the understanding that we are blessed in order to go forth and be a blessing in the world (Gen. 12:2). And notice that the pastor doesn’t necessarily get the last word—the rubrics suggest that a deacon or ruling elder may speak the charge as an expression of their leadership in the congregation’s service and common life.

Baptism and Reaffirmation

Glory to God includes liturgies for the Sacrament of Baptism and the Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant. The latter is especially for “persons who were baptized as infants and nurtured in the church, and who now are making a public profession of faith” (i.e., confirmation). In the early church, baptism, confirmation, and first communion were one and the same event. The rise of infant baptism and the requirement that a bishop be present to preside at confirmation (difficult in rural areas) led to the fragmentation of Christian initiation into three separate events. The liturgy in *Glory to God* (following the BCW) seeks to restore a sense of the unity of Christian initiation by presenting confirmation as a reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant.

The Sacrament of Baptism

The liturgy for Baptism begins with the Great Commission: to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the triune God and teaching them to obey Jesus’ commandments (Matt. 28:19–20). Not only is this statement the biblical “mandate” for baptism; it also shows us how the sacrament is connected with the church’s mission. Responsive sentences of Scripture follow, expressing the theme of Christian unity in Baptism; these may be led by an ecumenical representative or a member of the congregation. A ruling elder presents the candidate(s) for Baptism, demonstrating the session’s role in authorizing the sacrament and providing for the formation of the people of God. After inquiring about the candidate’s (or parents’) intent, the pastor addresses sponsors (if applicable) and the congregation, seeking their commitment in the ongoing support and nurture of the one(s) being baptized.

The Profession of Faith consists of two parts—first turning *away* from sin (the renunciation of evil), then turning *toward* God in Christ (the affirmation of faith). In the early church, this

movement in the liturgy sometimes involved literal turning—first facing the western darkness (where the sun sets), then facing the eastern light (where the sun rises). The Apostles' Creed, traditionally associated with Baptism, is used as the Affirmation of Faith; it may be spoken in unison or led in a question-and-answer format (“Do you believe in God?”). The contemporary, ecumenical version of the creed is provided here, as a witness to our baptism into the universal church.

As with the eucharistic prayer in the Service for the Lord's Day, a full text for the thanksgiving over the water is not provided; rather, rubrics explain the structure of the prayer and outline essential elements—giving thanks for God's faithfulness in salvation history, remembering Jesus' baptism, and praying for the power of the Holy Spirit—ending with praise to the triune God.

Rubrics indicate that the act of baptism may involve immersion or pouring water on the candidate's head; in any case, the application of water should be visible and generous enough to convey the extravagant grace of God. The use of Christian (first) names in baptism demonstrates the equality and kinship of the baptized—as children of God we are “on a first-name basis” in the body of Christ; symbols of status and other allegiances dissolve in the water of the font. The use of the triune name of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—shows that we are baptized into the life of the one who created, redeemed, and sustains us. After the baptism, the laying on of hands signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit, by whom we are claimed as children of God and anointed for ministry in Christ's name. Anointing with oil may follow—another sign of the gift of the Spirit.

Next, those who have been baptized are welcomed into the life and fellowship of the church. It is especially appropriate for a ruling elder or ecumenical representative to issue this welcome. Candles, lighted from the church's paschal candle, may be given as a sign of the light of Christ. The sharing of Christ's peace reflects reconcilia-

tion and new relationship in the community of faith. The Service for the Lord's Day then continues with the Prayers of the People, including special petitions for those who have been baptized. The ancient pattern of Christian initiation is most fully expressed when the Eucharist can follow Baptism, with those who are baptized coming first to the table. If the congregation does not celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday, Baptisms should be scheduled on the first Sunday of the month (or another Sunday when the feast is kept).

Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant

The structure of the liturgy for the reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant is, appropriately, parallel to that of the Sacrament of Baptism. A ruling elder presents the candidates for reaffirmation of baptism, and the pastor summarizes the journey of faith that has brought them to this place. A member of the congregation or ecumenical representative speaks sentences of Scripture, acknowledging the candidates' membership in the household of God. The renunciation of evil and affirmation of faith follow, again using the Apostles' Creed traditionally connected with Baptism. In this case, the prayer over the water acknowledges that the candidate has been previously baptized, and calls for the renewal and continuation of that covenant. Since this liturgy assumes that Baptism has already taken place, the decisive elements of water and the triune name of God are not present; the laying on of hands and anointing with oil, however, are repeated. A ruling elder welcomes those who have reaffirmed the baptismal covenant into full and mature participation in the mission and ministry of the church, and the peace of Christ is shared.

Daily Prayer

Glory to God provides four services for Daily Prayer: Morning, Midday, Evening, and Close of Day. The rhythm of Daily Prayer represented here is one that spans millennia, with ties to the worship of ancient

Israel, the habits of Jesus, the teaching of the apostles, and the daily office of Christian monasticism. In contemporary practice, this pattern of devotion, study, and intercession continues to offer shape and substance for spiritual life—whether in personal or family settings, small-group gatherings, conferences, retreats, or councils of the church.

Although the four services differ somewhat in their content and structure, the “basic ingredients” are always the same: psalms (ideally sung), Scripture readings, and prayer. Each service begins with sentences of Scripture and ends with a dismissal and sign of peace. Psalms and Scripture readings may be drawn from a lectionary, such as the two-year daily lectionary of the *BCW* or the Revised Common Lectionary daily readings. A nonbiblical reading, such as an excerpt from the *Book of Confessions*, may also be read. Prayers of thanksgiving are offered for the many gifts of God we experience each day; prayers of intercession are spoken for the church, world, community, and personal concerns. The thanksgivings and intercessions end with a concluding collect and the Lord’s Prayer.

A distinctive feature of the service for Evening Prayer is the (optional) singing of the *Phos Hilaron*, an ancient hymn to Christ the light, and a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of light; the lighting of candles and/or the burning of incense (with the singing of Psalm 141) may be included. The liturgy for prayer at the close of day includes the element of confession—an opportunity to examine the struggles and failings of the day and ask for God’s grace. Certain canticles—sung following the reading of Scripture—are associated with services of Daily Prayer: the Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:68–79) at Morning Prayer, the Song of Mary (Luke 1:46–55) at Evening Prayer, and the Song of Simeon (Luke 2:29–32) at the Close of Day.

Other Texts for Worship

Following the liturgies for daily prayer, *Glory to God* includes a set of “other texts for worship.”

These texts are included because of their theological and historical significance, as well as their frequent use in worship. They are provided in three translations—English, Korean, and Spanish—reflecting the primary languages spoken in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The first of these texts is the Nicene Creed. Drafted in the fourth century by a council convened by the emperor Constantine, the Nicene Creed is one of the earliest Christian affirmations of faith. It is also the most ecumenical—shared by Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant Christians around the world. Because of its ancient and ecumenical character, the Nicene Creed is traditionally spoken when the church celebrates the Eucharist. Note that only one version of the Nicene Creed is provided in *Glory to God*, since the PC(USA) has adopted the contemporary, common version as its official translation of the creed.

The next three texts—the Apostles’ Creed, Lord’s Prayer, and the Law of God—have been the bedrock of Christian formation in the Western church for at least sixteen centuries. Sermons from early church leaders indicate that new believers were expected to study and memorize these three texts before they could be received as members of Christ’s body through Baptism. The Heidelberg and Westminster Catechisms are constructed as expositions of the creed, prayer, and commandments. Since the contemporary, ecumenical versions of the Apostles’ Creed and Lord’s Prayer were provided earlier, this section includes the more familiar, archaic texts. A listing of the Ten Commandments (based on Exodus 20) is provided, along with Jesus’ summary of the law in Matthew 22 (citing Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18).

The final piece in this collection of “other texts” is the Brief Statement of Faith of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This new creedal statement was composed to commemorate the 1983 reunion of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the Presbyterian Church in

the United States. The publication of *Glory to God* coincides with the thirtieth anniversary of that event. Major sections of the Brief Statement are numbered in order to facilitate the use of excerpts as Affirmations of Faith.

Glory to God

The liturgical texts found in the first fifty pages of *Glory to God* are just a beginning—they provide a firm foundation for “traditional, contemporary, ecumenical, and Reformed” worship, but they will need to be supplemented with materials for the seasons and festivals of the Christian

year, liturgies for marriage and funerals, ordinations and installations, services of wholeness and healing, and so on. Fortunately, we have strong guidance and excellent resources for such occasions in the DFW and the BCW. Still, we hope and pray that these offerings will edify the church and enliven its worship as, together, we give glory to God.

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