



Worship Guide

Welcome to Mission Hills United Church of Christ, a traditional church with a progressive theology offering God's extravagant welcome to everyone who enters our doors. We hope you feel warmly received here. We also want you to feel comfortable in worship. To help in that regard we provide you with this worship guide that may help you understand what we do in worship. Please feel free to ask those sitting near you for additional guidance. Welcome today and do come back often. Our hope is that you feel right at home in this special place.

PRELUDE: This is a musical piece, typically played by the organist and offers a time of reflection for those desiring that or a time to chat and meet those near you in the pew.

COMMUNITY BUILDING – Announcements and Prayer Requests: The announcements are offered at this time providing information on our church community life, as well as information regarding those who have requested prayer. There is always time allowed for attendees to offer a prayer request that the pastor will include later in the service and throughout the week. You may also request specific prayers by filling out the request card in the pew rack. Your prayer will be offered each day by our prayer partners.

THE CHIMES: Mark a transition between “announcement time” and formal worship.

THE ILLUMINATION: The acolyte enters the sanctuary and lights the candles on the communion table. By this action we bring the light of Christ into the service indicating our openness to sacred presence and illumination.

THE INTROIT: Literally meaning *entrance* or *beginning* it is a brief musical verse that begins formal worship.

THE CALL TO WORSHIP: Is typically a responsive expression, led by the liturgist (a lay person who assists the pastor in leading the worship service) that reminds people we are here to worship God in all we do together.

HYMNS: These are songs interspersed throughout the worship service that offer praise, reflection, devotion, and make statements about our understanding of God, humanity, and discipleship. They are musical expressions sung in unison and are selected to complement the theme of the day.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION: In this prayer we formally call upon God to be with us in our corporate worship. It is both a reminder that God is here and a request that we be attentive to God's presence among us.

CONFESSION: The pastor formally calls us to confess our sins (individual and corporate) through the confession. This is a time to recognize that we make mistakes knowingly and unknowingly, individually and collectively. We acknowledge those mistakes and ask God to forgive.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS: Through these words the pastor reminds us that God always stands ready to forgive. There is nothing that can separate us from God's love. We are loved as the children of God and rejoice in that assurance.

GLORIA - PEACE: This is a response of gratitude in song to God's graciousness. You will be invited to "pass the peace" to those near you. Simply shake hands with others (or offer a hug) and say, "The peace of God be with you," to which you will likely hear the response, "And also with you." This ancient Christian greeting is shared among persons in worship as a sign of community and in celebration of the peace we seek.

ANTHEM: A musical offering given by the choir. It is an expression of praise in response to the assurance of forgiveness. On most Sundays a solo is offered as well.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE: This is a time specifically devoted to the children. Children come forward for their message from the pastor. The children's message typically reflects the theme of the day, but on an age-appropriate level. Parents may feel free to accompany children until they are ready to come up front on their own. Following the message children leave the service for their own Sunday school.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: There are typically two readings from the Bible. One reading is usually from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) the other from the New Testament. In this church we stand for the reading of the Gospel out of respect for the life and words of Jesus.

PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE – LORD'S PRAYER (Debts): This prayer, offered by the pastor, is an extemporaneous prayer reflecting the theme of the day, prayer requests offered earlier, and offers hope for God's intervention in contemporary situations. The prayer is concluded with the Lord's Prayer sometimes referred to as the "Our Father":

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

SERMON: Offered by the pastor and typically based on the scriptures read in the service. The sermon attempts to bridge the gap between the message of the ancient texts in light of contemporary scholarship and issues of our day.

OFFERING: In responding to God's word, we offer our tithes and offerings for the work of the church locally and beyond. The pastor offers a prayer of dedication for the offerings received following the sung congregational response.

COMMUNION: On the first Sunday of every month (and designated holy days) communion is offered. In this service (contained within the regular worship service) we offer bread and cup following Jesus' commands to "Do this in remembrance of me."

BENEDICTION: Literally means "good word" and is offered following the closing hymn. The pastor typically invites those present to join hands in an expression of community as the commission is received and the blessing or benediction is offered. It is a sending forth into the week as "the worship ends and the real service begins."

POSTLUDE: A musical offering played at the conclusion of the service. Many folks like to be seated to listen to the postlude as a means of transition and in preparation for continuing the journey.

We hope this guide is helpful to you particularly if you are new to Christian worship or worship in the United Church of Christ. We take seriously the idea that, "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here." May your worship experience with us be deeply spiritual, truly inspirational, and a means of realizing the love of God in your life.

If you have questions about worship or about Mission Hills United Church of Christ, please speak with the pastor or one of the ushers. We are honored by your presence and hope you will return often.

Please join us for coffee and fellowship following today's worship. We'd love to meet you. Again, welcome!



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