

Why Our Worship Follows This Pattern

Understanding the Blue Headings in Our Liturgy

WE GATHER

Worship begins with God calling us together.
We enter into a holy rhythm of welcome, song, prayer, and confession.
This is the moment when we shift from the noise of the week into God's presence.

WE HEAR THE WORD

We pray for illumination and listen to Scripture.
Through the reading, preaching, and the Spirit's movement,
God speaks hope, challenge, and grace into our lives.

WE RESPOND

Hearing the Word changes us.
We respond with our gifts, our prayers, our confessions, our joys and concerns,
and with the sacred meal of communion.
Worship is not passive—it is participatory.

WE GO FORTH

Worship sends us back into the world as people of faith.
We receive a blessing and go forth to live out Christ's love
in our daily lives, our community, and our world.

This fourfold pattern is followed by Christians around the world and reminds us
that worship is not entertainment,
but a sacred journey:

God gathers us, speaks to us, transforms us, and sends us out.

Why These Prayers? – A Guide for Advent Worship

Why These Moments Matter in Worship

Call to Confession

An invitation to honesty.

We are reminded that we can bring our real selves before God — with all our failures, fears, and hopes — trusting in God's compassion.

Prayer of Confession

A prayer we speak together.

We acknowledge where we fall short in love, justice, and faithfulness.

Confession does not bring shame; it opens the way for grace.

Words of Forgiveness (Assurance of Pardon)

A declaration of God's mercy.

We hear the good news that in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, restored, and made new. Forgiveness is a gift we receive, not something we earn.

Prayer for Illumination

A prayer for understanding.

Before Scripture is read and preached, we ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts and minds. We trust that God still speaks through the Word today.

These moments guide us into worship with **honesty, grace, and openness**, helping us listen for God's presence in our midst.

Why We Say “in body or in spirit”

(Inclusive Worship Language)

In worship we say, “**Please stand in body or in spirit,**” because Christian worship is embodied— yet not every body moves the same way, and **every body bears God’s image.**

This phrase honors:

- children, elders, and all stages of life
- those with chronic pain, mobility challenges, or fatigue
- those who are neurodivergent or sensitive to sensory input
- those recovering from injury or surgery
- those carrying grief, trauma, or emotional heaviness
- the full dignity of every person present

This reflects a core belief:

Participation in worship is never measured by posture, but by the posture of the heart.

Standing in body is faithful. Standing in spirit is faithful.
Remaining seated is faithful.

Why We *Don’t* Say “if you are able”

The phrase “*if you are able*” can unintentionally suggest that standing is the *preferred or more faithful* posture, and that those who remain seated do so because they “cannot.”

This language can separate people into categories—“able” and “not able”—rather than honoring the many ways bodies show up in worship.

By saying “**in body or in spirit,**” we offer an invitation rather than a condition.
We affirm that:

- all forms of participation are equal,
- ability is not a measure of devotion, and
- every body is welcomed exactly as it is.

**This language is a practice of hospitality—
a way of saying:**

“You belong here as you are.

Your presence is a gift.

Your body is honored in this space.”