

REFERENCES

Assisting Ministers and Readers: A Worship Handbook. Gerald Spice, Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, MN. 2001.

MANUAL ON THE LITURGY: LUTHERAN BOOK OF WORSHIP. PHILIP H. PFATEICHER AND CARLOS R. MESSERELI. AUGSBURG PUBLISHING HOUSE, MINNEAPOLIS, MN. 1979.

Introduction.

It is clear from the scriptures that worship in the early Christian church was led by members of the congregations. Certainly, there were leaders of the church who regularly presided over worship, but others assisted. The same is true today in our Lutheran worship.

The Lutheran service is liturgical, meaning it follows a set pattern or format. But the word liturgy means not only an order of worship; it also means, “the work of the people.” The people of the congregation, as well as the pastor, serve to lead the worship service.

Assisting Minister.

At Grace Lutheran Church, our Pastor most often serves as presiding minister, and another, usually non-ordained or lay, member of the congregation serves as assisting minister. While the assisting minister can be called upon to assist the Pastor in many ways, he or she has several routinely assigned responsibilities in our worship service.

Liturgical Responsibilities.

Preparation

Prayerful contemplation of the worship service and his or her duties is always appropriate for the assisting minister. If asked, the church secretary can make the readings and prayers available in advance to the assisting minister for practice. The assisting minister should arrive early enough to review the readings before the service. The church secretary puts the assisting minister's service binder and a pronunciation guide in the assisting minister's tray in the church office. The assisting minister should also check to be sure the microphone on the lectern is turned on. If there is an assigned acolyte and/or crucifer, the assisting minister may help them to robe and prepare. Ask the Pastor if there are any unusual changes to the order of worship for the day. Participate with the Pastor and a church council member in a pre-worship prayer in the Pastor's office.

Procession

The assisting minister processes with the acolyte and the Pastor. The acolyte leads, and the Pastor and assisting minister follow, with the assisting minister to the Pastor's right. The Pastor and assisting minister pause while the acolyte lights the candles on the altar, and then they take their seats. The assisting minister may need to help if the acolyte has trouble lighting the candles.

Liturgical Responsibilities (continued).

Readings

After the Children's Sermon, the assisting minister moves to the lectern for the readings. Regular Sunday worship readings include two lessons, with a Psalm in between. The readings begin with a brief introduction, such as, "The first reading is from the 2nd Chapter of Genesis." The church secretary includes the appropriate introductions for the readings in the assisting minister's service binder. The assisting minister should read the lessons clearly and expressively, but without dramatization. The assisting minister concludes the lessons with, "The word of the Lord." To which the congregation responds, "Thanks be to God." The Psalm is usually read or sung responsively, with the assisting minister reading or the cantor/choir canting a verse and the congregation reading or singing the next verse in response. The assisting minister introduces the Psalm, saying, "The Psalm for today is Psalm __, which is found on page __ of your bulletin. We will read/sing the Psalm responsively." Again, the church secretary will include the appropriate introduction in the assisting minister's binder. After the congregation's response at the end of the 2nd Lesson, the assisting minister asks the congregation to stand for the reading of the Gospel. Again, that request will be printed in the assistant minister's binder. The assisting minister returns and stands at his or her seat for the Gospel.

Prayers

After the Creed the assisting minister returns to the lectern to lead the prayers. The Pastor asks the congregation to join in the prayers, and then the assisting minister leads them. The assisting minister reads each petition, then waits for the congregation's response before going on to the next. The Pastor concludes the prayers.

Liturgical Responsibilities (continued).

Offering

After the sharing of the peace, the service continues with the offering. If there is an acolyte, he or she takes the offering plates from the table and moves with them to wait for the ushers near the baptismal font. The assisting minister may have to remind the acolyte of this task, and if there is no acolyte the assisting minister gets the plates for the ushers. The ushers collect the offering, and the acolyte moves behind them to collect the registration forms. As the ushers and acolyte collect the offering, the assisting minister moves near the baptismal font to receive the offering plates from the ushers and acolyte; then he or she returns them to their table behind the altar.

Communion

The assisting minister, along with the acolyte and another member of the congregation, assist the Pastor with distribution of communion. This assisting group communes first at the altar, then moves in front of the altar to serve the congregation. The assisting minister assists the Pastor in ensuring servers are in their proper places, and the assisting minister is responsible for distribution of the wine. At Grace we use a pouring chalice, which allows for the use of individual cups, while maintaining the character of the common cup. Pre-filled cups in the center of each tray contain grape juice for communicants who prefer a non-alcoholic communion. As each communicant stops in front of the assisting minister, he or she pours wine into the empty cups and says to each communicant, “The blood of Christ shed for you.” The assisting minister uses a purificator (cloth) under the pouring spout of the chalice to catch falling drops of wine, and he or she is careful not to overfill the cups. After the congregation has received communion, the assisting minister gives the elements to the Pastor, using the words, “The body of Christ given for you,” and “The blood of Christ shed for you.” The assisting minister straightens the trays on their table, then returns to his or her seat.

Liturgical Responsibilities (continued).

Recession

The assisting minister recesses to the back of the sanctuary with the Pastor and acolyte during the closing hymn.

Dismissal

After the closing hymn, the assisting minister dismisses the congregation with the dismissal printed in the bulletin—usually something like, “Go in Peace. Serve the Lord.”

Other responsibilities

During baptisms or other special parts of the worship service, the assisting minister may have other tasks to perform. Read through the bulletin before the service to identify other duties, and ask Pastor or a worship and music council member if uncertain of what needs to be done and how.

Assist the Pastor as requested, and the acolyte/crucifer as needed.