



Sunday Liturgy at Renewal Main Line

Our Sunday worship services follow a pattern of worship, also known as our liturgy, in a way that embeds the gospel. Just as an architect must think of the structure of the building to display its aesthetic qualities, we are also intentional in the structure of our Sunday services to exemplify the beauty of Jesus Christ proclaimed through the gospel. As Bryan Chapell puts it, “liturgy tells a story. We tell the gospel by the way we worship... The medium is the message because the message shapes the medium.”¹ Because we believe in the importance of these foundational gospel truths, we ensure that this gospel story is consistently told every week.

The liturgy is not solely identified with the sermon but is inclusive of praise, prayer, confession, and commitments made during the whole of Sunday worship. It begins with the Call to Worship and continues until the Benediction. It is a common misconception for us to think that the “main” part of Sunday worship lies in the preacher’s sermon. This is evident when we consider if we “got anything out of the message” without much consideration to the gospel as presented in the rest of the liturgy. This kind of mindset also encourages a self-centered view of Sunday worship where the perceived goal is for *us to benefit*. While we most certainly do benefit from encountering God on Sundays, it is not our primary motivation for attending service; rather, we are motivated to bring God the worship and honor that *he is due*. And in turn, we ourselves are changed from this holy encounter.

Throughout the liturgy, we encourage the participation of all who are in the congregation. This participation reflects our belief that the priesthood is in *all believers* by virtue of our faith in Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:9). Therefore, we encourage the corporate reading of various elements of the liturgy to reflect the wonderful truth that we all are participants in conducting the worship service. We also select our praise songs to be singable and simple enough for the whole congregation to join.

*The gospel story in Renewal’s liturgy is presented in three segments: (1) **recognition**, (2) **repentance**, and (3) **renewal**. This broadly reflects the redemptive-historical narrative of God calling his people to worship him (recognition), bringing a sinful people to repentance in the presence of a holy God (repentance), and the renewal of life that takes place through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (renewal).*

We hope that you can join us and appreciate the beauty of this gospel story with us on Sundays. Below are short explanations of all the elements of our services. If you have children, we strongly encourage you to explain these elements to your children so that they too, can heed this gospel presentation and appreciate its beauty!

¹ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice*, 2009.

Recognition

The liturgy begins with adoration and praise to the greatness of our God. Instead of reflecting on ourselves, we initially set our minds and hearts on God and allow our encounter with him to shape how we are to view ourselves and in turn, our need for him through the gospel. It is the difference of a God-centered view of worship vs. a man-centered view of worship.

***Call to Worship²** - All of us enter the sanctuary with the weight of what we experienced throughout the week along with countless distractions. The Call to Worship invites us to turn our attention to God and reflect upon his qualities. Guided by Scripture—typically a Psalm, we are reminded that God calls *us* to worship and we respond in declaring how great he is.

***Prayer of Adoration** - The minister leads us in an opening prayer that responds appropriately to the Scripture passage that was previously read. The emphasis of this prayer remains on the qualities of God, which in turn leads us to sing of his attributes in the Songs of Praise.

***Songs of Praise** - The praise team leads us in 2 or 3 songs that encourage the participation of the congregation. Our songs are selected to make sure that they are theologically sound and able to be sung by people from all backgrounds and ages. Occasionally, traditional hymns are sung that complement certain themes of the liturgy.

Repentance

After we come to recognize who God is in his holiness, repentance is the “reflex response of divine encounter” which is sure to happen when there is a real apprehension of God.³ We ask the Holy Spirit to convince, persuade, and convict us of our sins and in turn, we allow the truths of Scripture to guide our prayers both corporately and personally.

***Corporate Confession** - Scripture passages and its reflected truths in the Westminster Standards are read by the minister to bring us to an awareness of our sins as God’s people. In turn, we corporately read a Prayer of Confession asking for God’s forgiveness.

***Personal Confession** - Time is given for individuals to personally confess their sins as the Holy Spirit leads. During this time, individuals confess sins that have been committed this week and ask for God’s help in fighting sin and striving after his holiness.

***Assurance of Gospel Pardon** - A passage of Scripture is read that declares our Assurance of Gospel Pardon as promised through our repentance from our sins and trust in Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. The source of this assurance lies not in the minister; nor does it lie in anything in of ourselves but rather in the gospel accomplished and applied to us by the Holy Spirit.

***Affirmation of Faith** - After receiving assurance, we confidently affirm what we believe by reciting historical creeds that contain the basic truths of the Christian faith as reflected from Scripture (e.g., the Apostle’s Creed). Often times we will recite the Lord’s Prayer as modeled for us by Jesus himself (Matt. 6:9-15).

² Elements of the liturgy marked with an asterisks (*) require the congregation to stand.

³ Chapell, 2002.

***Song of Confession** - In light of our repentance, we sing a Song of Confession that particularly highlights the atonement of sin that was accomplishment for us through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Renewal

The gospel is not simply about forgiveness of our sins but is just as importantly about our transformation into the likeness of our Savior, Jesus Christ. During this time, we allow the seeds of the gospel to take fruit in our lives and in turn, offer up ourselves as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1) as we go back to our homes, workplaces, and schools.

***Extending Greeting & Announcements** - One of the most tangible ways gospel transformation takes place is through the community of believers who engage in relationship with one another. This time of greeting and events outside of regular Sunday services provide opportunities for everyone to continue meeting to serve one another and those who outside of our church (Heb. 10:25).

Offering - In response to what God has done for us, we offer our tithes as ushers pass the offering plate throughout the congregation. Visitors are not expected to give offering although they are welcome to if it moves them. Those who regularly give through E-Giving are still encouraged to see this time of prayer and meditation for God to use these offerings for the advancement of his church.

Intercessory Prayer - The minister leads the church in corporate prayer for the following: (1) thanksgiving for all that God has provided for us spiritually, emotionally, and financially; (2) intercession for those outside of our church in need of prayer (e.g., recent events, world missions); (3) the spiritual discipleship of our younger children as they are dismissed to their Sunday school lessons.

Scripture Reading - The minister reads the portion of Scripture that will be preached during the sermon. We believe in the power of God's Word in that it will not return to God empty but accomplish his purposes (Isa. 55:11).

Sermon - The preacher will spend 30 - 45 minutes expounding the passage and drawing out implications and applications. Notes can be taken on the back of your bulletins. Our Children's Ministry, our Community Groups, and our Youth Bible studies will follow the series of passages that are preached during the sermon so that the whole church are studying the same portion of Scripture.

***Song of Response** - In light of the sermon that was preached, the congregation spends a few minutes in personal prayer to respond. Afterwards, the minister prays and everyone stands to sing a Song of Response that is associated with the sermon.

***Benediction** - Worship does not end when we leave service but is continued as we return to our homes, schools, and workplaces. The benediction is not only a blessing, but a charge in sending the church into their respective places to shine the light of Christ.