

Liturgy of the
Divine Services in
the New Apostolic
Church

New Apostolic Church





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The divine service

*But the Lord is in His holy temple.
Let all the earth keep silence before Him.
Habakkuk 2: 20*

In our divine services the main elements are word and ministrations. Our divine services, their sequence, form and content, have their basis in the activities of the Triune God upon us. The individual elements of a divine service – for example proclamation of the word, bestowal of sacraments, blessing – are not arbitrary but are necessary because we require them for our salvation.

God is the basis of the acts in the services. To allow God's presence and holiness to be accessible in the divine service is a task associated with the service at the altar. The contributing ministers are vessels in God's hand.

The liturgy specifies the defined structure in which all activities in the divine services are carried out uniformly and in a dignified manner. The repeated components in the sequence of a divine service are responsible for specifically indicating to mankind that God permanently cares for them. The liturgy also provides the minister commissioned to hold the divine service with surety in his actions. Ultimately all persons attending divine services should be able to recognise God's reliability through it, and feel sheltered in His unchangeable faithfulness.

The sermon

The word of God is audible in the sermon which wishes to make known God's will. The sermon is a divine word through the Holy Spirit which contains and imparts life. This means that ministers must sanctify and prepare themselves conscientiously for the sermon.

The sacraments

The divine word from which all speech of God comes is Jesus Christ, the eternal word through which all things were made (*cf. John 1: 1-3*). The sacraments are also founded in Him: Holy Baptism, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion. In these, mankind experiences God's comprehensive act of salvation. In the sacrament of Holy Communion, this divine word which became flesh in Jesus can be experienced particularly distinctly.

The prayers

The prayers which are spoken are a personal exchange with God and an answer to God's practically incomprehensible devotion to mankind. In this manner, man shows that he wishes to have fellowship with Him and receive guidance from Him.

Prayers within the fellowship of a divine service also have a characteristic of confession. Divine services are therefore a fellowship in word and sacrament, and also in confession.

The spiritual hymns

The spiritual hymns sung in a divine service are an expression of fellowship within the assembled congregation. The texts not only bind the congregation together but also to God. Spiritual hymns also provide the divine service with a festive atmosphere through which access to God's activity should be facilitated for each person present.

The benediction

The benediction in the triune name of God at the end of a divine service should accompany the participants in the service into their everyday life. Believers can trust in God's grace, can feel sheltered in His love, and should entrust themselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They are assured of God's protecting presence in their life to enable them to live in accordance with the gospel.

Additional points to be observed

All ministers must always be aware of God's presence in the divine service when carrying out their work. This already begins when they enter the assembled congregation. They approach the altar in quietness and dignity. Everything taking place in a divine service should be carried out with the greatest possible peace and dignity.

Ministers involved in proclaiming the word must additionally be aware that they are standing at God's altar and proclaiming His word! They should therefore pay attention to their way of speaking, their choice of words, and their conduct in the divine service. Clear and understandable speaking is always important at the altar. Not monotonous, not mumbled, but clearly audible and understandable with a lively voice. Avoid speaking too fast.

Visual contact between the minister and the congregation during the sermon generates an atmosphere of openness and personal closeness. Appropriate gestures (body language) should accompany the words and make them more understandable. Cautious mimics (facial expressions) support this.

The congregation stands when praying together. Ministers and the congregation close their eyes during all prayers. Eyes can be kept open during the other liturgical parts (blessing, dispensing of sacraments, consecration of the Holy Communion elements etc.).

Each "Amen" spoken by the officiant is answered by the congregation with "Amen".

Preparing and clearing up the altar

The altar must be prepared early enough before members arrive. The chalices should remain on the altar after the divine service until the members have said their goodbyes. When clearing up the altar, the members should have left the room in which the service takes place.

Closing remarks

The divine service is an anticipated experience of the future fellowship with the Triune God to which we have been called through the rebirth, and is the focal point of the life in the congregation. The liturgy has a compulsory order from the opening hymn up to the closing hymn. Therefore observation of the liturgy must be important for the serving ministers. The divine service order is provided to avoid differences in the structure of the services and thus demonstrate the Church's unity. It should be emphasised again: The liturgical texts are binding, and their wording must not be changed.

The following explanations on the liturgy should deepen your understanding of that which takes place in a divine service.

The liturgy and the liturgical texts

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The parts of the liturgy referred to above apply to a regular "main service". In special cases, "text services" can also be held. These are "main services" without celebration of Holy Communion or further sacramental acts. The "text service" usually comprises the beginning (I), sermon (II) and end (V).

It can be provided for the ministration and soul-care of particular groups of members if it takes place outside the regular times of the main services. For example, services for seniors or wedding services can be carried out as a "text service".

If a priestly ministry is not available, the text service can also be held by Deacons at the time of a regular divine service.

Explanations on the liturgy

Minimum duration of divine service

The divine service should not be less than the minimum duration:

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------------|
| ■ | Sundays and church holidays | 60 minutes |
| ■ | Weekdays | 45 minutes |

More precisely: duration including final piece of music. The maximum duration of a normal service results from the minimum duration + 15 minutes. If there are sacramental acts or bestowal of blessings, the service can be appropriately lengthened.

In the case of festive divine services, an appropriate lengthening is also possible. However, the duration should not exceed 1 hour 45 minutes.

If only one single minister is present for the main service, the minimum time of the divine service can also be shorter.

Before the divine service

The time prior to the divine service should have a preparatory characteristic for our inner being and serve for the personal sanctification of those present.

- Greeting of members
- Time for a personal prayer
- Musical contributions
- Greeting on special occasions
(for example, greeting of bridal couple in sacristy)
- Stillness in the congregation
(approximately 3 minutes before beginning of service)
- Sanctification and prayer of the ministers
(in sacristy / possibly in presence of Deacons)

Opening hymn

The opening hymn has a bonding characteristic and should express the longing for God's word and grace. The officiant chooses the hymn. During the opening hymn the officiant and possibly the other ministers at the altar say a silent prayer. They should then join in the congregation hymn.

Commencement in the triune name of God

The commencement in the triune name of God in a divine service is:

"In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

This is the invocation of God (by specifying the name of God) and the promise of the presence of the Triune God by the minister. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are thus present in the congregation. The officiant should be aware of this holy moment and make sure that his manner of speaking makes the congregation aware that the Triune God is present. This can only be achieved if the officiant is filled by the fear of God and humility.

The commencement in the triune name of God is not part of the opening prayer, but is a proclamation of God's presence! On the other hand, the opening prayer is our addressing of God. Therefore a pause in speaking of about 2-3 seconds is inserted between the triune name of God and the subsequent opening prayer.

Opening prayer

The prayer at the beginning of the divine service is the first spoken word for the congregation. The officiant prays with it, and for it. Everyone should be able to feel that they are incorporated.

The prayer should be concise and dignified. The prayer should not already be a commencement of the sermon or an attempt to explain something to God. The prayer should be spoken loudly and clearly, so that it can be followed without problem. It should last for a maximum of 3-4 minutes.

Contents of the prayer could be:

- Worship and praise of God
- Thanks for preservation, help and previous grace
- Petition for divine peace
- Petition for God's word – as comfort and orientation for all those present, and for understanding of the word
- Intercession for members who cannot be present, and seeking a connection to them
- Petition for a connection to the souls in the beyond
- Petition for a connection to the bearers of blessing
- Petition for sanctification and undisturbed peace in the divine service

If appropriate, significant events (e.g. catastrophes) in the world or country can be referred to.

Reading of Bible text

The officiant should make sure that the Bible text is read with expression and dignity and without haste. An emphasised pronunciation helps direct the congregation's attention to the words of the Holy Scriptures.

The congregation sits down following the reading of the Bible text.

Hymn (choir or congregation hymn)

Following reading of the Bible text, a choir or congregation hymn should be sung. The text of the selected hymn should correspond to the intended direction of the divine service, and thus lead toward the subsequent sermon.

The choir or congregation stand up while singing the hymn.

Reading of passage from the Bible (as specified)

Reading of a passage from the Bible should, for example, lead to a better understanding of a Christian solemnity and make it

clear that the Bible is the basis of our faith and is the proclamation of the gospel. Therefore the Bible is indispensable in a divine service. The reading of a passage from the Bible is not identical to reading of the Bible text.

Reading of a passage from the Bible is uniform with regard to date and passage as specified in the *Divine Service Guide*. It should be from the Bible translation used in the respective District Church. The scope is defined by a complete topic. The reading of a passage from the Bible should be chosen to be not longer than 3 minutes.

The congregation remains seated during reading of a passage from the Bible.

The District Apostle specifies for his working area who is to read passages from the Bible. Only the officiant should read from the altar, otherwise reading of a passage from the Bible is carried out in front of or next to the altar. The officiant remains standing at the altar during reading of the passage, even if he does not read it himself.

Detailed introductory words of the officiant prior to reading of a passage from the Bible are not envisaged. The reading of a passage can be announced by him using the following words: "*We shall now hear a passage from the Bible, today from ...*"

Musical contribution following reading of passage from the Bible (optional)

A musical contribution can be made following reading of a passage from the Bible. The choir stands up when singing, the congregation can remain seated when singing.

Sermon

The focal point of the *Divine Service Guide* should become clear in the sermon. It can be helpful to establish a connection to previous divine services.

The officiant serves for about 20 to max. 25 minutes. The sermon is concluded with "Amen". The congregation then answers with "Amen".

Musical contribution when calling assistant

Between the main part of the sermon and assistants, musical contributions in the form of hymns or instrumental pieces should take place if possible. These should clearly indicate the wide variety of musical possibilities of the congregation within the context of the permissible literature.

The choice on whether the congregation sings is decided upon by the officiant. Any musical contributions other than choir or congregation hymns should be clarified with the officiant prior to the divine service.

The choir or congregation stands during the hymn.

Assisting ministers

Assisting ministers should not serve for more than 5 minutes each. Deacons can also be called to assist. In such cases, agreement with the Deacon should be reached (at the latest) before the divine service begins. A general agreement from the Deacons is also possible.

All parts of the sermon are completed by "Amen". The congregation also replies in each case with "Amen".

Musical contribution following the sermon part (optional)

The end of the complete sermon part can be followed by a choir hymn or instrumental musical contribution. A congregation hymn is less preferable at this point since the hymn of repentance will be sung by the congregation shortly afterwards.

Preparation of congregation for forgiveness of sins and Holy Communion

Following completion of the sermon based on the Bible text, the officiant should prepare the congregation for the forgiveness of sins and Holy Communion.

The content of the preparation can refer back to the sermon, or also include the following points:

- Thanks for Christ's sacrifice
- Remembrance of Jesus' suffering and death
- Esteeming the value of Christ's sacrifice
- Current realisation of His sacrifice
- Remembrance of the initiation of Holy Communion
- Recognition of own sinfulness and debt
- Guidance toward repentance
- Remembering of the washing of feet (humility)
- Readiness to forgive/reconcile
- Remembrance that administration of sacraments has been entrusted to the apostle ministry.

A distinction must be made between the forgiveness of sins and Holy Communion. At the same time, it must be understood how the two acts relate together:

They relate to each other in that the forgiveness of sins provides the holiness required for receipt of sacraments, and thus worthy partaking of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The subsequent Holy Communion guarantees fellowship of life with Jesus Christ.

Hymn of repentance

Following preparatory words for the forgiveness of sins and Holy Communion, the congregation (or choir) sings an appropriate hymn which the officiant announces as completion of the preparation. The hymn of repentance is an expression of the joint confession of sins before God and each other.

The congregation should preferably sing the hymn of repentance so that it associates better with the text and that everybody is actively involved. Appropriate hymns, or verses therefrom, are specified.

The congregation can remain seated during the hymn of repentance. The choir should stand up if it sings alone.

"Lord's Prayer"

The officiant invites the congregation to say the "Lord's Prayer". He can select approximately the following words:

"We want to stand up and say the prayer which the Lord Jesus taught us."

The "Lord's Prayer" is spoken by the whole congregation standing.

Absolution

The "Lord's Prayer" is followed by the absolution with the following wording:

"In the commission of my sender the Apostle I proclaim unto you the glad tidings: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, your sins are forgiven. The peace of the Risen One abide with you! Amen."

The priestly ministry makes it herewith clear that he has been commissioned by the apostle ministry to proclaim the forgiveness of sins.

The absolution is not a prayer. Reading is permissible if the officiant feels unsure of the liturgical text.

The congregation stands during the absolution.

Eucharistic prayer

The eucharistic prayer includes praise and thanks for Christ's sacrifice. It serves for the remembrance of Jesus Christ's suffering and death. At the same time, it should be a reminder that Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion and called His disciples, the Apostles, to proclaim the gospel in all the world. We bring our thanks for the mission of the Apostles in the past and present. Focal points of the eucharistic prayer can therefore be:

- Thanks for the experienced grace in the forgiveness of sins
- Thanks for Jesus Christ's sacrifice
- Thanks for the Holy Communion instigated by the Lord
- Petition for strength to prove ourselves worthy of the grace
- Petition for help in our efforts to become worthy.

The eucharistic prayer is concluded with "Amen".

Further sacraments and acts

The dispensing of sacraments and acts, namely Water Baptism, Holy Sealing, adoption or confirmation, is carried out following the absolution and the eucharistic prayer, but prior to consecration of Holy Communion. The forgiveness of sins provides the sanctification required for receipt of the sacraments and these acts. The sacraments and acts mentioned also represent a confession. This is associated with the permanent participation in Holy Communion.

Following the acts, the associated members receive Holy Communion together with the ministers and congregation and not directly following the act and separate from the others. This expresses that they are (now) part of the congregation. This underlines the fellowship characteristic of Holy Communion. The ministers and the congregation are included equally in celebration of this fellowship.

If appropriate, the recipients can be accompanied to the altar and back into the congregation again by a musical contribution.

Introduction to Holy Communion

Following the eucharistic prayer (and the dispensing of sacraments and acts if applicable) the officiant stands behind the altar and introduces Holy Communion approximately with the words:

"And now we shall celebrate Holy Communion."

Uncovering of the communion chalices

The invitation to celebration of Holy Communion is followed by quiet moments. This is the time required for the visible, perceivable uncovering of the communion chalices.

Uncovering of the chalices takes place after the absolution, since up to the absolution the congregation is repentant, and subsequently purified. Only then should the Holy Communion elements be present openly for the actual celebration of Communion.

It should be ensured that this part of the liturgy is carried out in complete silence. The congregation should experience it in complete awareness, and remains standing.

Uncovering of the chalices is not usually carried out by the officiant. If no other priestly ministries are present, Deacons can be used here. The person to uncover the chalices, as well as those assigned to serve Holy Communion, should be informed before the service. The officiant, if he is not the only minister and therefore has to open the chalices himself, remains in reverent silence during this time.

Once the ministers have uncovered the chalices and have returned to their places, the officiant subsequently approximately announces to the congregation:

"And now the Lord's table is prepared."

Consecration

Through consecration of bread and wine by the priestly ministry, the body and blood of Christ become present.

During consecration of the elements, the officiant extends his arms from the beginning, with his hands "covering" the chalices. If chalices are only on one side of the altar, both arms can point in this direction.

Reading of the consecration text is permissible if the officiant feels unsure of the liturgical text.



Photo on left: The officiant extends his arms for the consecration. His hands "cover" the chalices.



Photo on right: Consecration gesture if chalices are only present on one side of the altar.

The consecration text is largely taken from [1 Corinthians 11: 24-26](#). This is the oldest known consecration text. Here Apostle Paul cites the words of Jesus and describes the fundamental content of Holy Communion.

Consecration text

**In the name of God, the
Father, the Son and the
Holy Spirit,**

*Beginning of sacrament in
triune name of God*

I consecrate

Act

**bread and wine for Holy
Communion**

*Natural elements, the
sacramental means, are
named*

and lay thereupon the
once brought, eternally
valid sacrifice of Jesus
Christ.

*Current realisation of
Christ's sacrifice*

For the Lord

Remembrance of the event

took bread and wine,

*Reference to natural ele-
ments*

gave thanks and said:

*Thanks to God – as with
the feast of the Passover
Participation in His life*

This is My body which is
broken for you.

This is My blood of the
new covenant

Presence of Christ's sacri-
fice

given for many for the
remission of sins.

*Reference to Christ's
sacrifice as the basis for
the forgiveness of sins
(from Matthew 26: 28)*

Eat and drink!

*Invitation to participate in
Christ's body – act is
remembrance of Christ and
the supper instituted by Him*

Do this in remembrance
of Me.

Meal of remembrance,
*remembrance of His bitter
suffering but also of His
promise*

For as often as you eat
this bread and drink this
wine,

*Repeatedly necessary **meal
of fellowship***

you proclaim the Lord's
death

Meal of confession

till He comes.

Eschatological meal

Amen!

*Confirmation of that previ-
ously said.*

The consecration text covers all fundamental aspects of Holy Communion, namely:

- **Remembrance** of the event
- **Presence** of Christ's sacrifice
- **Meal of remembrance** - remembrance of His bitter suffering but also of His promise
- **Meal of fellowship** which should take place repeatedly
- **Meal of confession** - confession of the Lord's death
- **Eschatological meal** - reference to His return.

Serving of body and blood of Christ to officiant and ministers

The officiant takes a chalice into his hand and serves himself with Holy Communion.

The congregation remains standing until the ministers at the altar have received Holy Communion from the officiant. This also applies to those who are not seated there. This can be accompanied by the organ, a vocal piece or instrumental. Differences may be necessary during larger services for pragmatic reasons. The organist should receive Holy Communion after the ministers.

That the ministers receive Holy Communion before the congregation is an expression of the presence of the Apostle through the ministers commissioned by him. The element in the ministerial body which conveys salvation becomes evident.

Announcement of musical contributions during celebration of Holy Communion

Once the officiant has returned to the altar and replaced the chalice, the congregation sits down. The officiant then announces the musical contributions during celebration of Holy Communion.

Silence should initially follow this announcement. The officiant waits with the further acts until the members are in anticipation of Holy Communion.

Invitation to Holy Communion

After the body and blood of Christ have been served to the ministers, the hymn announced, and a moment of silence, the congregation is invited with approximately the following words: "*The Lord now invites you to Holy Communion.*"*

The officiant at the altar then hands over the chalices to the ministers who are to serve Communion.

The communion hymn or musical piece to accompany Holy Communion should only commence after the chalices have been handed out. It is also possible to wait until the congregation has received Holy Communion. Soft organ music should then accompany this.

In festive divine services with many participants, handing out of the numerous chalices can be organised differently, e.g. accompanied by music.

* If appropriate, this can be followed in special divine services by an invitation to guests who wish to participate in Holy Communion.

The following words can be used:

"Invited are all baptised souls who confess Jesus Christ as the Lord, His death, His resurrection, and His return."

Permanently authorised to participate are sealed members, adopted members, and those who have received the New Apostolic baptism. Guests baptised in accordance with the rites (with water and in the triune name of God) are permitted to participate. Those who have not been baptised have no access to Holy Communion. However, no one should be prevented from participating.

Handing out the communion chalices

The inner composure of the minister with regard to Holy Communion should also be reflected in the outer attitude. This also concerns the handling of the communion chalices. A chalice is not an ordinary vessel, and must therefore be handled worthily.

The priestly ministers should confer dignity to the act through the manner in which they handle the chalice.

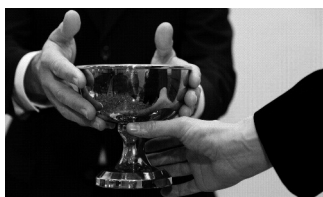


Photo on left: Example of appropriate handing out of a chalice.



Photo on right: When serving communion, the chalice is held by its base.

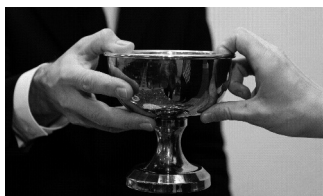


Photo on left: Example of appropriate handing out of a flat chalice.



Photo on right: The flat chalice should be held by the minister in his flat hand.

The following photos show examples of how communion chalices should **not** be held.



Serving of Holy Communion

The wafers are served with the words:
"The body and blood of Jesus given for you!"

Adults with small children who cannot take the wafer for themselves are served with the words:
"The body and blood of Jesus given for you and your child!"

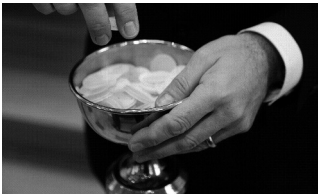
The manner in which the wafers are served should underline the presence of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The wafer should therefore be served in awareness and accentuated. Holy Communion should be an extremely solemn feast.

Serving of the body and blood of Christ must never take place under time pressure. When serving Holy Communion, everything must be avoided which could disturb the receiver in his devotion or is contrary to the holiness of the sacrament.



Photos on left and right: The wafer is held between thumb and index finger.

The following photos show examples of how the wafer should **not** be served.



Both photos: The minister's hand or thumb hides the wafer when placing into the member's hand.

Both photos: Holding of the chalice (or the flat chalice) as shown is also inappropriate.

The altar should remain occupied by a minister (also a Deacon if necessary) during celebration of Holy Communion since the personal presence of the Apostle through the minister commissioned by him becomes visible.

Serving of Holy Communion is only complete when the last member has received Holy Communion and has taken the wafer.

Replacement of lids on the chalices

The lids should only be replaced on the chalices by the minister standing at the altar when all of them have been returned to their position and all musical contributions during celebration of Holy Communion have been completed. Replacement of lids on the chalices is also an act perceivable for the congregation just like uncovering of the chalices. If communion for the departed also takes place, the chalices present on the altar remain open until the end of this act.

Note that the chalices should be returned behind the altar to the minister standing there, and not across the altar.

Further acts, and completion of divine service

The Chief Apostle, District Apostle or a commissioned Apostle now dispenses Holy Communion and possibly the other sacraments for the departed. These acts should be commenced and terminated by a musical contribution. The lids are only replaced on the chalices when the last musical contribution has been completed. The congregation remains standing during this process.

Further ministrations or ordinations then follow. A musical contribution can also be made. The congregation is seated in this case.

The service is completed by the closing prayer and benediction. The officiant closes the Bible.

Closing prayer

This can include the following contents:

- Thanks for the word and grace received
- Thanks for experiencing the divine service
- Petition for God's protection, help and accompaniment
- Petition for blessing of the material offerings, of everything done in the work of God, and of those bringing the offerings
- Intercession for all those in need, and the sick
- Intercession for the bearers of blessing
- Petition for possibility to participate in next service
- Petition for shortening of the time
- Petition for our perfection for the Lord's return.

The closing prayer is completed by a single "Amen". The congregation stands during the closing prayer.

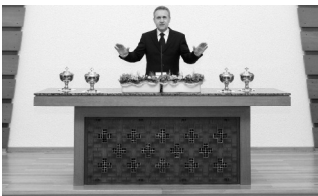
Benediction

The closing prayer is followed by a separate liturgical part: the benediction. The wording is:

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all! Amen."

(2 Corinthians 13: 13)

The benediction is followed by the liturgical threefold "Amen" sung by the congregation. The benediction should be bestowed with extended arms (gesture of blessing). The palms should point toward the congregation.



Photos on left and right: Gesture when bestowing the benediction.

Final musical contribution (compulsory)

The benediction should be followed by a final musical contribution. If the congregation sings, it can remain seated at this point.





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