Welcome to church!

As you participate in the church service, we’ve provided this small guide to help you understand more of what is happening, why it is happening, and some of the special language used in church. May the Lord bless your worship this day!
What Is Worship?

People often think worship in the Church Service is about what we do for or toward God. The reality is quite different.

In the Divine Service, God provides His service for us. God comes to us in the reading, preaching, and proclamation of His Word and in His Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.

In worship, God gives His grace, and we respond with thanks and praise.
What Is the Divine Service?

The Lutheran understanding of worship is expressed in the *Divine Service*. We follow this order not because we believe it is the only right way but because we believe this ancient pattern of worship most clearly and beautifully serves the purpose of worship, to deliver the gracious gifts of God.

The *Divine Service* uses two distinct elements to create a framework for our worship. Those parts of the liturgy that do not change each week are called the *Ordinary* because they are ordinarily present each week. The Ordinary reflects the changeless and timeless texts of the liturgy, some used continuously for more than 1,500 years.

The second element consists of the changeable texts, known as the *Propers*. The Propers follow the seasons of the *Church Year* and the associated Scripture readings. The Propers carry the message or theme for the day, often taken from the Gospel reading.
The Preparation has not always been part of the Divine Service. Confession and Absolution have always been seen as preparation for those who desire to participate in Holy Communion. The Preparation may be omitted entirely when we celebrate Holy Baptism immediately after the Hymn of Invocation.
Invocation

The Invocation begins the Divine Service with the name of God. Invoking His name orders our worship, making it clear that this is His service to us, not our service or someone else’s. The words of the Invocation remind us of our Baptism in the name of the triune God.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19

Confession

In the Confession, we are saying “Amen” or “Yes, yes, this is true” to God’s righteous judgment against our sin. In the Divine Service, the Lord is present with us and ready to give us His mercy and grace.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:8–9
Absolution

. . . the announcement of forgiveness to the penitent sinner.

Our Lord declares through the mouth of His servant, the pastor, that by His grace and mercy our sins are forgiven. The Absolution speaks the Gospel into our ears in a personal way. Through these Gospel words we receive the salvation earned by Christ upon the cross of Calvary; every sin is covered by His blessed death.

[Jesus] breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

John 20:22–23