



Have you ever wondered about the meaning of the parts of the worship service? How the parts are developed? What are the symbols used in the service? The Church year? ...

Our worship service is actually a complex series of intentional inclusions and exclusions based on the church year, scripture guidance through the Revised Common Lectionaries, Ministry, Music and Worship Team knowledge, experience, creativity, tradition and rituals.

Worship Team is starting a weekly question and response feature where you ask questions about Worship and the Ministry & Worship Team reply. Send your questions to the church office by phone or eMail and the Worship Team will respond to one question a week. If you wish further information on any questions asked, just let the Worship Team know and we will get back to you.

Let us learn together about this significant shared experience of our church life!!

Our first question:

Fri 19 Feb 2021

**How are the Scripture Readings chosen for worship?**

The term lectionary (from Latin referring to “book”) is commonly understood to mean a pattern of readings assigned to each Sunday.

In ancient Hebrew times there was a pattern of assigned readings of the “Torah” associated with special feasts and holy days supposedly originating with Moses.

In the early church, the Gospels and Paul’s letters were contemporary documents, read spontaneously, but as time progressed habits formed and specific passages were read on specific days according to the seasons and celebrations.

More recently, The Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, and even Methodist churches had particular patterns of readings, some on a one year cycle some two and some more.

Some of the other Reformation churches gave pastors and preachers freedom to choose their own Sunday readings, and often they would read sequentially through an entire Gospel or letter.

Today most of the United Church uses the Revised Common Lectionary, an ecumenical pattern on a three year cycle that has a Hebrew reading (Old Testament), a Psalm reading, a reading from the letters, and a reading from the Gospels. They are only partly sequential because they are oriented to the seasons of the church year. We are currently in year B which is the year of Mark,\* and entering the season of Lent which highlights Jesus’ experience as he moves toward greater conflict with the Temple and political leaders, and the story of Holy Week. Normally we only use one or two of the available readings.

This is not the only way that scripture readings can be organized, but this is a common one these days.

\*Year A is the year of Matthew; Year C is the year of Luke and the scripture of John is included throughout.



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Our second question:

Fri 26 Feb 2021

### What are the seasons of the church year and the colours associated with each?

The seasons of the church don't quite follow the 4 seasons many of us are familiar with on the Prairies.

The church year is divided into seasons according to the suggested lectionary themes.

<b>Advent:</b> the four Sundays prior to Christmas Eve.		Blue
<b>Christmas Eve:</b> December 24 <sup>th</sup>		White
<b>Christmas Season:</b> December 25 <sup>th</sup> Including Epiphany and the baptism of Jesus		White
<b>After Epiphany:</b> January 6 <sup>th</sup>		Green
<b>Transfiguration Sunday:</b> The Sunday prior to the first Sunday in Lent February 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2021		White
<b>Lent:</b> 5 Sundays leading to Palm Sunday February 21 <sup>st</sup> to March 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2021		Purple
<b>Palm Sunday</b> through <u>til</u> Maundy Thursday March 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2021      April 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2021		Red
<b>Good Friday:</b> April 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2021		Black or neutral
<b>Easter Sunday:</b> April 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2021		White

**Easter Season** til Pentecost



White

**Pentecost:**

May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021



Red

**Trinity Sunday:**

May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021



White

**After Pentecost:** Ordinary Time or Proper Time



Green

*Some churches celebrate Creation Time during the season of Pentecost*  
September 12<sup>th</sup> to October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021



Orange

**All Saints Day:** the day following All Hallows Eve  
November 1<sup>st</sup>

**Reign of Christ Sunday:** the Sunday just before the first Sunday in Advent  
November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021



White

Which takes us right back to the lovely colour blue and the season of Advent.

Dates retrieved from: <https://united-church.ca/worship-liturgical-season>



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Our third question:

Fri 5 March 2021

### **How is the music selected for each worship service?**

In our previous Ask Worship pieces, we have talked of the three lectionaries that guide us through scripture selection and the seasons of the year that are informed by the lectionaries. The lectionaries and the season also guide the selection of music. The music is chosen by the Music Director in partnership with the Minister(s). Seasons with special services are also discussed with the Worship Team. For seasons like Advent or Lent, a general theme may be chosen, and each week depicts an aspect of the theme, or separate themes are chosen for each week that tie together with the overall season.

Last year, the weeks of Lent were all themed around "A Godly Play". The weeks of Advent are usually each themed around Hope, Peace, Joy, Love - all link together for the season as we anticipate the birth of Jesus. Another aspect of Hymn selection is the context of the life of the congregation. Many hymns have a seasonal base like winter, spring, Thanksgiving, Remembrance and there are hymns that may be appropriate for the celebration of Communion, Baptism, or Confirmation. On occasion, the monthly soloist will also have suggestions that are taken into consideration when choosing music. It is a very collaborative process.

The following is an example of hymn/music dialogue for selections based on all of these factors:

The third Sunday of Advent is the week of Joy, and traditionally celebrates the annunciation of Mary. As we were using Luke's gospel the liturgical year (2020), we told the story of Mary through music. The first piece, 'Gabriel's Message,' depicted the annunciation: Mary is the chosen Mother of God. 'Breath of Heaven' is a piece told from Mary's perspective - she wonders why she was chosen and asks God for strength as she journeys to Bethlehem. The final selection, 'Christmas Lullaby,' is from a musical theatre show, *Songs for A New World*. The speaker draws on Mary and her story for strength as she anticipates giving birth to her own child. These three pieces were bookended by traditional Marian hymns (*Christian songs* focused on the *Virgin Mary*).



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Our fourth question:

Fri 12 March 2021

### **Why does the Easter Date change?**

Easter is a moveable feast and does not have a fixed date.

However, it is always held on a Sunday between March 22 and April 25.

Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday following the full moon that occurs on or just after the spring equinox.

In Christian churches, the first full moon of spring is called the Paschal Full Moon.

This year in 2021, the spring equinox happens on Saturday March 20<sup>th</sup>. The first full moon to occur after that date rises on Sunday March 28<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, Easter will be observed on the following Sunday, which is April 4<sup>th</sup>.



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Our fifth question:

Fri 19 March 2021

### **What is Lent?**

What is Lent and why is it celebrated?

Beginning on Ash Wednesday, **Lent** is a season of reflection and preparation before the **celebrations** of Easter. By observing the 40 days of **Lent**, Christians replicate Jesus Christ's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days.

We also at times describe Lent as a time to follow Jesus on the last journey of his life as he encounters escalating conflict with his disciples, the Pharisees, and the priests, resulting in his arrest and death.



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Our sixth question:

Fri 26 March 2021

### **What is Holy Week?**

Holy week, which begins on Palm Sunday and ends on Holy Saturday, can be observed in this way:

#### **Palm Sunday**

All four gospel accounts record Jesus' entry into Jerusalem during the festival of the Jewish Passover on the first Sunday of Holy Week (sometimes called Passion Week). Whether by donkey or colt, many of the observant would recognize and make the connection between what was written by the prophet Zechariah (9:9) "a humble king riding a donkey, a mere colt of a donkey .....no more war horses in Jerusalem...."

**Why wave palm branches?** This according to the great oracle Google:

**Palm branches** were regarded as tokens of joy and triumph and were customarily used on festive occasions (Leviticus 23:40, Nehemiah 8:15). Kings and conquerors were welcomed with **palm branches** being strewn before them and waved in the air.

#### **Maundy Thursday**

This is the day Christians remember the Last Supper, when Jesus gave his disciples bread and wine (communion/eucharist) and washed their feet.

The term Maundy comes from the Latin word *mandatum* – meaning command – and references Jesus' words to the disciples: "a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another." John 15:12

#### **Good Friday**

The day of Holy Week that tells the story of the crucifixion of Jesus. It is the most somber day in the Christian faith story. Many churches use the liturgical colour of black as a symbol of mourning. Candles are sometimes extinguished as the bible narrative is shared and the music selections reflect the sorrowful tone of the service.

### **Why Good?**

For years many have thought (this writer included) that it all started with the understanding it would be called God's Friday – over time it changed much like the phrase Good Bye began its origins with "God be with you". This is no longer the understanding and the adjective "good" in this context refers to a day or season observed as holy by the church, hence the greeting "good tide" at Christmas or on Shrove Tuesday.

### **Holy Saturday**

The final day of Holy Week and it remembers Jesus' followers holding a vigil for him outside of his tomb. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century CE, Christians fasted between nightfall on Good Friday and dawn on Easter Sunday. Some churches hold a vigil starting on Saturday at dusk and the service focuses on the transition from darkness to light, and a new candle is lit on Easter Sunday to represent the new light of the risen Christ.



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Our seventh question:

Thurs 1 April 2021

### **What are some common Lenten traditions and Practises?**

The traditions of Lent are epitomized by fasting and by refraining from certain pleasurable activities as a sign of self sacrifice. (It might be chocolate, or movies, or alcoholic beverages). The most obvious tradition is the Shrove Tuesday gathering of rich, sweet, luxury foods and having a feast, before the fasting begins on Ash Wednesday. Another is the annual festival called "Mardi Gras" (French for Fat Tuesday) which is one last raucous party before the more austere season of Lent.

Other Lenten traditions are the instruction and preparation of candidates for baptism, confirmation, and first communion Easter Sunday.

Although lent has been most often marked by the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran traditions, and less so by more Reformed Protestant churches, in recent years our own United Church has invested in Lenten study guides and programs as a way to encourage us to be more focused and intentional about exploring the roots of our faith during this season.

Liturgically, the colour of Lent is Purple, and we decorate our sanctuary with banners and hangings expressing the theme of preparation. Sometimes we mark the progress of the season by extinguishing candles as the weeks go by.



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Our eighth question:

Fri 16 April 2021

### **What is the intent of Praise?**

One dictionary definition of "praise" as a verb is : **"to express a favorable judgment of"**, the corresponding noun is defined as: **"an expression of approval."**

Neither of these seems to capture the profound feeling of a praise hymn like "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing", or "Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies". So, in worship, praise expresses a deep and profound gratitude for the blessings of life as we gather with God's people. This is why many of us appreciate a grand and uplifting hymn at the beginning of worship, but it also explains why many of us beam with delight as we enter the church and see dear friends with whom we have shared many of life's best experiences.

Sometimes worship begins in a more thoughtful, quiet way, yet the hope is always that we will acknowledge delight, wonder, and thankfulness, for all the gifts of creation, whether we express that in a quiet, pensive mood, or in a more, exuberant way.



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Our ninth question:

Fri 23 April 2021

### **Why do some say, "Our Father and Mother"?**

What a great question! So glad you asked! 😊

Personally speaking (Rev. Deborah Vitt), I have been using both nouns in the Lord's Prayer for some time now. I don't recall the exact moment I spoke those words together, out loud, in a service of worship however I clearly remember why I did. Language is powerful. It is important. And as I began to delve into the authority and interpretation of scripture, I began to pay closer attention to the way we speak about God.

What pronouns do we use? What pronouns have we used over the years? Growing up in the church, I was used to using only male expressions for God. Scripture readings only referred to God as a male. Hymns reflected the nature of God in masculine form. And yet..... I wondered. If we constantly use the pronoun "he" when referring to God, then we'll only believe that God is a man.

But what about me – a woman of faith who was also made in the image of God?

*Couldn't God be my mother too?*

Women and Men created in God's image: Genesis 1:27

God who gives birth: Deuteronomy 32: 18

God as a comforting mother: Isaiah 66:13

*What about God in nature and in the world of all creation?*

God as a mother hen: Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34

God described as a mother bear: Hosea 13:8

God described as a mother eagle: Deuteronomy 32: 11-12

Like I said, language is powerful. As we become more aware and inclusive using diverse expressions of gender, I imagine this conversation will expand. We will be encouraged to include more gender neutral pronouns as we continue our conversations about the nature of God and our relationship to God.

Like I said at the outset of this response – What a great question!!! And one that just might lead to further conversations, comment and renewed faith.

Friends, our words matter. They may not be perfect, yet God sees our hearts and likely rejoices knowing we are making time to find words to express our relationship with the great Divine, Eternal Spirit, Earth Maker, Source of all that is and that shall be..... may it be so.

Sources: Voices United page 916 Alternative versions of the Prayer of Jesus and Bethany Lutheran Church, pastor Cheryl Walenta Gorvie [bethany.net](http://bethany.net) 7/24/2016



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Our tenth question:

Fri 30 April 2021

**What is the difference between “holy” and “sacred”?**

“Sacred” and “Holy” are often used interchangeably, and in general both are used as adjectives referring to something that is set apart or dedicated to be used in the worship of God or for religious purposes.

The word *sacred* descends from the [Latin \*sacer\*](#), referring to that which is '[consecrated](#), dedicated' or 'purified' to the gods or anything in their power.

The Hebrew word *kodesh* (קֹדֶשׁ) is used in the [Torah](#) to mean 'set-apartness' and 'distinct'. *Kodesh* is also commonly translated as 'holiness' and 'sacredness'.<sup>[18]</sup> The Torah describes the [Aaronite priests](#) and the [Levites](#) as being selected by God to perform the Temple services; they, as well, are called "holy." Holiness is not a single state but contains a broad spectrum.

**Sacred** describes something that is dedicated or set apart for the service or worship of a [deity](#);<sup>[1]</sup> considered worthy of spiritual [respect](#) or devotion; or inspires [awe](#) or [reverence](#) among believers. The property is often ascribed to objects (a "[sacred artifact](#)" that is [venerated](#) and [blessed](#)), or places.

Although there are similarities between the terms *sacred* and *holy*, there are subtle differences.<sup>[4]</sup> *Holiness* is generally the term used in relation to persons and relationship, whereas *sacredness* is used in relation to objects, places, or happenings.<sup>[5]</sup> Thus, a saint may be considered as holy, but would not be viewed as sacred. Conversely, some things can be both holy and sacred, such as the Holy Bible, or Holy or sacred land.

While both words denote something or someone set apart to the worship of God and therefore worthy of respect and in some cases veneration, *holy* (the stronger word) implies an inherent or essential character.<sup>[6]</sup> Holiness originates in God and is communicated to things, places, times, and persons engaged in His Service.

The English word *holy* dates back to at least the 11th century with the [Old English](#) word [hālig](#), an adjective derived from *hāl* ('whole'), which was used to mean 'uninjured, sound, healthy, entire, complete'. The Scottish *hale* ('health, happiness, wholeness') is the most complete modern form of this Old English root. The word *holy* in its modern form appears in [Wycliffe's Bible](#) of 1382. Sometimes, the term *holy* is used in a more general way, to refer to someone or something that is associated with a [divine power](#), such as [water](#) used for [baptism](#).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred>



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Our eleventh question:

Fri 7 May 2021

From Deborah Vitt:

**Why bother going to church when we can worship from home?**

On Wednesday May 5<sup>th</sup>, Rev. D. Vitt posed this question to the coffee chat group on Zoom!

Here are some of the responses:

- I miss my church family.
- They are my extended family and I am missing them as much as I miss my own family.
- It will be good to be together again in person
- Humans need touch and connection
- We do better in community and that community is there for us when we need them
- Attending church kept me going in times of grief.
- Nothing can replace the hugs or eye to eye connections we make with one another
- Babies don't thrive without hugs and adults don't either
- I miss our shared meals ☺

We had a great chat about the importance of being together in a faith community. It's there where many of us feel safe to share our stories and make a deeper connection with one another with roots in our common faith.

On a personal note, I love to sing and singing alone in my home is not much fun! I miss hearing a choir. And I really miss the energy that comes from being part of a community as we lift our voices in praise to the One who gathers us together each week.

This time of worshipping apart has certainly been a learning experience. We have been able to offer online services as a way to keep our faith community connected. I am quite sure that when we are able to meet together again in person, Prairie Spirit will find a way to continue sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ online as well. We have learned how important it is to stay connected with one another.

To quote an old camp song: The living church, has many parts, and many parts make up Christ's body. I am one of them and so are you, so let's all do our part.....

Let's all do our part..... to get the job, encourage our neighbours and friends to do the same and soon we will be together again.....singing, praising, praying, celebrating and grieving.....and yes, sharing in a good 'ol pot luck meal!!!



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Our twelfth question:

Fri 14 May 2021

**What is the theological difference, if any, between communion served in the pews vs. intincture and how is the method determined for each service?**

“Ask Worship” has become an interesting challenge to understand and summarize some complex thoughts. This question really has two parts.

First, intincture, or more commonly “intinction” (from the Latin *intinctio* – meaning “a dipping in”), is the practise of coming forward to the front of the church, receiving bread either from the tray or from the hand of the server, dipping it in the chalice, then eating it to receive both the bread and the wine (juice) at the same time.

Intinction is one of several ways approved by the Roman Catholic Church to receive communion. The word “intincture” seems to come from the root “tincture” which refers to infusing or mixing. In the Orthodox Church, the bread and wine are often mixed in the same vessel and served by the priest, to the communicant, with a spoon.

The second part of the question has to do with coming forward to the front as opposed to receiving communion in the pews.

The Roman Catholic and the Anglican traditions value receiving communion directly from the Priest as the one designated in the apostolic succession of Peter. Reformed churches also value the role of Elders and Deacons who connect directly with the parishioners, so to have the communion elements distributed to the pews symbolizes the act of each member serving one another. In the United Church we have been experimenting over the past several decades with a variety of styles of communion, and everyone is finding their own favourites.

Technically, it is up to the Worship Team to determine whether we should have one standard form of communion (and what that should be), or if we should continue a variety of styles. This question is more complicated when we are in the middle of an amalgamation of several congregational traditions.



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Our thirteenth question:

Fri. 21 May 2021

**What is Pentecost?**

AKA – the Birthday of the Church!

Pentecost literally means “50” – it’s a moveable celebration held 50 days after Easter.

Pentecost celebrates the day the Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles, causing them to speak in tongues! This became a Pentecostal moment enabling the apostles to speak in languages other than Greek or Hebrew, which made spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ more effective and accessible to many.

Pentecost shares its roots with the Jewish holiday of Shavu’ot, which is referred to as the Feast of Weeks. This holy day celebrates the Jews receiving the Torah from God on Mount Sinai and comes 7 weeks after Passover. This special holiday is often marked by the reading of the Ten Commandments from a Torah scroll.

The colour of this season is Red and the sacrament of communion is most often celebrated on Pentecost (which is a reminder for all of you to join in this Sunday with your beverage of choice together with any type of bread or cracker).

Acts 2: 1-4 (the Message)

*When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a strong wind, gale force – no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.*

If you are a regular scripture reader, Pentecost is always a bit of a tongue twister.....verse 11 goes on to name the various languages suddenly spoken from a variety of countries:

*Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya and Cyrene, Rome, and even Cretans and Arabs!!*

Some were astonished and others thought the apostles were drunk on cheap wine!

Let it not be said the bible is without a bit of drama.....join us this Sunday as together we imagine how and where the Holy Spirit continues to blow her energy and wisdom through the church.



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Our fourteenth question:

Fri. 28 May 2021

**What is the significance of the 'flames' of Pentecost?**

The story of the Pentecost is one of the most dramatic of the New Testament.

Is it based on a memory of events long past? Or is it Luke's metaphorical representation of the huge transformation that took place in the life and work of the first disciples?

A strong wind is the expression of the experience of a new Spirit moving through this group of disciples and empowering them to communicate with the diverse crowd gathered for the festival.

Flames and or fire have been associated with burning of agricultural waste to create space for new growth. They are also associated with purification and cleansing, and fire is understood as the source of passion and enthusiasm.

One more metaphor, the tongues that touched each disciple have been understood as setting people apart for ministry, designating the apostles as the leaders of the new "church" that was coming into being.





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Our fifteenth question:

Fri 4 June 2021

**Where are we with the United Church of Canada  
Apologies to Indigenous Peoples?**

As news came on May 28, 2021, that the remains of 215 children were found in a mass unmarked grave on the grounds of the former Kamloops Residential School, we entered into a time of mourning for these relatives, their families, and their communities.

Gatherings were held around sacred fires across the country. Prayers were sung and spoken. Church bells were rung. Orange ribbons were tied on branches and fences. Shoes were laid out on the steps of churches and government buildings. Candles were lit and flags were lowered as a sign of respect.

We here at Prairie Spirit, commit ourselves to the ongoing work of the TRC as we open our hearts to listening and learning together.

As a United Church we have statements confessing our failure to value Aboriginal traditional spirituality.

- United church apology to First Nations (1986)
- United Church apology to Former Students, their families and communities in residential schools (1998)
- Revisions to the United Church Crest to reflect Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples (2012)  
<https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/apologies-response-crest.pdf>
- And this from United Church statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Alberta National Event (2014)  
<https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/trc-statement-2014.pdf>

*We have learned that “good intentions” are never enough, especially when wrapped in the misguided zeal of cultural and spiritual superiority. Thus we have learned we were wrong to reject, discredit and yes, even outlaw traditional indigenous spiritual practice and ceremony; in amazing circles of grace, as we have begun to listen to the wisdom of the Elders, we have found our own faith enriched and deepened. And we are grateful. (Moderator Gary Paterson, Edmonton, March 27, 2014)*

The following is from the Aboriginal Ministries Council and the Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools.

*We know we have a long journey ahead of us. We are committed to make that journey in humility and partnership, engaging the healing work of making “whole” our own spirituality, and acknowledging that holding both your spirituality and ours is possible through listening and learning with open hearts.*

Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future; a Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada available online at [http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future July 23 2015.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf)

*If you are a residential school or intergenerational survivor and this content is upsetting, please call the National Indian Residential School Crisis Line at 1-866-925-4419*



Art by Chase Gray, to honour the 215 children found at the Kamloops Indian Residential School.



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Our sixteenth question:

Fri. 11 June 2021

**What is the background rationale for the regular order of events in weekly worship?**

We are the inheritors of many patterns for worship.

In traditional Roman Catholic liturgy, the mass or communion was the high point, and hence close to the end. Anglican, Lutheran, and Methodist, liturgy frequently did not celebrate communion, so prayers of the people ended the service. In my own Presbyterian background, the preaching was pre-eminent and so often the service ended with the sermon.

Today most United Churches, and many churches generally follow a threefold movement of worship.

1. **The Gathering**, with welcome, call to worship, sometimes (though not always) a prayer of approach and confession, and an upbeat hymn of praise.
2. **The Word**, including scripture, sometimes a prayer for understanding, a hymn related to the message, and a sermon or reflection.
3. **The Response**, this will include our offering of tithes and commitment, prayers of the people, communion, if celebrated, and a sending forth to be the church in the community.

Of course, there is room for variation, as the liturgy in the United Church is not prescribed as it would have been in the Missal (Roman Catholic) or a Prayerbook (Anglican). The Worship Committee has the responsibility to determine the order of service and set the guidelines for each congregation.



Worship Team invites questions from you about worship practices. Send your questions to the church office by phone or email. One question per week will be responded to by the Ministry and or Worship Team. Once your response is given, if you have further questions, feel free to probe for understanding. You will receive a response from someone on the Worship Team. Let us learn together!

Our seventeenth question:

Fri. 18 June 2021

**The question of the day: What is a Covenant**

(Gage Canadian Dictionary) Covenant:.....in the Bible, the solemn promises of God to mankind; the contract between God and mankind. Ok, that seems simple enough although I would use the word humankind.

Ok Google Chrome , how many covenants are there in the bible?

Having just emerged from an in depth, rabbit warren, search, I can assure you this answer is not so simple. It really depends on which faith tradition you ask. Jews, Muslims, Christians.....it seems we all have our definitions and parameters on what constitutes a covenant. Some say 2. Others say 5.....and others say 7.

OK Google Chrome, what does the United Church have to say about covenant?

In biblical tradition a covenant has a much richer and deeper meaning than a written agreement between participants. Covenant in this sacred sense, refers to binding together people in mutual trust and loyalty with God and within the community of faith.

Building on God's ancient promise: I will be your God and you shall be my people (Jer 7:23)

And this from our covenant church partner in the US.....A covenant in an act of faith, a solemn promise to God in response to God's holy Word. Although God's covenant with us never changes, our covenants with one another evolve as we seek ways to faithfully deepen our commitment to Jesus and live into our call to embody God's love in the world. (United Church of Christ)

Here are just a couple of examples in the bible

**Genesis 9: 12,13** Noah and the Rainbow

And God said: this is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

**Genesis 17: 2** Abraham and God

And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous. In the New Testament, we learn of the new covenant with Jesus in the sacrament of Communion.

For me, it's all about the stated, intentional relationship between the divine and the human. It's a chosen partnership where promises are made and together with God, we work together toward a common goal.

It's more than a contract. It's more than a signed piece of paper.

It's a matter of the heart. It's intentional, prayerful, not entered into lightly but through faithful discernment between individuals and the Divine.

Prairie Spirit has a covenant relationship with the Prairie to Pine Region and soon you will enter into a covenantal relationship with Susan McIlveen, your new minister.

Along with oaths and symbols of the covenant, there is often a celebration! A ceremony! A Party.....and who isn't ready for a party!!



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Fri. 25 June 2021

Our eighteenth question and last question until the Fall:

**How and when were the seasons of the church year determined?**

I must admit this is a complex question and challenges my understanding of church history and requires more research than I have been able to invest.

Let me begin by saying two things. First, the complex rhythms of the church year were not decided overnight, but evolved through long years, primarily in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox branches of the Christian Church.

These practices, the use of lectionary readings, liturgical colours for specific seasons, the dates of observances, were confirmed at what were called Church Councils. The most recent of these was the second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church convened by Pope John the 23<sup>rd</sup> and held from 1962-1965 in Rome.

Second, the Reformed wing of the Church (that's us) adopted and tweaked those practices as we discovered that worship could be enhanced by symbolism and repetition, colour and ritual. Our understanding was increased by ecumenical conversations with Anglican, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic churches through greater interaction between churches after World War II.

I'll share two examples of the development of special days in the early church. For the earliest Christians, gathering involved a meal, prayers, and a sermon or reading from one of the letters of the Apostles. Every Sunday was a celebration of Jesus and his resurrection. Fairly early, by the end of the second century (CE 200) Easter was being observed annually. This is not surprising since the Jewish Synagogues marked Passover, which was associated with Jesus crucifixion. It was easy for Christians to mark their corresponding celebration.

Christmas, the birth of Jesus came a little later. It seems that Constantine the Roman Emperor initiated that celebration during the 300's, and the birth of Jesus was separated from his baptism. These two celebrations later evolved into the feasts of Christmas and Epiphany.

The observance of Advent, Lent, Pentecost developed through church practise over the years since.