

Church Agenda (Liturgy) of 1748

a.k.a., The Muhlenberg Liturgy

Translated from the German by Dr. C. W. Schaeffer for the English translation of the *Hallesche Nachrichten*. Recorded in *A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States* (1893/1902) by Henry Eyster Jacobs.

These alterations in the Morning Service are all of a piece. Every one of them is an injury to the pure Lutheran type of the old service. The chaste liturgical taste of the fathers has become vitiated; the accord of spirit with the church of the Reformation is dying out gradually. The service of the church is sinking slowly toward the immeasurable depths into which it afterward fell. The Order of Service of 1748 is beyond comparison the noblest and purest Lutheran Service which the church in America prepared or possessed until the publication of the Church Book.

— Dr. Beale Melancthon Schmucker, c.1882

[The Agenda of 1748 was never printed; but each pastor provided himself with a written copy for his own use. Two of these copies came into the hands of the late Rev. J. W. Richards of Reading, who himself was a descendant of the patriarch Muhlenberg. The oldest and most complete copy came down from the hands of PASTOR JACOB VAN BUSKERK, and is from the year 1763. It has the chapters and paragraphs numbered, while the ritual and liturgical appointments are complete. The other copy is from the hand of PASTOR PETER MUHLENBERG, who was in Dunmore County, Va., at the time when this copy was written, in 1769. Here the chapters and paragraphs are not numbered. The directions for the several divisions are not given in full; but the liturgical material is complete.

What we here furnish in print is taken from the copy of Pastor Van Buskerk, and varies from it only in certain unimportant parts, that have been somewhat confused, the correction being supplied from the copy of Peter Muhlenberg. Notice of these variations is always given.

All the contents of the Liturgy are given, in regular order, yet only the more important parts are printed in full.]

CHAPTER I.

THE MANNER IN WHICH PUBLIC WORSHIP SHALL BE CONDUCTED IN ALL OUR CONGREGATIONS

§ 1.

Introit

#163, v.1
or #317

When the pastor enters the church the worship shall begin with the singing of the hymn, “Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist,” either entire, or several verses of it; or a verse of the hymn “Komm Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott.”

Confession

§ 2.

After the singing of the hymn, or the verse, the pastor shall go to the altar, turn his face to the congregation, and says:

Beloved in the Lord!

Thus saith the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. I will not always chide, neither will I keep anger forever: only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Accompany me therefore in making confession of sins, saying:

I, a poor sinner, confess unto God, my heavenly Father that I have grievously and in various ways sinned against him; not only by outward and gross sins, but even more by inward blindness of heart, unbelief, doubt, despondency, impatience, pride, selfishness, carnal lusts, avarice, envy, hatred and malice, and by other sinful passions which are naked and open in the sight of my Lord and God, but which I, alas! cannot fully understand. But sincerely repent, in deep sorrow, for these my sins; and with my whole heart I cry for mercy from the Lord, through Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, being resolved, with the help of the Holy Ghost, to amend my sinful life. Amen.

Kyrie

Lord God the Father in heaven, **have mercy upon us.** Lord God the Son, Redeemer of the world, **have mercy upon us.** Lord God the Holy Ghost, **have mercy upon us, and grant us Thy peace. Amen.**

§ 3.

Gloria

#166

After the confession the hymn “Allein Gott in der hoh sei Ehr” shall be sung.

§ 4.

Salutation & Collect

During the singing of the last verse the pastor goes to the altar, turns his face to the congregation and says:

The Lord be with you.

The congregation responds:

And with thy spirit.

The pastor says:

Let us pray.

Then he prays in the words of the collect which is appointed for the Sunday or the festival, in the Marburg Hymn-book. After the collect the lesson from the epistle shall be read, being introduced with the following words:

Epistle Let us devoutly listen to the reading of the lesson for this day, from the, etc.

§ 5.

#230 Then shall be sung the principal hymn, selected by the pastor, from the hymns in the Marburg Hymn-book—one familiar to the whole congregation. The whole hymn, or only a part of it, shall be sung, as circumstances may decide.

§ 6.

Gospel After the singing of the principal hymn the gospel lesson shall be read, being introduced with the same words as before the epistle. After the gospel the pastor repeats devoutly the creed, in verse, “Wir glauben all.” If children are present to be baptized, the gospel and the creed are omitted.

Creed (#374)

§ 7.

#253 or #187 Before the sermon the hymn, Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier.” or “Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend,” is sung, either entire or in part.

§ 8.

Sermon Ordinarily, the sermon shall be limited to three quarters of an hour, or, at the utmost, to one hour. If the pastor is moved to have an exordium or a series of supplications before he begins the Lord’s Prayer, he is at liberty to do so. After the Lord’s Prayer, as usual, [the gospel is read?] during which reading the congregation shall stand. The sermon being concluded, nothing else shall be read than the appointed church-prayer here following, or the litany instead of it, by way of change; and nothing but necessity shall occasion its omission. . . .

Prayers Lord’s Prayer

After the general prayer petitions for the sick shall follow, in case request has been made to that effect; then shall follow the Lord’s Prayer, and then whatever proclamation and notices may be required. When all is done, the pastor closes with the votum:

Votum The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus, unto eternal life. Amen.

[Skip ahead]

§ 9.

[This paragraph is taken from the copy of Peter Muhlenberg.]

Then a hymn shall be sung. After the sermon and the closing hymn the pastor goes to the altar and says:

The Lord be with you.

Cong. Resp. And with thy spirit.

Pastor. Let us pray.

Hold us up, O Lord, Lord our God, that we may live; and let our hope never make us ashamed. Help us by thy might, that we may wax strong; and so shall we ever delight ourselves in thy statutes, through Jesus Christ thy dear Son, our Lord. Amen.

After the sermon in the afternoon shall be sung the hymn “Ach, blieb bei uns, Herr Jesu Christ.” Then shall follow

The Benediction.

The Lord bless thee and keep thee, and give thee peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Then a verse shall be sung at the close.

CHAPTER IV.

OF CONFESSION AND THE HOLY COMMUNION.

§ 1.

Ordinarily, whenever circumstances admit of it, the Supper of the Lord shall be administered on Christmas, on Easter, on Pentecost. It may also be administered at other times, as the necessities of the congregation may demand.

§ 2.

The pastor shall give notice from the pulpit of the administration of the Lord's Supper, one week or two weeks before the time of its celebration. To this notice he shall add a short exhortation, and at the same time he shall inform the people as to the day when they shall report themselves to him and have their names recorded.

§ 3.

The pastor shall keep a register of the communicants, which is to continue in the care of the congregation.

§ 4.

In case the pastor should know that, among those who call upon him to report their names for the Holy Communion, there is one or more who are living in strife, or occasioning public scandal, and his own influence should not be sufficient to remedy the evil, he may call the vestry of the congregation together, and direct such offenders to appear before them, with their plea and answer.

§ 5.

On the day before the administration of the Lord's Supper, and at the hour appointed by the pastor, the communicants shall all assemble in the church, when the following order shall be observed:

1. A penitential hymn, or a hymn suited to the object of the meeting, shall be sung.
2. After the hymn the pastor, speaking from the pulpit, exhorts the people to repentance; and in the application makes use of what he may have observed and learned about their spiritual state at the time when they reported their names.
3. After the Lord's Prayer the pastor reads aloud the names of the communicants that have been reported to him.
4. After the reading of the names a verse is sung, and the pastor goes before the altar and receives and writes the names of those persons who, for satisfactory reasons, could not report themselves before.
5. Then the pastor calls upon the male communicants first, to come before him, and addresses to them the following questions:

I now ask you, in the presence of the omniscient God, and upon the testimony of your own conscience:

1, 2. [The first two questions have been retained unchanged in all subsequent editions of the Pennsylvania Liturgy.]

3. I ask you: Whether you are fully resolved, with the help of God, to yield yourselves entirely to the gracious direction of the Holy Spirit, by his word; in order that by the power, the help, and the grace of the same, sin may be subdued in you, the old man with his evil deeds and corrupt affections be weakened and overcome by daily sorrow and repentance, and that you may win a complete victory over the world and all its allurements?

If this be your serious purpose, confess it and answer, Yes.

4. Finally, I ask you: Whether any one of you yet has, in his heart, any complaint against another?

6. After these questions are answered then the pastor and all of them together kneel down, when one of the communicants leads in repeating the confession of sin aloud, the pastor himself adding a short ejaculation thereto.

[The copy of Van Buskerk has no form of confession for this act; but the Muhlenberg copy supplies the following.]

I, a poor sinner, confess unto God, my heavenly Father that I have grievously and in various ways sinned against him, not only by outward, etc.; . . . with the help of the Holy Ghost, to amend my sinful life. Amen.

Lord God the Father in heaven, **have mercy upon us.** Lord God the Son, Redeemer of the world, **have mercy upon us.** Lord God the Holy Ghost, **have mercy upon us, and grant us Thy peace. Amen.** [The same as under § 2.]

[Resume]
Absolution

7. The pastor pronounces the absolution in the following words:

Upon this confession of sin which you have now made, I, a minister of my Lord Jesus Christ, hereby declare, to all them who are truly penitent and heartily believe in Jesus Christ, and are sincerely resolved, in heart, to amend their lives and daily to grow in grace, to them I declare the forgiveness of all their sins; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

But, on the other hand, I declare to all who are impenitent, to the hypocritical as well as the openly ungodly, and I testify, by the Word of God, and in the name of Jesus, that so long as they continue in their impenitent state, loving sin and hating righteousness, God will not forgive their sins, but retains their sins against them, and will assuredly punish and condemn them for their iniquities, in the end, except they turn to him, now, in this day of grace; except they sincerely forsake all their evil ways, and come to Christ in true repentance and faith; which we heartily pray they may do. Amen.

Then the service shall close with the singing of the verse, and the pastor pronouncing the benediction.

[Here a leaf is missing from the Van Buskerk copy, that contained all of the Retentio, after the words “openly ungodly,” and the beginning of the order for the Holy Communion. The missing portions are supplied from the Muhlenberg copy. The Van Buskerk copy, which is defective in Sections 6 and 7, begins again in Section 8.]

THE HOLY COMMUNION.

The minister goes before the altar, places the bread and the wine in order, then returns to the congregation and says:

Sursum corda

Minister. The Lord be with you.

Congregation. And with thy spirit.

Minister. Let us lift up our hearts,

Congregation. We lift them up unto the Lord.

Minister. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Sabaoth.

Congregation. The whole world is full of his glory.

§ 8.

Exhortation Before the communion the pastor addresses the communicants in the exhortation here following.

Beloved in the Lord!

[Here follows Luther’s Paraphrase of the Lord’s Prayer, and his exhortation to the sacrament, exactly as it occurs in his “Deutsche Messe” (German Communion) of 1526.]

§ 9.

Consecration The pastor turns his face to the bread and wine, and repeats the Lord’s Prayer and the words of institution.

Let us pray: Our Father, etc.

Our Lord Jesus Christ in the night . . . in remembrance of me.

§ 10.

Invitation Then the pastor turns to the congregation and says:

Now let all those who are found to be prepared, by the experience of sincere repentance and faith, approach, in the name of the Lord, and receive the Holy Supper.

§ 11.

Distribution In giving the bread the pastor shall say these words:

Take and eat. This is the true¹ body of your Lord Jesus Christ, given unto death for you; may this strengthen you in the true faith unto everlasting life. Amen.

In giving the cup:

Take and drink; this is the true blood of your Lord Jesus Christ, of the New Testament, shed for the forgiveness of your sins, unto everlasting life. Amen.

§ 12.

Post-Comm. The communion being finished, the pastor shall say:

Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: Hallelujah.

The congregation responds:

And his mercy endureth forever: Hallelujah.

Then the pastor says the following collect:

We give thee thanks, O gracious God, our heavenly Father, because thou hast refreshed us with these thy salutary gifts; and we humbly beseech thee to strengthen us, through the same, in faith toward thee, and in fervent love toward one another, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Benediction Receive the blessing of the Lord.

The Lord bless thee and keep thee, etc. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

#533 (opt.)

¹ The insertion of “true” was a concession to Revs. Wagner, Stoever, etc. See Mann’s “Life of Muhlenberg,” pp. 185 sqq.