



SAINT MICHAEL'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Discovering the meaning behind Episcopal worship

Week 1 — The Opening Acclamation

Ever notice that Episcopal worship doesn't officially begin with “Good morning” or announcements? It begins with God: **“Blessed be God...”** Our first words remind us why we've gathered and whose we are. Before we sing, pray, listen, or receive Communion, we proclaim a simple truth: **God is here. We belong to God. And everything begins with grace.**

Week 2 — The Collect for Purity

Last week, worship began by remembering **whose we are**. Now we prepare our hearts: “Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known...” We don't need to hide or pretend with God. We come exactly as we are, asking God to cleanse our hearts so that we may **love God more fully and worship truthfully.**

Week 3 — The Gloria or Song of Praise

Before we start asking God for things, we praise God simply for **being God**. That's what the Gloria and other songs of praise help us do. Worship turns our attention away from ourselves and toward the goodness, beauty, and glory of God. **Praise reminds us that the center of the universe isn't us—and that's wonderfully freeing news.**

Week 4 — The Collect of the Day

When the priest says, **“Let us pray,”** a brief silence follows. Then comes the Collect—a prayer that “collects” the prayers of God's people and usually introduces the theme of the day. That little silence matters. We gather our scattered thoughts, worries, hopes, and lives and bring them before God. **Our many prayers become one prayer.**

Week 5 — Why Do We Read So Much Scripture?

Episcopal worship is soaked in Scripture. On most Sundays we hear readings from the Old Testament, Psalms, New Testament, and Gospel. Why so much? Because before we tell God what we think, **we listen.** We enter the great story of God's love, faithfulness, and redemption—and slowly discover that **our little stories belong inside God's much bigger story.**

Week 6 — Why Do We Pray the Psalms?

The Psalms have been called the prayer book of the Bible. They contain almost every human emotion imaginable—joy, anger, fear, gratitude, grief, doubt, and hope. We pray them because God doesn't ask us to leave our real lives at the church door. **Whatever you're carrying today, chances are somebody prayed it thousands of years before you did.**

Week 7 — Why Do We Stand for the Gospel?

We've already heard Scripture, so why does everyone suddenly stand for the Gospel? Because now we hear directly about the life and teaching of **Jesus Christ.** Standing is an ancient posture of attention and honor. We rise not because the other readings don't matter, but because the Gospel brings us face-to-face with Jesus. **Jesus is speaking. We're listening.**

Week 8 — Why Does the Gospel Come Into the Congregation?

Sometimes the Gospel isn't read from the front of the church. It is carried right into the middle of the congregation. There's beautiful symbolism here: **the Gospel belongs among the people**. God's Word isn't meant to remain safely inside a book or behind an altar rail. The Good News of Jesus Christ comes **right into the middle of our lives**.

Week 9 — Why Do We Have a Sermon?

The sermon isn't supposed to be a religious lecture. Its purpose is to help us hear God's ancient Word **in the middle of our actual lives today**. What does the Gospel have to say about our relationships, fears, hopes, failures, choices, and dreams? Good preaching helps Scripture move from something we merely **hear** to something we begin to **live**.

Week 10 — Why Do We Say the Creed?

After hearing God's Word, we respond: **“We believe...”** Notice that we don't say merely, “I believe.” Christianity isn't a solo project. The Creed reminds us of the great story we belong to. When your faith is strong, you say these words for someone struggling. And when you struggle, **the Church believes alongside you**.

Week 11 — Why Do We Have Prayers of the People?

Notice the name: not “Prayers of the Priest,” but **Prayers of the People**. Having heard God's Word, we bring the world before God—our Church, community, leaders, suffering, needs, gratitude, and those who have died. Worship opens our eyes beyond ourselves. **We bring the world to God in prayer so that God can send us back into the world in love**.

Week 12 — Why Do We Confess Our Sins?

Confession isn't about convincing ourselves we're terrible. It's about **telling the truth** in the presence of a God whose mercy is greater than our failures. We acknowledge the ways we've wounded ourselves, others, and God. Then comes the remarkable part: forgiveness. Christianity says we don't have to hide our brokenness. **Grace gives us permission to tell the truth—and begin again.**

Week 13 — Why Do We Exchange the Peace?

The Peace isn't halftime! Before coming to Christ's Table, we turn toward one another and say, **“The peace of the Lord be always with you.”** Jesus connects reconciliation with worship. We can't claim communion with God while ignoring our relationships with one another. So before receiving the bread of peace, **we practice becoming people of peace.**

Week 14 — Why Do We Have an Offertory?

The offering isn't the price of admission to church. **Grace is free.** Giving is our response to grace. We offer some of what God has given us—our money, bread, wine, and ultimately ourselves. It's our way of saying: **“Everything I have comes from you. Take what I have and who I am, and use it for your purposes.”**

Week 15 — Why Do We Set the Table?

Bread and wine placed on the altar. They're wonderfully ordinary things—the food and drink of everyday life. And that's the point. Christianity proclaims that God meets us **in ordinary things.** Bread. Wine. Water. Human touch. Ordinary people. We bring ordinary gifts to the Table, trusting God to fill them—and us—with extraordinary grace.

Week 16 — Why Do We “Lift Up Our Hearts”?

The Eucharistic Prayer begins with an ancient conversation: **“The Lord be with you... Lift up your hearts... Let us give thanks...”** Christians have prayed these words for nearly two thousand years. And notice the invitation: *Lift up your hearts.* Bring your whole life—joy, sorrow, gratitude, worry—to God. **The great prayer of Thanksgiving is about to begin.**

Week 17 — Why Do We Sing “Holy, Holy, Holy”?

During Communion we sing, **“Holy, holy, holy Lord...”** These words echo the worship of heaven described in Isaiah and Revelation. For a moment, the boundary between heaven and earth becomes wonderfully thin. We aren't merely singing about God. We join our voices **“with Angels and Archangels and all the company of heaven.”** Worship becomes bigger than this room.

Week 18 — What Is the Eucharistic Prayer?

At the altar, the priest tells the great story again: **creation, covenant, Jesus, the Cross, Resurrection, and God's promise to make all things new.** Why repeat it every week? Because we forget. The world tells us countless stories about who we are. At this Table, God tells us again: **You are mine. You are loved. You have been redeemed.**

Week 19 — What Does “Do This in Remembrance of Me” Mean?

For us, “remember” usually means thinking about something that happened long ago. At Communion, remembrance means something deeper. We don't merely think about Jesus—we enter again into the story of his life, death, and Resurrection. Christ's love isn't locked in the past. **The risen Jesus meets his people here and now and feeds us with grace.**

Week 20 — Why Do We Say the Great Amen?

At the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, the congregation responds with a hearty **“AMEN!”** It's much more than a religious way of saying “the end.” Amen means something like **“Yes! Let it be so!”** The priest has spoken the prayer, but it belongs to all of us. With that Amen, the whole congregation says: **This is our prayer. This is our faith.**

Week 21 — Why Do We Pray the Lord's Prayer?

Just before Communion, we pray the prayer Jesus taught his disciples: **“Our Father...”** Notice again: our Father, not my Father. At Christ's Table, strangers become family. Rich and poor, young and old, lifelong believers and struggling seekers stand together before God with empty hands. **We come as one family asking our Father for our daily bread.**

Week 22 — Why Do We Break the Bread?

Before Communion, the priest breaks the consecrated bread. This is called **the Fraction.** It recalls Jesus breaking bread at the Last Supper and reminds us of Christ's self-giving love on the Cross. But the story doesn't end with brokenness. The broken bread becomes food for God's people. **In Christ, even what is broken can become a source of life.**

Week 23 — Why Do We Receive Communion?

We come forward and hold out **empty hands.** That's a sermon all by itself. We don't achieve Communion. We don't purchase it. We **receive** it. God gives himself to us as gift: “The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven.” Our empty hands remind us of the heart of the Gospel: **Grace isn't something we earn. Grace is something we receive.**

Week 24 — Why Do We Pray After Communion?

We've heard God's Word. We've prayed. We've come to the Table. We've been fed. Now what? The Post-Communion Prayer asks God to **send us into the world** to do the work we've been given to do. Communion isn't meant to keep us inside church. Christ feeds us so that we can become Christ's hands, feet, heart, and love in the world.

Week 25 — Why Does Worship End With “Go”?

Notice the final word of our worship: **Go**. We gathered, listened, prayed, confessed, made peace, came to the Table, and were fed. Now we're sent. Sunday worship isn't an escape from the world; it's preparation to enter it differently. **We come to church to be formed by Jesus—and then we're sent to love God, love others, and serve the world.**



SAINT MICHAEL'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH



LOVE GOD
LOVE OTHERS
SERVE THE WORLD

*What we celebrate in worship,
we are called to live every day.*

COME WORSHIP WITH US.
ALL ARE WELCOME. ALL BELONG.



WORSHIP



COMMUNITY



SERVICE



LOVE



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