

1 **Liturgy for Sunday: Reflections in Detail Session 10: Service of the Word**

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2 **Introduction**

- The "Service of the Word" in ELW provides an alternate resource for the Sunday assembly.
- While Holy Communion remains the norm for Sunday worship in Lutheran congregations (supported by the Confessions), the authors of the ELW recognize that many Lutheran congregations have historically celebrated Holy Communion less often than weekly.
- Note: thankfully, this is not an issue at Hope Lutheran Church!

3 **Introduction**

- Rather than force these congregations to celebrate Holy Communion when they are uncomfortable doing so, or worse yet having only the pastor or a few congregants receive (like the medieval "private Mass"), this service provides a "Communion-like" service for Sunday worship.
- This is a uniquely Lutheran service of Holy Communion without communion; mass without meal, "missa brevis."
- Work of teaching and encouragement for weekly communion continues, but here is an option in the meantime.

4 **Introduction**

- The Service of the Word in the ELW follows the pattern of the full communion service in ELW—except that here a thanksgiving for the word of God replaces the Meal in the Gathering-Word-Meal-Sending pattern.
- Three requirements:
 - Announce when the next full communion service will be.
 - Regular checking to see if the congregation is ready to begin weekly communion.
 - Preaching should focus on the meaning and importance of the meal.

5 **Introduction**

- Importance of continuing to teach about the importance of the meal and the refusal of compulsion were at the heart of Luther's own writing in both SC and LC (p. 237)
- Thus, the Service of the Word is a service of Holy Communion that is waiting for another time to celebrate the Meal.
- Replaces other, easier services such as Morning Prayer, etc., with focus on not doing the "easiest" thing.

6 **Notes on the Services**

- Use Propers and prayers for the day.
- Appropriate to use any of the settings for Holy Communion.
- Gathering, Word and Sending as described in HC service.
- Confession and Forgiveness (or thanksgiving for baptism).
- Sermon is integral to this service, with at least part of the sermon to encourage people toward communion.

7 **Service of the Word: Gathering**

- The gathering song may take on a weightier portion of the service.
- The gathering in a Service of the Word prepares the assembly for hearing and reflecting on God's word.

8 **Service of the Word: Word**

- The time of hearing, proclaiming, interpreting and responding to the word of God is the center of this service.
- Thus it is appropriate to expand this section: silence, expanded responses, use of interpretive reading or drama, varying use of Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, etc.

9 **Service of the Word: Thanksgiving and Sending**

- During the time of thanksgiving, the assembly gives thanks through offering, song and prayer.
- As with the gathering song, sending song may be weightier and could focus on mission.
- Closing prayer, in Lutheran tradition, is a thanksgiving for the word of God that had been read and preached in this service.
- ELW provides the "Great Thanksgiving."