

There are basically two parts to the Holy Communion service: the Word and the Sacrament.

The Word part consists of

- * the first part of the Holy Communion

(The Gathering and The Liturgy of the Word)

or

- * A Service of the Word (Preparation, The Liturgy of the Word, Prayers).

This can take the form of Morning or Evening Prayer, or a Family Service.

The Sacrament part consists of

- * The Peace
- * Preparation of the Table
- * The Eucharistic Prayer
- * Breaking of the Bread
- * Giving of Communion
- * The Dismissal

These features are not all of equal weight.

How it works

First decide the structure.

This is well set out [here](#), although Note 10 to A Service of the Word ([here](#)) says that the order provided is not prescriptive. A decision will need to be taken about where to place those ingredients that are normal but may vary in position; for example, where penitence is to come, and where the Peace is shared.

Second, add to this structure:

* Other elements that are compulsory, but may vary in form. All of the authorized forms of confession and absolution from *Common Worship* may be found in Section B. When A Service of the Word with a Celebration of Holy Communion is being used, the readings must be governed by an authorized lectionary, but the Creed could be the Apostles' Creed or an authorized Affirmation of Faith. All those currently authorized may be found in Section E.

* Those ingredients in the service which are not compulsory; e.g. the collect for purity, the Gloria in excelsis, the prayer of humble access, the choice of post communion or another suitable prayer.

* Those parts of the service where 'ad lib' or unofficial material may be used, or where there is provision made in the Resource Sections, e.g. the Greeting, the Prayers of Intercession, the introduction to the Peace, Prayers at the Preparation of the Table, the Post Communion or other suitable or seasonal prayers, the seasonal or other suitable form of blessing.

The Peace

Most modern rites place the Peace between the Prayers and the Preparation of the Table. Note the scope for placing it elsewhere, for example at the beginning or the end of the service, as well as the option to introduce it with other words, which may be composed for the occasion or the locality. See [here](#).

Preparation of the Table

Customs vary on the solemnity with which this is done. In some places, variable prayers may be used. These should be *preparatory*, as the title for this part implies, and not dramatically overshadow the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Eucharistic Prayer

One of the authorized forms must always be used. A Eucharistic Prayer, whether it takes the form of extended monologue with acclamations, or a dialogue between president and congregation, normally includes the following:

- * thanksgiving for creation, redemption and the work of the Spirit
- * the memorial prayer for the Church to receive and grow in the life of Christ
- * doxology, offering praise to God the Holy Trinity.

These are the 'deep structures' of the prayer. They need to be 'signposted' clearly as the prayer progresses, not least by the tone of voice(s) used

as the prayer is proclaimed.

The pattern of the prayer is normally

- * an opening dialogue
- * an introduction to praise
- * an extended act of thanksgiving
- * the narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper
- * the memorial prayer
- * the prayer for the work of the Spirit
- * the concluding doxology.

While this basic pattern is true for all the Eucharistic Prayers in *Common Worship* Order One, an examination of the position of the Sanctus reveals two slightly different structures.

- * The traditional Western structure, to which people grew accustomed in the prayers in *The Alternative Service Book 1980*, places the Sanctus at the climax of the preface or extended thanksgiving. It is followed by petition, which also encompasses the narrative of institution. This is the pattern of Prayers A, B, C and E.
- * The Trinitarian or Eastern structure followed in Prayers F and G places the Sanctus within the thanksgiving, where it marks the change of focus from Father to Son. In this pattern the narrative of institution marks the shift from praise to petition and the focus on the Holy Spirit comes after it. This Trinitarian pattern is slightly less clear in Prayer D. Prayer H is also Trinitarian in pattern, but the initial thanksgiving is concluded with the narrative of institution and the Sanctus is the final climax of praise at the end of the prayer.

Within this framework there is scope for variations:

- * The Preface: Short Prefaces may be inserted in Eucharistic Prayers A, B and C in Order One, and Extended Prefaces may be used with Eucharistic Prayers A, B and E. See Note 18 on page 333 in *Common Worship*, and also Praise in Resource Section G in this book. Others may be specially composed, provided that they balance the style and overall length of the rest of the prayer.
- * Acclamations: four three-line acclamations, each with a specific introductory line, are provided for Eucharistic Prayers A, B, C, E and G, and

one of them must be chosen. Optional acclamations are suggested for use in Prayers A and E, and as Note 18 says, other acclamations may be used.

* Chorus or metrical versions of the Sanctus and Doxology may be used, instead of those printed.

In Order One the Eucharistic Prayer leads into the Lord's Prayer, but A Service of the Word with a Celebration of Holy Communion does not specify where the Lord's Prayer should be used, opening up the possibility of using it, for example, in the Prayers of Intercession or in its Order Two position.

Breaking of the Bread

This symbolic action prepares for the sharing of the bread and wine. On Sundays and Principal Holy Days one of the forms of words provided in Order One or Order Two must be used. On other days it may be done in silence or during the Agnus Dei. See Note 20 on page 334 of *Common Worship*.

Invitation to Communion

Forms for this may be found on page 180 of *Common Worship*, but there are no explicit instructions either in the Notes or the Order [here](#).

Giving of Communion

Local customs vary. However the consecrated bread and wine are shared, it should be done decently and in order.

After Communion

Consecrated bread and wine not required for communion are reverently consumed at the end of the distribution or after the service. This is not a liturgical act and need not be done at the holy table or by the president.

For prayer after communion there is a choice between presidential texts (the authorized Post Communion of the day or another suitable prayer) and congregational texts. Other alternative prayers and dismissals are provided in Resource Section J.

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