

The Common Liturgy

2004 Home Fellowship Edition

Preface

The Common Liturgy of the Ante-Nicene Christian Fellowships (a.k.a. the Communion of the Ante-Nicene Christian Fellowships) is a Liturgy, or “work of the people”, based upon the descriptives of collective worship of the early church within the Holy Scriptures and the Didache, or “Teachings of the Twelve Apostles”. Therefore it is, by comparison to other “traditional” liturgies, Simple.

The reader or participant will quickly notice the absence of the traditional lengthy prayers and litanies that one would find in most liturgical expressions both ancient and contemporary. The reason for this omission is quite simply that we are keeping the directives of Our Lord Jesus Christ as stated in **Mathew 6:5-15**. Also it is important to note that the liturgical instruction given the early church in the Didache reflects this same simplistic, by traditional standards, approach to corporate worship.

A second, inescapably noticeable variance from the more traditional liturgy formats is the inclusion within the “Common Liturgy” of what is called “The Edification”(or “The Liberty”) , that portion of the liturgy in which all observers are encouraged to interactively participate and contribute in accordance with **1st Corinthians 14:26-40** “...for the greater edification of the saints.”

A third noticeable variation from the more traditional liturgical formats is that there is no specific “Confession of Sin” within the Common Liturgy. The function of a “Confession of Sin” is quite adequately served by the Lord’s Prayer. It is for this reason that the Lord’s Prayer is rendered quite early in the “Common Liturgy” as directed in the Didache (14:1-3)

Finally the “Charity” or Eucharist of the Common Liturgy includes both the words of Holy Scripture (the Last Supper) and the prayers of thanksgiving as directed by the Didache.

The primary design of the “Common Liturgy” is in accordance with the primary purposes of collective church worship as attested to in the Holy Scriptures; which is the edification of the church and the sharing of the Agape or “Love feast” (the Eucharist, Communion etc.). While what we know today as a “Worship Service” is included within those above stated purposes; corporate “Worship”, although edifying, was not the primary purpose of the “Gathering of the Saints” of the Ante-Nicene Church nor should it be for the Church of today. It must also be understood that the Common Liturgy is designed to be used in both of the two primary collective worship formats of the Ante-Nicene Christian Fellowships those being “The Church in the Home” (or Home Fellowships) and “The Gathering of the Saints”. For this reason it is imperative that the “Common Liturgy” be a liturgy that could be performed by either an Elder (Faithful head of a house-hold), a Deacon/ess, and a Presbyter or Bishop or, in other words, as “Common” in application as in use.

One more important point of consideration that must be noted in the design of the “Common Liturgy” is that it had to be “inclusive” in regards to the various apostolically orthodox Rites of worship within the Broader Body of Christ. This was achieved by the allowance of “Rite Specific” language for all portions save that of the “Charity” (Eucharist). Such an allowance ensures that while the specific language may not be “common” to all congregations the format, function, and purpose of the Common Liturgy will maintain the Common Unity of Spirit and Purpose of the Ante-Nicene Christian Fellowships, which is our ultimate prayer, hope, and desire.

The Common Liturgy

(Or prescribed format for collective worship)

For the

Ante-Nicene Christian Fellowships

The A.C.F. maintains two primary forms of collective worship gatherings, the “Church in the Home” (Home Fellowships) and the “Gathering of the Saints”. This Common Liturgy is designed, in keeping with Apostolic tradition, to facilitate the distinct purposes and functions of both of these worship gatherings of our communion of faith.

*Although each of the two primary worship gatherings serve their own unique purposes and functions unto the greater edification of the Body of Christ they do share a common foundation in that they both embrace the scriptural directives of **Unity** (of the Church), **Liberty** (of the local congregation allowing for the Holy Spirit’s edifying work) and **Charity** (Remembering the Love and Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ through the observance of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper)*

What follows is the “Common Liturgy” of the A.C.F. “Common” in that it is a shared guideline for collective worship within the A.C.F., in its adherence to the Apostolic directives of Scripture and in its adherence to the Didache Thanksgiving in Communion. The reader will quickly recognize the Unity, Liberty and Charity format.

It must be stated that strict adherence to this “Common Liturgy” is not required. The A.C.F. recognizes that differing congregations may adhere to differing “Rites” of worship. The “Common Liturgy” is structured to allow for the utilization of these various Rites.

The currently accepted Rites of Worship within the A.C.F. are;

- *The “Common” - Ante-Nicene Rite (“evolving” - currently using the Revised Common Lectionary)*
- *Anglican (BCP 1928)*
- *The Episcopal (BCP 1979)*
- *The Celtic Rite (Independent, Iona, Northumbria)*
- *The Old Catholic Rite(Old Catholic Missal)*

Regardless of which Rite within the Communion is preferred by the local Ante-Nicene Community adherence to the Unity, Liberty, and Charity format is strongly encouraged; as is adherence to the Didachean (Did-a-kay-N) Thanksgiving. (However Liturgies for the observances of particular “occasions” within the various Rites are permissible and encouraged)

It is important to be ever mindful of the fact that it is the needs of the local Community as directed by the Holy Spirit that are to dictate the worship structure of the faithful in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and Apostolic Tradition. It is the responsibility of the every believer, episcopate and elder to ensure that the Glorification of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the edification of all the Church are always paramount in our service to Our Lord, one another, and the world.

The Common Liturgy

The Unity:

The "Unity" is that portion of the Liturgy that is designed to keep the local congregation mindful of the essentiality of maintaining our union with the broader and historical Body of Christ, the Church.

The Celebrant stands through out the "Unity".

The Salutation:

Celebrant

Blessed be God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. +

Faithful

And Blessed be His Kingdom, now and forever.

All AMEN. +

Collect of Purity:

Celebrant Almighty God,

All to you all hearts are opened, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid:

Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by inspiration of your Holy Spirit, That we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your Holy Name; through Christ Our Lord. AMEN. +

The Lord's Prayer:

Celebrant

As the Lord has taught us, let us pray.

All

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name,
thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins as we forgive those that have sinned against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kingdom, and Power, and Glory, for ever and ever. **AMEN +**

Celebrant

Holy Father, we thank you for your Mercy and Grace, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, by whom we have remission of sins and Life everlasting within your Blessed Kingdom.

All

We Thank you Lord God Almighty for your Mercy and Grace.

Blessed be the Name of the Lord,

And Blessed be His Kingdom, now and forever. **AMEN +**

Collect (Prayer) of the Day:

Here the Celebrant leads the community in the Collect of the Day in accordance with the lectionary of the chosen Rite. If the Community is a "Common Rite" Community the Celebrant leads in Prayer as so moved by the Holy Spirit.

NOTE: *If the Liturgy is being celebrated in honor of or upon a special occasion either for the Church, the Rite or the Local Community prayers for such special occasion should be said here in place of the Collect of the Day.*

NOTE: *For those "Common Rite" communities within the A.C.F. that have adopted the use of the Revised Common Lectionary the, "Collects" from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer are appropriate for use.*

Celebrant

In Unity with the Universal Body of Christ, Let us pray.

Faithful O God hear this, the prayer of your Bride.

Celebrant Celebrant says the Collect (or prayer for the occasion)

All **AMEN +**

The Creed (or the “Pronouncement of Faith”)

*The Creed is stated by all as a means of publicly reaffirming our Faith. The A.C.F. adheres to the belief that the universal acceptance of the Apostle's Creed is evidence of its divine inspiration for use by the Body of Christ as sufficient pronouncements of our Faith to the world. **The Creed is read in unison while standing.***

Celebrant

Let us, with joyful hearts, pronounce our Faith before one another and the world.

The Apostles Creed

All I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's Only Son, Our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended unto Hades.

On the third day He rose again; He ascended into Heaven, He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

AMEN +

The Peace: Question & Pronouncement

*The Peace has traditionally been used as a time of greeting amongst the faithful, and rightly so. However the A.C.F. sees the “Peace” as not only a pronouncement of the Peace of the Lord upon us but also as an opportunity to ensure that the Peace of the Lord reigns within the Body of Christ. This is achieved by the addition of the question “**Does the Peace of the Lord dwell among us?**” before the pronouncement. By asking the question the Celebrant provides the opportunity for the faithful to address any concern they may have, either in dealing with an issue affecting their walk of faith, or with their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ or any number of areas that may be hindering them personally or the local Church in general and to do so in an atmosphere that is conducive to righteous resolution, genuine intimate support among the family of God, and reconciliation thus further strengthening the Body of Christ.*

This is important because all too often we are unaware of the fact that our actions or inactions may have troubled the hearts or walk of faith of our fellow Christians and, left unresolved, such occurrences can develop into divisions and may even cause one to leave the Church. Further more, as Christians, we have the right to expect the counsel and encouragement of our fellow Christians in dealing with our walk of faith. While ultimately our life in Christ is between our Lord and ourselves we have both the right and obligation, as members of the Body of Christ, to both seek and provide any counsel, advice, encouragement, righteous rebuke for correction, and any other necessary actions to preserve and assist our fellow Christians in their life in Christ. Raising the question provides a means by which the Holy Spirit can further edify the local Church by finding resolution by consensus under divine guidance.

*If any member of the faithful is troubled the proper response is “**I seek the Peace of the Lord**”. The presiding episcopate (be it an Elder, Deacon/ess or Presbyter) will then allow the respondent to share their concern with the rest of the assembled Body. Once the concern is brought forward the Celebrant should allow, in an orderly fashion, for any of the rest of the Body to offer insight/counsel/advice to the respondent. Once all that wish to do so have offered their assistance the Celebrant then offers their counsel. If the concern is regarding another member of the Body the Celebrant (most likely a member of the episcopate) must discern whether or not the concern can be resolved, in a timely manner, at that time. Most likely it can be resolved by an act of forgiveness, both sought and given, between those concerned. If the episcopate discerns that the concern will take much more time than is available He/She states to those directly concerned “**Brother [& or] Sisters we will seek the Lord's guidance together in prayer and counsel.**” At which the episcopate must then make time for resolution of the concern and as soon as possible announce that resolution has been achieved to the local Body. (And possibly allow for sharing of testimonies of those involved as a matter of edification of the Body)*

NOTE: “The Peace” in the “Gathering of the Saints” **ONLY** includes the pronouncement. It is faithfully assumed that any concerns have been addressed in the most conducive atmosphere for positive resolution, that of the “Church in the Home”, prior to the “Gathering of the Saints”.

The Question

Celebrant

Does the Peace of the Lord dwell among us?

Faithful

Resp.1) The Peace of the Lord reigns in my heart.

Resp.2) I seek the Peace of the Lord.

If there is no Resp.2 proceed to Pronouncement. If there are any Resp.2 allow the Respondent to bring their concern to the Body and seek resolution either by counsel, through forgiveness, or by consensus of the Body.

If it becomes clear that resolution to the concern will take more time than is available the episcopate can announce;

Celebrant

Brother(s) [& or] Sister(s) we will seek the Lord's guidance together in prayer and counsel.

The Pronouncement

Celebrant The Peace of the Lord be with you always.

Faithful And also with you.

Then the Faithful may greet one another in the Name of the Lord.

(Here ends the "Unity" of the Liturgy)

The reader may notice that the "Common Liturgy" does not include a collective "Confession of Sin" of the more traditional liturgies. The reason for this is that the Lord's Prayer allows us both to acknowledge the fact that we indeed do/have sinned as well as provided the means by which to ask for forgiveness of those sins. The A.C.F. believes that since the Lord's Prayer was taught to us by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself it is most sufficient for the collective confession of sins.

The Liberty: (Also called the "Edification")

The "Liberty" portion of the "Common Liturgy" is designed in accordance with 1st Corinthians 14:26 of the Holy Scriptures "for the further edification of the Church". Here the episcopate takes on more of a role of facilitation of the assembly of the faithful rather than a presiding role. It is the view of the A.C.F. that inclusion of such a format into the liturgy of the Church allows for the greater manifestation and workings of the Holy Spirit within the corporate life of the Body of Christ.

Reading (or Liturgy) of the Word

The Reading of the Word is the sharing and study of the Holy Scriptures within the corporate worship of the Church. Since the Reading of the Holy Scriptures occurs in every Christian Communion some might ask; "Why the Reading of the Word is not included in the "Unity" portion of the Common Liturgy?" The answer is because the fact that the A.C.F. allows for various Rites of Worship the many local A.C.F. Communities may not all be utilizing the same Readings on the same day, indeed the selected Readings will be directed by the lectionary/missal of the local A.C.F.'s chosen Rite of Worship.

Celebrant

Let us now read from the Holy Scriptures given to us under direction of the Holy Spirit that we might know God and His will for us that we might Love Him More.

Faithful Thanks be to God

Here the Celebrant will call upon a Reader, either pre-appointed or at random, to read the Epistle reading of the day as indicated by the lectionary of the local A.C.F. community.

1st Reader

A reading from the letter (or 2nd or 3rd letter) of our Brother

(i.e. Paul) to the church at (i.e. Ephesus).

(Chapter & verse(s) should be given so that all may read along silently with the reader)

After each Reading, the Reader says

1st Reader The Word of the Lord.

Faithful Thanks be to God.

Then the Celebrant will call upon a second Reader, either pre-appointed or at random, to read the Gospel reading of the day as indicated by the lectionary of the local A.C.F. community. The A.C.F. does not restrict reading from the Gospel to just the episcopate. Any Baptized and Confirmed member of the Body of Christ may do so.

2nd Reader

The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the Apostle [& or] our Brother (i.e. Mark).

(Chapter & verse(s) should be given so that all may read along silently with the reader)

After the Gospel Reading, the Reader says

2nd Reader The Gospel of Our Lord.

Faithful All Praises to you, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Ministerial

The Ministerial is the opportunity for the Celebrant to share some Episcopal insight on the Readings, a short “sermon” or relevant illustration or application of the Readings to the Church collectively and/or individually. The Ministerial is also an excellent opportunity to initiate a “Bible Study Discussion” on the material covered in the Readings.

The Edification

Here the Liturgy is opened to all for the sharing of a reading or revelation from the Scriptures, the Testimony of the Fathers (Ante-Nicene Fathers), Lives of the Saints, or anything that fosters a greater personal or corporate understanding of the faith as well as songs of praise, hymns, a poem or proverb or a personal testimony of Our Lord’s mercy, power, and/or grace in our lives. It is suggested that “The Edification” be initiated with Songs of Praise; after which the Celebrant continues;

Celebrant

Who here shall share the Love of Christ for the edification of the Church?

Resp.

The Spirit of the Lord has moved me to share with you _____.

This continued until all who are so moved have shared the blessings of the Lord in the lives with the Church. After which the Celebrant Continues;

Petitions and Praises

Celebrant

Let us go to the Lord in Prayer,

Let us bring Him our burdens and our praises,

Together in one accord.

Whoever has need of the Lord’s Loving grace in their lives bring it before us now that we may petition the Lord together as members of His One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church , the family of Christ.

(Pause to allow relies)

Celebrant

Whoever has a heart full of praise for the wondrous Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ or the mighty workings of His Holy Spirit in our lives let them bring them before us now, that we might praise Our Lord together being in Once Spirit.

(Pause to allow relies)

Here is the time for the Faithful to either voice their needs or praises or simply raise their hands in acknowledgement of their need for prayer. The Celebrant should be certain to remind the faithful to pray for the needs of others (faithful or not).

(Here ends the “Liberty” of the Liturgy)

The Charity:

(Communion/Lord's Supper/Agape/Eucharist)

The Lord's Supper/Communion/Agape etc. is the central Sacrament of the A.C.F. Within the A.C.F. this is celebrated as part of an actual fellowship meal that is both shared and prepared by the Faithful. Also the A.C.F. celebrates the Sacrament after all have been served their meal. The Eucharist/Communion should always be celebrated PRIOR to the commencement of the Agape/Fellowship Meal.

Celebrant

Let us Fellowship with the Breaking of Bread in the Name of Our Lord.

All gather around the prepared tables and are served the meal at hand. Once all have been served the Celebrant brings forth the Bread (a single loaf) and the Wine (a single Cup) and continues;

At the following words concerning the Bread, the Celebrant will hold or lay hands upon the element; and at the words concerning the Cup, the Celebrant will place a hand upon the Cup and any other vessel containing the wine to be consecrate.

Celebrant

On the night He was handed over to suffering and death, our

Lord Jesus Christ took Bread; and when He had given thanks,

He broke it and gave it to His disciples and said, "Take, eat;

This **IS** my body, which is given for you. Do this for the

remembrance of me." +

Celebrant

(As instructed by the Holy Apostles) Let us pray;

We thank You, Our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son.

All To God be the Glory forever.

Celebrant

As this broken Bread was scattered over the hills and then, when gathered together, became one mass, so let your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth unto Your Kingdom.

All

For Yours is the Glory, and the Power through Jesus Christ forever. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

AMEN +

Celebrant

After supper He took the Cup of wine and when He had given

Thanks, He gave it to them and said, “Drink this, all of you;

This **IS** my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you

and for the many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.” +

Celebrant

(As instructed by the Holy Apostles) Let us pray;

We thank You, Our Father, for the Holy Vine of David your servant, which You have made known to us in Jesus Christ, Your Son.

All

To You be the Glory for ever.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

AMEN +

Celebrant

Whoever is holy, let him come: whoever is not, let him repent.

All Maranatha! **AMEN +**

*The Bread and Wine are given to the Faithful **FIRST**, and then the episcopate in order of position from least to highest, with these words;*

Celebrant The Body of Christ, the Bread of Heaven.

Resp. **AMEN +**

Celebrant The Blood of Christ, the Cup of Salvation.

Resp. **AMEN +**

After All have been served the Sacrament of Communion

Celebrant

Let us give thanks to the Lord.

We give you Thanks, Holy Father, for Your Holy Name, which You have caused to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which You have made known to us through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, You Son.

All To God be the Glory for ever.

Celebrant

You, Almighty master, did create all things for the sake of Your name, and have given both food and drink for men to enjoy, that we might give thanks to You; but to us You have given spiritual food and drink, and eternal life through Your Son. Above all, we thank You because You are mighty and able to save.

All To God be the Glory for ever.

Celebrant

Remember, Lord, Your Church, to deliver it from evil and to make it perfect in Your Love, and gather it together from the four winds, even that which has been sanctified for the Kingdom which You have prepared for it.

All For Yours is the Power and the Glory for ever.

Celebrant Let Grace come and let the world pass away.

All Hosanna to the Son of God.

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

AMEN. +

Dismissal

It must be remembered that the assembled Faithful should not be encouraged to dismiss but allowed to congregate among one another in facilitation of intimate familiarity (family-ness). However a "formal" pronouncement for the ending of the Liturgy should be made in such a way as to encourage the Faithful in their private lives as Christians. It is for this reason that the following dismissal are offered.

I

Celebrant

As we walk with Christ Jesus let us be always mindful of His greatest Commandment to all who are faithful;

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your

soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.’ (Matthew 22:37-39)

Celebrant

The Love of God the Father; the Grace of the Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ; the communion and gift of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and for ever more.

All

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, **AMEN +**

II

Celebrant

The Lord Bless thee and protect thee;

the Lord Make His Face shine upon thee,

and be gracious to thee;

the Lord look with favor upon thee

and give thee peace.

All In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, **AMEN +**
