

CICERO CHRISTIAN CHURCH

TYPICAL ORDER OF SERVICE:

- **Welcome (approx. 5 minutes)**
 - Greeting
 - 2 or 3 announcements
 - Financial giving opportunity
- **Greeting One Another (approx. 2 minutes)**
- **Songs and Prayer (approx. 25 minutes)**
 - Usually 3 songs
 - A corporate time of prayer which varies in format
- **Communion (approx. 5 minutes)**
 - Usually includes a song or a spoken prayer
- **Sermon (approx. 30 minutes)**
- **Dismissal**

Baptisms, child dedications, and additional variations to the order of service may occur.

WORSHIP GATHERING FAQ'S

Why do we sing sad songs? Shouldn't we sing songs of celebration and praise?

Sad songs, also known as Laments, have been a part of worship for generations. The Psalms are full of expressions of sadness, grief, sorrow and suffering. We learn from the Psalms that we can bring these emotions and experiences to God. He cares about our hurts. Part of corporate worship is acknowledging that some people in the gathering are experiencing times of celebration, so everyone joins in celebration with them. And others are experiencing times of doubt, sadness, or loss, and we grieve and mourn with them. Laments acknowledge that life is hard and God meets us in the good times and the bad.

Why do people raise their hands or adopt other physical postures during worship? Doesn't God hear us regardless of the positions of our arms?

Yes, God hears our worship and prayers whether our hands are raised or firmly planted in our pockets. Our postures are not meant to influence or impress God, but to express the desires of our hearts. Scripture reminds us in many places that what we do with our bodies is a reflection of what is in our hearts. When angels appear to someone in scripture, the person has a physical reaction, usually falling on their face. People kneel before royalty and raise their hands in celebration at festivals.

When we express with our songs how wonderful God is, we raise our hands to his glory. When we pray for guidance or comfort, we open our hands to receive from him. When we come before him in repentance, we kneel before our King to seek His forgiveness.

We encourage worshipers to adopt postures that reflect the desires of their hearts.

Why do we read unison prayers from the screen? Shouldn't we just pray spontaneously from the heart?

Spontaneous heartfelt prayer is a critical part of personal connection with God. However, in worship gatherings, praying the same words together is a powerful way to demonstrate unity and alignment. The prayers we use are modeled on or adapted from ancient prayers that have been used by Christians for hundreds of years. We also see evidence of unison prayers in scripture. The Psalms are generally thought of as songs, but many can be and probably were read corporately as prayers. Jesus taught a model prayer in Matthew 6 (The Lord's Prayer) that was likely memorized and used by the early church in their gatherings. As we pray these words together, over time, our understanding of God and our desire to please him are shaped by these prayers. Through this liturgy, we embed spiritual truths into our minds and fuel spiritual desires in our hearts.

Communion Table Runners Explained

Colors carry different meanings in different cultures. Just like American culture associates the color orange with the Autumn season, so the Church has used changes of color to help mark changes in its spiritual “seasons” and annual rhythms. Historically, this has most often been done by changing the colors of the cloths that cover communion tables. CCC practices this in a way that is sensitive to how the global Church has historically associated certain colors with certain spiritual “seasons”, but does so in a way that is most helpful for us in our unique cultural context.

At CCC, we use:

- **White** at Christmas (when we celebrate the arrival of Jesus) and at Pentecost (when we celebrate the arrival of the Holy Spirit) to celebrate the purity and holiness of God coming to earth.
- **Red** during the week leading up to Good Friday and for our Good Friday service as we emphasize the sacrificial blood of Jesus and our own guilt during this time.
- **Purple** (the color of royalty) on Easter as we celebrate that Jesus is the risen king and Lord of all creation.
- **Rose**, which has historically been associated with longing and prayer, for the first three weeks of the season called “Lent” (the season in which we practice prayer, fasting, and repentance in preparation for Good Friday focused on the crucifixion of Jesus) and for the season called “Advent” which culminates in the celebration of Jesus’ birth on Christmas Eve/Christmas Day as we share in Israel’s anticipation of and longing for the coming of the Messiah.
- **Green** when we are “in between” special seasons. In other words, green marks “ordinary time” within the annual rhythms of the Church. However, because the color green is associated with life, growth, and abundance in the Scriptures as well as in the natural world, we are reminded that even when we are “in between” the big celebrations of the Church’s year, Jesus has invited us into an everyday relationship of life, growth, and abundance.
- **Emblems or symbolic pictures** which can help give us visual guidance in how to think, pray, and meditate during communion in these specific seasons of the Church are sewn onto the fronts of the table runners.