

The WHYs Behind:

This is our liturgy – our flow of worship. Liturgy means literally “the work of the people”. It is an old word with a rich history. And a bit like an old wise sage it is often misunderstood and misinterpreted. Sometimes we think of liturgy as just what Catholics and Episcopalians do. Or we think it is only the formal or written parts of the worship gathering. Really though our “liturgy” is everything we engage in as a community. All of our corporate actions and practices, from how we hug one another, how we have parties, art shows, serve our neighbors, help others move, play ultimate Frisbee games, pray the daily office, gather as house churches, to our many coffee house one-on-ones, these are our common liturgy. It is our work as the people of God in this place. In a sense, our liturgy is “the way we are” that people can see, the identifying characteristics of our life together.

Increasingly, the word “liturgy” has come to apply specifically to worship gatherings. So in that context, what is our common work as a larger gathered worship community and why do we do what we do? Below you’ll find a flow to our new weekly worship gatherings with a brief explanation as to why we do each element. Certainly as we live out these corporate gatherings our liturgy, our way of being together and working together as a people of God, will morph and grow... it always should. Just like a family or any relationship we do certain things together, traditions, habits, practices, and they grow and change over the years as kids mature, people come and go, and the Spirit moves among us.

Vineyard Central Weekly Worship Gatherings:

- Greeting and Announcements for the Community
 - We greet because we acknowledge that we have all come from varied places. We are not all “on the same page” when we gather. We have come from restless households, busy jobs, arguments with spouses, and with much on our hearts and minds. By corporately greeting and welcoming we are saying that we have gathered – an important practice in and of itself, and that we are ready to avail ourselves to the work of the Spirit of the Triune God.
- Worship in Song and Prayer
 - We worship in song because singing as a corporate body binds us together and opens us up to the Spirit in our midst. Singing together does something to us. As our voices resonate and harmonize together in the acoustic wonder that is St. Elizabeth’s we are knitted together as a people and discover that God is among us. Singing songs of worship also serves as a way for us to enter into the larger Salvation Story that God is enfolding us into. We hear and sing poetic words that remind us Who we belong to, why we are here, and where we are headed. Songs of Praise, Thanksgiving, and even Lament uniquely proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God to a watching world.
 - We pray together because we are invited to be co-creators with God. By speaking and listening to God we strengthen our relationship with him as a people. We are invited to be the friends of Christ. To keep this relationship vibrant we spend time communicating directly with the God of the Universe. We sing songs about God, hear the stories of God, and practice things God told us to do... but we would be remiss if we did not also speak and listen to God.
- Hear the Word of the Lord
 - We hear God’s Story as told in the Bible because we need to be reminded (continually) of the Story in which we live. The Bible is not merely a historical account of what happened to God’s people long ago, it is the unfolding Story of what God is doing throughout (and beyond) history. As we weekly hear readings from the Scriptures, we find ourselves in the Text. It is the Script by which we live.
 - We specifically engage in the reading of Scripture via the Revised Common Lectionary. The RCL is a collection of readings put together in the 1960s by an ecumenical group of Christians. It is a three year cycle that allows congregations to read the majority of the Bible publicly and communally. Each week there is a reading from the Old Testament, a Psalm, an Epistle, and a Gospel. It also follows the church year (Advent... Epiphany... Lent... Easter... Pentecost...).

For more info check out this website.

<http://www.montreal.anglican.org/comments/faq.shtml#1>

- Learning as a Community
 - We learn together because God is about the business of transformation. God is a Change Agent extraordinaire. He has designed us for growth and formation. We learn together through a multitude of modalities. Truly we learn in all that we do together, but this time is set aside specifically for corporate education. That may take the form of a sermon, homily, or teaching where one or more persons (male and female) orate, demonstrate, and proclaim something (usually in connection with the Lectionary readings) God is teaching us at the moment. This learning time may also take the form of *Lectio Divina* (a meditative way of reading and reflecting on the Scriptures), Worship Stations, Discussion, or some other interactive, experiential, multi-sensory mode of learning.
- Thanksgiving and Communion
 - We participate in the Eucharist because it is important for us to remember our Story. Our weekly Scripture readings will vary and will highlight various parts of the Story, but the weekly Eucharist liturgy (the words we read, say, and repeat week after week) is a condensed and simplified version of the Creating and Redeeming work of God. This work is initiated by God in creation, brought to fullness through Christ and continued by the Spirit in the Church and in the World. Likewise, it is important that we engage in this practice that is as old as the Passover in Egypt, re-mixed by Jesus with his disciple right before his death, and continued by churches throughout the world and history. It connects us across time and space to the Saints of God.
 - We have chosen to practice the Eucharist by using a simple litany of words that are written. We do this because it forms us. By saying these words over and over and over they slowly find their way into our very being. Sometimes the words will ring with vibrancy and life, other times they will seem dull and dead – that's OK. By practicing the corporate discipline of attending to these simple words they will work into our lives. In doing so we may discover that after months... maybe even years, of doing it we find ourselves to be a people that is more like Christ, more peaceful, more redemptive, and more holy.
- Sending blessing
 - We send one another onto and into the continuing mission of God in the world. Our weekly gatherings are not outside of "the world"; we are and continue to be in the world that God birthed. We are part of the unfolding *Missio Dei* – the Mission of God. These small words at the end of our worship time remind us of that. We bless one another on our way and in our journey.