

Welcome to First Christian Church, Fullerton!

Joining a church for a worship service can be an awkward or overwhelming experience. We are glad that you are here and want to help you understand the different components so that you can participate as fully as possible. We all were new at one point and we want you to feel welcome!

Different sections of service combine contemporary elements (music styles) with ancient practices (like prayer, responsive reading, or chants).

These notes describe a “typical” service, but we do have special events (like Christmas, Easter, etc.) that may include different components. An asterisk denotes standing. If you have questions about any of these elements, feel free to contact our office for deeper explanation or preparation at 714.525.5525 or email fullertonfirstchristian@gmail.com.

Opening Song: This musical selection prepares the atmosphere for reflection and worship. It is selected to fit with the church season or the theme of the morning’s service. As you listen to the music, you can take time to calm your mind and prepare your inner being for the service.

Welcome: A short welcome from one of the leaders of our church.

Time of Praise: This section includes songs selected to engage our creativity and our inner selves. The combination of music in this section, and other musical sections, are a combination of contemporary pieces, historical hymns, and ancient expressions. We utilize a musical assortment, consisting of piano and organ, guitars, choirs, and various musical talents of our congregation. If you are not familiar with the music, you can meditate about the words or focus your attention on the cross at the front of the room as thoughtful reflection.

Call to Worship*: This section includes a *responsive reading*, which is a prayer that involves the entire audience. The words of the prayer are displayed on the screens (or, at times, printed in the program or in the hymnal). The communal prayer reminds us that we are not isolated in our journey with God but share life together in community.

Worship*: The section includes a variety of music and songs that have been created to teach theology and express different aspects of faith. Some are traditional and some are modern. If you are not familiar with the music, you can meditate about the words or focus your attention on the cross at the front of the room as thoughtful reflection.

Invocation*: This section includes a prayer that acknowledges God’s presence with us. It is led from the stage and you may close your eyes to concentrate or focus on the cross on the wall or candlelight on the tables. At the conclusion of the prayer, the audience says a prayer together which is a translation of what Jesus taught his disciples when they asked him how to pray (commonly referred to as “The Lord’s Prayer”) and the words will be displayed on the screen. At the conclusion of the prayer, the audience responds by singing the *Gloria Patri*, which is an ancient component of early Christian worship.

Passing of the Peace*: This section is based on early Christian traditions, where each person would ask forgiveness from anyone they had wronged and find out how they could help serve one another. In the modern church, it is also a chance to welcome one another and new attendees.

This section concludes with children 3 years old through third grade being led to a separate program called Children’s Worship and Wonder. (It is the parent’s choice whether their child participates in these activities. Children are welcome to remain in the sanctuary if that is the parent’s preference.)

Prayers of the People: This section includes the sharing of prayer requests from the community (collected during the Passing of the Peace section or shared with the ministry team during the week) and is an opportunity to share our spiritual life together. If you have a prayer request to include (or make privately), you can contact our office at 714.525.5525 or email fullertonfirstchristian@gmail.com.

Scripture Reading: This section connects our community with the Bible as a foundation for our faith and practice. The Bible is a collection of spiritually-inspired texts that communicate about living faithfully in relationship with God. It is a collection of genres, including poetry, historical reflection, legal code, and narrative about the Hebrew people, the life and teaching of Jesus, and the community of the early Church.

Teaching: This section builds upon the scripture reading and other components of the service to study the life and teaching of Jesus and how to live faithfully today. They are prepared by our senior minister or a guest speaker and are typically 15-25 minutes. They offer a chance for thoughtful reflection and an invitation to living with more awareness and love. Questions about the teaching can be written on the Comment Card collected later in the service or directed to the speaker at the conclusion of the service.

Communion: This section is the extension of a teaching moment of Jesus as he was meeting with his disciples before his arrest. We remember Jesus by his own words and the symbols of bread and wine, shared together.

(We use grape juice, to support members of our community who have committed to maintaining complete sobriety.)

You are welcome to participate in one of two ways: you may come to the front and dip a piece of bread into juice or remain in your seat and be

served by our ministry team. **This ceremony is open to all people.** (This component is a core element of all Christian traditions and is practiced in different ways in different times and places. All perspectives have significance, though we choose to practice in a way that can be most inclusive.)

Call to Commitment: This section involves an opportunity for the community to provide support for the mission of the church through financial contributions and commitment to service. This is also the time to return question or comment cards or requests for the ministry team to follow-up with you. Contributions support the ministries of the local church, as well as wider initiatives to provide education opportunities, address homelessness, foster racial reconciliation, and respond to humanitarian needs around the world. Financial contributions is not an obligation and visitors are not expected to contribute. At the conclusion of this section, the congregation stands and sings a blessing together and a prayer is spoken to dedicate the offering.

Invitation to Discipleship*: This section provides an opening for anyone in the audience to respond to the invitation to journey deeper in the Christian life of faith. If you would like prayer, to join the church, or make a public decision to become a Christian, you may come to the front or arrange to speak with a pastor privately.

Announcements*: This section provides information about upcoming events in the life of the church as well as highlights some of the ways that financial contributions have been used to serve the wider community.

Benediction*: This section is a final prayer and blessing for the entire church.

More information about the church and our identity as Disciples of Christ are available at www.fullertonfirstchristian.org

A Movement for Wholeness in a Fragmented World