Liturgy of the New Apostolic Church

Introduction: general notes concerning the divine service

1 The Divine Service

2 Special types of Divine Services

3 Prayer service with and without liturgical form

4 Dispensation of sacraments and acts of blessing

5 Holy Acts associated with ministry and service

Introduction: general notes concerning the divine service

The term “liturgy”, which derives from the ancient Greek word *leiturgeia* (“public service”), denotes the prescribed sequence of the divine service, as well as the words, actions, and gestures it involves. On the one hand, divine service constitutes God’s service upon human beings, which becomes evident in the sermon inspired by the Holy Spirit, the celebration of the sacraments, and the benediction. On the other hand, divine service also constitutes our service to God, which is expressed in song, prayer, and profession.

The divine service has its origin in the historical self-revelation of the triune God. Its purpose is to remind believers of this self-revelation of God, but also to make it directly tangible and perceptible through word and sacrament. For this reason, the divine service has the function of imparting salvation. The individual elements of the divine service – the preaching of the word, the celebration and dispensation of the sacraments, prayer, and blessing – are thus not arbitrary, but rather necessary. The specific way in which these elements are configured and the specific course of the service is characterised by the time and its circumstances. Thus it is quite understandable for the external structure of divine services to change over the course of time. The sequence of the divine service is bindingly defined by the apostolate, which is responsible for the order of the Church.

A divine service is fundamentally a public event, because it is the Christian congregation’s act of profession before the world. In order for such a community to come into being, it is

necessary for at least one person to attend the divine service. New Apostolic divine services are always led by ministers who have been authorised to do so by the apostolate.

The New Apostolic divine service is characterised by its simplicity and focus on the sermon and the sacraments. However, this does not mean that the liturgical event as a whole is of a secondary nature. Rather, it requires great concentration, because an essential task of the ministers is to make God's presence and holiness accessible and perceptible in the divine services.

The liturgy specifies the defined framework in which all activities in the divine services are to unfold in a uniform and dignified manner. The repeated components in the sequence of a divine service are intended, among other things, to demonstrate God's consistent care to mankind. In this way, those who attend the divine service can feel secure in the unchanging faithfulness of God. In addition, the liturgy provides the officiating ministers with security for their actions.

In the New Apostolic Church there are two forms of divine service, namely the regular divine service incorporating the dispensation of the sacraments and the word service, which does not include the dispensation of the sacraments.

The sermon

The word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit bestows and sustains divine life. It is audible in the sermon, which is intended to make the will of God known. This requires sanctification and diligent preparation for the sermon on the part of the ministers.

The prayers

The prayers which are spoken are a dialogue with God and constitute the human response to God's devotion. Through them, human beings show that they wish to have fellowship with God and receive orientation from Him.

The Lord's Prayer, which is spoken collectively, also has a character of profession. Divine services are therefore a fellowship of word, sacrament, and profession.

The spiritual hymns

The spiritual hymns sung (or performed instrumentally) in a divine service are an expression of fellowship within the assembled congregation. The song texts not only bind the members of the congregation to one another but also to God. Spiritual hymns also give the divine service a festive atmosphere that facilitates access to God's activity for each participant.

The benediction

The benediction in the triune name of God at the end of a divine service is to accompany the believers into their everyday lives. They can trust in God's grace, can feel sheltered in His love, and can be certain of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They are assured of God's protecting presence in their lives, such that they may live in accordance with the gospel.

Additional points to be observed

All ministers must always be aware of God's presence in the divine service when carrying out their work. This already begins when they enter the assembled congregation. Everything that takes place in a divine service should be carried out solemnly, with the greatest possible calm and dignity.

Ministers involved in proclaiming the word must additionally be aware that they stand at the altar of God and proclaim His word. They should therefore pay atten tion to their way of speaking, their choice of words, and their conduct in the divine service. Ministers are not to mumble or speak monotonously, but rather understandably, with a lively voice, and not too quickly.

Visual contact with the congregation during the sermon creates an atmosphere of openness and personal closeness. Appropriate facial expressions and gestures should accompany the words and make them more understandable.

The congregation rises for collective prayers. Ministers and the congregation close their eyes during all prayers. Eyes can be kept open during other elements of the liturgy (Trinitarian formula, absolution, acts of blessing, dispensation of sacraments, etc.).

Each time the serving minister says “Amen”, the congregation responds with “Amen”.

Preparing and clearing the altar

The altar must be prepared before the congregation arrives. The chalices should remain on the altar after the divine service until the members have left the room in which the service took place.

Length of divine services

The divine service should last:

- Sunday and church holy days 60 minutes
- midweek 45 minutes

In the case of festive divine services or divine services with sacramental acts or acts of blessing, an appropriate lengthening of the service is also possible.

Before the divine service

The time prior to the divine service should have a preparatory character and serve for the personal sanctification.

- greeting of members
- time for a personal prayer
- musical contributions
- greeting on special occasion (for example, greeting of bridal couple in sacristy)
- silence in the congregation (approximately three minutes before beginning of service)
- sanctification and prayer of ministers (in the sacristy, possibly in the presence of the Deacons)

Summary

The divine service—which is an encounter between God and human beings—is an anticipated experience of our future fellowship with the triune God to which those who have been reborn out of water and the Spirit have been called. It is the focal point of church life. Its sequence unfolds in a mandatory order from the opening hymn up to the closing hymn in accordance with the bindingly defined liturgy. Random differences in the

execution of the divine services are thereby avoided, and the unity of the Church is reinforced and brought to awareness.

The following explanations concerning the liturgy are intended to deepen under standing of the divine service experience.