

A Guide to the Service of Holy Eucharist



st Mark's
NEW CANAAN

Welcome to St. Mark's

A worship service in church is called a *liturgy*. Liturgy means "the work of the people" and so our service rightly invites the participation of all who come through our doors.

This booklet is a family-friendly guide to the Episcopal liturgy at our main Sunday service. We want everyone to feel welcomed, included, and able to fully engage in worshiping God with joy and confidence.

Follow along as you are comfortable. Listen, stand, sit, kneel, sing, pray, or simply be present. We are glad you are here!

We invite you to reach out to us at any time with questions, comments, or for conversation:

churchoffice@stmarksnewcanaan.org
203.966.4515



The images in this booklet are just a few of the 184 figures and symbols taken from the reredos, the large screen behind the altar that depicts God's Mighty Acts in the world.

© 2026 St. Mark's Episcopal Church, New Canaan, Connecticut.
All rights reserved.

The Word of God



The Processional: The acolytes, choir, chalice ministers, and clergy (priests) enter during the opening hymn. The celebrant comes in last. He or she is the priest who leads the service and will later pray over the bread and wine.

The Opening Acclamation: We tell God we are happy to be here. When we say Amen, we are saying, "Yes!"

The Collect for Purity: A *Collect* is a prayer. The priest asks God to make us ready for worship.

The Gloria or Kyrie: Sometimes we sing a song of praise like the *Gloria*. This is an ancient hymn found in the Gospel according to Luke, the song angels sang to shepherds at Jesus' birth. We are telling God, "You are amazing!" Sometimes we sing *Kyrie*, which means "Lord, have mercy."

The Collect of the Day: This prayer collects the thoughts of the day and brings them before God. It is different every week.

The First Reading: Someone from the congregation reads from the Old Testament. The reader is called a *lector*.

The Psalm: We sing or read a sacred song of prayer from the Book of Psalms in the Bible. This helps us put our feelings about a lot of different things into words. We don't have to hide any of our feelings from God, who loves us completely.

The Second Reading (Epistle): A lector reads from the New Testament. *Epistle* means letter. This Bible reading is usually from a letter from one of Jesus' apostles to the earliest Christians.

The Gospel Acclamation: We sing a hymn of praise while the priest and acolytes come to stand among the congregation, just as Jesus stood among the people of his time.



The Gospel: The priest reads us a story about Jesus from one of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

The Sermon: The preacher, usually one of the priests, helps us to understand the readings and how the Gospel relates to living in the world today.

The Nicene Creed: We recite a list of beliefs that have defined Christianity for 2,000 years. Parts of the Creed may be hard to understand, but that's ok. After all, it was written in the 4th century!

The Prayers of the People: Someone from the congregation, an *intercessor*, leads prayers that give thanks and ask God to help us and to help others we care about. We participate in each prayer by saying a response or by praying silently.

The Confession and Absolution:

We tell God we are sorry for the things we have done wrong and the people we may have hurt. The priest says the Absolution, which declares that God forgives us.

The Peace: We shake hands, hug, or say hello to the people around us. It is a symbol of making peace with one another, as if to say, "I'm glad we're here together!"

Welcome and Announcements:

One of the priests and sometimes other members of the congregation tell us about things that are going on at St. Mark's, in the local community, and in the world. They might offer suggestions of ways to give, serve, and connect with one another.



The Holy Communion

The Offertory: One important way we honor God is by giving money to help the church do God's work in the world. Usually, the choir sings an anthem while the offering is collected. During the offertory, the celebrant sets the table for Communion, also called the *Eucharist*, which means "thanksgiving." The people from the congregation who carry the money offering, bread and wine up to the altar are called *oblation bearers*.



Part One of Holy Communion is called The Great Thanksgiving.

Eucharistic Prayer: There are four versions of this important prayer. They all include prayers of thanks and blessing over the bread and wine, and they all invite us to gather around the altar to receive them. The order of service tells us which one we are using each Sunday.

- In **Prayer A** we give joyful praise and thanks to God for creation and for sending Jesus into the world to live among us.
- In **Prayer B** we emphasize God's presence throughout history, through prophets and holy people, and finally through God's own son, Jesus, who became human to show us what God is like and to bring us into life with God.
- In **Prayer C** we focus on giving thanks to God as the creator of the entire universe, and on the gifts and skills God gives us to take care of one another and the world around us.
- In **Prayer D** we celebrate with all creation everything God has done by giving us Jesus to show us how to live holy lives.

The Sanctus and Benedictus: The celebrant begins by inviting us to give thanks to God by joining in song with some of the angels in heaven. It starts with "Holy, holy, holy." *Sanctus* is Latin for "holy."

The Consecration: The celebrant tells us how Jesus showed his disciples at the Last Supper how to remember him after his death by sharing this special meal. Jesus said he would be present in the bread and wine, and whenever they gathered together. The celebrant *consecrates*, or blesses the bread (or Communion wafers) and wine, so that they become holy food and drink for us.

The Memorial Acclamation: During the consecration we sing or say how we remember that Jesus died, rose from the dead, and will come back again. This is the “mystery of faith.”

The Lord’s Prayer: Together we say the prayer Jesus taught to his followers.



Part Two of Holy Communion is called The Breaking of the Bread.

The Invitation: The priest breaks the consecrated bread and invites everyone to come to the Lord's Table. Anyone who does not want to take the bread and wine for any reason may come forward for a blessing. You can let the priest know you want a blessing by crossing your arms over your chest.

Ministration of Communion: The ushers signal us when it is our turn to go up to the altar for Communion. Sometimes we stand, but usually we kneel, while the priest gives us a Communion wafer, and the chalice minister offers the cup or *chalice* of wine. You can hold your hands (one over the other) to receive the bread, and then drink from the cup by guiding it to your mouth. You might choose to dip your wafer in the wine instead of drinking. This is called *intinction*. Or you might choose to only take a wafer and simply "honor the chalice" by crossing your arms over your chest. You can respond with "Amen" after receiving the bread, and again after receiving the wine or honoring the chalice. Some people also make the sign of the cross. After we have received Communion, we return to our pews and silently pray or reflect.



Post Communion Prayer: We say this prayer together to thank God for the special food and drink we have just received, and to ask for help in doing the work God wants us to do in the world.

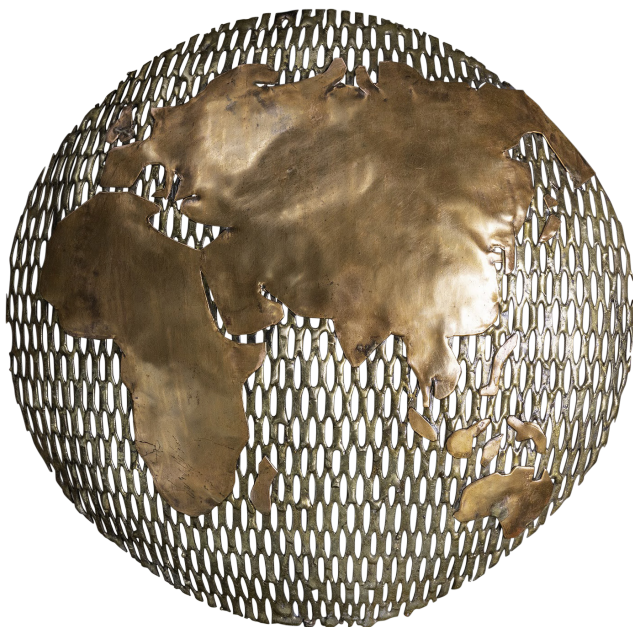
The Blessing: The priest gives us an encouraging blessing and reminds us that God is always with us.

Recessional: The acolytes, choir, chalice ministers, and clergy go down the center aisle while we sing the closing hymn.



The Dismissal: The priest tells us, as we go out into the world, to follow the way of Jesus in the week ahead.

We answer, "Thanks be to God!"



St. Mark's Mission

Go and make disciples who live
a deeper life in Christ
a more holy communion
with one another and
a greater love for the world.

St. Mark's Vision

A church bursting with disciples
who are so transformed by the
Holy Spirit that they live to give for the love of the Lord.



st Mark's
NEW CANAAN

ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
111 OENOKE RIDGE • NEW CANAAN, CT • 06840
203.966.4515 • INFO@STMARKSNEWCANAAN.ORG