

The Offering

After we hear the Word of God in worship, we begin to live according to God's Word together as a community before we go out to live it as individuals. First we share God's Word in the Creed, then we pray in God's name in the Prayers of the People, and then we do the work of God in all that we share in the Offering.

The Offering is both an important financial gift to the work of the church and a symbolic gesture of thanksgiving for all of the time, talent, and treasure that God bestows on us.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15. In this passage, Paul explains how financial giving is an act of sharing in God's grace with others. Grace is not just what we receive. We receive so we can give all the more. Or as we often say in the church, we are made to be a blessing for others. And God gives us so much so we can be a blessing to others.

When we are not dealing with a pandemic, the offering plate is passed around so everyone can give what they can. Once the offering is collected, then together we offer all of our gifts both given during worship and that given in our daily lives to God in thanksgiving. And while the congregation is passing the plate, the pastor is preparing the altar table for God's offering of his Son for our salvation in Holy Communion.

As the ushers bring the offerings forward, the congregation stands as a sign of offering their lives to God. As the congregation stands, we usually sing together an Offertory Hymn in thanksgiving to God. One hymn that is common in Lutheran worship is "Let the Vineyards be Fruitful, Lord". This hymn is based on John 15:1-11 where Jesus says he is the vine and we are the branches and we are to bear good fruit for him. In this hymn, we praise God for the fruit of God's blessings.

After the offering is received at the altar, the congregation prays the Offering Prayer to give thanks to God for all the blessings we share with others.

Conclude by praying this Offering Prayer (p.72, Sundays and Seasons; Augsburg Fortress: 2021).

**O God,
Receive these gifts as you receive us,
like a mother receives her child, with her arms open wide.
Nourish us anew in your tender care,
and empower us in faithful service
to tend to others with the same love,
through Jesus Christ, our saving grace.
Amen.**