

Brite Divinity School, Church Music Institute
Music in Christian Worship, Online session, June 22, 2026

To: the participants of the June 22 on-line conversation
 From: Gail Ramshaw, instructor

I welcome you all to a study of the vocabulary of Christian worship.

Christians in the United States are living in an increasingly ecumenical time. Historic church differentiations are less evident than in the past; congregations are collaborating with their neighbors; many of the baptized change their allegiance from one denomination to another; and the land is filled with independent congregations that practice their own preferences. Church leaders are called to ecumenical ventures, and church musicians may become the leader of assembly song in a congregation that is outside their earlier experience. Thus I advocate for you all a familiarity with an ecumenical list of words associated with Christian worship.

I attach here "A Dictionary of Christian Worship," a list that I have compiled of words significant for the study of Christian worship. This list includes words about religion, Sunday worship, the church year, sacred space, sacred objects, sacred rituals, Christian theology, and worship outside of Sundays. Some of these words you already can use accurately, while some will be new to you.

Before our session on June 22, I suggest that you give thoughtful attention to every word on this list; that you make note of each word that is unfamiliar to you; and that you investigate the meaning of some of the words new to you. My 2009 textbook *Christian Worship: 100,000 Sundays of Symbols and Rituals* is one of many books that include definitions of some of these words. You may find Chapter 12 (pages 201-14) of that book especially useful for your preparation for ministry.

My goal for our June 22 Zoom session is that we together master this vocabulary list so that you are better equipped to minister in the ecumenical church of the future. Even this lengthy list is incomplete, but it will keep us occupied for several hours.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

When we have finished attending to the meaning and use of these words, we will address one or several of the following Topics for Discussion:

- religion of the individual versus religion of the community
- religion of the head versus religion of the heart
- historic and oldest is best versus innovative and newest is best
- rituals ought to be maximized, versus rituals ought to be minimized
- symbols ought to be maximized, versus symbols ought to be minimized
- focus on Christ's passion and death versus focus on Christ's resurrection
- focus on Jesus versus focus on the Trinity
- attention to masculine language for God
- list of the meanings of baptism
- list of the meanings of holy communion
- clergy planning of worship versus committee planning
- positive and negative effects of streaming worship

Words about religion

What do these words mean, and how are they used in 21st century America?

religious
 spiritual
 symbols
 rituals
 sacraments
 theology, doctrines
 the service, worship, liturgy, to do church
 ancient-future worship
 saint

Words about classic Sunday assembly worship

Which denominations practice all or most of these weekly?

See page 5 for a partial list of Christian denominations.

Gathering, Word, Meal, Sending
 strophic hymns
 Bible
 psalter
 lectionary
 Revised Common Lectionary
 Gospels, gospel
 sermon, homily
 creed, Nicene, Apostles'
 intercessory prayer, prayer of the people, intercessions, pastoral prayer
 sacrament, ordinance, mystery
 eucharist, holy communion, mass, Lord's Supper, breaking of the bread
 prayer of thanksgiving, consecration prayer, anaphora, canon, great thanksgiving
 opening thanks, words of institution, anamnesis, epiclesis, doxology
 Lord's Prayer, Our Father
 English Language Liturgical Consultation 1988
 benediction
 Trisagion, Kyrie eleison, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, Hallelujah, Amen

Words about Protestant word gatherings

Which denominations construct weekly worship in this way?

revival, camp meeting
 testimonies
 whooping
 threshing floor, anxious bench
 altar call
 call-and-response
 7-11 songs
 concert prayer

Words about the church year

Which denominations use these days and seasons to organize their annual worship?

Advent
 Christmas, winter solstice
 Epiphany, Three Kings
 Transfiguration
 Ash Wednesday
 Lent
 Holy Week
 Tenebrae, Seven Last Words
 the Three Days, the Triduum: Maundy Thursday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil
 Exultet
 Easter, Pascha, spring equinox
 Ascension
 Pentecost
 Trinity Sunday
 All Saints Day
 Reign of Christ
 Creation Day
 World Day of Prayer
 Commemoration days

Words about sacred space and sacred objects

It may be helpful for you to know the meaning and use of these terms.

icon
 iconostasis
 cross, crucifix
 basilica
 cathedral
 apse
 sanctuary, chancel
 altar, table
 sacramentary
 relic
 ambo, lectern
 pulpit
 nave
 pew
 ciborium
 tabernacle, monstrance
 loaf of bread, host, wafer
 chalice, cup
 wine, grape juice
 baptistry
 font, pool
 vestments
 alb, stole, chasuble, surplice, Geneva gown, choir gown
 crosier, miter

Words about sacred rituals

It may be helpful for you to know the meaning and use of these terms.

Jesus prayer
 veneration of the saints
 Mariology
 rosary
 novena
 kneel, genuflect
 orans
 chanting
 canticle
 asperges
 liturgical dance
 glossolalia
 baptism, new birth
 exorcism
 anointing
 confirmation
 catechumen
 ordination
 priest, pastor, minister, clergy, elder, bishop, archbishop, cardinal
 monasticism

Words about Christian theology and doctrine

Some churches expect their worship to adhere strictly to their stated theology.

Trinity
 divinization, deification
 LORD, Lord
 Christ
 sacrifice
 atonement
 confession and absolution
 eschatology
 heresy, Arianism, Pelagianism

Words about worship beyond Sundays

Local usage often determines which of these you will encounter.

Divine Office, canonical hours, liturgy of the hours
 morning prayer, matins, evening prayer, evensong, compline
 ceremony of naming
 Quinceanera
 marriage
 unity candle
 burial of the dead, funeral
 columbarium
 pall
 celebration of life
 ethnic rituals of celebration

A Partial Listing of Christian groupings

What kind of worship does each of these groups practice? What is most important to them?

Which of these groups are known for their worship practices?

Eastern orthodox

Greek, Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Ethiopian

Uniate churches

Roman Catholicism

Protestantism

First wave churches

Lutheranism, called in Europe Evangelical

Anglican, Episcopalian

Second wave churches

Presbyterian

United Christ of Christ

Third wave churches

Baptist churches

Mennonite

Amish

Society of Friends, Quakers

Some of the 19th and 20th century churches

Unitarians

Moravians

Seventh Day Adventists

Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, Mormons

Disciples of Christ

Jehovah's Witnesses

African American Episcopal

A.M.E. Zion

Holiness churches

Methodism

Church of the Nazarene

Church of God

Pentecostal churches, charismatic movement

Church of God in Christ

Assemblies of God

Foursquare Gospel

independent churches

Calvary Chapel

megachurches

home viewing of online streaming