

# A Participant's Guide to Worshiping with Brentwood



Worshiping together on Sunday mornings is what most Christians do most often together. The patterns in which each denomination moves through this event are different and there is great variety within denominations. This is a guide to the way Brentwood Presbyterian Church creates space for Jesus, as God's prototype of a new humanity, to encounter us with forgiving and reconciling love and to invite us, through the workings of the Holy spirit, to respond in ways that will change our ways of contributing to our common good.

All of us – congregants, greeters, ministers, musicians, readers, AV techs, lunch makers – are encountered together and individually. We trust that God's divine energy, as Creator, Redeemer, and Reformer, or to use the more traditional language of the church for the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, will integrate the words, music and images into a meaningful awakening that reveals in and for us the transforming power of God's forgiving and reconciling love.

The changes generated in our lives equip and enable us to live into our dignity and worth as ambassadors of God's care for God's creation. That care is exercised justly, kindly, and humbly. In that missioning, we grow into God's gift of salvation. Nourishing us to flourish in that collaboration with God is what the conversations that constitute worship do. They are complemented by more conversations in our learning, fellowship and service as we radiate God's mercy and grace into the circles of inspiration and influence where God sends us.

Our worshiping at Brentwood flows through a pattern of four stages – welcome, wonder, wisdom, and witness. It's hard for us not to use 'churchy' language in guiding you through these movements, but please know we are most willing to discuss any questions you have. To inquire, speak to any of us or email us at [brentwoodpcc@gmail.com](mailto:brentwoodpcc@gmail.com).

## Welcome (Slides 1-5)

Our conviction is that the Divine Energy gathers us into the event of worshiping. This is an engaging encounter in which God embraces us as beloved, forgiven, and reconciled into the relationship that gives us life. This is God's initiative and embrace, accepting us as we are and nourishing us to flourish as God desires. We know our Creator most fully in Jesus Christ through the revealing and reforming work of the Holy Spirit. To accept this invitation is to participate in God's salvation of the world, to contribute to the welfare of the world God loves.

## Wonder (Slides 6-9)

Each of us feels, deep inside, that we are not worthy of this welcome. We wonder how it is happening and how we are included. As it dawns on us that the welcome is sincere and authentic, we wonder at this mercy and grace, this forgiveness and reconciliation. To quote a hymn that sparks universal resonance, this is truly “amazing grace.” We are in awe that such a gift is offered to us with no conditions and, through the work of God’s reforming Spirit, we awaken to the new possibilities that open before us.

## Wisdom (Slides 10-15)

Among Canadian Presbyterians, we understand the faith that is being provoked by God’s merciful and gracious embrace of us nourishes us with the wisdom to be composed as a corps of ambassadors of the way of living together as caretakers of God’s creation. That wisdom infuses us with what the apostle Paul call the fruits of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, and gentleness (Gal 5:19-21). These are the qualities of presence that will bless the world as God desires.

## Witness (Slides 16-23)

When you have been found by a source of flourishing life, you want to share it others in your circles of inspiration and influence. That is what we are invited, equipped, enabled, and encouraged to do through the event of worship. We radiate into God’s world to testify to the good news that we are all forgiven and reconciled with our Creator, with each other, and with ourselves so we can pursue justice with kindness in humility.



# A Deeper Dive into the Dynamics of Worship

If you're interested in digging deeper into this flow of worshipping, here's a guide to what we pray you will experience, slide by slide.

## Online Worshipping (Slide 1)

We normally gather at 1600 Delta Ave in Burnaby at 10am on Sunday mornings to enjoy this flow of worship. Currently, due to BC's protocols for pandemic safety, we meet on Zoom. You can find the link to join us on the homepage of our website at [www.brentwoodpcc.com](http://www.brentwoodpcc.com).

## Worshipping on Zoom (Slide 2)

We continue to learn how best to do this and welcome your suggestions for improvements. You're muted for most of the service because the speeds of connections don't sync well. Appreciating the participation of people who are not able to get to the church building regularly when we return to in-person worship, we are planning to live stream the services in the future. Expanding our reach into our new e-neighbourhoods is a delightful challenge. We welcome your suggestions for doing it better.

## Land Acknowledgement (Slide 3)

As Canadian Presbyterians engage in the work of healing and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, we acknowledge their rights and our responsibilities. We aspire to live into our Canadian Presbyterian confession to Canada's Indigenous peoples offered in 1994. You can read the confession and find out more about our work in healing and reconciliation at [link to our website page on Healing and Reconciliation, which needs renaming. Currently it is designated "socks-for-souls".]

## Musicking Drawing Us into Worship (Slide 4)

Our music directors are talented composers and we feature some of their music as we prepare ourselves for worshipping together. You will find a lot of music in our services. There are different hymns each Sunday drawn from a wide range of times and styles in the church's history. There are a lot of service songs, many written or arranged by our music directors. We have chosen, as our primary missional neighbours, the jazz community in Greater Vancouver. Their contributions to God's ability to extend hospitality, hope, and healing enhance the ways God infuses every level of our beings with their mercy and grace.

## Welcomed into Worshipping (Slide 5)

We believe that we drawn into this time of worshipping together by God for our mutual benefit. Jesus summarized the whole of God's desire revealed in the history of Israel as loving God, loving others, and loving self (Matthew 22:35–40, Mark 12:28–34, and Luke 10:27a). To get a bit more specific, God welcomes us with forgiving and reconciling love to generate a hope and healing that encompasses the whole of creation.

## Lighting the Christ Candle (Slide 6)

The Christian tradition, rooted in the witness of the scriptures to how God saved the world, has always seen Jesus Christ the best light in which to understand God's desires for the whole of creation.

### **Prayers of Wonder for Your Welcoming Love (Slide 7)**

This is a prayer of confession. We recognize our separation from God, each other, and our best selves. We wonder at God's mercy and grace welcoming us as we are, no matter where we have been or how we have managed the stresses of life. This happens, in God's patience, over and over again.

### **Appreciating God's Grace (Slide 8)**

There are consequences to God's attitudes and behaviours on our behalf. This prayer we all say together reminds us of just some of the changes that God generates in our lives.

### **Hymn (Slide 9)**

From the very beginning, God has inspired his people to sing out their responses to their encounters with God's loving energy. We draw on the deep riches of the church's traditions in music each week as we sing together.

### **A Prayer for Illumination (Slide 10)**

We believe that any enlightenment that we enjoy is brought about by the work of God's Holy Spirit working among us and within us, as this prayer reflects.

### **The Scriptures (Slide 11)**

The 66 books that make up the Bible tell the story of God's encounters, especially with human creatures, as the divine presence seeks to forgive and reconcile us all into the kinship for which God designed us.

### **A Word to Ponder (Slide 12)**

Canadian Presbyterians believe that the church is Jesus Christ and his people together with their governing councils. The wisdom of God is gifted to all the people and heard most fully when they are consulted and respected. We listen to our different perspectives on a key word or phrase in the story or theme under consideration each week.

### **The Sermon (Slide 13)**

In the Presbyterian tradition, the minister is often referred to as the teaching elder. They are entrusted with a special degree of responsibility for provoking people to understand more deeply the changes in living that the gift of companionship with Jesus Christ is enabling. This time of considering the safety and meaning of the Gospel is part of the larger mix of conversations that nourishes the church to flourish in its missioning.

### **Music for Reflection (Slide 14)**

At this point in the service, we invite our music directors to give a musical offering to God that is informed by the wisdom generated in the service and that touches us at levels words don't normally reach. We trust that this music will lead us into a deeper friendship with Jesus Christ.

### **The Brentwood Declaration (Slide 15)**

This summary of the Christian story out of which and into which we live, by God's mercy and grace, was composed by the congregation and aligns with Canadian Presbyterian beliefs and practice as laid out in our national statement, *Living Faith* (<https://presbyterian.ca/wp-content/uploads/Living-Faith.pdf>). [to be uploaded to our website so the link is more stable]

## **Nourishing Souls to Flourish at and through Brentwood (Slide 16)**

There are a lot of activities that happen through and around Brentwood that can nourish your souls more deeply to flourish in the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ. We take a few moments to highlight some of them. Wherever you are on your faith journey, you are welcome to participate.

## **Contributing to God's Generosity (Slide 17)**

Brentwood's work and witness relies on a number of sources of revenue, the largest being the generosity of people who support what God is doing with and through us. The slide outlines three ways of getting your donation to us. All such donations are eligible for a tax receipt.

## **Hymn (Slide 18)**

We sing verses from another chosen hymn to express some dimension of the wisdom being generated through this encounter with the Trinity's mercy and grace.

## **Prayers of the People (Slide 19)**

We offer space for people to write in the chat or speak their prayers of awe and thanksgiving and for help. This is a safe space to express our deepest feelings about God's saving presence with us.

## **The Lord's Prayer (Slide 20)**

There is no prayer in the Christian tradition said more frequently in more places than this one. With the added power of singing it, we align deeply with God's designs and actions for our flourishing.

## **The 9 Teachings of the Apostles (Slide 21)**

This song is a reminder of what the apostle Paul encouraged the church in Galatia to see as the fruits/outcomes of the Spirit at work among them. We sing it every Sunday to focus our attention on the flourishing into which God has equipped us to live as we radiate into God's world this week.

## **Benediction (Slide 22)**

In the end, we are blessed to be a blessing. We are an ambassadorial corps of God's mercy and grace.

## **Choral Amen and Sending Song (Slide 23)**

Every week, we are sent into God's world to align and collaborate with God to provoke justice with kindness and humility. Thus, we participate in and contribute to God's saving work in the world.

# **A Concluding Consideration**

One of Jesus' stories is seminal for our missioning at Brentwood as we nourish souls to flourish in the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ through worship, learning, fellowship, and service. It's the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) who wanders and squanders on his own until he "comes to himself" and returns home to the delight of his family. The story conveys so many of the levels and dimensions of God's welcome, wonder, wisdom, and witness with us. Its light illumines our living.