

**Foundations of Christian Worship
North Park Theological Seminary
THEO 5120, Fall 2025 Equip and Ignite Intensives
3 credit hours**

All
Full Class Dates: August 25-December 12
NOTE: Online modules begin Monday, Aug. 25

Equip
Intensive Dates: September 15-19
Carol Joy Holling Retreat Center
Class Time: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. (with one-hour lunch break)

Ignite
Intensive Dates: September 22-26
Mission Springs
Class Time: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. (with one-hour lunch break)

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Virtual Office Hours: By appointment

**preferred method: barring any unforeseen circumstances, I will respond to any emails within 48 hours.*

Course Description

An Introduction to Christian Worship examines the history, theology, and practices of Christian worship from an ecumenical perspective. The main goals of the class are to: (1) introduce the discipline of liturgical studies; (2) develop foundations and skills for worship leadership; and (3) foster theological/pastoral reflection and evaluation of the liturgical life of faith communities.

Course Learning Objectives

North Park University uses the IDEA course rating system to measure student progress towards learning objectives and to measure student satisfaction with their overall learning experience. These course evaluations are administered at the end of the term, and you will be notified by email when they are ready for you to complete. The results of these evaluations are very important to us and we use them for ongoing efforts to improve the quality of our online courses.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. demonstrate a theology and practice of Christian worship that is historically, liturgically, and culturally coherent;
2. observe and constructively critique one's own tradition of Christian worship on the basis of the historical, theological, cultural, and practical norms of Christian worship;
3. articulate key issues (historical, theological, ecumenical) pertaining to the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist;
4. demonstrate the theological, historical, and practical connections between word and sacrament;
5. illustrate the connection between the worshiping life of the church and its theological beliefs and ethical actions;
6. analyze the main components of liturgical inculturation and engage the diversity of Christian worship;
7. design a worship service that takes into account historical, theological, social, pastoral, and cultural factors.

Course Structure

As a semester-long class with an intensive week, the course is structured with both asynchronous and synchronous learning components:

1. Asynchronous learning (before and after the intensive week): Preparation for the intensive will include weekly readings and assignments that will be available and completed on the Canvas class page. There will also be assignments to complete after the intensive week (see schedule below for details).
2. Synchronous learning:

Required Texts

1. Duck, Ruth. *Worship for the Whole People of God: Vital Worship for the 21st Century*, 2nd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2021.
2. Smith, James K. A. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016.
3. Cone, James. *The Spirituals and the Blues*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991.
4. *Covenant Book of Worship*. Chicago: Covenant Publications, 2003.
5. Book picked by student for book review and class presentation (from list below).

Assessments

Feedback/Grading Timeline

For all assessments besides online discussions (which is discussed below), you can expect written feedback and grades within a week of the due date and/or submission.

Grading

Assignment Type:	Weight:
Attendance and Participation	15%
Weekly Assignments (pre-intensive)	10%
Book Review and Class Presentations	15%
Field Observation Report	15%
Worship and Inculturation Project	20%
Worship Service Design	25%

The grading scale for the course will be as follows:

A	100-93%
A-	92.9-90%
B+	89.9-87
B	86.9-83
B-	82.9-80%
C+	79.9-77%
C	76.9-73%
C-	72.9-70%
D+	69.9-67%
D	66.9-63%
D-	62.9-60%

Late Policy

With exceptions for sickness and emergencies, assignments turned in late will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., a B will drop to a B-) for each day over the deadline. After a week, the highest score you can receive on an assignment is 50%.

Attendance and Participation (15%)

Because this is an intensive class, attendance is required for all five days of the intensive in order to pass the class. You are also required to attend a synchronous introductory session (1/2-1 hour) on **Wednesday, Aug. 28 at 7:30 p.m. CT**. The link will be available on the Canvas shell, and I will send it out via email the week before. If you cannot make that meeting, you will need to set up a meeting with me individually. Participation will be based on your active engagement during class discussion. Note: part of your participation grade will include completing the readings. You will be asked to sign a reading log at the end of the semester detailing the approximate percentage of reading done.

Weekly Assignments (10%)

Prior to the intensive week, you will have three modules with discussion posts. Based on that week's readings, you will write a 400-500-word essay that will be posted in the discussion board. You will be divided into groups of four or five depending on the size of the class to facilitate this process. Once you have posted your own materials, you are to read and comment on the postings of two other members of your group. You will make

one comment and pose one question. This will, I trust, facilitate conversation. I will also read every student post and comment at least every other week on your post. Each week **your initial posts are due by noon on Saturday to give your colleagues time to respond by Tuesday at noon.** Part of your learning, as with any class, is your interaction with one another. As can be seen below, each post and response will be worth a total of five points (3 points for the initial post and 2 points for the response). The rubric below shows what the typical three-point, two-point, and one-point posts look like. These will be graded each week and recorded in the Canvas grade book so you can follow your progress.

Initial Posting Rubric

3 Points	2 Points	1 Point
-Discussion is substantive and relates to key principles of the assignment	Reference made to key principles but is not sufficiently integrated	Inadequate or no reference to key principles; no evidence that student understood the principles
-Uses relevant examples	Examples are used but not integrated effectively into response	No examples provided
Posted by the deadline	NA	Posted within one day of the deadline
Syntax is appropriate, terminology used accurately and appropriately, language is understandable and concise, organization is logical	Only 3 of these are present - Syntax is appropriate, terminology used accurately and appropriately, language is understandable and concise, organization is logical	Only 2 or fewer are present: Syntax is appropriate, terminology used accurately and appropriately, language is understandable and concise, organization is logical

Response Posting Rubric

2 pts - Meets Standards	1 pt - Approaches Standards
Reply includes 2 statements that further or clarify the discussion such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relating a personal experience - summarizing the peer's post - offering further resources - making additional tie-ins to course material Etc.	Reply includes 1 statement that furthers or clarifies the discussion such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relating a personal experience - summarizing the peer's post - offering further resources - making additional tie-ins to course material Etc.
Reply includes 2 positive statements that are compliments or that acted as encouragement to the peer	Reply includes 1 positive statement that is a compliment or that acted as encouragement to the peer

Book Review and Student Presentations (15%) – Due: day of presentation during intensive (students will be assigned date based on book topic)

Each student will choose one book from the list below (or another one approved by the instructor) to write a short review using the following format:

1. Give a summary of the book's main thesis (150-200 words)
2. Engage in the 3-2-1 Method of Reader Review (500 words):
 - 3 main points or concepts from the reading;
 - 2 connections to other readings from the class;
 - 1 way the text could inform your ministry and/or spiritual formation.
3. Provide three questions to guide classroom discussion.

Your presentation should be approximately 20-25 minutes—the first half giving an overview of the main arguments of the book and the second half leading classroom discussion around the three questions you provided in your paper.

Book Options:

Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001.

Constance Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021.

Anscar Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995.

Melva Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, 2nd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007.

Thomas Long, *Accompany Them with Singing*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009.

Su Yon Pak, Unzu Lee, Jung Ha Kim, and Myung Ji Cho, *Singing the Lord's Song in a New Land: Korean American Practices of Faith*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Lester Ruth and Lim Swee Hong, *A History of Contemporary Praise & Worship: Understanding the Ideas that Reshaped the Protestant Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023.

Don Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994.

Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004.

Susan Marie Smith, *Caring Liturgies: The Pastoral Power of Christian Ritual*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2012.

Laurence Hull Stookey, *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.

Sandra Maria Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World*. Downers Grove, IL: 2015.

Lauren F. Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin*. Hew Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.

Worship Observation, Adaptation, and Design Project (55%)

Part 1 (15%): Field Observation Report (1200-1500 words) - Due: Sept. 10, 11:59 p.m.

Choose a Christian worshipping community with which you are quite familiar.

1. Describe the social, cultural and economic makeup of the community.
2. Identify its ecclesiastical affiliation, noting factors from the community's history that may have influenced its worship practices.
3. Describe the worship space, using James White's descriptions as needed (see Week 2 module for White reading). Include photos if possible.
4. Identify the leaders and their "style" of leadership while presiding, reading, praying, leading singing, preaching, and celebrating sacraments/ordinances.
5. Describe the principle "non-verbal" languages you find present among the leaders and within the assembly.
6. Comment upon what you discern to be the "high" and "low" points of the congregation's participation (i.e., where is the congregation most actively and least actively participating in the service?)

Part II (20%): Worship Inculturation and Adaptation – Due: Oct. 30, 11:59 p.m.

Analyze a cultural worship tradition outside of one's own tradition through secondary resource and site visits. In light of your findings on the cultural tradition, adapt the liturgy described in your field report so that it would help incorporate this tradition into the liturgical life of your church.

There are three parts to this assignment.

1. Research secondary sources on the worship of your chosen cultural tradition to ascertain its main characteristics/distinctives. You can choose any type of culture (ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, geographic, etc.), just remember that part of the assignment is finding secondary research on the subject, so getting too specific (e.g., Chicago hipsters) will make your task very difficult. You will need to find at least four total sources (books or journal articles—at least free should be from non-required readings) for your secondary research.
2. Two site visits to worship services from the chosen cultural context (recorded services do count as long as they are *complete* services and not just the sermon).
3. Write a paper (1300-1500 words) that gives a brief summary of secondary source research on the chosen culture, compares and contrasts this research with what was observed during site visits, and explains several adaptations that could be made to the liturgy (as described in the field observation report) to better represent the worshipping context of your chosen culture. If it is helpful, imagine that the church of your field report and the church tradition you visited/studied are in the same neighborhood. The church you visited is closing, and a large

contingent of the population begins attending your church. How would you adapt your liturgy in light of the new population? (1500 word maximum)

Part III (25%): Worship Service Design with Commentary – Due: November 23, 11:59 p.m.

Design a complete service of worship for the congregation used for the Field Observation Report.

1. The service will be designed to reflect the readings (Revised Common Lectionary, Year A) for one Sunday in Ordinary Time (note: you do not have to use all four of the readings! You can focus on one or two, but you should choose from the same week):
 - a. Micah 3:5-12; Psalm 43; 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13; Matthew 23:1-12
 - b. Amos 5:18-24; Psalm 70; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13
 - c. Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18; Psalm 95:1-7a; Ephesians 1:15-23; Matthew 25:14-30
2. The service will include:
 - a. one original prayer of confession or opening prayer;
 - b. one original prayer of thanksgiving or prayer of intercession;
 - c. one or more of the readings for the day of the church year listed above;
 - d. a one-two paragraph summary of the sermon focus;
 - e. the celebration of one sacrament (communion and/or baptism)
3. Provide the complete text of the liturgy as the worship leader(s) would have it (first line titles and tunes for all hymns/songs, full wording for all other elements). It is not necessary to type out hymn/song texts, ecumenical creeds, and scripture lessons.
4. In the commentary for the order of service, be sure to discuss:
 - a. Why a particular element is placed where it is in the order (e.g., How does it relate to that which precedes and follows? How does it fit into the overall framework of the service?)
 - b. Why the content of the element is appropriate to the service (e.g., why a particular hymn or song was chosen)
 - c. Why changes were made (if any) from the form currently in use by the community.

Course Schedule

(Reading Key: **bold** – readings, [blue](#) – art resource [everyone read/watch/listen], [orange](#): activities and/or assignments due)

Week 1 (Aug. 25) – We Are What We Worship

Read:

-Smith, Intro, Chs. 1-2

- Carvalhaes, "Worship: Loving Madly" (Canvas)
- Lecture: What Is Worship?
- Read or Listen: Wallace, "This is Water" (Canvas)
- Optional: James K. A. Smith, "Taking a Liturgical Audit of Your Life," lecture at Biola University <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bactDK2JV34>

Due:

-Required Synchronous Gathering – Wednesday, Aug. 28 – 7:30 p.m. CT (1/2-1 hr)
link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89758009785?pwd=ox99vzpmAeQsWg9EFJjbDan1Xr0PQi.1>

-3-2-1 Essay (500-600 words): Based on the class readings, give 3 insights you learned from the readings, 2 competing cultural liturgies that you find in your church context and your own life (one of each); and 1 liturgical practice that could help retrain your love. Due: Saturday by noon (initial essay)/following Tuesday by noon (responses)

Week 2 (Sept. 1) – What Is Christian Worship

Read:

- Isaiah 6:1-8, Deuteronomy 26:1-10; Luke 24:13-38; Acts 2:41-48
- Duck, xv-xxii, 1-27 (Introduction, Ch. 1, Ch. 2 up to "Worshiping with Children and Youth")
- Smith, chs. 3-4
- Lecture: What Is Christian Worship?
- Covenant Book of Worship*, 3-11 ("A Theology of Worship," & "The Authority of the Word in Worship", 15-29 ("The Art and Practice of Worship"); 33-46 ("Traditional," "Praise and Worship," "Story," & "Fourfold Worship")

Due:

-What Is Christian Worship? – based on class readings and discussion, compose a one-to-two sentence definition of Christian worship with an additional paragraph explaining how you drew on the readings/discussion to come up with your definition. Due: Saturday/Tuesday

Week 3 (Sept. 8) – Worship and Culture

Read:

- Acts 15:1-29
- Duck, 35-59 (Ch. 3)
- Chupungco, "Liturgy and Components of Culture" (Canvas)
- Nairobi Document (Canvas)
- Phan, "Liturgical Inculturation"
- Lecture: Inculturation (and corresponding slides) (Canvas)
- Examine: Marian Images (Canvas)

Before intensive:

-Smith, chs. 5-7, Benediction

Due:

-Part I: Field Observation Report (see above). Due: Sept. 10 by midnight.

- Using the Nairobi Document as a guide, write a 400-500 word essay that gives at least one element in your congregation's worship that is transcultural, contextual, countercultural, *and* cross-cultural, as well as which cultural interaction is an area of growth for your context. Due: Saturday (no group responses required)

INTENSIVE WEEK

(note: during the other cohort's intensive week, there is no additional readings/assignments)

Day 1 (Sept. 15/22) – Word and Sacrament

Morning – *You Are What You Love* Discussion and Words in Worship

Read:

-Review Smith

-Genesis 1; John 1:1-8

-Duck, 105-117

-Long, "Talking Ourselves into Being Christian" (Canvas)

-LeGuin, "Telling Is Listening" (Canvas)

Optional: Guidelines for Public Scripture Reading (Canvas)

-Listen: "Words That Shimmer," *On Being* interview with Elizabeth Alexander (Canvas)

Afternoon – Body and Sacrament

Read:

-Duck, 94-97, 151-65 (Ch. 5: "Movement in Worship" and "Visual Arts in Worship," Ch. 9)

-Westerfield Tucker, "Knee-Bowed and Body Bent" (Canvas)

-Williams, "Love Your Body: The Power and Protest of Embodied Worship" (Canvas)

-Doyle, excerpts from *Mink River* (Canvas)

Day 2 (Sept. 16/23) – Liturgical Time and Music in Worship

Morning – Liturgical Time – Sunday and the Church Year

Read:

-Exodus 20:8-11; Exodus 23:10-16; Rev. 1:10

-McClain, excerpt from *Come Sunday: The Liturgy of Zion* (Canvas)

-Stookey, "The Year of Our Risen Lord," in *Calendar* (Canvas)

Afternoon – Music in Worship

Read:

-Duck, 83-94 (Ch. 5 to "Movement in Worship")

-Cone, ch. 1-3

- Saliers and Saliers, "A Sound Spirituality," in a *Song to Sing, a Life to Live* (Canvas)
- Bjorlin, "Theologies of Church Music" (Canvas)
- Lucille Clifton, "What Nikki Knows"

Day 3 (Sept. 17/24) – Worship and Theology/Ethics, Prayer, and Planning Public Worship

Morning – Worship and Theology and Ethics

Read:

- Excerpts from *Sacraments and Worship: Athanasius of Alexandria*, Sub Tuum Praesidium, Basil of Caesarea, Prosper of Aquitaine, *Nicholas Cabasilas*, Amalarius of Metz, Martin Luther, *The Council of Trent*, Pope Pius IX, Odo Casel, *Peter Brunner*, Alexander Schmemmann, Geoffrey Wainwright, Aidan Kavanaugh, Edward Kilmartin, Gordon Lathrop, Don Saliers, Robert Taft, David W. Fagerberg, Teresa Berger, Melanie Ross, Virgilio Elizondo (Canvas)
- Isasi-Díaz, "Rituals and *Mujeristas*' Struggle for Liberation" (Canvas)
- Niequist, "Too Much Bono in Church?" (Canvas)
- Saliers, "Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings" (Canvas)
- Winner, excerpt from *The Dangers of Christian Practice* (Canvas)

Afternoon – Cone Discussion, Prayer, and Planning Public Worship

Read:

- Cone, chs. 4-6
- Ephesians 6:12-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:14-18; Luke 18:1-8
- Duck, 61-81, 129-134 (Ch. 4 & 7)
- Stookey, Learning a Basic Form for Brief Prayers (Canvas)
- Hall, "Failure Makes Good Worship"; Guidry Jones, "Good Worship"; Rienstra, "Good Worship: Articulating Standards of Excellence in Worship without Becoming Liturgical Police" (Canvas)

Day 4 (Sept. 18/25) – Baptism and Communion

Morning – Baptism

Read:

- Ezekiel 36:24-27; Acts 2:37-41; Acts 8:27-38; Romans 6:1-11; Galatians 3:26-29
- Duck, 167-91 (Ch. 10)
- Scharen, "Baptismal Practices and the Formation of Christians: A Critical Liturgical Ethics" (Canvas)
- "Baptism" section of Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (WCC) (Canvas)
- Watch: Alvin Ailey, "Wade in the Water"

Afternoon – Communion

Read:

- Acts 2:42-46; 1 Corinthians 11:20-29; Matthew 26:26-29; Hebrews 9:11-14
- Duck, 193-214 (Ch. 11)

- Kim-Cragg, "Through Senses of Sharing: How Liturgy Meets Food
- Carvalhaes, excerpt from *Eucharist and Globalization* (Canvas)
- “Eucharist” section of Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (WCC)

Day 5 (Sept. 19/26) – Worship Space and Rites of Passage (Healings, Funerals, and Weddings)

Morning – Worship Space and Rites of Passage (General)

Reading:

- Duck, 97-104 (Ch. 5: “A Space for Worship” to end of chapter)
- Vosko, “Standing on Holy Ground” (Canvas)
- Torgerson, excerpt from *Sighting the Unseen* (Canvas)

Afternoon – Healing, Funerals, and Weddings

Reading:

- Duck, 215-270 (Chs. 12-13)
- Long, excerpt from *Accompany Them with Singing* (Canvas)
- Grimes, excerpt from *Deeply into the Bones* (Canvas)

Due during Intensive:

Book Review and Class Presentation—Due: day of presentation (sign up first week of clas)

Due after Intensive:

Part II: Worship Inculturation and Adaptation – Due: Oct. 24

Part III: Worship Design – Due: Nov. 21

Class Resource Bibliography

- Alexander, Elizabeth. Interview with Elizabeth Alexander. *On Being*. Podcast audio, January 6, 2011, <https://onbeing.org/programs/elizabeth-alexander-words-that-shimmer/>.
- Baldovin, John. "The Liturgical Year: Calendar for a Just Community." In *Between Memory and Hope: Readings on the Liturgical Year*, edited by Maxwell E. Johnson, 429-44. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000.
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- Carvalhaes, Cláudio. "Worship: Loving Madly." *Liturgy* 29, no. 3 (2014): 55-62.
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- Clifton-Soderstrom, Michelle and David Bjorlin. "Vision." In *Incorporating Children in Worship: Mark of the Kingdom*, 125-137. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014.
- Doyle, Brian. *Mink River*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon University Press, 2010.

- Duchesne, Suzanne Wenonah. "Antiracist Preaching: Homiletical Strategies for Undermining Racism in Worship." *Liturgy* 29, no. 4 (2014): 11-20.
- Grimes, Ronald L. "Introduction." In *Deeply into the Bones: Re-inventing Rites of Passage*, 2-13. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
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- Jones, Neichelle R. Guidry. "Good Worship." *Liturgy* 29, no. 2 (2014): 37-41.
- Kim-Cragg, HyeRan. "Through Senses and Sharing: How Liturgy Meets Food." *Liturgy* 32, no. 2 (2017): 34-41.
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- Long, Thomas G. *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Mita, Joe. David Foster Wallace. "This is Water." May 5, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhhC_N6Bm_s.
- Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture*, Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1996, <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/nairobi-statement-on-worship-and-culture-full-text>.
- Niequist, Aaron. "Too Much Bono in the Church?" *Liturgy* 32, no. 1 (2017): 42-45.
- Phan, Peter C. "Liturgical Inculturation: Unity in Diversity in the Postmodern Age." In *Liturgy in a Postmodern World*, edited by Keith F. Pecklers, SJ, 55-86. New York: Continuum, 2003).

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Saliers, Don E. "Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited." In *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch Before God*, edited by E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill, SJ, 209-24. Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1998.

Saliers, Don E. and Emily Saliers. "A Sound Spirituality." In *A Song to Sing, A Life to Live: Reflections on Music as Spiritual Practice*, 19-37. San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2005.

Scharen, Christian B. "Baptismal Practices and the Formation of Christians: A Critical Liturgical Ethics." *Worship* 76 (2002): 43-66.

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Smith, James. K. A. "Taking a Liturgical Audit of Your Life," lecture at Biola University (36:38) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bactDK2JV34>.

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