

STRUCTURE OF THE SERVICE (con't)

People go to the front (to the altar) to receive communion. In some churches communion is brought to the seats. In many churches (including Orthodox churches) only members of that particular church are eligible to receive communion, though some churches invite Christians from other churches to join in. In some churches people who cannot participate in communion may come forward for a blessing. At the end of the Orthodox liturgy everyone ó including visitors ó is invited to receive some *antidoron* (a piece of blessed bread) from the priest

LANGUAGE OF THE SERVICE

The language used in most churches is that of the people attending.

BIBLE

During Christian services, readings may be taken from different parts of the Bible. The Christian Bible includes Hebrew scripture and distinctively Christian readings. The readings are in the language of the people attending.

COLLECTIONS

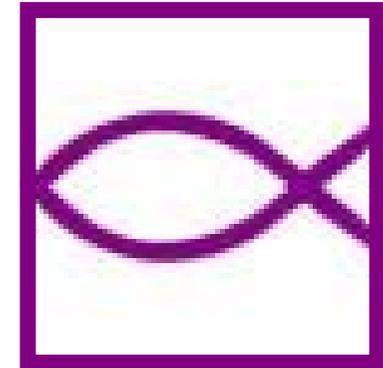
At Sunday services regular attendees often give money to support the work of that church.

A collection plate or bag is passed around during the service.

You may wish to make a contribution but as a guest you do not have to. Collections are not taken up at funerals, wedding services or on casual visits to the church.

QUEENSLAND FORUM FOR CHRISTIANS, JEWS AND MUSLIMS

Entering a CHURCH



In the history of Christianity many different styles of worship have emerged, though they share some key elements. The two main streams of tradition are those known as Orthodox churches on the one hand and Western-style churches (Catholic and Protestant) on the other. In the following no distinction is made wherever elements are held in common.

Many styles of worship used in Africa, Latin America and Asia incorporate different elements such as dance. Services may be very long.

WELCOME

In most churches people are greeted upon arrival at the main entrance. Hymn books or an Order of Service booklet, which is often used on special occasions such as weddings, can be obtained at the entrance to the church or on the seats (*pews*).

Upon entering the Church Orthodox Christians will make the sign of the Cross and light candles in prayer for themselves and others. The lit candles symbolize the light of Christ that guides us. They will then proceed to venerate (kiss) the *icons* placed in the entry (*narthex*) of the Church. You are welcome to do likewise if you wish. An *icon* is a religious picture.

LAYOUT AND SEATING

The church is usually divided into the sanctuary and the body of the church. The sanctuary in Western-style churches usually features an altar or table, a pulpit and seating for clergy and lay leaders. The Sanctuary of an Orthodox church features an altar table behind an icon screen and is reserved for clergy and the acolytes (priest's assistants).

Normally you are free to sit anywhere you wish in the main seating area of the church. The nave (body) of an Orthodox church may or may not have pews, so you are usually free to sit or stand anywhere in this part of the Church.

Some churches have statues, paintings and stained glass windows depicting religious scenes or figures. These are intended to strengthen the faith of the worshippers but are not objects of worship.

DRESS CODE

Modest attire is the acceptable standard. It is not usually necessary for either men or women to wear a head covering, though some women in Orthodox churches may do so.

POSTURE AT PRAYER

You can sit, kneel or stand as indicated by those around you. In some churches the congregation usually stands for prayer, others kneel, others stay seated.

STRUCTURE OF THE SERVICE

Services include readings from the Christian Bible, a sermon (short talk), prayers (some spoken together) and singing hymns.

Many church services include a communion or Eucharist. Communion is a celebration of the presence of Jesus Christ. The minister or priest consecrates bread and wine, which are then received by the members of the congregation. The Orthodox Liturgy (Eucharist or Communion Service) always climaxes in the consecration (blessing) of the bread and wine as the Body and Blood of Christ.