

UNIT 1 SESSION 1

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Isaiah 66:1-2
John 4:20-24

SESSION OBJECTIVES

Throughout this session, students will:

Discover the nine Elements of Worship that are referenced throughout this unit.

Experience how worship can draw us closer to God and each other.

Notice Elements of Worship from different places in the worship space.

GETTING READY

Looking Back

In our life of faith as Lutherans, we are called to worship God. In the Old Testament the people of Israel gather together to praise and serve the God who has freed, formed, and sustained them. The New Testament continues this call as Jesus invites and forms a community devoted to word, meal, prayer, and song. This pattern of worship continues in the early church. As Lutherans, we center this gathered community through our liturgy, the work of the people that is shaped by God's promises. Many elements of our liturgy echo scripture; see the complete list on pages 1154-1159 of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

What Lutherans Believe

As Lutherans, we view worship as a central part of our life of faith. Our core worship resource, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)*, includes this statement on the dynamic, contextual, and interconnected nature of worship: "Worship takes place in particular assemblies within particular contexts. Yet every assembly gathered by the Holy Spirit for worship is connected to the whole church." *ELW* goes on to say that "worship unites the people of God in one time and place with the people of God in every time and place. We use patterns, words, actions, and songs handed down through the ages to express this unity and continuity" (page 6).

Current Connections

In this first session of the Lutheran Worship unit, tune in to the worship experiences students already have—with your church community in particular and with worship more broadly. Some students may be familiar with what goes on in your congregation because they've frequently attended worship, Sunday school, fellowship time, service projects, and other church activities. Other students may hold much looser affiliations with your congregation. Your job is to welcome all students into this session and the entire unit to help them explore the patterns, words, actions, and songs that are both ancient and new.

Saying Yes to . . .

Throughout Lutheran Yes! confirmation, students explore the five baptismal affirmations that parents, sponsors, and the whole congregation hear during a baptism. Caring adults respond with a YES to these statements, using these words: "We do, and we ask God to help and guide us." Whether a student is baptized or not, this session introduces them to worship, the setting where these affirmations are spoken.

GATHER (10 minutes)

Choose one of these Gather activities to welcome your students as they enter this space of YES. Then move to the Get Connected activity using the Connection Deck.

GATHER ACTIVITY OPTION 1 ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP SUDOKU

MATERIALS

- Elements of Worship Sudoku and Solution page from pages 161–163
- Sign-in supplies such as a sign-in sheet and name tags
- Writing utensils

PREPARATION

- Make copies of the Elements of Worship Sudoku, including a few copies of the Solution page.
- Place Elements of Worship Sudoku sheets and writing utensils on a welcome table with other sign-in supplies.

Greet students by name and invite them to find a spot at a table and begin working on the sudoku puzzles solo, with a partner, or in a small group.

Tip: Rules for sudoku are included, but be prepared to explain them to students who are not as familiar with this activity.

GATHER ACTIVITY OPTION 2

WORSHIP WORDS

MATERIALS

- Sign-in supplies such as a sign-in sheet and name tags
- Whiteboard or chart paper
- Markers

PREPARATION

- Set up the welcome table with sign-in supplies.
- Set up a circle of chairs near the whiteboard or chart paper and markers.

After students sign in, invite them to the circle of chairs. Introduce the Japanese game called Shiritori. In this word game, someone says a random word. The person next to them quickly thinks of another word that begins with the last letter of that word. For example, if the first person says “fruit,” the next person could say “taco,” the next person could say “octopus,” and so on. One round consists of going around the circle once.

In the first round, students can call out any kind of word as they go around the circle.

In the next round, invite them to use words that belong in a category. Examples include names of people, places, school-related words, or animals. Play a few rounds so students get used to thinking of specific types of words.

In the final round, challenge them to use words that are related to church, worship, the Bible, confirmation, and other facets of their faith life. If there’s interest, play more than one round of this category to see what words they already know.

Tip: If students join the group as the game occurs, their fellow students can explain the rules.

Tip: If some students need support to know the final letter of each word, write each word on the whiteboard or chart paper for the whole group to see.

GET CONNECTED

MATERIALS

- Unit 1 Connection Deck

PREPARATION

- Plan a spot where your group can lay out 54 cards on a flat surface.

Transition from the Gather activity to this activity that can help students and leaders make connections. Introduce the Connection Deck of cards, and let students know that each time you meet, you'll use some of the cards to make connections—with themselves, with each other, and with their faith. Each time you meet, you can use the cards in a different way.

Spread out all Connection Deck cards on a table in various positions so students have to move around the table to see all the cards. The cards should be evenly distributed between image side up and word side up.



Invite students to select one word card and one image card to answer this question:
How do you feel during worship?

Once students have selected their cards, they can share (with a partner or the whole group) how the word captures their feelings about attending worship at your church. Then share why they felt drawn to the image on the card as an expression of their selected word.

If sharing with the whole group, start with the person with the lowest number on either card. If there is a tie, go to the next lowest number between those who were tied.

This activity helps set a baseline for how students feel about worship. Encourage students to be honest. You'll revisit this question at the end of the unit to see if they choose different words and images related to worship. Use the space below to jot down their chosen images and words so you can compare to their responses in Session 10.



FOCUS

(10 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Bibles
- Writing utensils
- Bell, chime, or other cue

PREPARATION

- None

Use a bell, chime, or other cue to let students know it is time to transition to the next activity. If you have more than one small group, invite all groups to sit together in a gathering space.

Welcome students to Lutheran Yes! confirmation. Prepare them for this curriculum's structure and content with any of these points, which you can adjust to your context:

- We are gathered to explore saying YES to the affirmations you will say at the affirmation of baptism service at the end of this confirmation program.
- God said YES to you from the very beginning. You are a precious child of God, and God will always love you.
- If you are baptized, your parents/caregivers and baptismal sponsors said YES when they brought you to be baptized.
- If you are not baptized, your parents/caregivers said YES to you being part of this confirmation ministry.
- The congregation said YES when they promised to support you and your parents/caregivers at your baptism.
- The congregation says YES to you by supporting this confirmation ministry.

In Lutheran Yes!, we will do these kinds of things together each time we meet:

- **Sign in at the sign-in table.** (Describe the activities they may do there, such as writing down their name on a sign-in sheet, filling out a name tag, picking up a schedule, and so on.)
- **Gather together with an activity** you can start doing when you arrive.
- Once everyone arrives (or at a specific time), **we'll use a deck of cards to help us** make some connections with each other and check in on how people are doing.

- **Then we'll move to reading a few Bible passages** that introduce the day's focus. If you have your own Bible you can write in it.
- After that, you'll each get **a chance to explore these ideas through something called a Quest**. Quests are different each time we meet. Each Quest will invite you to discover more about a specific topic that is part of Lutheran Yes!
- **We'll regather** by using the cards to play a quick game and then finish with a final activity.

Distribute Bibles to students.

Explore the two readings for this session. Use one of the Bible-reading strategies described on page 10.

If this is your first session together, or if you think your group could benefit from a brief exploration of how to find Bible passages, walk through how to find these two passages by finding the Table of Contents together and then searching for the book, chapter number, and verses.

Read Isaiah 66:1-2 together.

Follow up with one or more of these questions and explorations:

- If there is a word or phrase you don't understand, you can ask about it now.
- This passage says, "What kind of house could you build for me?" and "What sort of place for me to rest?" If you were to build a house for God, what would it look like? Think about what the outside would be like and how God would want it decorated on the inside.
- God says, "All these things are mine." How do we respond to that through worship?

Read John 4:20-24 together.

Follow up with one or more of these questions and explorations:

- If there is a word or phrase you don't understand, you can ask about it now.
- Who is a true worshiper? Do you know anyone you would call a true worshiper?
- What does it mean to worship in spirit? What does it mean to worship in truth? Why do you think we need both?

DISCOVER

(25-35 minutes)

Introduce students to the options for their Quests that will help them explore the places we worship, the Elements of Worship, and some ways we can move our bodies during worship. Based on your context and available resources, choose one, two, or all three of these Quests for your students.

Quest 1 is called Worldwide Worship. You'll explore places of worship from around the world. Then you'll be able to share your ideas for how you would design a worship space.

Quest 2 is called Drawn to Worship. You'll learn about the Elements of Worship while we are in the worship space. Then you'll choose a spot that is connected to an Element of Worship and draw what you see from that perspective.

Quest 3 is called Whole Body Worship. You'll look up some verses in the Bible that describe the ways people have worshiped over thousands of years.

Once students decide which Quest to pursue, they can head to that area with their Student Quest Books and writing utensils. Plan to have a leader or volunteer in each space to answer questions and offer support.

QUEST 1

WORLDWIDE WORSHIP

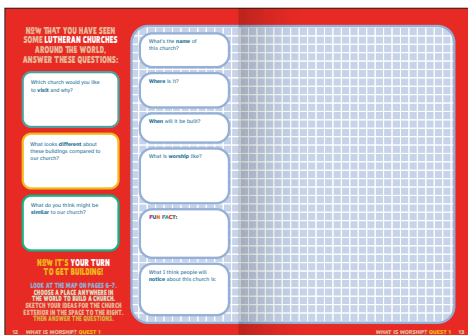
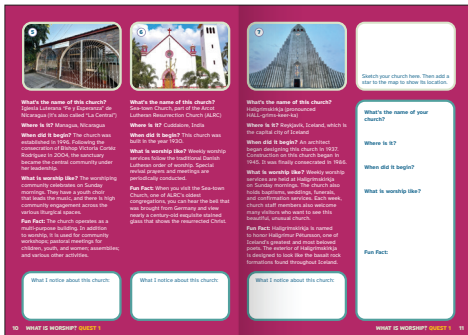


MATERIALS

- Unit 1 Student Quest Books
- Writing utensils
- Optional: World map or globe

PREPARATION

- If you have a world map or globe, display it for easy viewing.
- Optional: If someone in your congregation has visited the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, or any other international Lutheran churches, invite them to show pictures and souvenirs from their trip.



Students who choose this Quest will turn to pages 6-13 in their Quest Book to read about different Lutheran churches around the world. After they read about each one, they will write about their own church, answer these reflection questions, and then sketch an idea for a new church somewhere in the world.

- Which church would you like to visit and why?
- What looks different about these buildings compared to our church?
- What do you think might be similar to our church?

To wrap up this Quest, point out that Lutherans worship all around the world. While our buildings may look different on the outside, there are many parts of worship that connect us across geography and language and culture.

QUEST 2

DRAWN TO WORSHIP

MATERIALS

- Unit 1 Student Quest Books
- Writing utensils
- Optional: Worship folders/bulletins from a recent service

PREPARATION

- This Quest occurs in the worship space. Check your church calendar and reserve space if needed so your group can be there for 20–25 minutes without interruptions.
- If your church uses printed worship folders/bulletins, provide several from recent worship services for students to reference.

Students who choose this Quest will turn to pages 14–16 in their Quest Book to learn about the nine Elements of Worship. They will read about each one, answer some reflection questions, and then sketch their view from a place in the worship space.

QUEST 2

DRAWN TO WORSHIP

FOR MORE THAN 500 YEARS, LUTHERANS ALL AROUND THE WORLD HAVE BEEN WORSHIPING TOGETHER.

Our buildings, our languages, and our communities may look different, but many parts of Lutheran worship have been the same across all these years.

Take a look at the nine **Elements of Worship**. (They are listed in alphabetical order, not the order they happen in worship.) In your pair or small group, read each part out loud. Then try the next part of the activity on page 16.

The words in quotation marks come from an important book called *The Use of the Means of Grace*. This book describes many of the ELCA's teachings about worship.

14 WHAT IS WORSHIP? QUEST 2

CREEDS

A **creed** is a statement of belief. Lutherans use three Creeds that have all been around for more than 1,000 years: Apostles' (kinda long), Nicene (pretty long), and Athanasian (very long). The Apostles' Creed is the creed Lutherans usually say during worship. All three creeds affirm that Jesus Christ is both God and human.

PRAYERS

A worship service usually includes many kinds of **prayers** sung or spoken at different times. Sometimes a worship leader says the prayer, sometimes the whole congregation says the prayer together, and sometimes worshippers say silent prayers heard only by God.

MUSIC

As Lutherans, we believe that **"music** is a servant of the Gospel and a principal means of worshiping God in Lutheran churches" (page 16). Usually, Lutheran worship includes music before, during, and after the service.

PEACE

In many congregations, after praying for the whole world in the prayers of intercession, people share the gift of Christ's **peace** with each other. People hug, shake hands, show the peace sign, or make another sign of peace. Christians have been sharing the peace with each other for 2,000 years.

SERMON

A pastor, deacon, or other leader preaches a **sermon** during the worship service. As Lutherans, we believe this: "Preaching is the living and contemporary voice of one who interprets in all the Scriptures the things concerning Jesus Christ. . . . The preacher proclaims our need of God's grace and freely offers that grace, equipping the community for mission and service in daily life" (page 15).

15 WHAT IS WORSHIP? QUEST 2

NOW THAT YOU'VE LEARNED A LITTLE MORE ABOUT EACH ELEMENT OF WORSHIP, CHOOSE ONE OF THEM TO INVESTIGATE.

Circle it.

Find a place in the worship space or other spot where this Element of Worship happens.

Sit or stand in that space for a few minutes. Imagine what it looks (and sounds and feels and smells) like during worship.

Then sketch that scene in the space below.

16 WHAT IS WORSHIP? QUEST 2

QUEST 3

WHOLE BODY WORSHIP

MATERIALS

- Unit 1 Student Quest Books
- Bibles
- Writing utensils

PREPARATION

- Plan for this Quest to occur in an open space where students can move.

Students who choose this Quest will turn to pages 17–18 in their Quest Book to learn about the different postures of worship. They will look up the verses, find corresponding postures, and then answer some reflection questions.

Here is each verse matched to its posture.



Psalm 95:6 Let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

Psalm 22:27 Turn to the LORD.

Psalm 96:9 Tremble before the LORD.

Matthew 28:9 [The women] took hold of [Jesus'] feet and worshiped him.

Genesis 24:26 The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD.

Nehemiah 8:6 All the people . . . lift[ed] up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Review the questions on page 18 of the Student Quest Book together. What does your group have to say about movement and postures during worship?

REGATHER

MATERIALS

- Unit 1 Connection Deck
- Bell, chime, or other cue

PREPARATION

- Sort the Connection Deck cards into hands of nine cards each. Each hand includes cards with the numbers 1 through 9.

Use the bell, chime, or other cue to regather everyone from their Quests.

Lead them in this Connection Deck game. It is for up to six people and plays in under 10 minutes. It introduces students to the idea of playing games with these cards by focusing on the card numbers.

Give each player nine cards, one with each number (1 through 9) represented. Let them know they will make a discard pile and a points pile.

Each player selects one of their cards and places it image side up front of them so no one can see their number.

Once everyone has placed a card in front of them, everyone reveals the number on their card at the same time.

If there are any tied numbers, those cards eliminate each other. Those players put their cards image side up into their personal discard pile to the side of their play area.

If everyone's card matches with some other player's card, then all the cards are removed from play for this round into everyone's discard piles with image side up.

Once all ties are removed, the remaining players now compare the numbers on their played cards. Only the highest number card remaining will count for points for this round. The student can place it number side up in their points pile.

Any players left return their played card to their hand. Players may play any card again, until it is discarded (due to a tie) or earned as points.

When any player has only one card remaining in their hand, the game ends. Players compute their final score by adding up the numbers on the cards in their points pile.

In case of a tie, whichever player has the least amount of cards in their discard pile is the winner. Should a second tie occur, both players share in the victory.

SEND (10 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Unit 1 Student Quest Books
- Scissors

PREPARATION

- None

Welcome any closing thoughts or questions and share announcements.

Read together the baptismal affirmation on page 55 of the Student Quest Book: “To live among God’s faithful people.” Point out that no matter where God’s people have worshiped or what they had in their worship space, they knew it was important to continue meeting together and living close to one another.

BAPTISM Thank you, Holy Spirit, that you have claimed us as your own in baptism.	COMMUNION Thank you, Lord, that we get to eat at your table with you and each other.	CONFESSiON & FORGIVENESS Praise to you, Jesus, that we can confess our sins and be forgiven.
CREEDS Thank you, Creator, Healer, and Sustainer, for inviting us to believe in you.	MUSIC We praise you, God, that our joy for you overflows into song and music and art.	PEACE Praise to you, Holy Spirit, for giving us the peace that surpasses all understanding.
PRAYERS Thank you, God, that you hear our prayers and will always listen to us.	READINGS We praise you, Lord, for the stories of your saving grace passed down to us through generations.	SERMON Thank you, Jesus, for your servants who preach the good news to all.

Close with prayer by inviting students to read the nine Elements of Worship prayers on page 19.

Invite students to choose one of these prayers, cut it out, and use it during the week to connect them to a part of worship.

Collect Quest Books and send students with a YES.