Every Sunday the following words are printed in the service folder: WHAT IS WORSHIP? "In Christian worship our Lord speaks and we listen. His Word bestows what it says. Saying back to him what he has said to us in his Word, we repeat what is most true and sure. Most true and sure is his name, which he put upon us with the water of our Baptism. We are his. This we acknowledge at the beginning of the Divine Service: 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' Where his name is, there he is. Before him we acknowledge that we are sinners, and we plead for forgiveness. His forgiveness is given us, and we, freed and forgiven, acclaim him as our great and gracious God. The rhythm of our worship is from him to us, and then from us back to him. He gives his gifts, and together we receive and extol them. We build one another up in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Finally his blessing moves us out into our calling, where his gifts have their fruition." These words, taken from the "Introduction" to the hymnal, Lutheran Worship, serve to keep us focused on what is going on in this place. God comes to us, gathering us in His name and calling us by His Word out of the darkness of this world into the radiance of His light. The very same Lord Jesus Christ who gave His body and blood as a sacrifice for our sins on the cross, now comes to us, giving us His body and blood to eat and to drink. That is why Lutherans call this service, the Divine Service - God serving us.

The Divine Service centers around two things: Word and Sacrament. The structure of the Divine Service might be compared to a house. The "front porch" of the Service is the Preparation. We enter God's House because we were made His children in Holy Baptism where God Himself put His holy name on us. It is in confession and absolution that we return to our Baptism and are so prepared to enter into the presence of our living Lord. From the "front porch" we step into the "living room." Here we sit like Mary at Jesus' feet to hear His Word (see St. Luke 10:39). From the living room, the Lord leads us to the "dining room," that is the Service of the Sacrament, where He feeds us with His very body and blood. Having been in God's House to receive His gifts in Word and Sacrament, we leave with these gifts alive in us and in His name we go back into the world to live lives that bring glory to Him through our service of the neighbor.

The architecture of the chapel is reflective of the service which God renders to us in this place. As you enter the chapel from the rear of the nave (the area where the congregation sits) your eyes are drawn upward to the altar, the cross, and the stained glass window. In the Old Testament, the altar was the place of sacrifice. From our altar we receive the fruits of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, His body and blood and to the altar we bring the sacrifices of prayer and praise. The stained glass window is based on the three articles of the Creed, picturing for us the work of the Holy Trinity. The lectern is the place from which the Word of God is read. The pulpit is the place from which the Word of God is preached. On the column to the side of the pulpit there hangs a crucifix (cross with the corpus) as a visual reminder that the Lutheran sermon is always the preaching of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." The colored paraments on the altar and pulpit change according to the Church Year (blue for Advent; white for festivals of the Lord such as Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, and Trinity; purple for Lent; red for Pentecost and Reformation; black for Good Friday and green for Sundays after Trinity). The baptismal
font is placed at the entrance to the nave, recalling for us that it is by Baptism that we are made members of Christ's church. Stationed by the baptismal font is the paschal candle signifying that in Baptism we are delivered from the darkness of sin and bathed in the light of Him who is the Light of the world.

As the pastor does not represent himself but the Lord, Lutheran pastors wear vestments as a sign of their holy office. The vestments cover the man alerting the congregation to the fact that the pastor is here as Christ's servant. The basic vestment which the pastors and others who assist him wears is the alb, a white robe. For the Service of the Word, the pastor wears a stole, a long strip of fabric in the appropriate color of the Church Year. The stole resembles a yoke, indicating the obligation of the pastor to be Christ's servant. At the Service of the Sacrament, the pastor puts on a chasuble, a poncho-like garment which, like the stole, is in the appropriate color of the Church Year.

On festivals we often make use of a processional crucifix and torches. In these festival services, the crucifix and torches are carried into the chancel (the raised area where the altar, lectern, and pulpit are located) during the singing of the first hymn. Likewise, at the end of the service as the final hymn is sung, the crucifix and torches are carried out of the chancel and through the nave. This movement indicates that we are drawn into the Divine Service by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and we follow in the light of His cross as He leads us through this world to His heavenly kingdom. The Gospel Procession is the practice of carrying the Bible or Lectionary (book containing the Scripture readings for the Divine Service) into the midst of the congregation, flanked by the processional torches. Then, from the midst of the congregation, the pastor reads the Holy Gospel. This practice reminds us that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

Much more could be said about the Divine Service and the manner in which it is conducted at University Lutheran Chapel, but that would require more space than is available in this tract. We offer this short explanation of the Divine Service and a few of its features to assist you in understanding and appreciate our liturgical heritage. God bless your worship with us.

-Pastor John T. Pless