

# THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA

## THE BOOK OF COMMON WORSHIP



Revised and approved by the CSI Liturgy Committee  
2000-2002, 2002-2004

Accepted and approved by the CSI Executive Committee  
October 2003

Submitted for authorization to the  
29<sup>th</sup> session of the Synod of the  
Church of South India, Bangalore 2004

### Revision of the Book of Common Worship: a liturgical milestone in the life of the Church of South India

The Liturgy Committee that met 13<sup>th</sup>- 14<sup>th</sup> October 2003 at the CSI Centre, Chennai, resolved unanimously to submit the revised drafts of the fifteen Orders of Worship for the proposed Revised Book of Common Worship to the Executive Committee of the CSI for its perusal and approval.

The Executive Committee of the CSI in its meeting held on 21 and 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2003 accepted and approved the drafts of the fifteen orders of worship for the proposed Revised Book of Common Worship with appreciation. Now these fifteen orders of worship for the proposed Revised Book of Common Worship accepted and approved by both the liturgy committee and the executive committee of the CSI are placed before the Synod of the Church of South India, for final authorization for their use in worship in the Church of South India.

#### Process of Revision:

The 1994 Synod of the CSI gave a mandate to the Liturgy Committee to revise the Book of Common Worship. The CSI Liturgy Committee however, took up the revision only during the Biennium 2000-2002, and continued the same through the Biennium 2002-2004.

The Liturgy Committee that met in Secunderabad 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> March 2001 drew up the guidelines for the revision of liturgies, and subsequently met in five workshop-seminars - 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> July 2001, 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> November 2001; 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> August 2002, 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> May 2003 and 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> October 2003 to successfully bring to fruition the work begun in Secunderabad.

#### The Revised Liturgies:

1. The Order for the Lord's Supper  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - November 2001)
2. The Short Order for the Lord's Supper - **New**  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - October 2003)
3. Second Order of Worship - Matins  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - May 2003)
4. Third Order of Worship - Matins  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - May 2003)
5. Fourth Order of Worship - Matins - **New**  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - October 2003)

6. The Order for the holy Baptism of adults  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - May 2003)
7. The Order for the holy Baptism of infants  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - May 2003)
8. The Order for the Confirmation  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - May 2003)
9. The Order for the holy Matrimony  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - November 2001)
- 10. The Order for the Burial - Major Revision**  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - November 2001)
11. The Order for the Ordination of Deacons/Deaconesses (approved by the Liturgy Committee - May 2003)
12. The Order for the Ordination of Presbyters  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - May 2003)
13. The Order for the Consecration of Bishop  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - May 2003)
14. The Order for the Covenant Service  
(approved by the Liturgy Committee - May 2003)
- 15. The Common Liturgy of the Eucharist for CSI, CNI and Mar Thoma Churches - New** (prepared by the Worship and Mission Commission of the CCI, accepted and approved by the Liturgy Committee - May 2003)

### **Salient Features of the Revision:**

1. The existing CSI Book of Common Worship has become an icon and part-and-parcel of the cultic life in the CSI. The revision does not attempt to break this icon. Rather, it tries to re-interpret each part of the liturgy; this has often been done by the inclusion of alternative form/prayer. The old form/prayer is retained; the new prayer brings into the liturgy the new theological insights of our 41 years of ecumenical journey together since the publication of the Book of Common Worship in 1962.
2. In the use of the language, the Committee's aim has been to combine both simplicity and dignity. Modern English and inclusivist language have been used as far as the human community is concerned. For this reason, the biblical quotations have been taken from the New Revised Standard Version. The God-language used in the prayers strives to be inclusive, but not such as to cause offence. However in relation to the older liturgical forms/prayers and doctrinal formulations, the traditional God-language has been used.

3. The orders have been made more participatory for the congregation. The basic structure of the orders, more or less, remains the same, but provide a wealth of alternative resources. This has been done to enable the congregations to adapt the content of the worship with great freedom, to allow creativity and imagination and to contextualize the worship, and make it relevant to a particular setting. The rubrics provided at some or not provided at some other points, and the wealth of alternatives given, provides flexibility for the congregation to be innovative according to the local context. Spaces are provided in the orders of worship where local indigenous forms, symbols and cultural elements may be adapted and variety introduced.
4. The orders reflect an ecumenical learning - the ecumenical resources of worship of the WCC, CCA, and CNI Book of Worship, Anglican Book of Prayer (2000 edn.), the Book of Common Worship of the Presbyterian Church in USA, Anglican Worship resources from the Caribbean were to name a few which gave inspiration and education to us.
5. In the present revised order for the Lord's Supper, the prayers of the 1984 revision that was authorized for the experimental use by the Executive Committee of the CSI have been incorporated. Other attempts by the previous Liturgy Committees in revising the Marriage and the Matins orders in the 80's and 90's found in the Liturgy Committee's files that never saw the light of the day were also utilized.
6. The present revisions are not an attempt to form experimental liturgies. Rather, the present Liturgy Committee consciously tried to bring together the spiritual traditions and heritages revered in different congregations; at the same time challenging the congregations with prayers which call for more authentic relevance in worship by bringing in contemporary issues and concerns such as violence, poverty, oppression, marginalization, ecology, justice, peace, and integrity of creation.
7. In the order of the Lord's Supper, the *peace* has been shifted to the end of the part *Preparation*. After the *Confession of sins* the congregation celebrates the *Reconciliation* by a kiss of peace. This also enables the children to be part of the peace sharing. The order of the Lord's Supper now has three alternatives for each

part of worship: the first one represents time-tested prayers/forms found in the present first order; the second and the third alternatives bring variety and different theological perspectives into the liturgy, for example, the prayer of *Great Thanksgiving in the breaking of the bread* has three alternatives: the first one interprets the salvation history and the Christ event using the traditional concepts of ransom, propitiation, etc., the second alternative celebrates the salvation drama from the liberation perspective, and the third one looks at it from a creational point of view.

8. In the marriage order, the gender justice has been taken seriously and the vows shared are formulated identically. While the custom of the 'father giving away the bride' has been dropped, it has been replaced by both the families assuring and promising support.
9. The burial liturgy has been extensively re-moulded to include sections relevant to the burial of:
  - a) those who die after having lived a full life, i.e. in adulthood,
  - b) a child, c) youngsters, d) accident victims or sudden death, and
  - e) suicide victims.
10. The fourth order of Matins has been drafted anew, and provides resources for *call to worship, adoration, call to confession, confession, absolution, thanksgiving, collects, intercessory litanies* etc. Two additional faith affirmations in contemporary language have been added which may be used for special occasions.
11. The mission statement of the CSI has found place in the ordination and consecration liturgies.
12. The covenant service has been remoulded in corporate language instead of individualistic, to symbolize the covenant between the God and the people of God, the ecological and justice concerns find a place in the liturgy.
13. The common liturgy of the CSI-CNI-Mar Thoma churches for the celebration of the Lord's Supper is an ecumenical breakthrough in the history of Indian Christianity. The inclusion of this common liturgy for Eucharist in the Revised Book of Common Worship will be a sign of our ecumenical openness.

14. In the Revised Book of Common Worship, apart from the above-mentioned orders of worship, one may also include a three-cycled common lectionary for Sundays, festivals and special days prepared by the Worship and Mission Commission of the CCI, along with the collects provided by the Liturgy Committee. The three-cycled daily Bible readings prepared and approved by the Liturgy Committee already in 2001 which covers the Old Testament in 3 years and the New Testament, twice in 3 years may also be included.

Once the revised orders are authorized by the Synod 2004 then immediate steps need to be taken for its publication and its translation to regional languages. The question of copyright now held by the Oxford University Press will also need to be discussed.

The revised orders of the Book of Common Worship are offered to the glory of God with the fervent prayer that they may assist the Church to remain in closest union with its Saviour and Head, and being filled with the love of the Holy Spirit, present itself continually as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to the almighty and merciful God.

***Now to our Lord eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.***

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