

While they do so, we sing a hymn, and everyone is invited to put some money in the collection bag, though many will have given by Standing Order already. All Saints costs nearly £3,000 per week to run, and donations are our only source of income.

The Service of the Sacrament

The word *Sacrament* has its roots in a Roman soldier's oath of service, but in the church it means an action that Jesus commanded us to do, in which God is invisibly at work as well as what you can see happening. The Bible tells us that at his Last Supper before his death Jesus blessed bread and wine, and urged his disciples to eat and drink them as a sign that his body was broken and his blood was shed to save them and us. In the Mass we obey that command, and we believe that by consuming spiritual food we are strengthened spiritually by God.

The bread and wine are taken up by the wardens to the President, who says a short prayer over each, and swings the thurible around them, followed by a ceremonial hand-washing called "the lavabo", and also blesses the collection, setting it apart for holy use.



The President begins to say the communion prayer. After the first part of the communion prayers, the bell rings to show that we can sit down.

When the President prays that the bread and wine may be to us the body and blood of Jesus, a bell rings three times for the bread and three more for the wine, and the Thurifer gives the thurible three times three shakes.

The three rings follow the words of Jesus at the Last Supper, and a very long tradition in the Western Church regards these words as of capital importance in this whole service. The Church has never been able to reach total agreement on exactly at what point ordinary bread and wine become also the sacramental body and blood of our Lord, his Real

Presence. In this church we have chosen to keep within the historic understanding of the Western Church, so we attach the greatest significance to the words of our Lord, spoken at the Last Supper; our ceremonial actions reflect this. But we acknowledge that this is not the only way of understanding this most wonderful and personal of mysteries, and for this reason all Christians of every tradition are most welcome to join us at the communion rail.

The communion prayers also include the Lord's Prayer (sung) and a Prayer of Humble Access, for everyone to join in.

When the communion prayers are finished, the President invites everyone to go up to the rail, queuing in the central gangway, and the bell is rung once more. Anyone who has been taught how to receive the bread and wine in any Christian church may do so at All Saints, holding out their hands to show that they want to receive. Others go up too, but keep their hands at their sides to show that they want to receive a blessing. The President dispenses the bread and the blessings, and the Deacon and Sub-deacon the wine. When you have received, please go back to your seat via the side routes, making space for those in the queue behind you to receive as well.

After the communion

The President says a final prayer, which like the Collect changes from week to week, and then we stand to say or sing the Gloria together, as a way of saying thank-you to God for what we have received from him.

Finally the President makes announcements and gives us a blessing, and the Deacon sends us out. The word "Mass" is thought to come from the Latin words that the Deacon used to say at this point, *Ite, missa est*. Then we all sing a final hymn while the serving party reverences the altar and processes out.

When the hymn has ended, do stay to hear the organ voluntary and to join us at the back of church for refreshments and chat.



What happens during High Mass?

When you arrive

You should be given, or find in a rack near the door, a copy of a folded service sheet which contains all of the words that will be said or sung, apart from the intercessory prayers and the preacher's sermon, which might be said "off the cuff" to some extent. The service sheet shows in **bold** text the words that are for everybody to say, as well when one should sit or stand.



You should also be able to find envelopes with a gift aid declaration printed on them in the racks near the doors. If you are a tax-payer, please put into the envelope whatever money you will put into the collection plate, and fill in the details on the envelope to enable us to reclaim from the government the tax that you have paid on it.

You are welcome to sit anywhere in the pews, apart from the two seats right at the back reserved for the church-wardens, and the longitudinal benches in front of the eagle lectern and pulpit where the serving party sit.

The Introduction

A bell rings to mark the start of the service, prompting us to be quiet and focus our thoughts on the presence of God.

God is holy, so we begin by confessing our shortcomings and asking for his mercy. All Saints uses the traditional Greek words *Kyrie eleison* (Lord, have mercy), *Christe eleison* (Christ, have mercy), *Kyrie eleison* (Lord, have mercy). You could imagine that you are addressing these three phrases to the

three persons of the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Then we stand to sing the first hymn, and the serving party procession emerges from the Lady Chapel. The procession normally consists of the following people:



1. Two church-wardens, or people standing in for them, carrying staves of office, leading the “serving party” to their places for the start of the service.
2. The Thurifer, whose task is to burn incense in a metal container suspended on chains called a thurible. Incense is dry tree resin from countries in the Middle East, broken into pieces no larger than a pea. A spoonful is poured onto burning coals, making smoke like our prayers going up to heaven, and an ethereal smell which makes our worship a multi-sensory experience; this practice goes back thousands of years. The Thurifer swings the thurible to and fro, creating a draught through it which keeps the coals glowing. The Thurifer is accompanied by a “boat boy” (or girl) carrying a supply of incense in a little brass container shaped like a boat.
3. The Crucifer, who carries the processional cross, flanked by a pair of Acolytes carrying candles.
4. The MC, who helps out as necessary.
5. The preacher, unless someone else in the procession will preach.
6. The Sub-deacon, Deacon (which means helper) and President, wearing special robes called vestments. The President is a priest, usually Father John the Rector, or Father Dave the Curate. We have several sets of vestments in different colours, corresponding to the church seasons, including:

◆ **purple** in Lent and Advent, as a sign of repentance of our sins;

◆ **gold** at Easter, reflecting God’s glory;

◆ **green** at Trinity, signifying our need to grow spiritually like plants in a field;

◆ **red** at Whitsun, like the flames of fire which appeared above the apostles, or on saints’ days, recalling the blood shed by the martyrs.

We admit to God and each other that we come as sinners. The President then prays that God will forgive us and make us more holy, making the sign of the cross. Many people respond by crossing themselves where the service sheet has the symbol ✠, to confirm that they want to receive God’s blessing. Sometimes the President sprinkles the congregation with water, as a sign of God making us clean.

Then we sing again while the President, Deacon and Sub-deacon go to the High Altar. An Altar is a table that is only used for holy things, and the High Altar is the one on top of the steps at the east end of the building. It usually has a cloth hanging on the side facing the congregation, in the same colour as the vestments. On the altar, under a small cloth cover of the same colour, are the communion vessels, which are as yet empty. The President swings the thurible around the altar as a sign of the ethereal presence of God.



The church has a prayer for each Sunday called “the Collect of the day”. The President sings the Collect with hands raised, to show that it is the prayer of us all, hence the name Collect. This way of singing prayers has been a tradition in the church for hundreds of years; St Augustine reputedly said “he who sings prays twice”.

The remainder of the service is divided into two parts, one concerning God’s word in the Bible, and the other concerning the sacrament of bread and wine.



The Service of the Word

A passage from the Bible is read from the eagle lectern, either from the Old Testament which describes God’s relationship with people before the time of Jesus, or one of the New Testament writings from the days of the early church.

Then we sing another hymn as the serving party processes to the middle of the church. When they arrive, the Deacon reads a passage from the Gospels, which are the four books of the Bible that describe Jesus’s life and death two thousand years ago.



The Gospel reading is followed by the sermon; the preacher spends a few minutes explaining the readings and suggesting how we should apply them so that we live as God wants today.

After the sermon we stand to sing the Nicene Creed, which was composed in a meeting at Nicea in 325 AD. It summarizes the Christian beliefs about God in a few paragraphs, so that we can all be clear that we believe the same things. Singing it as opposed to saying it may seem difficult at first, but as you get used to it you will find that the tune helps you to remember the words. For one sentence of the creed the serving party *genuflect*, i.e. they touch the right knee on the ground, to show particular honour to the Incarnation of Jesus as a human.

During the Creed the Sub-deacon, Deacon and President walk to the middle of the congregation to say the intercessory prayers. When a prayer ends with the words “Lord, hear us” please respond by saying: “Lord, graciously hear us”.



That concludes the *service of the word*. The serving party processes up to the High Altar which will be the focus of the rest of the service. On arrival there they acknowledge its special status by reverencing it.