

Taizé Worship

A Guide for Worshipers at Grace of God



Where Did Taizé Come From?

In 1940, a young Swiss man named Brother Roger Schutz settled in the tiny village of Taizé in Burgundy, France, with a vision of reconciliation—in the middle of a world torn apart by war. He began sheltering refugees and gradually a community of brothers gathered around him, drawn by prayer, simplicity, and a conviction that Christians divided by tradition could still worship as one.

The Taizé Community became one of the most remarkable ecumenical communities of the 20th century, drawing brothers from Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican traditions under a single roof. Today it welcomes tens of thousands of pilgrims from around the world each year. Brother Roger was killed during a prayer service in 2005, but the community he founded continues—and his dream lives on wherever these prayers are sung together.

The Music of Taizé

The heart of Taizé worship is its music—short, simple chants sung repeatedly. Repetition allows the words to travel from the mind into the heart. You stop reading and start praying. The chant becomes breath.

Most of the music was composed by Brother Jacques Berthier, a French organist working closely with Brother Roger. The chants are written in many languages—Latin, English, French, German, Swahili—reflecting the international community they come from. The words are almost entirely scriptural:

- "Bless the Lord, my soul" (Psalm 103)
- "Stay with us, Lord" (Luke 24)
- "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23)

This music has spread far beyond Burgundy into Lutheran, Episcopal, Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian congregations worldwide—exactly the ecumenical sharing Brother Roger envisioned.

What Happens in a Taizé Service?

Taizé services create space for encounter with God rather than the delivery of information. There is no sermon. You are invited not to receive something but to be present to Someone. Here is what you will find:

- Repeated chants — The same short song may be sung eight or ten times. Let the repetition do its work.
- Extended silence — Silence here is not awkward dead air. It is the invitation. You are not waiting for the next thing; this is the thing.
- Scripture — Brief readings offered without commentary, allowing the Word to speak on its own.
- Candlelight — The physical space is intentionally contemplative. Soft light invites the body to rest and attend.
- Intercessory prayer — Simple, direct prayers for the world and for those who suffer.

How We Do It at Grace of God

Icon or Artwork as Focal Point

At each of our Taizé services, we place an icon or piece of sacred artwork at the front of the worship space as a visual focal point. This image is chosen to illuminate the scripture reading for that evening. In the Eastern Christian tradition, icons are sometimes called "windows into heaven"—images through which the holy becomes visible. You need not have a particular theology of icons to benefit from fixing your gaze on something beautiful and sacred while you pray. Let the image draw you in.

Anointing for Healing

We offer a simple service of anointing during our Taizé worship. A word of clarification may be helpful: anointing for healing is not a claim that injuries will disappear or illnesses be cured. It is something older and deeper than that. It is a prayer made physical—oil applied to the forehead or hands as a tangible sign that you are held, known, and prayed over by God and by this community.

This practice has deep biblical roots (James 5:14–15) and has been part of Christian worship from the earliest centuries. In receiving anointing, you are joining a long line of believers who have brought their wounds, their fears, and their need for God's presence to this simple act of prayer. Anyone is welcome to receive it.

Candle Lighting

At the center of our worship space stands a large reproduction of the Taizé cross—a simple, iconic cross that lies parallel to the floor, slightly raised, inviting you to draw near rather than simply look from a distance. In Taizé itself, worshipers are welcome to kneel before this cross as an act of prayer. Here at Grace of God, it is the place where we bring our candles. Lighting a candle and placing it at the foot of the cross is a visible, tangible act of prayer—for yourself, for someone you love, for a need you are carrying. The flame that remains burning continues to “pray” even after you return to your seat.

Prayer Stones and Palm Crosses

As you enter, you will find prayer stones and palm crosses available to take. Hold them during the service if you like—the weight of a stone in your hand, or the shape of a cross in your palm, can anchor your prayers in a way that words sometimes cannot. They are yours to keep.

A Few Notes

There is no wrong way to be present here. If the silence feels uncomfortable, stay in it anyway. If you don't know a chant, listen for a few repetitions and the melody will come. Or just listen. Some people close their eyes; others rest their gaze on the icon or a candle. Follow what draws you deeper into prayer.

You are welcome to remain as long as you like after the service ends. The space will stay open for continued prayer.

"In all things, may God alone be glorified."

— Brother Roger of Taizé



GRACE OF GOD
LUTHERAN CHURCH