

*Leading Morning Worship
when there's no-one else to do it.*

A guide for the inexperienced presider.



Kingdom People

love • compassion • justice • freedom



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
**DIOCESE OF
WORCESTER**

Introduction

According to Canon Law B11.1, “*Readers, such other lay persons as may be authorized by the bishop of the diocese, or some other suitable lay person, may, at the invitation of the minister who has the cure of souls or, where the cure is vacant or the minister is incapacitated, at the invitation of the churchwardens say or sing Morning and Evening Prayer (save for the Absolution).*”

Sometimes the only person the churchwarden can find is themselves. If the lot has fallen on you to lead worship without particular training or authorisation, as “some other suitable lay person”, this booklet and the accompanying sample service orders, are intended to give equip you to do just that.

In what follows, the outline or sample text of the service is on the left hand page, There are comments and ideas about using it on the right hand page. This typeface is used for the commentary, but all liturgical texts in this booklet use a different typeface, as illustrated below.

A simple set of conventions about printing the text of the liturgy is followed (and recommended as a helpful practice to adopt). Note that you do not have to use the word all before congregational text, as bold type is often sufficient.

Item Headings look like this

Text said by only one person (e.g. the officiant) looks like this

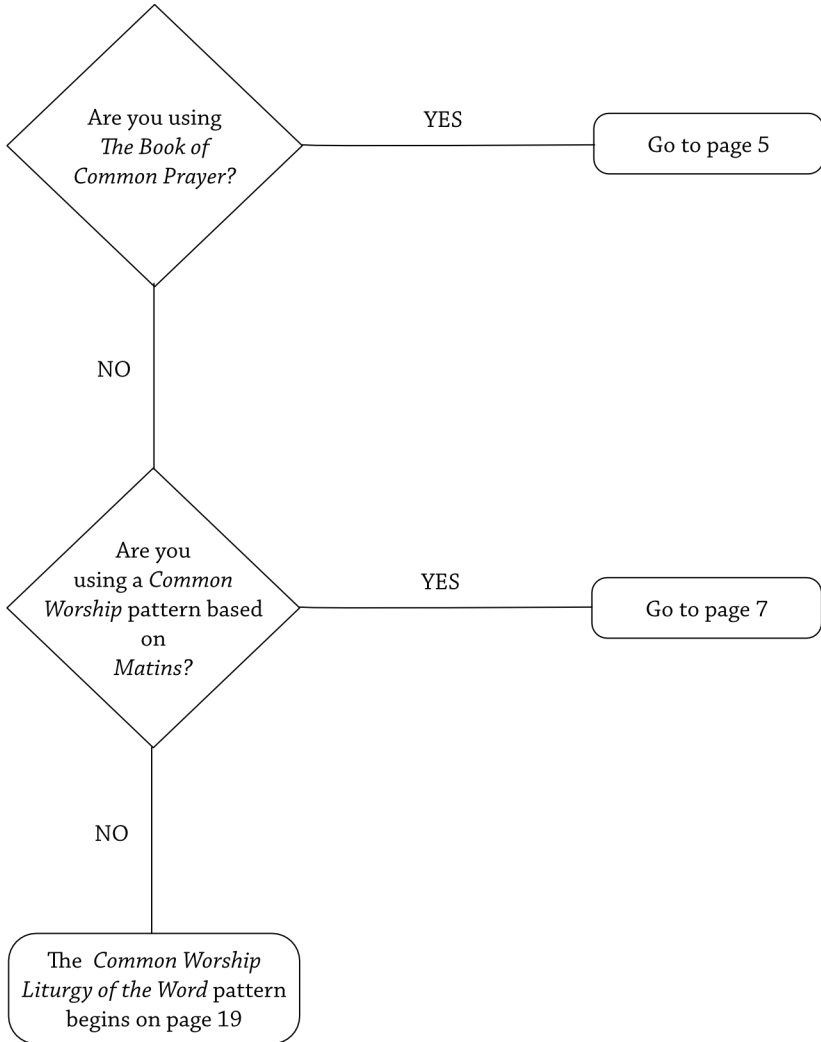
All **Words said by everyone look like this**

Instructions (rubrics) look like this

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Which service pattern are you using?



Book of Common Prayer Matins

The Book of Common Prayer comes with a traditional pattern, which is shown here together with an alternative order. Items common to both are centred on the page. The full text is not provided here as it is assumed most people using the BCP will be using the books in their church. In a sense the point of using the old prayer book is that it is essentially the same week by week. Here are some simple notes for guidance.

Choosing which order to follow

The traditional order adds prayers of intercession and the sermon (or here reflection on the Word) after the service of Morning Prayer (as printed in the Prayer Book) has finished, as a kind of appendix. The alternative order incorporates the exploration of the Word after the Apostles' Creed, and then the prayers of intercession between the responses and the collect. Follow your church's custom when stepping up to an unexpected occasional emergency.

Hymns

The traditional order (left hand column) has four places suggested for hymns, the alternative order has three suggested places. See p.32 on choosing hymns.

The Sentences

Select one or two at most of the opening sentences.

The Confession and Absolution

In many places the introduction is usually abbreviated in this way:

Dearly beloved, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness; wherefore I pray and beseech you, as many as are here present, to accompany me with a pure heart and humble voice unto the throne of the heavenly grace, saying after me:

A lay person does not say the text of the absolution, but instead uses the Collect for the 21st Sunday after Trinity.

The Responses

Although it may be customary to sing the opening versicles and responses, and the versicles and responses after the Creed, it is not required.

Exploring the Word

See the ideas for how to do this when there isn't a sermon (p.34)

Matins: 1662 BCP

The service follows this pattern from the beginning to the Apostles' Creed

One or more sentences of scripture

(Hymn)

Invitation to Confession

General Confession

Collect for Trinity 21 (in place of the Absolution)

The Lord's Prayer

Opening Versicles and Responses

The Venite

The Psalm(s)

Old Testament Reading

Te Deum (or, sometimes, Benedicite)

New Testament Reading

Benedictus (or, occasionally, Jubilate)

Apostles' Creed

At this point two possible patterns can be used

Kyrie	Exploring the Word (Thought)
Lord's Prayer	(Hymn)
Versicles and Responses	Kyrie
Collects	Lord's Prayer
(Hymn)	Versicles and Responses
Exploring the Word (Thought)	Prayers of Intercession
(Hymn)	Collects
Prayers of Intercession	(Hymn)
(Hymn)	The Grace (or other ending)
The Grace (or other ending)	

Morning Prayer ~ Matins pattern

This order follows a traditional morning prayer pattern. The text printed here is based on that provided in the main volume of *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (the Sunday Book). This text is also available on the Church of England website at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/service-word/service-word-morning-and#mm6c2>.

Two versions of opening responses are provided. There are alternatives available. Many alternatives are available in the book *New Patterns for Worship*, which is also on the website at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/service-word>. Look for the Resource Section (Section A).

The words of welcome are a suggestion, you may wish to use others, but these offer a template.

Opening Responses

Either

O Lord, open our lips

All **and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

Give us the joy of your saving help

All **and sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.**

or

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

All **and also with you.**

This is the day that the Lord has made.

All **Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

Welcome

We have come together in the name of Christ
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,
to hear and receive God's holy word,
to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,
that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

A range of alternative prayers of penitence are provided in both the main *Sunday Book*, and *New Patterns for Worship* (Resource Section B). See <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-12>.

If this is the main act of worship (technically called the *Principal Service*) in the parish on a Sunday, you must include the Prayers of Penitence. If it is not the main act of worship, then you can choose to omit them.

When any Prayers of Penitence (and absolutions) are used, they must follow an authorised form (i.e. one of the sets in the books / online, as described above).

There are also a range of alternative absolutions in the same Resource Section. Note that a lay person must say “us” instead of “you” in the text of any absolution (the prayer for forgiveness after the confession).

Note this is only a suggested place of the first hymn: it could come at the beginning or another point. The text in the book and online also provides an optional thanksgiving and prayer which may be used here instead of, or as well as, the hymn, canticle or song.

Prayers of Penitence

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' So let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All

Lord God,

we have sinned against you;

we have done evil in your sight.

We are sorry and repent.

Have mercy on us according to your love.

Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.

Renew a right spirit within us

and restore us to the joy of your salvation;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse us from our sins,
and restore us in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All

Amen.

Responsory

Blessed is the Lord,

All

for he has heard the voice of our prayer;

therefore shall our hearts dance for joy

All

and in our song will we praise our God.

Hymn or Canticle

A hymn or song may be sung.

An opening canticle may be said.

There are a variety of ways of singing and saying the psalms. Anglican chant is usually too hard for small congregations. If you have one good singer, then you can always use a cantor to sing the verses, while everyone else joins in a response. If you are saying the psalm, then the most common ways are a) for the leader to say the odd verses and the congregation the even verses or b) for one side of the church to say the odd verses and the other side to say the even verses.

Many psalms have also been turned into hymns or songs, and you could sing something based on the day's psalm, e.g. "The Lord's my Shepherd" (Crimond) for Psalm 23, or "O God you search me and you know me" for Psalm 139.

The text suggests an optional canticle which can either follow the psalm or come between the readings. A range of canticles are supplied in the *New Patterns for Worship* (Resource Section D) and even more in the *Daily Prayer* book. See <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-27>. This canticle may be said in the same way as the psalm, or all together, or again a metrical (hymn) version may be used.

The traditional provision is to have two readings: the first from the Old Testament and the second from the New Testament. For help with finding the readings, see the note at the bottom of p.14 on finding the Collect.

It is a good idea to leave some time for silent reflection after each reading.

Psalmody

The psalm set for the day is said or sung.

Each psalm or group of psalms may end with

All **Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Old Testament Canticle

A canticle may follow the psalm or come between the readings.

Scripture Reading(s)

This response may be used after each reading

For the word of the Lord

All **Thanks be to God**

Responsory

Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead

All **and Christ shall give you light.**

You have died and your life is hid with Christ in God.

All **Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead.**

Set your minds on things that are above,
not on things that are on the earth.

All **And Christ shall give you light.**

When Christ our life appears
you will appear with him in glory.

All **Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,
and Christ shall give you light.**

You may choose to use sing one of the available metrical versions of the Gospel Canticle (the Benedictus) instead. Several versions of this and other canticles are included at the end of *New Patterns for Worship* (Resource Section D). See <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-27>.

The reflection on scripture may come before or after the Apostles' Creed. A hymn may also be used before and / or after the sermon. For ideas of what to do instead of a sermon or talk, see page 34.

Gospel Cantic

- 1 Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel,
who has come to his people and set them free.
- 2 He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour
born of the house of his servant David.
- 3 Through his holy prophets God promised of old
to save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all that hate us,
- 4 To show mercy to our ancestors,
and to remember his holy covenant.
- 5 This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
- 6 Free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.
- 7 And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
- 8 To give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
- 9 In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
- 10 To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

All **Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Exploring the Word

A reflection, discussion or other learning activity follows here

The Apostles' Creed is traditional at Morning Prayer, but any authorised affirmation of faith may be used instead. These are available in *New Patterns for Worship* (Resource Section E). See <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-28>.

The intercessions may be led by a member of the congregation. A book designed to help people who have never led intercessions begin to prepare their own in *Leading Common Worship Intercessions: A Simple Guide* (ISBN 0715142003) by Doug Chaplin.

The easiest way to find the Collect of the Day (and the readings) is to look on the Church of England website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>. A little way down the page, click the MORE OPTIONS link, and choose **Type of Service** “Contemporary”, **Time of Day** “Morning”, and finally the date of the service you are leading, then click APPLY. On the page that loads, scroll nearly to the end, and you will find the right collect (the readings, obviously, come earlier in the service).

The Apostles' Creed

All

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers

Intercessions are offered.

The Collect is said.

The Lord's Prayer may be said in either modern or traditional form – follow your church's customary usage.

There is no perfect place for notices, but if they are done at this point in the service then a) they are associated with going out (into the week and the places when some of the things announced will happen) and b) people may remember them better!

The conclusion may either be as printed, or all may join in saying the Grace, or the service can conclude with the Peace.

The Lord's Prayer

Gathering our prayers and praises into one,
as our Saviour has taught us, so we pray

All

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

The Conclusion

Notices and Banns of Marriage may be read here

Hymn

Any collection may be taken during this hymn

The Blessing

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

All

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

All

Thanks be to God.

Morning Worship ~ “Word” pattern

This order suggests an optional beginning: the carrying in of the lectern Bible by a member of the congregation, which may also involve children of the family. It signals the way in which the Word provides the heart of the worship. Ideally, the lay person (or family group) who brings in the Bible should say the opening words.

A hymn may be sung at this point, or the opening hymn, especially if it is based on a psalm or canticle, may be sung after the Prayers of Penitence, in place of saying or singing the Gloria.

The words of welcome are a suggestion: you may wish to use others, but these offer a template.

Let us stand to welcome the Word of God.

A Bible may be brought in, opened, and placed on the lectern

All Your word, O Lord, is a lantern to my feet
and a light upon our path.

or

All O Lord, your word is everlasting:
it stands firm for ever in the heavens.

Greeting and Welcome

All Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

From Easter to Pentecost this acclamation is added
Alleluia. Christ is risen.

All **He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

Welcome and Introduction

We have come together in the name of Christ
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,
to hear and receive God's holy word,
to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,
that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

The Lord's Summary of the Law may be read here. Other possible texts include the Beatitudes or the full Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments may be most appropriate in Advent and Lent rather than on a weekly basis. It is also quite possible to move straight from the introduction to the Prayers of Penitence. Sometimes a shorter Gathering section with fewer words can be more prayerful.

A range of alternative prayers of penitence are provided in both the main Sunday Book, and *New Patterns for Worship* (Resource Section B). See <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-12>.

If this is the main act of worship (technically called the *Principal Service*) in the parish on a Sunday, you must include the Prayers of Penitence. If it is not the main act of worship, then you can omit them.

When the Prayers of Penitence are used, they (and the absolution) must follow an authorised form (i.e. one of the sets in the books / online, as described above).

Preparation

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All **Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

Prayers of Penitence

God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ
to save us from our sins,
to be our advocate in heaven,
and to bring us to eternal life.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God's commandments
and to live in love and peace with all.

All **Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly, love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.**

There are also a range of alternative absolutions (prayers for forgiveness) in the same Resource Section B. Note that a lay person must say “us” instead of “you” in the text of any absolution.

The Gloria may be used, or another hymn, song or canticle. If this is the first hymn, then it is good if it invites people into worship, or marks the season or theme (if there is one) in an appropriate way.

Since this is *Morning Worship* it may on some occasions be appropriate to use a metrical version of the traditional Te Deum here, and likewise a metrical version of the Benedictus after the readings. Hymn versions of these canticles are included in *New Patterns for Worship* (Resource Section D) <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-27>

The easiest way to find the Collect of the Day (and the readings) is to look on the Church of England website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>. A little way down the page, click the MORE OPTIONS link, and choose **Type of Service** “Contemporary”, **Time of Day** “Morning”, and finally the date of the service you are leading, then click APPLY. On the page that loads, scroll nearly to the end and you will find the right collect (the readings, obviously, come earlier in the service).

May almighty God have mercy upon us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Gloria

or other canticle, hymn or song

All **Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

The Collect

The collect of the day is said, and all respond

All **Amen.**

There are several possible combinations of readings. If all three principal service readings are used, then the psalm (if used) normally comes after the Old Testament (it has usually been chosen in some way to respond to the Old Testament passage).

When two readings are used, it can be Old Testament and Epistle, Epistle and Gospel or Old Testament and Gospel. A reading from the Old Testament is to be encouraged. It is good to have continuity of readings from Sunday to Sunday where possible.

Additionally, the Old Testament reading always has some kind of link with the Gospel reading, whereas the reading from the Epistles (Letters) does not. Having the two linked Old Testament and Gospel readings can help people understand both more easily.

The reflection on the Word (see p.34) may come before or after the Creed.

A hymn may also be used before and / or after the sermon.

The Liturgy of the Word

Reading(s)

One or more readings may precede the Gospel

At the end of each the reader may say

For the word of the Lord.

All

Thanks be to God.

A short silence follows each reading

Psalm

The psalm of the day may be said or sung.

A hymn or song, especially one based on the appointed psalm may be used instead.

The Gospel

At the beginning of the reading from one of the gospels, the reader says:

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to N.

All

Glory to you, O Lord.

After the Gospel is read, the reader says

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All

Praise to you, O Christ.

Exploring the Word

A talk, or other learning activity follows here

Hymn

A hymn or song may be sung here, or after the Apostles' Creed.

The Apostles' Creed is traditional at Morning Prayer, but any authorised affirmation of faith may be used instead. These are available in *New Patterns for Worship* (Resource Section E). See <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-28>.

The intercessions may be led by a member of the congregation. A book designed to help people who have never led intercessions begin to prepare their own in *Leading Common Worship Intercessions: A Simple Guide* (ISBN 0715142003) by Doug Chaplin.

The Apostles' Creed

All I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Prayers

Prayers of Intercession

One of these responses may be used during the prayers

Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer**

or

Lord, hear us.

All **Lord, graciously hear us.**

The Lord's Prayer may be said on either modern or traditional form. Follow your church's customary usage.

This ending may be used:

Merciful Father,

All **accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

The Peace

The presider introduces the Peace and then says

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

All **And also with you.**

We offer those around us a greeting of peace.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

There is no perfect place for notices, but if they are done at this point in the service then a) they are associated with going out (into the week and the places when some of the things announced will happen) and b) people may remember them better!

The final hymn can happen here or at the very end.

There are a variety of closing prayers and endings available in *New Patterns for Worship* (Section J: Conclusion).

Notices and Banns of Marriage

Banns may be read and notices given either here or after the final hymn

Hymn

Any collection is usually taken during this hymn

Closing Prayer

All

**Almighty God,
we thank you for the gift of your holy word.
May it be a lantern to our feet,
a light to our paths,
and a strength to our lives.
Take us and use us
to love and serve
in the power of the Holy Spirit
and in the name of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Dismissal

All

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All

In the name of Christ. Amen.

In Eastertide this ending is used

Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia. Alleluia.

All

Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.

A word on choosing hymns and songs

There is so much local variation that helpful advice is hard to give. However, here are a few hints and tips.

- ¶ If you have a regular organist or other musician, cherish and involve them.
- ¶ Bear in mind that if you have even one very or quite good singer, more can be done unaccompanied than you would think.
- ¶ There are many musical resources online, or recorded. It is now possible through technology to support congregations without musicians more cheaply and effectively, even with portable equipment (e.g. an iPod and a good portable speaker).
- ¶ With each hymn or song, ask yourself: “Does this fit here?”
- ¶ For the first hymn or song it is good to look for one which either establishes a seasonal flavour, or invites people to worship. Conversely, it is usually best not to have songs that invite people to “Come and worship” as the last hymn just before going out.
- ¶ It can often be a good idea to choose quieter hymns or songs between readings, or linked to the prayers.
- ¶ If you are using a hymn while something is happening (e.g. taking the collection) you should try to make sure it is long enough. This is not usually the best place for quiet or meditative music.
- ¶ Try to make sure you have some kind of mix of style and mood; e.g. newer songs and older hymns; hymns from more than one century; some longer and some shorter hymns; quieter and louder hymns; some with four line verses, and some with eight.
- ¶ Most modern hymnbooks have suggested hymns for the season, or for the Sunday, or for a topic, included in their indexes. Make use of them, but be aware that some Sundays have a better selection than others, and don't feel obliged to follow their choices. They are meant as helpful suggestions, not compulsory orders.

What about Evening Prayer or Evensong?

Essentially the same guidance works for both using a Service of the Word that follows the Liturgy of the Word pattern, and for following BCP Evensong as for BCP Matins.

Copyright

Liturgy Copyright

You should include either the name of your parish, or the date of the service on any leaflet you use. Then use text like this:

“Copyright material is included from *Common Worship*. Copyright © The Archbishops’ Council of the Church of England. This service has been prepared in accordance with the specifications of *A Service of the Word* as authorized for use in the Church of England. The use of *A Service of the Word* has been agreed by the Parochial Church Council in accordance with Canon B 3.”

Songs and hymns copyright

Songs or hymns are copyright for 70 years after the death of their author. If you are going to print copyrighted hymns you will need permission. The easiest way to use copyrighted material is with a licensing scheme.

CCLI

Christian Copyright Licensing Incorporated (CCLI) is probably the scheme most are familiar with. It covers a wide range of music publishers, and much mainline hymnody, but is weighted towards the evangelical, charismatic worship traditions. You will probably know whether your church has a CCLI Licence, and the easiest way to check what hymns are covered is via their website (<https://uk.ccli.com/>)

ONE LICENSE

The main copyright holders covered by ONE LICENSE include: Oregon Catholic Press (OCP), GIA, Oxford University Press, the Royal School of Church Music, The Taizé Community, The Iona Community, Hope Publishing, and Kevin Mayhew. For a full list of publishers, see this page: <https://onelicense.net/publishers>.

What to do instead of the Sermon?

The ready made solution: sermon podcasts

The Diocese of Worcester provides a weekly **Sermon Podcast**, especially with situations like this in mind. Depending on your church's technology, you can download and play the file, play it over the internet, or copy the script and read it. Each podcast comes with discussion questions.

You can find the sermon podcast page here: <https://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/your-faith/prayer-worship/sermon-podcasts/>.



Discussion

You will want to give some thought to the key questions worth discussing well before the service. The sermon podcast normally has questions provided by those who have written and recorded them. You will need to decide whether discussion should take place in smaller groups, or with the whole congregation.

Meditation

Sometimes – particularly at services where there is much more of a focus on prayer – leading people in a meditation can be an appropriate substitute. People can respond either in silence, or with an appropriate song. Sometimes projection can significantly enhance the meditation. There are books of meditations available, but choose wisely, and check it is suitable for use in Christian worship.

Reading

This might be a short story, or several poems. It is particularly important to be sure you have a really good reader if they are going to be reading for any length of time. It may be appropriate to have more than one reader, or to do a dramatic reading. You could even use this opportunity to read rather longer excerpts from Scripture than the typical Bible reading. For example, why not read the whole of Jonah? Or the whole story of Joseph? You will want to consider whether to allow people some time to respond or react afterwards.

Interview

Why not interview someone from the congregation? People are often shy about talking about their faith, but may find it easier to do so in response to friendly questions than simply standing up for a testimony. Don't leap straight into faith questions, but chat normally about a typical day first, and help get a picture of the person's context first. It will almost certainly help if you have spent some time together in the week exploring the sort of questions you might ask.

Conversation

Two or three of you might sit at the front having a conversation about the Bible readings for the day. You can also give others in the congregation the chance to join in. The important thing is to be honest about things like "I've really got no idea what that means, but perhaps ..." "That's definitely something to ask the vicar" "I've always found that particularly challenging / difficult / encouraging etc". It will obviously help if you've had some preparation together, but try to avoid a rehearsal. This works better if it's spontaneous – a real conversation.



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