

THE MINISTRY OF SCRIPTURE READING DURING PUBLIC WORSHIP

Introduction

Worship “is something special. It is a time set apart to gather as a community of sisters and brothers in Christ, to call to mind what God has done among us throughout our history. Worship focuses our attention on God and the difference God makes for those who believe that life is to be lived in fellowship with the divine. How does one speak in such a Presence? How does one speak *to* such a Presence? How does one lead others in the worship of the One who is present with each of us and all of us together in ways that go clean beyond our capacity to comprehend? Those questions are not just questions of theology-though they are that. They are questions of speech communication technique, too.” (Ref. Effective Speech Communication in Leading Worship, Charles L. Bartow, Abingdon Press, pg. 9-10, 1988).

At Home

The Reader must be engaging in daily scripture reading at home to expect to share in the ministry of reading passages of scripture out loud in the context of weekly public worship. As Baptised Christians, this is part of continuing in the apostle’s teaching and part of letting Christ work in us and mould us. The choice of lectionary is up to us...it is more important that some sort of resource is used to help guide us through the scriptures. The Book of Alternative Services contains the Daily Office Lectionary on pages 450 to 497. The Book of Common Prayer has the Table of Lesson on pages xvi to xlv. The Anglican Communion has a web-site for the Cycle of Prayer which contains a lectionary for daily scripture reading.

< <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acp/> >

The appointed passage to be read on Sunday must also be read several times throughout the week and reflected upon. Pray through the passage and recognize the Lord’s presence within the words. Take time to consider the context and spirit of the passage. These must be considered by the reader before it is read out loud within worship. It is important to read with understanding so that the listener may have a better opportunity to also understand what is being read. Several commentaries are available at the Diocesan Resource Centre to assist us in being aware of the context and spirit of the passage. The Diocese of Montreal hosts a web-site that provides commentary on the Revised Common Lectionary (which is the lectionary we follow for our corporate worship together) and this may be found at

<http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/index.shtml>.

Any difficult words need to be clarified in advance of the day of the worship service during which one will read the scripture out loud. The Biblespeech website <http://www.biblespeech.com/> is a good resource. Other resources available for pronunciation are as follows:

Books: A Guide To Pronouncing Biblical Names, T.S.K. Scott-Craig, Morehouse Publishing, 1982 .
The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible

Internet: <<http://netministries.org/bbasics/bbwords.htm>> Option available to listen to the correct pronunciation.

Microphone The microphone is a resource used to help ensure the gathered community is able to hear the spoken word. We are to become familiar with the microphone we will be using, identifying which position will pick up our voice the best. The position of most microphones are easily adjusted to accommodate the reader.

Movement Christian worship is not just an intellectual activity. Worship of God involves our whole selves: body, mind and spirit. The liturgical ministers ought to move about the worship in a reverent manner. Readers, when moving from their seat to the lectern ought to walk in a slow steady pace, pausing to acknowledge the altar. The same movement is desired in reverse when returning to one’s seat following the reading of the appointed passage.

In Position and Ready to Read The liturgy of our public worship together is meant to flow seamlessly from one act of worship to another. When one act of worship is completed, the next ought to follow without delay. It is desired that the reader move to the lectern to be in position and ready to read upon completion of the act of worship which proceeds the reading.

We are each to ensure that we have marked our appointed scripture passage in the Lectern Bible at least 10 minutes before the worship is to begin. Be familiar with where to find the passage on the page.

Holy Eucharist: The Book of Common Prayer

- First Lesson: The reader, if sitting in the congregation, ought to sit more towards the front of the worship space and at the end of the pew to reduce ‘travel time’ in moving to the lectern. Upon completion of praying The Collect of the Day after “Amen” is proclaimed, the reader moves to the lectern and announces the passage as per the rubrics.
- Psalm: The leader of the psalm likewise ought to sit more towards the front of the worship space and at the end of the pew to reduce ‘travel time’ in moving to the lectern. As soon as the words of, “Here endeth the Lesson” or “The Word of the Lord” are begun to be proclaimed, the leader moves to the lectern and announces the appointed psalm to be read alternately by verse.
- Second Lesson: Since the Gloria Patri (“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,...”) is not needed at the end of the psalm during Holy Eucharist, it is desired that the reader of the second lesson move to the lectern as soon as the psalm is completed. Likewise, the reader ought to sit more towards the front of the worship space and at the end of the pew to reduce ‘travel time’ in moving to the lectern.
- Gospel Lesson: The reader is to move to the lectern during the singing of the Gradual Hymn in sufficient time to ensure that upon completion of the hymn, the lesson may be introduced as per the rubrics.

Holy Eucharist: The Book of Alternative Services

- The Book of Alternative Services follows a similar order of services as The Book of Common Prayer for the Liturgy of the Word. Please follow the guidelines above.
- * Both the Gloria Patri and the psalm prayer are not needed at the end of the psalm during Holy Eucharist.
- * A Canticle may be used as a hymn of praise rather than a gradual hymn. The reader of the Gospel Reading is to move to the lectern during the proclamation of the canticle in sufficient time to ensure that upon completion of the canticle, the reading may be introduced as per the rubrics.

The Offices - Morning/Evening Prayer: The Book of Common Prayer

- Readers ought to sit more towards the front of the worship space and at the end of the pew to reduce ‘travel time’ in moving to the lectern.
- Psalm: The leader of the psalm is to move to the lectern when the words, “The Lord’s Name be praised” is begun to be proclaimed. The psalm leader is to announce the appointed psalm to be read alternately by verse. As the psalm is not used as a reflection upon a proceeding reading, the Gloria Patri is appropriate to be said as a doxology.
- First Lesson: The reader begins to move towards the lectern as soon as “As it was in the beginning, is now,...” begun to be proclaimed after the reading of the psalm.
- Second Lesson: The reader begins to move towards the lectern before the ending of The Te Deum Laudamus (Morning Prayer) in sufficient time to ensure that upon completion of this canticle, the reading may be immediately introduced as per the rubrics. In Evening prayer, the reader begins to move towards the lectern as soon as “As it was in the beginning, is now,...” is begun to be proclaimed after the Magnificat.
- Third Lesson: The reader begins to move towards the lectern as soon as “As it was in the beginning, is now,...” is begun to be proclaimed after the Benedictus (Morning Prayer) and the Nunc Dimittis (Evening Prayer) so that the lesson may be introduced without delay.

Introducing and Concluding the Appointed Scripture Passage

- Within our Diocese, the Bishop has authorized the use of the liturgies as contained within The Book of Common Prayer and The Book of Alternative services for Congregation Worship. The principle form of Sunday worship is Holy Eucharist following either of these two liturgies. The Daily Offices from either of these two Liturgy Books may be used as a principle liturgy of the day depending on the circumstance. Therefore, it is important that the reader becomes familiar with the rubrics (instructions) of each of these liturgical traditions as it pertains to proclaiming the scriptures.

- Each book contains liturgies developed with a particular theological understanding and tradition. It is important that the liturgical minister understands the spirit of each liturgy and maintain the integrity of each
- When introducing and concluding the reading/lesson, ensure that you look at the congregation. We are communicating to them. Upon the conclusion of the reading/lesson, there ought to be a distinct pause and then the reader proclaims the concluding response as per the rubrics.
- The reader needs to be aware of how the appointed scripture passage begins. For example, the appointed passage may begin with “If you love me,…” Someone is being quoted; however, the reader is left guessing who is speaking. It is appropriate to say, “Jesus said, ‘If you love me,…” for listening clarification.
- Follow the formulas for introducing and concluding the scripture readings/lessons as per the rubrics.

The Book of Common Prayer

- First and Second Lesson:
Introduction: “The **(First)(Second)** Lesson is written in the (#) chapter of **(Title)** beginning at the (#) verse.”
Conclusion: “Here endeth the **(First)(Second)** lesson or Here ends the **(First)(Second)** Lesson.”
- Gospel Lesson:
 - Introduction: “The Holy Gospel is written in the (#) chapter of the Gospel according to Saint **(Title)** beginning at the (#) verse.” Then shall the people sing or say: "Glory be to thee, O Lord".
 - Conclusion: Remember that there is to be a distinct pause and then lead the people off with the proclamation, “Praise be to thee, O Christ.”
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* During the Daily Offices, the Gospel Lesson is introduced as the third lesson as per the First and Second Lesson above.

The Book of Alternative Services

- First and Second Reading:
Introduction: “A reading from **(Title)**”
Conclusion: “The word of the Lord.” People respond with, Thanks be to God.
- -Gospel Reading:
Introduction: “The Lord be with you.” People respond with, And also with you. “The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to **(Title)**.” People respond with, Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ
Conclusion: Remember that there is to be a distinct pause and then say, “The Gospel of Christ.”
People respond with, “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.”

Conclusion

Sharing in the ministry of scripture reading during public worship requires attention to the worship act at hand. Proper preparation and continued reflection is all part of developing ones gift of proclaiming the scriptures. If at any time there are questions or a need to clarify something, please ask.

It is indeed a blessing to help lead the worship of God’s people in praise of the Lord during public worship. May the Lord continue to bless you as you fulfil the Lord’s purpose for your life.

Reference: Compiled by Archdeacon Cathy Laskey Diocese of Fredericton for general use. .