

# Notes for Morning or Evening Prayer; as the principal service on Sunday

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Worship is the core activity of Christians, who regularly gather together to offer praise and prayer to God. On occasion, the cleric or Layreader intended to lead a service, for whatever reason, is not able to come. These Guidance Notes are designed for Layreaders who may be asked to lead a Service without the support of anyone else.

This guidance assumes that Layreaders will adjust to the practices of the community, e.g. hymns, intercessions and readings, so that as little disruption as possible occurs in worship.

The following notes should help you in your preparation.

## Preparation:

1. **Pray.** Seek God's help and blessing. <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
2. **Service and Liturgy.** Determine the service and liturgy?
  - a. Will the liturgy be from the BCP, the BAS, or a trial rite?
  - b. Is this the Principal service on Sunday or is it a second or third service, or a service on a weekday?
  - c. What's the liturgical date?
  - d. What are the Scripture readings/lessons? Who will read them?
  - e. Where and when is the service?
3. **Structure of the Service.** Read the order of service and organize your particular service. <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
  - a. Which canticle(s), if any, will you use between the Scripture readings? Are they read or chanted?
  - b. Will you have a homily, reflection, or sermon? What will you say? Is a children's talk expected?
  - c. Which Collect(s) and intercessions will you use? Who will lead the prayer?
  - d. What are the hymns; who selects them; where are they normally placed; and where will you place them?
  - e. How will you introduce the various liturgical elements and transitions?
4. **Movement and posture.** Check through the choreography of the service. Do you need to make a note of anything on the order of service? E.g. <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
  - a. Vestments. What will you wear? (What is the norm in the church)
  - b. If there is a choir, will you say a vestry prayer with them before and/or after the service? (Examples of prayers are at the end of this guidance.)
  - c. How do you get in and get out – is there a procession or do you walk

- in/out alone? Will you need to acknowledge the altar (do you need to practice)?
- d. What will you do when the collection is taken?
  - e. Indications are usually given for standing/sitting/kneeling, but these vary according to local custom. Are you clear about when you stand, sit, or kneel?

## Before the Service Confirm:

1. **Hymns.** Confirm the hymns, where are they located, and if you announce them. There is no particular requirement, follow local custom. Be sure to know where in the liturgy the chosen hymns are sung, and write down the numbers.
2. **Bible readings.** On Sunday, if three readings are usual, the Old and New Testament readings should come together separated by a Psalm, with the Gospel reading after the hymn. Check the Bible readings being used and who should be reading.
3. **Collection.** Find out when it is normally taken and how the gifts are dedicated. Is there a short doxology with the congregation or just your prayer over the gifts? Where will it happen?
4. **Psalm.** Where the saying or singing of a psalm is customary, this should be included in the usual way after the first reading. Check you know how it is usually sung or read. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
5. **Intercessions.** You or a member of the congregation can lead these. If it is a member of the congregation check you know who should be praying. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
9. **The Lord's Prayer.** Both versions are printed, and you should choose the one normally used. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
10. **Children.** Will children be present? If so, will they stay in, or go out, or go out and return later? How will that be organized? <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> Is a children's talk expected?

## Before the Service Actions:

11. **Collect.** Find and mark the collect for the day, if you wish to use it, and any other collects that you may want and will need to find.
12. **Sermon or Homily.** Prepare your Sermon, homily, or reflection on one or some of the readings or another suitable alternative to the sermon, as covered in your training. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
13. **Listen to the news.** Is there anything current to which you should refer?
14. **Arrive in good time** – there is always more to do than you think and the last few minutes go fast! <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
15. **Sound system.** If using a microphone, check the battery, the sound levels, <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> and how to operate the mute!

## During the service

1. **Vestry Prayers.** It is appropriate to pray before a service with the choir or other ministers or servers.
2. **Welcome.** You may want to give a welcome and an explanation at the start about why you are leading the service.
3. **Attitude.** Aim to look and sound confident, even if you are not feeling it! Smile!
4. **Focus.** Try not to make unnecessary comments, apologies or jokes to cover any uncertainty on your part. Keep the focus on the service and helping people to concentrate on God.
5. **Be heard.** Even if using a microphone, aim to project your voice to the back of church. Speak more slowly and clearly than usual, but try to sound natural. Look up and make eye contact where possible when reading. Remember to use the mute when you don't want to be heard.
6. **Instructions during worship.** Keep them simple and clear; invite rather than command: e.g. 'Please...', or 'We sit or kneel to pray.' Pause after giving an instruction for people to find their place or change posture, especially if moving from standing to kneeling for prayer. There is no need to rush.
7. **Introducing hymn numbers.** Give the number and an invitation to stand. Repeat (it is often better to say the full number, then to the individual digits – e.g. hymn sixty, hymn 6-0 so there is no confusion with 16, for example.)
8. **Starting off a congregational prayer.** Start slowly and clearly and allow the congregation to join in ('Almighty God...') or give a simple instruction ('We pray together', very slight pause, 'Almighty God...')
9. **Follow the natural pace of the congregational in prayers.** Continue to lead in prayers and the creed, etc., but do not try to push the natural speed of the congregation.
10. **Interruptions.** Consider what you would say or do if there is an interruption (e.g. someone is taken ill).
11. **Service Register.** Do not forget to sign the service register after the service.

## Vestry Prayers

The prayers below are examples that can be used with the choir and other ministers or servers in the vestry before a service.

### Before

Bless, O Lord, us your servants, who minister in your church. Grant that what we sing with our lips, we may believe in our hearts,<sup>[1]</sup> and what we believe in our hearts, we may show forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>[2]</sup> Amen.

Or, if there is no choir:

Gracious Lord, make us mindful of your presence with us in this time of worship;  
that we may draw near to you with holy and humble hearts, and offer prayers  
and praises acceptable in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

After, if that is the custom

Lord God, as we go forth from this service in church, strengthen us for service in  
the world; that the words we have heard and said and sung may find expression in  
our daily life and work, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.