

**TRAINING COURSE FOR  
LAY WORSHIP LEADERS**



## CONTENTS

### **SESSION 1 – UNDERSTANDING WORSHIP *page 1***

What is worship?

Who is the God that Christians worship?

Elements of worship

How does worship transform us?

### **SESSION 2 – TRADITIONS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP *page 15***

What does scripture tell us about worship?

The history of Christian worship

What do we mean by 'the Anglican tradition'?

Liturgical resources currently used in the Church of England

### **SESSION 3 – THE CHRISTIAN YEAR *page 27***

The Christian story

The Church's year

Feasts, festivals and holy days

Seasonal services

### **SESSION 4 – THE WORSHIP LEADER *page 39***

It's not about me

Setting the scene

The worship leader in action

The worship leader as pastor

### **SESSION 5 – THE DAILY OFFICE *page 51***

The work of God

The Psalms in worship

The Daily Office in the Church of England today

Individual patterns of daily prayer

### **SESSION 6 – BREAKING OPEN THE WORD IN WORSHIP *page 65***

Which reading?

Which bible?

Resources for scripture study

'Something other than a sermon'

**SESSION 7 – PRAYER AND INTERCESSION IN WORSHIP *page 77***

What is prayer?

The Lord's Prayer

Intercessions in church

Preparing and leading intercessions

**SESSION 8 – INCLUDING MUSIC IN WORSHIP *page 93***

Musical preferences – a very personal thing!

Stories from the four churches

Understanding the place of music in worship

Making the most of music in worship

**SESSION 9 – MULTI GENERATIONAL AND ALL AGE WORSHIP *page 109***

What is multi generational/all age worship and who is it for?

The journey of faith

Elements of multi generational/all age worship

Godly, Messy, reflective, growing Church

**SESSION 10 – WORSHIP AND OUTREACH *page 123***

The missional challenge

Fresh Expressions or traditional worship?

Four community occasions

Christmas unwrapped

**SESSION 1**  
**'UNDERSTANDING WORSHIP'**



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*In this session we will be exploring ...*

**What is worship?**

Defining worship and some worship words – 'liturgy', 'ritual' and 'symbol'

**Who is the God that Christians worship?**

Our one, trinitarian, transcendent, immanent, unknowable, loving God

**Elements of worship**

What are they?

**How does worship transform us?**

'In spirit and in truth'

*Please bring with you to the session ...*

Your course book or session material

A notepad and pen

A bible

Usual service book used in your church – Common Worship, BCP or other

Material you have prepared on 'What is it that you Christians do?'

## Welcome to the session

*The course leader and the group members greet one another*

*If members of the group don't already know one another the course leader may extend the time of introduction or provide an 'icebreaker' at this point*

*Any practical arrangements for the course should be discussed. The group may also want to agree ground rules for working together such as commitment to the sessions, confidentiality etc*

## 'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness'

This hymn for Epiphany was written by Dr John Samuel Bewley Monsell, a nineteenth century clergyman, poet and hymn writer. He published eleven volumes of poems and about 300 hymns including a number of popular favourites such as 'Fight the good fight'.

*A member of the group reads the hymn aloud. Or if feeling tuneful the group might sing it. Then spend a few minutes picking out the main themes*

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!  
Bow down before him, his glory proclaim;  
With gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,  
Kneel and adore him: the Lord is his name!

Low at his feet lay thy burden of carefulness,  
High on his heart he will bear it for thee,  
Comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy prayerfulness,  
Guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.

Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness  
Of the poor wealth thou wouldst reckon as thine;  
Truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,  
These are the offerings to lay on His shrine.

These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,  
He will accept for the name that is dear;  
Mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,  
Trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!  
Bow down before Him, his glory proclaim;  
With gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,  
Kneel and adore him: the Lord is his name!

## **Some other hymns which may help us think about worship**

*Any of these, or another hymn, could be chosen to start the session instead of 'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness' if the course leader prefers*

Christ is made the sure foundation (7<sup>th</sup> century)  
Christ is our cornerstone (9<sup>th</sup> century)  
Now, my tongue, the mystery telling (13<sup>th</sup> century)  
All people that on earth do dwell (16<sup>th</sup> century)  
Let all the world in every corner sing (17<sup>th</sup> century)  
Come let us join our cheerful songs (18<sup>th</sup> century)  
Angel voices ever singing (19<sup>th</sup> century)  
I will enter his gates (20<sup>th</sup> century)  
In our day of thanksgiving (20<sup>th</sup> century)  
All heaven declares (contemporary)  
Majesty, worship his majesty (contemporary)

## **Prayer**

*The course leader prays for the group and asks God's blessing on the session*

*Then we pray together*

**Almighty God,  
whose only Son has opened for us  
a new and living way into your presence:  
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## What is worship?

### Defining worship

The word 'worship' is derived from the Old English 'weorþscipe' or 'worth-ship'. It means literally to give worth to something, to ascribe to it its proper value. The Oxford English Dictionary defines worship as 'the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity'.

#### *Worship may be formal or informal*

An 'act of worship' may mean anything from a highly elaborate cathedral service to a simple occasion 'where two or three are gathered together'.

*Share examples ...*



MadrugadaVerde/Shutterstock.com

#### *Worship may be corporate or individual*

We express our membership of Christ's Body by regularly gathering together for worship. But prayer time, scripture study or saying the daily offices is just as much 'worship' as anything we do in church.

*Share examples ...*



MonkeyBusinessImages/Shutterstock.com

#### *Worship may be planned or spontaneous*

Most Christians plan when they are going to worship, by attending church or setting aside time to pray with friends or alone. But there are also times when we are unexpectedly overcome by a need to turn to God, in moments of crisis, fear or sorrow or when our hearts are suddenly overwhelmed by a sense of God's greatness, faithfulness and goodness.

*Share examples ...*



Burlingham/Shutterstock.com

#### *Anyone can worship*

Even for those who say they don't believe in a God there may be moments in life – eg when surrounded by beautiful scenery or deeply moved by the birth of a child or the death of a loved one – when we have an experience of the 'numinous', that is, a strong sense of awe and wonder which seems to point us to something beyond ourselves.

*Share examples ...*



Source:www.christianphotos.net

#### *Human beings can worship many things*

The word 'worship' is also used to describe our relationship to other people or things. Someone may be said to 'worship' the man or woman they love. Or someone may be accused of 'worshipping' wealth, power or celebrity. 'What your heart clings to and trusts in, that is really your God', wrote Martin Luther in his Large Catechism, 1530. Scripture contains many warnings to believers not to put other things in the place of God in our lives.

*Share examples ...*



aastock/Shutterstock.com



## Some worship words

Three words which you are likely to come across in any discussion about or study of worship are 'liturgy', 'symbol' and 'ritual'.

### Liturgy

The Greek word 'leitourgia' is derived from two Greek words, 'laos' (people) and 'ergon' (work). Originally 'leitourgia' meant any public duty which a citizen might perform. Then in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures) 'leitourgia' came to be used to describe the ritual functions carried out by priests in the Temple, functions which are first described in the Book of Exodus and remained largely unchanged up to the time of Jesus. In Luke 1:23 we read that Zachary goes home *'when his time of service (literally 'the days of his liturgy') were ended'*.

For Christians, Temple worship with its system of offering sacrifices was made obsolete by the once for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross. In Hebrews 8:6, we read that *'Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry (literally 'a better liturgy')'*. In Christian use 'liturgy' means the public official service of the Church, corresponding to the official service of the Temple in the Old Law. And the 'liturgy of the Church of England' is the whole collection of authorised services, rites, ceremonies, prayers and sacraments that we use in public worship. We might think of it as 'the sacred work which God's people do together'.

'Liturgy always has a corporate aspect. How I praise God at home in my own prayers is between me and God. When I join with the Church, however, I am part of something bigger. I don't simply bring my private worship and put it together with the personal worship of others, like eggs that happen to be in the same egg box. Liturgy is more like an omelette: eggs are broken and something new results. No wonder public worship is sometimes hard! It involves being broken in order to be remade, because it means balancing my preferences with the needs of others, perhaps even sacrificing my preferences. We worship in Christ, as part of the body.'

***Liturgical Worship: how it works, why it matters, Mark Earey, Church House Publishing, 2002***

### Ritual

Ritual is a very wide concept and not easy to define but usually refers to a set of actions which are repeated at certain times by groups of people in order to give expression to shared beliefs or desires, to promote wanted outcomes or stave off unwanted ones. Ritual is often but not necessarily associated with religion. There are also many examples of secular rituals or rituals which combine some secular and some religious elements. Far from becoming 'ritual-less' as religious belief has declined, modern societies have developed all kinds of rituals of their own which are treated with equal seriousness.

In some religious settings worship is highly ritualized to the extent that departing from the ritual that has been laid down is seen as suspect or even sinful. In others there is a strong suspicion of ritual as being somehow naïve, superficial or inauthentic. However ritual describes not only those activities which have been formalized as such but many that we engage in without being aware of it – so that it would be possible to say of all religious groups, or even all human groups, that they display ritual behavior of one kind or another.

'Because humans are not simply intellectual and rational, but emotional and embodied, ritual helps the human person experience religious worship as more than a cerebral activity; ritual by its nature asks the worshippers to do more than one thing at once: to pray while they kneel, to sing while they walk, to read while they listen. One could thus describe ritual as a 'behavioural pattern', but it is important to note that it is a social behavioural pattern. Ritual is concerned with relationships and uses 'things' to illustrate these relationships. Doing things together is an important aspect of ritual: not just individuals but communities act together, following a pattern that through routine repetition becomes a tradition.'

*Ritual, Paul F. Bradshaw and Katherine E. Harmon, in The Study of Liturgy and Worship: An Alcuin guide, ed. Juliette Day and Benjamin Gordon-Taylor, SPCK, 2013*

### **Symbol**

As human beings we naturally use both signs and symbols to communicate with one another. Signs are objects, events or actions which point beyond themselves to a further layer of information. They have a fixed or commonly agreed meaning which may be universal (such as road signs), culture specific (such as the use of black for mourning in some cultures but white in others) or personal to groups or individuals.

Symbols on the other hand do not have fixed meanings. The word 'symbol' comes from the Greek word 'sumballo' which means 'to throw, or place, together'. Symbolism is the practice of juxtaposing two ideas to draw out the deeper meaning of one or both of them. Symbolism is a helpful way of approaching and speaking about the more mysterious aspects of human existence.

'Symbols convey many meanings; they are multivalent. The symbol of water for example, means many different things to different people. It slakes our thirst in the heat of summer and refreshes our bodies as we swim in pools and lakes. But the same symbol can also mean death and destruction in the case of floods or drowning. Thus, symbols carry different functions depending on the context. Christian worship is replete with archetypal symbols of light and darkness; bread and wine; water and oil; fire; and bodily acts of standing, kneeling, bowing, eating and drinking. As these natural symbols are transformed within the liturgy they take on a deeper significance for those who gather'

*Worship, Keith F. Pecklers SJ, New Century Theology, Continuum, 2003*

***For discussion, drawing on the material you prepared in advance:  
A non Christian friend asks you: 'What is it that you Christians do together in church'? How might you reply?***

## Who is the God that Christians worship?

The majority of human beings worship. We may want to argue that everyone worships in some way. But we do not all worship the same person or thing. What can we say about the God that Christians worship?

### God is 'one'

'Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me'.

*Exodus 20: 1 – 5*

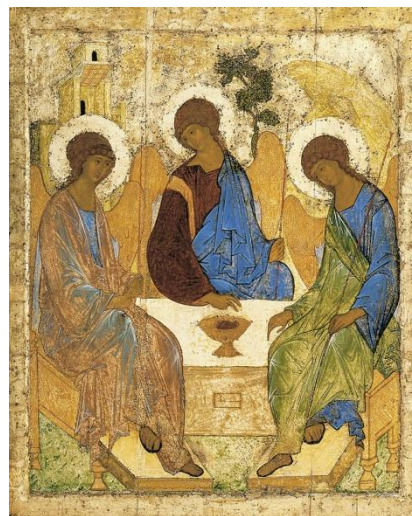
In the book of Exodus we read that the Egyptians, the Canaanites and other surrounding nations all worshipped a number of gods – they were 'polytheistic'. By contrast the Israelites were commanded to worship a single God, Yahweh, and it was this that set them apart from their pagan neighbours. The ancient Israelites were 'henotheistic' rather than 'monotheistic' as the existence of other gods is not denied, even if the Israelites were forbidden to worship them. By the time of Jesus, monotheism, ie the belief in a single universal Deity, was fully evolved and this belief is also central to the Christian faith.

### God is 'trinity'

'And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one'.

*Athanasian Creed*

The doctrine of God as Trinity is unique to Christianity. It is expressed in scripture and took shape in the early Church when it was more clearly formulated in the creeds and elsewhere, although not without controversy. The doctrine of the Trinity states that there is one God, but three distinct Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that each of the Persons is God. The Trinity is not three individuals who together make one God, three Gods joined together, or three properties of God. The Trinitarian nature of God is expressed in the intercessions when we pray *to the Father, through or in the name of the Son, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.*



*The 'Rublev' icon, depicting the Holy Trinity*

## **God is 'transcendent' and 'immanent'**

The God whom Christians worship is also unique in being both 'transcendent' (far off) and 'immanent' (near at hand). God is 'transcendent' in that God exists beyond space and time. God is not part of the material universe but is the creator 'of all that is, seen and unseen.' So we praise God in terms of eternal might, majesty, glory and power. Yet God has also chosen to come close to us in the person of Jesus Christ, sharing our human condition. So we also praise God as friend and brother, teacher, and humble servant of all.

## **God is 'unknowable'**

Human imagination can never come near to summing up who God is or what God is like. As soon as we try to, we are in danger of falling into error because we cannot help picturing God through the lens of the culture which formed us and under the influence of our own ideas. So we begin to make God in our image instead of the other way around. It is for this reason that Judaism so strictly forbids 'graven images'.

Yet if we are to talk about God at all we have to use human metaphors because there is no other language available to us. So we have to keep reminding ourselves that God is not really great or small, Jewish or Aryan, male or female but is in the words of the Westminster Confession of Faith 1646 'a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions'.

## **God is 'love'**

'Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.'

***1 John 4: 7 – 12***

The nature of God as love is perhaps the most central theme in scripture and in our worship. Christians believe that God loved us before we had the opportunity to love him, that he continues to love us no matter what we do and even if we turn our backs on him, and that love was his whole reason for creating this world. This is why it is our vocation as Christians to show God's love to one another.

The 14<sup>th</sup> century mystic Julian of Norwich experienced a series of intense visions about the nature of God. These are recorded in her book 'Revelations of Divine Love', the first published book in the English language to be written by a woman.

*'I desired in many ways to know what was our Lord's meaning. And fifteen years after and more, I was answered in spiritual understanding, and it was said: What, do you wish to know your Lord's meaning in this thing? Know it well, love was his meaning. Who reveals it to you? Love. What did he reveal to you? Love. Why does he reveal it to you? For love. Remain in this, and you will know more of the same.'*

**For discussion:**

**How can human beings know God and what can we know? Do you find Mother Julian's approach helpful? Or what other writers have helped you understand more about who God is?**



Source:www.christianphotos.net

**What are the elements of worship?**

<i>Praise</i>	<i>Lament</i>	<i>Celebration</i>	<i>Penitence</i>
<i>Dedication</i>	<i>Absolution</i>	<i>Remembrance</i>	
<i>Confession</i>	<i>Initiation</i>	<i>Blessing</i>	<i>Revelation</i>
<i>Recommitment</i>	<i>Healing</i>	<i>Adoration</i>	
<i>Atonement</i>	<i>Supplication</i>	<i>Commissioning</i>	

***For discussion:***

**Where do we encounter these elements in the Church's liturgy? Are there other elements of worship which are not mentioned here? Use your usual service book to look things up**

*Here I am, Lord  
Here You are, Lord  
Here we are together  
Who am I, Lord?  
Who are You, Lord?  
Who are we together?*

*From a prayer of  
St Francis of Assisi*



## How does worship transform us?

### Encountering God ...

'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven'

*Genesis 28: 17*

We can encounter God anywhere and in all the circumstances of our daily lives. And yet for many people there is something about being in 'a holy place' or 'a place that is prayed in' that can make God feel especially close.

### Remembering the Christian story ...

Telling the story of who God is and what God has done reminds us of who we are. It is in the context of the Church's identity as the Body of Christ that we understand our own identity and calling as Christ's disciples.

### A new start ...

The opportunity to come into God's presence with penitent hearts, to express sorrow for our sins and to receive assurance of God's forgiveness, is one of the most precious and restorative aspects of worship. During our times of worship we are seeking to understand God's future purpose and direction for our lives.

### Building up the Body of Christ ...

If Christians never or rarely meet together then we lose the opportunity to minister to one another. Being a Christian is tough – and being the Church in today's world is more challenging still. In worship we have the opportunity to rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn and uphold one another in prayer.

### Rediscovering our mission ...

One of the purposes of worship is to remind us of God's great call on our lives, that is, to share the gospel with others. Worship should do more than provide us with an uplifting or comforting personal experience, it also equips us to witness and serve in God's world.

### Receiving God's blessing ...

'And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

*Matthew 28: 20*

Most acts of worship will end with a form of blessing or with 'the Grace'. We are reminded that God is faithful and intends good for our lives. We are not going out from God's presence, because God goes out with us into the world and will be with us wherever we are and whatever we do.

## 'In spirit and in truth'

"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'

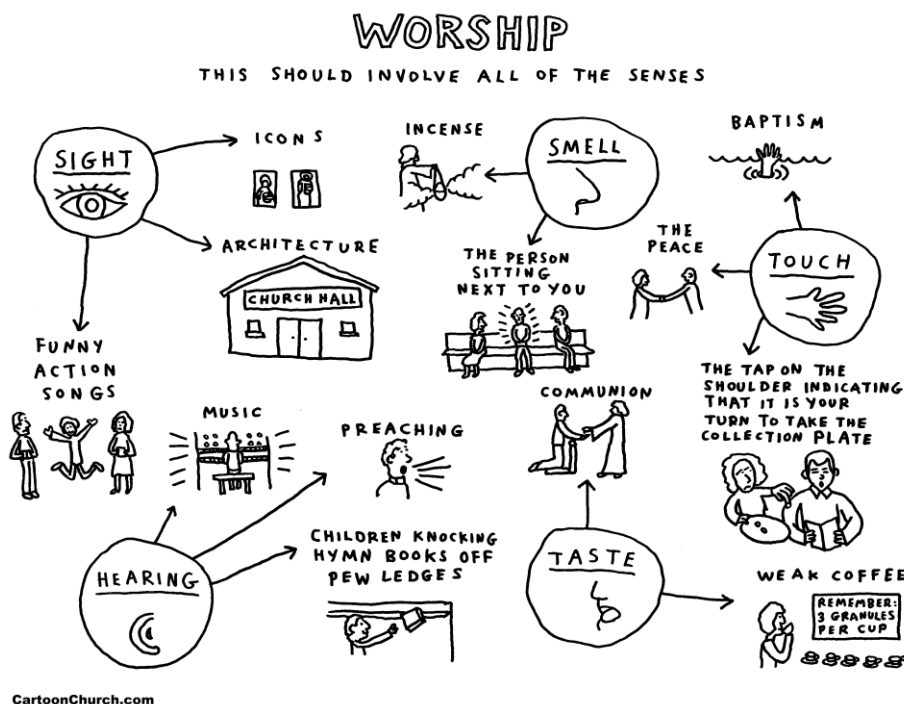
John 4: 23 – 26

'All worship was to him sacred, since he believed that in its most degraded forms, among the most ignorant and foolish of worshippers, there has yet been some true seeking after the Divine, and that between these and the most glorious ritual or the highest philosophic certainty, there lies so small a space that we may believe the Saints in paradise regard it with a smile.'

*Thoughts of a Tertiary, Elizabeth Waterhouse,  
quoted in Worship, Evelyn Underhill, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1984*

### For discussion:

**What do you think it means to worship God 'in spirit and in truth'?**



Cartoon by Dave Walker – used with permission



## **Preparation for next session**

In our next session we will be exploring 'Traditions of Christian Worship'. In preparation for the session please visit a church of another Christian tradition and join them for a service if you can. This could be either a Church of England church with a different ethos to the one you normally go to, or a Church of a different denomination.

The course leader may discuss possibilities with the group and offer suggestions so that group members between them get to sample an interesting variety of worship styles.

The idea is to compare and contrast what you find with the customs and practices of your own church. Sensitivity is needed - remember that you are both a guest and a worshipper. It may be a good idea to introduce yourself to whoever is leading worship and explain why you have come.

We recommend that you jot down some notes immediately after the service while your memory is fresh (not during the service!). You can then write them up more fully at your leisure. Aim for about a side of A4 or equivalent. We look forward to hearing your impressions and reflections.

NOTES ...

## SESSION 2

### 'TRADITIONS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP'



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*In this session we will be exploring ...*

**What does scripture tell us about worship?**

Sacrifice as a central theme

**The history of Christian worship**

A whistle stop tour

**What do we mean by 'the Anglican tradition'?**

More than just choirboys ...

**Liturgical resources currently used in the Church of England**

From BCP to Common Worship

*Please bring with you to the session ...*

Your course book or session material

A notepad and pen

A bible

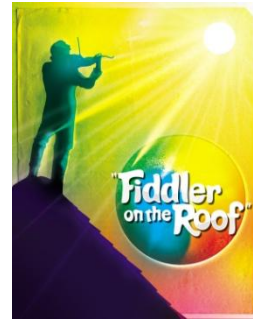
Your notes on your visit to another church

## Welcome to the session

*We take a few moments to greet one another and catch up on any news*

## 'Tradition'

'Tradition' is the opening number of the Broadway musical, 'Fiddler on the Roof'. You can easily find it online either as a sound track or a YouTube clip for the group to listen to or watch. In the song, the main character, Tevye, explains the roles of each social class (fathers, mothers, sons and daughters) in the village of Anatevka, and how the traditional roles of people like the matchmaker and the rabbi contribute to the life of the village.



'Fiddler on the Roof' is set in Tsarist Russia in 1905 at a time of political unrest and cultural and religious upheaval. It tells the poignant story of a family and a community trying to reimagine traditional beliefs and ways of life as the world around them changes. It also reveals how social, cultural, religious and personal factors are all subtly interwoven as catalysts of change.

It is well worth watching the whole film if you get the chance – some group members might like to organize a film evening with refreshments!

## Prayer

*The course leader prays for the group and asks God's blessing on the session*

*Then we pray together*

**Almighty God,  
whose only Son has opened for us  
a new and living way into your presence:  
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## What does scripture tell us about worship?

### The Old Testament

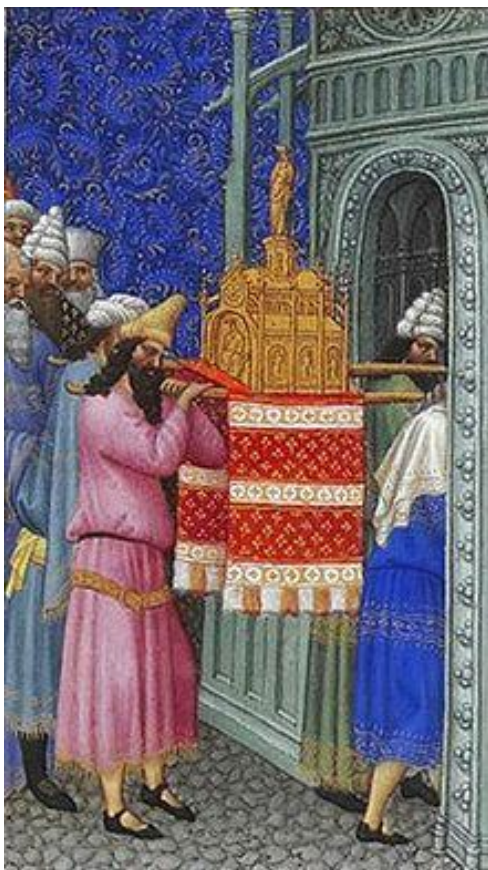
The first example of worship in scripture comes early in Genesis.

'Now Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a tiller of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions.'

*Genesis 4: 2a – 4a*

You know the rest of that story!

Throughout the Old Testament, sacrifice is the primary expression of worship. The books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers contain detailed descriptions of the different kinds of sacrifices (burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings, sin offerings, incense offerings, offerings of well-being etc) which the Israelites were to make in obedience to the Law given to Moses on Mount Sinai. God also sets aside one of the twelve tribes, the tribe of Levi, to be in charge of the sacrificial system. Exodus 29: 1 – 30 describes the ordination of Moses' brother Aaron and his sons as the first priests.



**The Ark carried into the Temple**  
**Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry**  
**15<sup>th</sup> century**

In the days before the wandering in the wilderness sacrifices were offered on makeshift altars built for the purpose, usually to commemorate something which God had done in that place. During the wilderness years sacrifices were always offered before the Ark of the Covenant, a sacred chest containing the stone tablets of the law, Aaron's rod, and a sample of manna, the bread with which God fed his people in the wilderness. The Ark was housed in a special tent, called the Tabernacle, which was pitched wherever the Israelites had made their camp. Exodus 25ff gives a full account of the construction of the Ark and the Tabernacle.

Later the Ark found a permanent dwelling place in the first Temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem where it was kept in an inner room called the Holy of Holies. The Temple became the place where all sacrifices were offered. Then in 597 BC the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple, and the Ark disappears from history. A second Temple was built on the same site 70 years later and this, or a reconstructed version of it, was the Temple that Jesus knew. The second Temple was later also destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans.

## The New Testament

The same sacrifices that we read about in Exodus were still being offered in the time of Jesus. In Luke 1: 5ff Zechariah, a descendant of the priestly order of Aaron, is in charge of the incense offering in the Temple when the angel Gabriel appears to him to announce the birth of John. In Luke 2: 22ff after the birth of Jesus his parents go to the Temple to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

‘... (as it is written in the laws of the Lord, ‘Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord’) and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, ‘a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.’”

**Luke 2: 24**

In some ways Jesus is an orthodox Jew. He worships in the Temple and in the Synagogue (a local worship space for prayer and study). He keeps the Jewish holy days such as Passover (Matthew 26:17 – 19), The Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:10) and the Dedication of the Temple (John 10:23). He tells his followers that he has not come to reject or overturn the religion of his ancestors.

‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.’

**Matthew 5: 17 – 19**

Yet by the religious authorities of his day, Jesus is seen as heretical. He is accused of breaking the Sabbath (Matthew 12: 1 – 14), disregarding the purity laws (Luke 11: 37 – 54), blasphemy (Mark 14: 55 – 64) and sedition (John 19: 12 – 16). He in turn is highly critical of the narrow legalism of the scribes and Pharisees and the corrupt practices of the Temple.

The Christian understanding of the person and mission of Jesus as both continuous with and distinct from what had gone before was developed by St Paul who presents Jesus as the mediator of the new covenant, himself both priest and sacrifice. Paul’s thinking is well explained in the Letter to the Hebrews although this is not believed to have been personally written by Paul.

*The Scapegoat is an oil painting (1854 – 1856) by the Pre-Raphaelite painter William Holman Hunt which depicts the ‘scapegoat’ described in Leviticus 16:20 – 22 as a ‘type’ or ‘foreshadowing’ of the person and sacrifice of Jesus Christ*



### **Discussion:**

**Is sacrifice an outdated idea or is it still important in contemporary Christian worship?**

## The history of Christian worship

During two thousand years of Christian history there have been Christian worshippers in nearly every culture right across the globe. But most of us have little experience of worshipping traditions beyond those we have grown up with so we may be unaware of just how rich and diverse a phenomenon Christian worship is. It is always enlightening, as we have seen, to visit other churches, both at home and abroad.

### Jewish roots

Christian worship is rooted in Judaism and the origins of both Baptism and the Eucharist are to be found there. The Lord's Prayer which Jesus taught his disciples is based on the Amidah, a Jewish prayer used three times daily. But other aspects of Jewish belief and worship were soon discarded by the early Church. We read in Acts 10: 44 – 48 how Peter becomes convinced that not only Jews but Gentiles too can be Christians. Paul struggles (Galatians 5: 1 – 12) to convince the believers that it is by faith that they are justified and that circumcision is no longer a requirement. Possible early Christian hymns and prayers can be found in Luke 1: 46 – 55, Luke 1: 68 – 79, Luke 2: 29 – 32, John 1: 1 – 16, Philippians 2: 6 – 11, Colossians 1: 12 – 20 and the various acclamations and songs in the Book of Revelation. Where do you notice Jewish influences in our worship today?

### Persecution

The history of the early Church up to the 4<sup>th</sup> century was one of frequent although not constant persecution. Christians were persecuted both by Jews and Romans. The Jews regarded Christians as heretics while the Romans, who were generally tolerant of other religions, saw Christianity as a threat to good social order. Beginning with the Neronian persecution in 64 AD, there were ten systematic persecutions until in 312 AD the Emperor Constantine was himself converted to Christianity. The Church venerates a large number of saints and martyrs who died heroically during these persecutions. Is your church or another church near you dedicated to one of them? Many well known readings and hymns touch on the theme of witness and martyrdom and have been a source of encouragement down the centuries to Christians in danger because of their faith.

### Monasticism

After the conversion of Constantine, Christianity became not only acceptable but popular – especially among those who wanted to attract the favourable notice of the ruling classes! Christianity was in danger of losing its cutting edge. This led some devout Christians to withdraw altogether from the everyday life of the world to devote themselves more fully to a life of prayer and spirituality. The first 'rule of life' for a monastic community was written in the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century by St Benedict of Nursia. As well as the Benedictine order with its characteristic emphasis on 'balance' and 'stabilitas' there are many other monastic orders each with its own distinctive traditions. Monasticism has been a major influence on Christian worship, especially through the recitation of the daily 'office' with its set hours for prayer. More about this in Session 5.

### East – West Schism

Throughout the first millennium there were many disputes between the Greek-speaking Eastern part of the Church and the Latin-speaking Western part. The lack of a common language was part of the problem. Long running disagreements, some political (such as the authority of the Pope) and some theological (such as the relationship between the three 'persons' of the Trinity) led in 1054 to a complete breakdown of communion between the two. From this point the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church became independent of each other and developed separately, each with its own distinctive spiritual and worshipping traditions. Worship in the Orthodox Church is often more visual and participatory – the veneration of icons is an example of this.

## The Reformation

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century a second major schism took place within Western Christendom as Protestant reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin tried to address the corruption and abuses then taking place in the Catholic Church. The Reformation was intended to be a return to a purer form of religion, closer to the original beliefs and practices of the early Church. There was a fresh outbreak of persecution both of Protestants and Catholics. In England the Elizabethan Settlement of 1558 established a middle way between Puritanism on the one hand and adherence to Rome on the other, although hostilities later broke out again during the Civil War. Is the worship in your church more 'Protestant' or more 'Catholic' – both are aspects of Anglicanism.

## Methodism

Methodism began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a movement within the Church of England under the leadership of John Wesley, George Whitefield and Charles Wesley. It later became a separate church with a worldwide membership. Methodism has a strong social dimension and has historically been popular among the working classes including in the US among the slave classes who later formed their own churches in the Methodist tradition. Methodist worship ranges from high to low church but is chiefly known for its rich tradition of hymnody. Many of our most popular hymns were written by the Wesley brothers – can you think of some?

## Missionary activity

Nothing shapes Christian worship more than mission. In every age and place, whenever missionaries have travelled abroad with the gospel message they have always ended up bringing back with them traditions, insights and practices from other cultures, whether they have been aware of it or not. Stories, prayers, liturgical dance, and folk hymnody such as negro spirituals from other parts of the world now have an established place in our worship as well as ornaments, vessels and vestments which have been brought back or given as gifts. We may even borrow from other religions – can you think of examples?

## Ecumenism

Closer to home but no less significant, in recent decades more open and respectful relationships have developed between different Christian denominations, most notably between Anglicans and Methodists. There is a greater sense of permission to use elements of one another's liturgy in our own worship. A good example is the rise in popularity of the All Souls service with its prayers for the departed, something which in the past would have been firmly rejected by most non Catholics but now seems to speak to a need. More and more younger Christians are 'post denominational' and don't attach the same importance to membership of a particular church – perhaps a sign of the way things are likely to evolve in future.

### ***Exercise:***

**Make a list of things which have changed in the Church's worship during your lifetime, with approximate dates if you know them. Why do you think these changes have come about?**



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## What do we mean by 'the Anglican tradition'?

It is very hard to capture in words all that is meant by 'the Anglican tradition'. In fact it probably means different things to different people and not everyone will agree about which aspects they value. Below are five suggestions of things we may particularly associate with Anglicanism or with the Church of England.

### The 'via media'

'Via media' is a Latin phrase meaning 'middle way' and is sometimes used to describe the way in which the Church of England has tried to combine the best of both Catholicism and Protestantism. The Church of England contains some churches and people whose doctrinal beliefs and ways of worshipping are very similar to those of contemporary Roman Catholicism. It also contains some churches and people whose doctrinal beliefs and ways of worshipping are very similar to those of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant reformers. The Church of England takes pride in its diversity – although it would be true to say that those on the catholic and protestant 'wings' do not always get along easily with each other or with the majority who occupy the 'centre ground'. Recently issues such as women bishops and same sex marriage have led to some particularly sharp differences of opinion.

### Scripture, Reason and Tradition

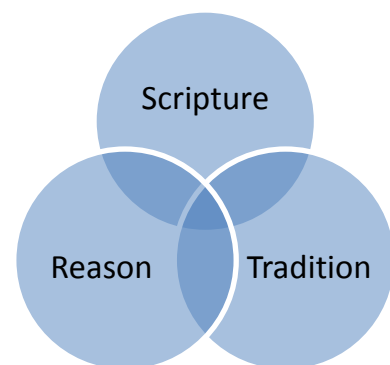
A key aspect of the 'middle way' is the Anglican conviction that our beliefs and practices must derive from an integration of scripture, reason, and tradition. To emphasise any one of these at the expense of the other two is to risk distorting the whole.

One of the earliest understandings of the concept of integrating scripture, reason, and tradition comes from the writings of Richard Hooker:

'Be it in matter of the one kind or of the other, what Scripture doth plainly deliver, to that the first place both of credit and obedience is due; the next where-unto is whatsoever any man can necessarily conclude by force of reason; after these the voice of the Church succeedeth. That which the Church by her ecclesiastical authority shall probably think and define to be true or good, must in congruity of reason overrule all other inferior judgments whatsoever.'

*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Book V, 8:2*

This thinking was developed in the early 1830s by the Oxford Movement. Led by John Keble, John Henry Newman and Edward Pusey, the movement wanted to restore the place of tradition in the life of the Church. They thought it was wrong to say that everything we believe and do must come directly from Scripture, but beliefs and practices could be defended if there was evidence for them in Scripture and in the life of the early Church. Examples include infant baptism, episcopacy and indeed the doctrine of the Trinity. More recently theologians have also considered the importance of 'experience' in deciding what the Church ought to believe and do. 'Experience' might include 'revelation' – what God himself has revealed directly to us.



## The Book of Common Prayer and the King James Bible

The 1662 Book of Common Prayer was the culmination of several liturgical revisions undertaken by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. It continues to be authorized for use today. The King James Bible was published in 1611 under the patronage of King James 1 and remains for many people the translation they best know and love.

These books form part of the 'cultural furniture' of every English man or woman, whether they are a Christian believer or not. Many expressions in common usage come from them. When we say that someone is 'a law unto themselves' or 'a wolf in sheep's clothing', when we speak of 'a den of thieves', 'a bottomless pit' or 'a two edged sword', when we refer to 'the land of nod', 'the powers that be' or 'the signs of the times', or say that something will happen 'in the twinkling of an eye', we are drawing on the extraordinary linguistic richness of these two books.

## The English choral tradition

From Thomas Tallis to John Rutter, the English choral tradition has many devoted admirers worldwide. Well known features include:  
The **'preces and responses'** — sung antiphonally by the priest or a lay cantor and the choir  
**Psalms** — sung to Anglican chant by the choir or congregation  
**Service settings** — choral settings of the Eucharist, some grand, some simple  
**Anthems, canticles and motets**  
**Hymns** — usually for congregational use



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## The parish system



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The parish system in England dates back to Anglo Saxon times and by the 12<sup>th</sup> century extended over most of the country. It has been a constant feature of English life up until the present day and only very recently has its usefulness and viability started to be questioned. The parish system gives rights to individuals to be baptized, married and laid to rest by 'their' church even if they never worship there. The parish system helps to explain why English people worship the way they do – with a strong emphasis on the 'community' aspects of worship, not just the beliefs of individuals. We'll be exploring more about this in Session 10.

### ***Discussion:***

**What things about the Church of England would I miss if I joined another denomination or went to live in another country?**

## Liturgical resources currently used in the Church of England

### The Book of Common Prayer (BCP)

The 1662 Book of Common Prayer continues to be used throughout the Church of England today. It cannot be altered or abandoned without the approval of Parliament. It has a loyal following among those who appreciate its melodious language or have a particular commitment to its doctrines.

#### What's in it ...

Table of contents

The Preface

Concerning the Service of the Church

Concerning Ceremonies, why some be abolished, and some retained

Rules to Order the Service

The Order how the Psalter is appointed to be read

The Order how the rest of the Holy Scripture is appointed to be read

A Table of Proper Lessons and Psalms

The Calendar, with the Table of Lessons

Tables and Rules for the Feasts and Fasts through the whole Year

The Order for Morning and Evening Prayer – Introduction

The Order for Morning Prayer

The Order for Evening Prayer

The Creed of S. Athanasius

The Litany

Prayers and Thanksgivings upon several occasions

The Collects, Epistles, and Gospels, to be used at the Ministration of the Holy Communion, throughout the Year

The Order for the Administration of The Lord's Supper or Holy Communion

The Ministration of Public Baptism of Infants

The Ministration of Private Baptism of Children in Houses

The Order of Baptism for those of Riper Years

The Catechism

The Order of Confirmation

The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony

The Order for the Visitation of the Sick

The Communion of the Sick

The Order for the Burial of the Dead

The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth

A Commination, or denouncing of God's anger and judgements against Sinners

The Psalter

Forms of Prayer to be used at Sea

The Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining, and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons

Forms of Prayer for the Anniversary of the day of Accession of the Reigning Sovereign

Articles of Religion

Royal Warrant

A Table of Kindred and Affinity

## Common Worship

Common Worship is the name given to the series of services authorised by the General Synod of the Church of England and launched on the first Sunday of Advent in 2000. It offers worship resources for all occasions in contemporary language and reflects current theological understandings.

### What's in it ...

#### **Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England.**

This is the main volume. It contains services and resources for use on Sundays, Principal Feasts and Holy Days, and Festivals, in both contemporary and traditional language, together with the Common Worship Psalter. It also includes services from The Book of Common Prayer in the forms in which they are customarily used today, as well as a service of Night Prayer using the texts from The 1928 Prayer Book.

#### **Common Worship: The President's Edition**

This volume is specifically for the clergy who lead worship in the Church of England. It contains the Holy Communion and Baptism services, the Collects and Post Communions that appear in the main volume, as well as:

Collects and Post Communions for Lesser Festivals and Special Occasions

Additional Proper Prefaces and Blessings

Music for the Eucharistic Prayers

#### **Common Worship: Pastoral Services**

The services and resources for Wholeness and Healing, Marriage, and Funerals are contained in this volume.

#### **Pastoral Ministry Companion**

This easy to use collection presents services, prayer and readings for the most frequently encountered pastoral occasions in a durable and portable format.

#### **Common Worship: Christian Initiation**

Published in 2005, Christian Initiation is a complete volume containing all the liturgies of Baptism and Confirmation as well as 'Rites on the Way: Approaching Baptism', 'Rites of Affirmation: Appropriating Baptism' and liturgies of Reconciliation and Wholeness and Healing.

#### **Common Worship: Daily Prayer**

This volume contains orders of service for morning, evening and night prayer for each day of the week, and each season of the Church's year. There is also a wealth of seasonal variants, collects, psalms and other devotional materials.

#### **Common Worship: Collects and Post Communions**

This volume contains all of the Common Worship Collects and Post Communions, including the Additional Collects authorized in 2004.

#### **New Patterns for Worship**

This volume contains guidance on planning worship, resources for use on a variety of occasions and sample services.

### **Times and Seasons**

Times and Seasons provides liturgical material for the major seasons of the Christian year. For each season, it offers a wide range of prayers and blessings, as well as fully worked out services and creative outlines for key events, such as Christingle and crib services, Easter Vigils and Dawn Services.

### **Common Worship: Festivals**

This volume contains everything you need to celebrate the Saints' days, principal holy days and special occasions in the Church of England calendar. It brings together all the prayers ('propers') and Collects needed for these days with Eucharistic material and music.

### **Common Worship: Ordination Services (study edition)**

This special hybrid volume of Common Worship provides the ordination liturgies of the Church of England from The Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship alongside a study guide for these services.

### **Times and Seasons: President's Edition**

This revised, expanded edition of Times and Seasons provides a wealth of seasonal material for the celebration of Holy Communion Order One throughout the church year.

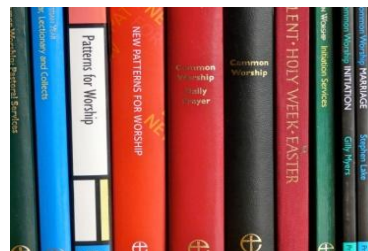
### **Holy Week and Easter**

This president's volume contains all that is required for the differing services that are held in this 'week of weeks'.

### **Additional Eucharistic Prayers**

These additional Eucharistic prayers for Common Worship are designed for use where significant numbers of children are present, particularly in school worship. This booklet includes the full texts and responses of both prayers, and helpful guidance on celebrating the Eucharist with children.

The contents of these volumes are available in a variety of editions and formats. For details, view the range of official products online on the Church of England website at [www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/other-information/official-products.aspx](http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/other-information/official-products.aspx)



### ***Exercise:***

**Group members share impressions of their visits to other churches made since the last session. In the light of what we have explored in this session, what do we think are the reasons for the differences we have noticed?**

**If the group is small this could be done all together or with a larger group share in pairs or threes**

## **Preparation for next session**

In our next session we will be exploring 'The Christian Year'. In preparation for the session please do some research on the dedication of your church. If you are in a group, team or benefice, choose a church with a more unusual dedication if there is one.

Many churches are dedicated to a saint or sometimes to pairs or groups of saints. Or a church may have a different kind of dedication. There is always a story although details may be lost in the mists of time. See what you can find out. Then add your reflections on how this story might be relevant or how it might be made meaningful for the community which the church serves. Aim to produce around a side of A4.

## SESSION 3 'THE CHRISTIAN YEAR'



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*In this session we will be exploring ...*

### **The Christian story**

Key events

### **The Church's year**

How the Church tells and re tells the Christian story every year

### **Feasts, festivals and holy days**

Introducing richness and colour into worship

### **Seasonal services**

Preparing services for special times of the year

*Please bring with you to the session ...*

Your course book or session material

A notepad and pen

A bible

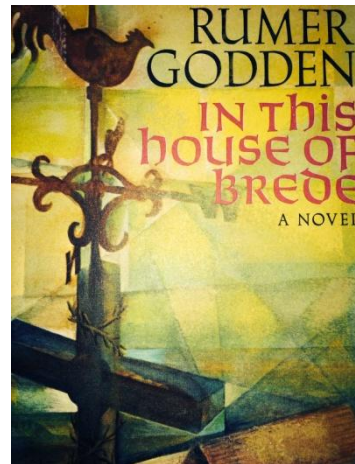
Material you have prepared on the dedication of your church

## Welcome to the session

*We take a few moments to greet one another and catch up on any news*

### 'In This House of Brede'

'In This House of Brede' is a novel by Rumer Godden. Published in 1969 it tells the story of a community of Benedictine nuns during a time of challenge and change. Brede Abbey is modelled on the former Stanbrook Abbey in Worcestershire where Rumer Godden was a frequent visitor, and the detail is lovingly observed with very accurate descriptions of the worshipping life of the community. This passage particularly captures something of the rhythm of the Christian year, experienced through the liturgy. The group might read this passage aloud or why not buy the book.



'For every religious, Holy Week is the most moving time of the year. At Brede the church was never empty; recreation was suspended, and each nun was quiet, withdrawn, except for the part she must play in choir. 'In the liturgy of Tenebrae, of the last three days of Holy Week,' taught Dame Clare, 'the Church mourns over Jerusalem and celebrates the Passion of our Lord in primitive chants drawn from the Jewish tradition itself; they must often have been on the lips of Christ and the apostles.' On Maundy Thursday Cecily was allotted the first Lamentation and, as she prefaced each verse with the singing of the Hebrew alphabet, Aleph, Beth . . . , she was doing what any of the apostles might have done in the synagogues along the Sea of Galilee. 'The psalm, In Exitu Israel,' explained Dame Clare, 'is the exact counterpart of that of the Jewish Passover night, and was probably sung by our Lord in the upper room.'

On that same day, the Abbess, following her Master's example, became the servant of the whole community, serving them at midday dinner. The sight of the refectory was inviting: each place was laid with a snow-white napkin, a glass of wine, a bunch of grapes, a small wheaten loaf, and a brown earthenware bowl of vegetable soup. Apricot puffs and cheese were laid along the side tables. When the nuns were seated, the Abbess came in, wearing a white apron and white sleeves and with her came the kitchener, Sister Priscilla, bearing a great silver salver of fish. The Abbess went to every nun, serving her and laying beside her plate a nosegay of small flowers: violets, wood anemones, primulas, grape hyacinths, tiny ferns, pink heaths.

Later, in the chapter house, Abbess Catherine, girded with a towel, would kneel before twelve of her daughters, drawn by lot—'I must cut my toenails,' Dame Nichola had said in panic—and reverently wash their feet just as Christ did to his apostles. 'I have set you an example,' He told them, 'to teach you what to do.' That night the Mass re-enacted the Last Supper, when Jesus took bread and broke it, took wine, and spoke the words that consecrated them and gave them to his disciples, the gift to the world for all time, of the Eucharist. Then, just as Christ had gone from the upper room to the Garden of Gethsemane and was seized in the midst of his disciples, so the Host was taken from the altar's tabernacle and borne in procession to a small side altar made welcoming with flowers and



candles; the church was left stark, the high altar stripped of its linen, the doors of the empty tabernacle flung open. Bells were replaced by the dry sound of clappers.

For the long hours of the Good Friday vigil, a heavy wooden crucifix lay before the empty tabernacle as the nuns chanted and prayed the terrible saga through. The names mingled: Judas, Malchus, Annas, Caiaphas, Herod, Pontius Pilate, Barabbas, Simon of Cyrene: the women of Jerusalem, the two thieves, and the centurion: the two Marys who stood with our Lady at the foot of the cross. 'The women didn't run away,' said the Abbess.

Christ died and, as if the Abbey had died too, came the long pause of Holy Saturday, 'Surely the longest day in the year,' said Dame Beatrice until, at night, hope came back to the Church as, long ago, hope had come to the apostles. The new fire was kindled in the church porch, the huge Paschal candle, inscribed with the date of the civil year and painted with symbols of the Resurrection, was lit from that new fire and the priest took the first step inside the darkened empty church; he raised the candle and cried 'Lumen Christi,' 'The light of Christ.' Three times the cry echoed as the new light was passed from candle to candle, the boy servers who came from the town lighting their candles from the great one and bringing them to the wicket where the Abbess met them with hers; she passed the fire to the rows of nuns, each holding her candle until the whole church was illuminated.

As the candles caught their light one from another. Cecily had a vision of the flame running in the same way from one church to another throughout Christendom, far around the world: new light, new joy, fresh hope. Thousands of candles, pure wax, wax of bees, made through the year by the wings and work of infinitesimal creatures like us, thought Cecily, made for this night. 'This is the night,' intoned the priest, 'the night on which heaven was wedded to earth. On this night Christ broke the bonds of death,' and, 'the night shall be as light as day, the night shall light up my joy.'

The priest blessed the new water and led the renewal of baptismal vows until, just before midnight, Mass began, the first Mass of Easter, when linen, flowers, and candlesticks were brought back to the altar as the celebrant began the opening of the Gloria, 'Gloria in excelsis Deo...' Every bell, every stop on the organ, every voice joined in the triumphant response, 'Glory to God on high,' and it was Easter Sunday.'

## Prayer

*The course leader prays for the group and asks God's blessing on the session*

*We pray together*

**Almighty God,  
whose only Son has opened for us  
a new and living way into your presence:  
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## The Christian story

One of the purposes of liturgy is to tell the Christian story over again, to bring new believers to faith and to reinvigorate and deepen the faith of those who are believers already.

In the early Church new believers, or 'catechumens' as they were called, would be inducted into the Christian story in the period up to and during Lent so that they were ready to 'confess', ie testify to, their faith and be baptised at Easter. In the same way those who had committed sins and been excommunicated for a period of reflection and penitence would be restored into the Church's fellowship at Easter. Through witnessing and celebrating the baptism of new believers and the restoration of sinners the whole Church was strengthened and encouraged. Today in Salisbury Cathedral we still baptise and confirm as part of the Easter Dawn Eucharist and many other cathedrals and churches do the same.

<b>Key events in the Christian story</b>	
God creates the world	Genesis 1 – 2:3 Genesis 2:4 – 25
Humankind sins and falls from grace	Genesis 3
Humankind drifts further away from God and is nearly destroyed in the Flood	Genesis 6:5 – 9
Humankind continues to drift away from God God makes a covenant with Abraham, that his descendants will inherit the Promised Land The promise is extended to Abraham's son, Isaac and to Isaac's son Jacob whose twelve sons are the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel	Genesis 12 – 50
God delivers his people from slavery in Egypt On Mount Sinai he gives them the Law He leads them through the wilderness to the Promised Land	Exodus 1 – 18 Exodus 19, 20 Joshua 1 – 22
Israel becomes a nation ruled first by judges ... ... and later by kings	Judges 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings
The prophets predict God's judgement on a disobedient people and his subsequent mercy They also foretell the coming of the Messiah	Isaiah – Zechariah
The Israelites are carried into exile in Babylon ... but later return They rebuild Jerusalem	Ezra Nehemiah
God becomes incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ He is revealed to the world – shepherds, kings, Simeon and Anna – and goes into exile in Egypt	Matthew 1, 2 Luke 1, 2

Jesus calls the first disciples	All gospels
During his earthly ministry Jesus reveals the true nature of God and of God's coming kingdom by his words, deeds and example	All gospels
Jesus goes to Jerusalem and enters the city in triumph He eats the last supper with his disciples and institutes the Eucharist	All gospels
Jesus is arrested, tried and condemned to death	All gospels
Jesus is crucified and buried	All gospels
Three days later Jesus is raised from the dead and appears to his followers	All gospels
Jesus returns to heaven	All gospels
The Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples	Acts
The early Church is born and begins its work of witness and evangelism	Acts The Epistles

***Discussion:***

**Which do you think are the most important events in the Christian story? Which are most significant for you personally? Which are most significant for the Church's mission?**



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Many churches light a large paschal candle as part of the celebration of Easter. The candle has either a cross or a 'Chi Rho' in the centre. The tall P is really the Greek letter RHO or R and combined with the large X which is the Greek CHI or CH spells CHR, the initial letters of Christ. Above and below this symbol are the Greek letters Alpha and Omega which are the first and last letters of the alphabet. The meaning is that Christ is the Lord of both time and eternity, the beginning and the end of all things, a very powerful and important message for the Christian believer.

## The Church's year

The liturgical cycle of the Church's year provides a framework for the retelling of the Christian story, so that the whole story is repeated every year.

The Church's year starts not on 1 January but at the end of November/ beginning of December with the season of Advent. We then follow a set pattern for the next twelve months ending the following November with the season of Remembrancetide. In between we revisit all the key elements of the Christian story, reflecting upon their meaning for the world, the Church and ourselves as individuals.

This annual cycle does not follow a strictly chronological order but takes as its hinge points the two narrative cycles which are most significant for Christian belief: the Incarnation cycle and the Paschal cycle.

### The Incarnation Cycle

Advent (*4 Sundays*)

**Christmas Day** (*25 December*)

12 days of Christmas

**Epiphany** (*6 January or nearest Sunday*)

4 weeks of Epiphany

**Feast of the Presentation/ Candlemas**

(*2 February or nearest Sunday*)

### The Paschal Cycle

**Ash Wednesday**

Lent (*40 days measured from Lent 1 to Maundy Thursday*)

Paschal Triduum

**Easter Day**

40 days to the Ascension

**Ascension Day**

Easter continues for 10 more days, waiting on the Spirit

**Pentecost/ Whitsunday**

In between these two hinge points are fitted all the other 'events' which the Church wishes to remember and celebrate. The whole cycle of the Christian year is set out on the next page.

### Key to Liturgical Colours

**Purple** Purple may vary from 'Roman purple', a warmer more reddish purple, to violet, a cooler more blueish purple, with blue as an alternative. Purple is used during seasons of penitence and preparation. In some churches you may find that a warmer coloured purple is used for Advent and a cooler coloured purple for Lent. On the third Sunday of Advent when Mary is commemorated and the fourth Sunday of Lent which is also Mothering Sunday **rose pink** coloured vestments may be used if available

**White** White is used for seasons of celebration such as Christmastide, Epiphanytide and Eastertide. On the major Festivals themselves such as Christmas, Epiphany and Easter as well as on other occasions Festal White, a more ornate version, or **Gold** may be used

**Green** Green is the everyday colour and is used during 'ordinary time' ie when nothing else is going on in the calendar

**Red** Red is used for Pentecost and for Saints Days. Sometimes a **darker red** is used for solemn occasions such as Good Friday or for Remembrancetide but most churches will only have one kind

## Advent

The First Sunday of Advent

The Second Sunday of Advent

The Third Sunday of Advent – Gaudete Sunday

*From 17 December (O Sapientia) begin the eight days of prayer before Christmas Day*

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Christmas Eve

## Christmas

### Christmas Day – 25 December

The First Sunday of Christmas

The Second Sunday of Christmas

*The days after Christmas Day until the Epiphany traditionally form a unity of days of special thanksgiving*

## Epiphany

### The Epiphany – 6 January or nearest Sunday

The Baptism of Christ (The First Sunday of Epiphany)

The Second Sunday of Epiphany

The Third Sunday of Epiphany

The Fourth Sunday of Epiphany

### The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas) – 2 February or nearest Sunday

## Ordinary Time

*This begins on the day following the Presentation. Depending on the date of Easter there may be fewer than 5 Sundays before Lent*

The Fifth Sunday before Lent

The Fourth Sunday before Lent

The Third Sunday before Lent

The Second Sunday before Lent

The Sunday next before Lent

## Lent

### Ash Wednesday

The First Sunday of Lent

The Second Sunday of Lent

The Third Sunday of Lent

The Fourth Sunday of Lent – Laetare Sunday/Mothering Sunday

The Fifth Sunday of Lent (*Passiontide begins*)

Palm Sunday

Monday of Holy Week

Tuesday of Holy Week

Wednesday of Holy Week

### Maundy Thursday

### Good Friday

Easter Eve - stripped altar

### Easter Day

Monday of Easter Week

Tuesday of Easter Week

Wednesday of Easter Week

Thursday of Easter Week

Friday of Easter Week

Saturday of Easter Week

The Second Sunday of Easter

The Third Sunday of Easter  
The Fourth Sunday of Easter  
The Fifth Sunday of Easter  
The Sixth Sunday of Easter

#### Ascension Day

*From Friday after Ascension Day  
begin the nine days of prayer before Pentecost*  
The Seventh Sunday of Easter – Sunday after Ascension Day

#### Pentecost (Whit Sunday)

##### Trinity Sunday

The First Sunday after Trinity  
The Second Sunday after Trinity  
The Third Sunday after Trinity  
The Fourth Sunday after Trinity  
The Fifth Sunday after Trinity  
The Sixth Sunday after Trinity  
The Seventh Sunday after Trinity  
The Eighth Sunday after Trinity  
The Ninth Sunday after Trinity  
The Tenth Sunday after Trinity  
The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity  
The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity  
The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity  
The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity  
The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity  
The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity  
The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity  
The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity  
The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity  
The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity  
The Twenty First Sunday after Trinity  
The Twenty Second Sunday after Trinity  
The Last Sunday after Trinity

*Depending on the date of Easter there may be fewer Sundays after Trinity*

All Saints

#### All Souls

The Third Sunday before Advent – Remembrance Sunday  
The Second Sunday before Advent  
Christ the King

#### ***Discussion:***

**If someone visited your church for a service or at another time what signs of the seasons might they see? How might they know that the Church is keeping a special occasion?**

## Feasts, festivals and holy days

As well as the main framework of the Church's year there are many other feasts, festivals and holy days which the Church marks. These include:

**Saints Days** when either the birth or the death of a saint is commemorated. Most churches will hold a special service on the feast of their 'patronal' saint or other dedication. The feasts of St Peter and St Paul at the end of June are traditionally the time when ordinations take place. The most important saints appear in the lectionary in capital letters. Some saints are also commemorated in groups such as English Saints and Martyrs of the Reformation Era, since not all their names will be known individually.

**Lesser festivals** when someone who has been important in the life of the Church but who has not been canonised, ie made a saint, is remembered. Examples might include Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, famed for his wartime chaplaincy, Mary Sumner, founder of the Mother's Union or George Herbert, poet and parish priest.

Days on which events in the **life of the Holy Family** are commemorated, such as the Annunciation in March, Transfiguration in August, or Holy Cross in September. Churches in the catholic tradition are particularly likely to observe a number of feasts relating to the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

**Devotional Days** such as Corpus Christi on which we give thanks for the institution of the Eucharist. Some days are designated as **ember days**. There are four separate sets of 3 ember days spaced throughout the year, on the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of a particular week. Ember days are days of special prayer and perhaps fasting for God's blessing.

Not every church will keep every possible feast, festival and holy day. Most churches will try to keep the principle ones, sometimes by transferring them to the nearest Sunday. At other times it is often possible to introduce some richness and colour into worship by picking up on the theme of the day.



**The Forerunners of Christ with  
Saints and Martyrs**

**Fra Angelico, 15th Century**

**National Gallery, London**

***Discussion:* Share and discuss the material you have prepared on the dedication of your church. In what ways are the stories of the saints and other special people relevant to our lives as Christians today?**

## Seasonal services

### Seasonal motifs

When designing worship it is important to choose readings, music and prayers which are in keeping with the season. No-one wants to be singing 'Alleluia!' in the middle of Lent, or lingering over the theme of human wickedness and frailty on what should be a day of celebration. The lectionary points us towards the right readings (more about this in Session 6) and most hymn books will include an index suggesting suitable hymns. An anthology of seasonal prayers is a handy resource for the worship leader.

As well as texts which are clearly identifiable as belonging to a particular time of year there are many which can be used on more than one occasion. The worship leader will want to choose those that pick up on the deeper themes and motifs of the season eg

**Advent** – longing, expectation, waiting, watching, preparation

**Christmas** – wonder, rejoicing, generosity

**Epiphany** – revelation, manifestation, ecumenism

**Lent** – sin, repentance, forgiveness

**Easter** – new birth, victory over death, proclamation

**Pentecost** – calling, gifting, discipleship, ministry

**Ordinary time** – the teachings of Jesus, obedience, our earthly pilgrimage, the Christian life etc

### ***Exercise:***

**Choose an occasion in the Church's calendar and begin to collect some resources which might be useful in preparing an act of worship. This could include readings, poems, drama, hymns, music, prayers, activities, visual aids or anything else you like**

**This is best done in twos or threes and can be completed outside the session. Why not build up a library of resources for a number of different occasions?**



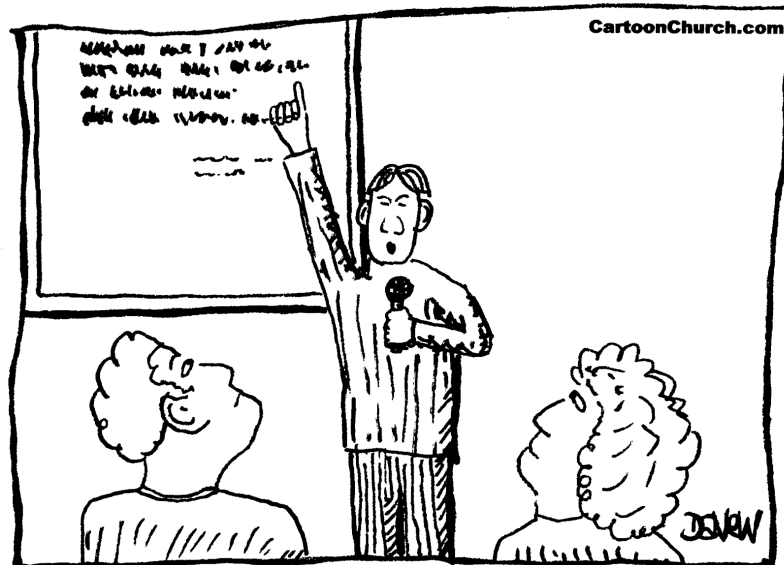
## **Preparation for next session**

In our next session we will be thinking about the role of the worship leader. In preparation for the session please interview someone you know who is an experienced worship leader – this may be your parish priest or another person. You can interview more than one person if you like.

Find out from them how they feel about leading worship – both the positive and the negative. What advice would they like to give to someone who is new to leading worship? Then add your own reflections. Did you hear anything that helped you? Anything that surprised you? What have you learned? Aim to produce around a side of A4.

NOTES ...

## SESSION 4 'THE WORSHIP LEADER'



Try as they might, no-one could work out what the worship leader was pointing at.

Cartoon by Dave Walker – used with permission

*In this session we will be exploring ...*

### **It's not about me**

Pointing beyond ourselves

### **Setting the scene**

Creating a welcoming space for worship

### **The worship leader in action**

Preparing, delivering and reviewing worship

### **The worship leader as pastor**

Caring for those in our congregations

*Please bring with you to the session ...*

Your course book or session material

A notepad and pen

A bible

Notes from your interview with an experienced worship leader

## Welcome to the session

*We take a few moments to greet one another and catch up on any news*

## Fr Gerald takes his first wedding

It isn't only Lay Worship Leaders who may find taking a service for the first time daunting – clergy do too. Isn't that nice to know!

In 'Four Weddings and a Funeral' the unfortunate Fr Gerald, played by Rowan Atkinson, gets into all sorts of difficulties taking a wedding. If someone has a DVD of the film the group may like to watch this comic extract – or you can easily find it online. Enjoy!



Photocredit:©Allstar from www.theguardian.com

## Prayer

*The course leader prays for the group and asks God's blessing on the session*

*We pray together*

**Almighty God,  
whose only Son has opened for us  
a new and living way into your presence:  
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## It's not about me

### 'Of the unworthiness of the ministers'

#### **XXVI. Of the Unworthiness of the Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the Sacraments.**

Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments, yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their Ministry, both in hearing the Word of God, and in receiving the Sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith, and rightly, do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men.

*The 39 Articles of Religion*

Being a worship leader is a hugely privileged ministry but it can also feel very daunting. When people come to worship it is because they want to encounter the living God. They are looking to the worship leader to help provide a space in which that can happen. But who are we to take on such a responsibility? We are all too aware of our own faults, failings and limitations.

The 39 Articles of Religion, which you can find at the back of the Book of Common Prayer, tackle this thorny issue head on by stating that the Church's ministry of both word and sacrament flows from Christ, not from the minister. So although the person leading the service is a sinner, that doesn't take anything away from the worth of the ministry that people are receiving.

It would be lovely if all worship leaders were perfect people but we aren't, of course. And it might be rather intimidating for everybody if we were. But as long as we are sincerely doing our best to be faithful disciples of Christ, he will bless what we do in his name – a very comforting and encouraging thought!

### 'Person' and 'persona'

The word 'persona' comes from the Latin, originally meaning a kind of mask worn by an actor playing a part on stage. The same actor might play a variety of contrasting parts, simply by putting on a different mask each time. The voice of the actor is heard through the mask ie 'per sonare' meaning 'to sound through', while the real identity of the actor remains concealed.



Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung adopted the term 'persona' to describe the social face that a person presents to the world. Babies and very small children tend to be spontaneous with their feelings as parents sometimes find to their cost. As we grow older we gain the ability to adapt our behaviour to whatever situation we are in. We learn from others around us how to behave in ways that work well for them and for us. Mastering this art is essential to our social and professional

survival but there are also risks. If we get too much into the habit of concealing our feelings we may become disconnected from our own needs and others may find it hard to get close to us.



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All ministers of religion have to strike the right balance between 'being myself' and fulfilling the role which others need us to fulfil. Sometimes it's not easy. We want people to see 'the real me', not a pretence. And people are quick to pick up on it if we are not being ourselves particularly if they also know us in other settings. They may even lose confidence in us as a result. So a question to reflect on: what kind of 'persona' might be appropriate when leading public worship? Are different 'personae' appropriate to different worship styles? How will we know when we have found the right 'persona'?

## What to wear

This is a subject on which some churches and individuals have strong views. It is worth thinking about our choice of clothing when leading worship and how others might react.

For clergy and LLMs, directions about vestments are set out in Canon B8: 'Of the vesture of ordained and authorized ministers during the time of divine service', but some churches may take a more informal approach.

The ministry of a Lay Worship Leader is a commissioned rather than a licensed ministry so there is no formal expectation about what you should wear. Ordinary clothes may be most appropriate or you might choose to put on a cassock. If you go for ordinary clothes a bold fashion statement may be distracting to some. A cassock can be worn over the top of whatever you have on.

If you go for a cassock, colour is unimportant but choose one that fits, not one that drags on the floor or shows six inches of visible trouser leg. Your church may have a suitable spare cassock or if you frequently wear one you may want to buy your own.

Think about shoes – you may not notice them but other people might. Your comfortable trainers may not be the most attractive option. If your church has a tiled floor something with a softer sole will be less noisy. And beware of shoes that squeak!

Generally speaking, it is best to try and fit in with whatever is usual practice at your church. If there is a more formal approach to vestments, a cassock may be preferable. If your church has a more informal approach, go with the flow. If in doubt, discuss with your incumbent, as a final decision is really up to her or him.

### ***Discussion:***

**What can we do to help worshippers focus on God, not on ourselves as worship leaders?**

## Setting the scene

### 'How Sweet and Awful is the Place'

In the early 1700's Isaac Watts wrote a hymn called 'How Sweet And Awful is the Place'. These days it is rarely sung as the use of the word 'awful' to mean 'awe inspiring', 'full of awe' tends to raise a laugh. For some church buildings (let's be honest) are decidedly awful – cold, cluttered and without the most basic facilities. Those of us who only ever worship in buildings that have been well maintained and thoughtfully reordered may not always appreciate our good fortune.

And of course we don't all agree on what looks good. 'De gustibus non est disputandum' goes the Latin maxim – meaning, there is no accounting for taste. To one person the Victorian stained glass window showing a fair haired Jesus blessing the little children is 'sweet' but someone else may think it is 'awful'.

Another difficulty is that today's churches are often trying to fulfil a range of functions, not all of which are compatible with one another.

'The Church's building is now called upon to provide within its four walls a home, a worship workshop, a source of inspiration, an oasis of prayer, a community college, an advice centre, a typing pool, a soup kitchen and an operational HQ for a missionary organisation. These multifarious and often conflicting functions require space and flexibility and a new emphasis on quality of provision, to encourage everything to happen that should be happening in our Church's buildings, in terms of both spiritual growth and social action. Lamentably, comparatively few of our church buildings have yet been refurbished and re-equipped with these needs in mind. Local Christian communities are only now beginning to face up to the new building requirements of a missionary Church, and the temptation to withdraw into a heritage cocoon is very great. If we consider for a moment the existing stock of English parish churches, the majority of buildings are woefully unsuitable and ill-equipped to serve as local centres of worship and mission'.

*Re – Pitching the Tent: reordering the church building for worship and mission*  
*Richard Giles, Canterbury Press Norwich, 1999*

### Making the best of what's available

As worship leaders we may not have a great deal of control over the fabric of the Church building. Any permanent change or the removal of furnishings and ornaments that belong to the church requires a 'faculty' which can only be granted after a lot of consultation. But we have some freedom to set out the worship space in a way that helps rather than hinders what we are trying to do. Here are some tips ...

#### *Consult others:*

Before you do anything, check with your incumbent or Churchwarden. He or she may know things that you are not aware of. Also talk to anyone else who regularly uses the same space. What are their needs? Are they planning to use the space in a different way just before or just after the service you are leading?

*Less is more:*

Any building with multiple users tends to collect clutter. Is there anything you can do to make the space more restful and less distracting on the eye? If possible tuck away out of sight any objects that are not directly associated with worship. Flipcharts, ladders, hoovers, and flower arranging paraphernalia are all very useful and necessary but they should not be on display. Move away any furniture that won't be needed for this particular service but be prepared to put things back as you found them afterwards.

*Health and safety:*

It's always a good idea to think about the safety of the environment that we are inviting people into, especially if we are making changes to how things usually are. If you move furniture don't ask people to lift things that are too heavy for them or try and do it yourself. Look out for anything fragile or valuable. And remember that some things which are perfectly safe for adults can present a hazard to children or those with disabilities, such as candles or sharp objects.

*Seating:*

If your church has fixed pews you may have to live with them. If chairs are moveable, a circle or horseshoe may be more congenial than rows if the service is informal. Or it may be possible to hold a small act of worship somewhere else in the church, giving you more choice about how to arrange the space.

*A focal point:*

Is there a focal point, something for the eye to rest on which will be an aid to worship? This may be the cross and candles already on the altar, or the imaginative worship leader may provide something particularly linked to the theme of the service such as a picture or other visual aid. If chairs are in a circle it is helpful to have something in the centre, otherwise worshippers end up gazing either at one another or into their laps.

*Overhead projection:*

If well used, overhead projection can add a helpful dimension to worship. You can do much more than project the words of hymns – an image or series of images may aid meditation or you could show a film clip. Many churches have built in overhead projection facilities or it may be possible to bring in a projector and screen. Make sure you, or someone else, knows how to use the equipment – no-one wants to watch the worship leader frantically trying to get the tech to work. If in doubt, keep things simple. The gospel was preached for centuries without the aid of technology.

***Exercise:***

**Think about your own church building(s). What facilities do you have? What facilities do you lack? What needs improving? Make a list and share your findings with the group. How can you improvise and make the best of what is available?**



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*Don't forget the key!!*



## The Worship Leader in action

### Preparing to lead worship

As worship leaders we don't just lead worship, we also have to plan and prepare it. Setting aside enough time for preparation is central to doing a good job.

#### Prepare yourself

Good worship starts here.

- Pray before you do anything else. Ask that God will use you as a channel of his grace for those who will be at the service
- Check your diary – have you blocked out enough time to get everything done and a little bit extra just in case?
- Rotas – do you have the up to date information you need to begin planning the service, eg set readings, hymns, names of who will be doing what?

#### Prepare others

The worship leader is usually only one of the people who has a part to play in the smooth running of a service but you may be the person others are depending on to let them know what to do. Be in touch in good time. Nothing induces stress like having to chase someone for details or hearing of a change of plan at the last minute. It's also a good way to lose volunteers.

- Keyholder, sidespeople, refreshment organisers. Do they know the time and place of the service? It sounds obvious but in multi parish settings where services move around it is easy to make mistakes
- Organist, choir, musicians. Who is selecting songs/ hymns/ settings – you or someone else? Avoid crossed wires. When is the rehearsal? It may be early in the week or even the week before. Don't miss it!
- Readers, intercessor. Don't rely on the reader(s) to identify the correct reading from the lectionary. There are often choices and it's always flummoxing if someone gets up and reads the wrong one. The person leading the prayers will find it helpful to know the theme of the service and any special things that will be happening in it
- Always keep an up to date list of email addresses/ phone numbers of all the people you may need to contact, including mobiles if possible in case of any last minute issues. And make sure others know when and how they can contact you

#### Prepare the material

Many the worship leader who has ended up frantically trying to do this late on a Saturday night. Leave time to spare – you never know when you may need it.

- Look up the theme for the service and read the set readings as far in advance as possible. It's good to leave time for the creative juices to get going. The Holy Spirit may help you make connections with what is going on in the news or in the lives of members of the church community, leading to a richer worshipping experience
- Service sheets. This is usually the last thing on your list once you have got everything else together. Aim for quality – or if desktop publishing isn't your thing, enlist the help of someone with skills in this area. There are lots of good software resources available. Leave time for copying – printers and photocopiers always know if you are in a hurry!

## On the day

**Be on time:** On the day of the service arrive early if you can. That way there will be plenty of time to get set up and also deal with anything unexpected. Most worship leaders will be ministering in a familiar church but if you are asked to go somewhere you haven't been before make sure you know exactly where it is before you set out. Is there parking? Is there a loo? You may be glad you asked!

**Stay calm:** If you are prone to being a little bit nervous before doing things in public, don't worry. Many worship leaders feel the same and it needn't mean you're going to do a less good job. Knowing that everything is well prepared will help. Or if you're still feeling anxious try some controlled breathing in a quiet corner. Breathe in slowly through the nose while counting up to 7. Then breathe out through a pursed lip while counting up to 11. It really does help!

**Begin with prayer:** Most worship leaders like to pray immediately before the service. Sometimes it is helpful to do this where others can see you – in the officiant's stall or a pew at the front of the church. There can be a lot of chatter before services but if people see you preparing yourself for worship in this way they may do the same. If others are processing in with you it is also good to pray a 'vestry' prayer, asking God's blessing on the service before you enter.

**You are being watched!** Remember that people may be observing you all through the service, whether you are aware of it or not. Don't slouch or sag – stand, sit or kneel up straight. Remain attentive and participative even when you are not actually leading or speaking. When you are 'up front' it may be helpful to try and picture yourself in the context of your surroundings. If you are meant to be standing centrally trace an imaginary line down the centre of the church and align yourself with it.

**Be heard:** Nothing is more frustrating for members of a congregation than finding they are unable to follow what is being said. Each building has its own acoustic, some more helpful than others. Check it out by asking someone to listen to you. Ladies – most women's voices are naturally higher than most men's so you may need to make a greater effort to project your voice effectively. If your church has amplification such as a standing or roving microphone, make sure you know how to use it. If you have information on a sheet, A5 is less likely to rustle than A4. And last but not least, remember to turn your microphone off when the service is over!

## Learning from feedback

An excellent way to improve our worship leading skills is to ask for feedback from others. Now is a good time to set up a feedback group for yourself. Ask a few people who are regular attenders if they are willing to give you some feedback over the next few months or so as you start to practice your worship leading skills. Three people is a good number. Your incumbent or another minister should be one if possible. Think of a regular time when you can meet to hear what they have to say. 15 minutes after a service once everyone else has gone may be enough but take longer or meet more often if you need to.



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### **What feedback is ...**

Feedback is an objective message about behaviour or an activity, recognising and reinforcing something well done or offering suggestions about how to do something better. The intention of feedback is to help people develop and grow. Feedback should always have the other person's best interests at heart.

### **What feedback isn't ...**

Feedback is more than praise. It's good to give praise where it is deserved but unless we are already perfect, praise on its own doesn't help us to learn. Encourage those giving you feedback to be honest as well as complimentary. Signal that you want to know what they REALLY think.

Feedback is more than criticism. Criticism is not nice to hear especially if it sounds like blame. If we feel criticised or blamed we may become defensive or angry so that no useful learning can take place. Not everyone has the knack of giving feedback in a supportive way but hopefully you know some people who do.

### **Why do people respond differently to feedback?**

Some people respond well to feedback and learn from it readily. This in turn gives permission to the person offering the feedback. Other people seem to resist feedback and struggle to make use of it. That makes giving feedback more challenging but there may be reasons that we need to try and understand.

The earliest feedback we give and receive is likely to be with our mother or other person who looks after us when we are tiny and it may affect the way we offer and respond to feedback for the rest of our lives.

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| • Mainly positive feedback | high self image, low grasp of limitations                                 |
| • Mainly negative feedback | low self image, low grasp of potential                                    |
| • Conflicting feedback     | low self image, low self awareness  |
| • Insufficient feedback    | low self image, low self awareness, low empathy                           |
| • Balanced feedback        | high self image, high grasp of potential, high self awareness and empathy |

Which of these do you think is true of you?

### **Modelling feedback**

The good news is that we can learn to be better givers and receivers of feedback. If we give good feedback to others the chances are they will get the idea and become better givers of feedback themselves. You can even ask for feedback on your feedback! What things did the other person find helpful and why? What things did they find less helpful? If you want to know more there is training available.

### **Feedback should be focussed on:**

- **behaviour** NOT personality
- **evidence** NOT assumption
- **description** NOT value judgments
- **specifics** NOT generalities
- **discussion** NOT telling
- **information** NOT gossip

### ***Discussion:***

**Can you think of any other helpful hints and tips for worship leaders? Share as a group**

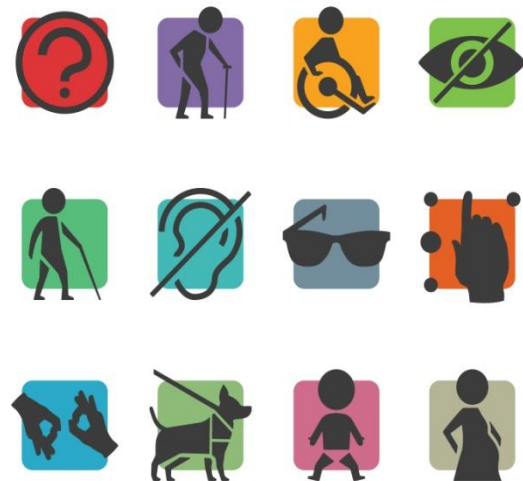
## The Worship Leader as pastor

When we think about worship leading we usually focus on the liturgical side of things. But the worship leader also has another important role – as pastor. Whoever ‘presides’ has a pastoral responsibility toward those who are taking part in the worship, to try and look after their physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. For this to happen we need to be alert to what may be going on beneath the surface.

Before the service begins take a look around the church. Who is here today? Many will be familiar faces but there may also be **visitors**. Has someone greeted them? Do they know where to go and what to do?

Think about the people you know who are here. What **happy, sad or challenging things** are going on in their lives at the moment? It may be appropriate to mention some of these during the service, such as a birthday or anniversary. A person may appreciate prayer for an illness or bereavement or a request for help with something. But be sensitive – not everyone wants attention to be drawn to them in this way. If in doubt, ask first.

Is there anyone in the congregation today with **mobility, sight or hearing issues**? You are likely to know the needs of regular worshippers but if people are new it may be less obvious. Some churches have up to date facilities but listed buildings and limited budgets present challenges so it may be a case of doing the best we can. If there are large print service/ hymn books has someone got them out? If there is a hearing loop is it turned on? Is the door to the loo unlocked? If someone is a wheelchair user or on crutches do they need to be in a particular part of the church and has a space been saved? Check before the service, or get someone else to. It is good to be alert to these kinds of needs during the service too – even a request to ‘stand for the hymn’ can be off putting to someone who is not able to.



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People who come to church may be feeling vulnerable for all kinds of reasons. It is not unusual for someone to become **unwell or distressed** during a service. We bring to worship our joys, cares and sorrows, our sense of sinfulness and unworthiness and our hopes and fears for the future. We may not be expecting to become emotional but sometimes our feelings take us by surprise. If this happens, be ready to respond, or allow someone else to step in.

There will often be **children** in the congregation. A squalling baby or fractious toddler may cause great embarrassment to its parents and sad to say not all congregations are tolerant of the needs of younger members. We want people to stay and worship but if that's difficult is there a quiet place where parents and children can ‘take 5’.

**Share ministry** with others. The worship leader is pretty busy before the service and fully occupied during it, and there may be a number of people hoping for a word afterwards. No-one can be everywhere at once. If your church has an LPA, work collaboratively with her or him. If you don't have an LPA, a Churchwarden or another trusted member of the congregation may provide pastoral backup.

Be sure to offer **thanks and feedback** as appropriate after the service. An appreciative word goes a long way. If there is anything that has not gone well and needs addressing it is usually best to do this straight away. We explored some of this in the material on 'learning from feedback' in the previous section.

Remain alert to **safeguarding issues**. If you have a leadership role in the life of the church you will be seen as a trusted person and others may turn to you with all kinds of issues or concerns. Remember to renew your DBS clearance regularly and keep up to date with safeguarding training. If anything happens that you are unsure about or uncomfortable with, talk to your incumbent and to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.

Last but not least – one of the greatest gifts a leader can offer is the gift of an unanxious presence. As Kipling might have said: 'If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you – you'll be a worship leader, my friend!'

### ***Discussion:***

**Drawing on the notes of your interview with an experienced worship leader, put together your top ten tips for excellent worship leading. You might buzz in pairs or threes and feed ideas back to the main group. The course leader might put together a group list and circulate a copy to everyone**

Ancient ...



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... and modern!



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## Preparation for next session

In our next session we will be exploring the Daily Office as part of the traditional pattern of worship in the Church of England. In preparation for the session, tune in to Choral Evensong on BBC Radio 3 and have a listen, even if it's not 'your kind of thing'.

Choral Evensong is a long-running programme presenting live broadcasts of Evensong from cathedrals and churches around the country where there is a strong musical tradition and a fine choir. It is broadcast each Wednesday at 3.30 pm and repeated the following Sunday at 3 pm and is also available online on demand. Search BBC Radio 3 Choral Evensong for information.

On a side of A4 record the date and place of the broadcast and an outline of the service. This will probably include details of the introit, responses, psalm(s), readings, hymns, canticles, anthems, and organ voluntary plus anything else of interest. Add your own reflections. Does this style of worship appeal to you? If so, why? What is there about it that feeds you spiritually? Or if not, why not? What did you feel was missing? Do you think it is important that the Church preserves this style of worship at least in some places? What if anything would be lost if it died out? You might want to talk to other people and get their views too.

## SESSION 5 'THE DAILY OFFICE'



*In this session we will be exploring ...*

### **The work of God**

St Benedict and his Rule

### **The Psalms in worship**

A mirror in which we see ourselves

### **The Daily Office in the Church of England today**

Morning, Midday, Evening and Night Prayer

### **Individual patterns of daily prayer**

Together or alone

*Please bring with you to the session ...*

Your course book or session material

A notepad and pen

A bible

Your notes on Choral Evensong

## Welcome to the session

*We take a few moments to greet one another and catch up on any news*

## 'Lord of All Hopefulness'

'Lord of All Hopefulness' was written by Jan Struther (the pen name of English writer Joyce Anstruther 1901 – 1953). As well as writing hymns she is mainly remembered for her 1940 novel 'Mrs Miniver', the story of a British housewife who gets caught up in the events of World War II. The book was made into an academy award winning film starring Greer Garson.

'Lord of All Hopefulness' used to be a firm favourite for school assemblies and perhaps for this reason is now much sung at weddings! It gives a helpful insight into the rhythm of daily prayer in which we seek to be with the Lord in the morning, at noon, in the evening and at night. It is usually sung to the Irish folk melody Slane, a gentle lilting tune which gives a feeling of collectedness and serenity.

*A member of the group reads the hymn aloud. Or if feeling tuneful the group might sing it*

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,  
whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy,  
be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,  
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,  
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,  
be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,  
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,  
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,  
be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,  
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,  
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,  
be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,  
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

*The picture on the previous page is 'The Angelus' by Jean-François Millet 1814-1875  
Millet was a French painter noted for his scenes of peasant farmers. 'The Angelus' is the third in a set  
of three famous paintings of which the other two are 'The Sowers' and 'The Gleaners'*



## Prayer

*The course leader prays for the group and asks God's blessing on the session*

*We pray together*

**Almighty God,  
whose only Son has opened for us  
a new and living way into your presence:  
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**



Photocredit: © MarkAWilson(Wilson44691)

*Sundials are an ancient method of telling the time of day by the position of the sun. The earliest examples are those made by the ancient Egyptians. The oldest example in this country is the Anglo Saxon Bewcastle Cross in the churchyard of St Cuthbert's church at Bewcastle, in Cumbria. Sundials remained the only method of keeping track of time right up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

*Many sundials also bear inscriptions which are often musings on the fleeting nature of human life. Perhaps the most common is 'tempus fugit' ('time flies'). This sundial on the wall of the Moot Hall in Aldeburgh says: 'I will not count the hours unless they be tranquil' – surely a good motto!*

## 'The work of God'

### St Benedict and his rule

#### Chapter 16: How the work of God is to be performed during the day

'Seven times in the day,' says the Prophet,  
'I have rendered praise to You' (Ps. 118[119]:164).  
Now that sacred number of seven will be fulfilled by us  
if we perform the Offices of our service  
at the time of the Morning Office,  
of Prime, of Terce, of Sext, of None,  
of Vespers and of Compline,  
since it was of these day Hours that he said,  
'Seven times in the day I have rendered praise to You' (Ps. 118[119]:164).  
For as to the Night Office the same Prophet says,  
'In the middle of the night I arose to glorify You' (Ps. 118[119]:62).  
Let us therefore bring our tribute of praise to our Creator  
'for the judgments of His justice'  
at these times:  
the Morning Office, Prime, Terce, Sext, None,  
Vespers and Compline;  
and in the night let us arise to glorify Him (Ps. 118[119]:164,62).

St Benedict wrote his Rule for the life of a monastic community somewhere between 530 and 560. It quickly became the pattern for monastic life across Western Christendom and versions of it have been in continuous use ever since. You can buy a copy, or there are translations online, in both traditional and contemporary English.

To St Benedict the main reason for living together in a monastic community was so that the monks could devote themselves to the 'opus dei' ('work of God') by which he meant 'worship'. Worship was the central and most important part of the monastic day and everything else – study, manual work and times of rest and recreation – was arranged around it. The monks were to gather for prayer seven times during the day and again during the night.

These 'canonical hours' became established in the Roman Catholic Church in the following pattern:



**Matins** (at midnight or another time during the night). Also called **Vigils** or **Nocturns** or simply **The Night Office**

**Lauds** or **Dawn Prayer** (at dawn or 3 am)

**Prime** or **Early Morning Prayer** (The First Hour, 6 am)

**Terce** or **Mid-Morning Prayer** (The Third Hour, 9 am)

**Sext** or **Midday Prayer** (The Sixth Hour, 12 noon)

**None** or **Mid-Afternoon Prayer** (The Ninth Hour, 3 pm)

**Vespers** or **Evening Prayer** (at sundown or 6 pm)

**Compline** or **Night Prayer** (before retiring, around 9 pm)

## Jewish roots of daily prayer

But the practice of praying at set times during the day was already ancient by the time it was adopted by St Benedict, who traces it back to the Psalms. The 'Siddur' or Jewish prayer book, contains prayers to be said three times daily, 'Shacharit' (morning prayers), 'Mincha' (afternoon prayers) and 'Ma'ariv/Arvit' (evening prayers). In the gospels and in Acts we read of Jesus and his followers praying at these times.

We can also see how the hours of prayer gave shape to the Jewish day just as they shaped the monastic day in the first Benedictine communities. The gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke record that Jesus was crucified 'at the sixth hour' and died 'at the ninth hour', about the time devout Jews would be gathering for prayer. The liturgy of Good Friday, also called The Three Hours, consists of a vigil which is kept from noon until 3 pm, the hours Jesus hung upon the cross. So the rhythm of prayer flows on from one culture and century to another.

'It was now about the sixth hour and the sun's light failed, so that darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour ... Jesus cried out in a loud voice saying, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' With these words he breathed his last.'

**Luke 23: 44 – 46**

## The Reformation and daily prayer

During the Middle Ages the saying of the daily offices became more and more elaborate and complicated. But for those outside of monastic communities the prospect of praying seven times a day as well as in the middle of the night was quite unrealistic.

In the Book of Common Prayer, Cranmer attempted to rescue the daily office for ordinary clergy and lay people in their parish churches by repackaging them in a shorter form, more like the simpler pattern used by Jewish believers and by the earliest Christians. He amalgamated Matins and Lauds into Morning Prayer and Vespers and Compline into Evening Prayer while the lesser offices during the day and during the night became the preserve of the religious professionals!



## The Psalms in worship

The Psalms are the first book of what are called 'The Writings', which together with 'The Law' and 'The Prophets' make up the canon of the Hebrew scriptures. They are not 'history' as we understand it but a collection of 150 poetic works reflecting on Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh in times both good and bad. The earliest ones may date from before Moses while the latest ones may date from after the Exile, a span of around five centuries.

The Psalms probably existed as smaller collections in different places before being gathered together. It seems clear that they were originally intended for use in worship and some of them include musical directions. In their present form they are organised into five 'books' (Pss 1 – 41, 42 – 72, 73 – 89, 90 – 106, and 107 – 150) each ending with a doxology (short hymn of praise), and the whole collection ending in a set of doxologies in Psalms 145 – 150.

The content of the Psalms is highly patterned with frequently recurring themes. They can be divided into five main types:

**Hymns of praise** to God's glory

**Communal laments** in which Israel's sufferings and spiritual predicament are described and God's mercy and intervention are requested

**Royal psalms** which describe eg the king's coronation or his victories in battle, although no specific king is referred to by name

**Individual laments** a common type of psalm in which the trials and temptations of an individual are detailed usually with a plea for help and an expression of confidence in God's saving power

**Individual songs of thanksgiving** in which an individual gives thanks for God's help



'David Playing the Harp'

Jane de Bray 1627 - 1697

Praise the LORD!  
Praise God in his sanctuary;  
praise him in his mighty firmament!  
Praise him for his mighty deeds;  
praise him according to his  
surpassing greatness!  
Praise him with trumpet sound;  
praise him with lute and harp!  
Praise him with tambourine and  
dance;  
praise him with strings and pipe!  
Praise him with clanging cymbals;  
praise him with loud clashing  
cymbals!  
Let everything that breathes praise  
the LORD!  
Praise the LORD!

*Psalm 150*

Part of the appeal of the psalms is their universalism – they seem to be speaking about situations and feelings that are common to all human beings. They hold up a mirror in which we see ourselves reflected. David Ford puts it very well in this extract from his book 'The Shape of Living':

'What is the secret of the Psalms? Over thousands of years they have been at the heart of the worship of Jews and Christians. Perhaps no book has been more influential. The Psalms have given whole communities and traditions their public voice and have formed the private prayer of billions of people. They have drawn generation after generation into the great overwhelmings – by God, joy, suffering, anger, gratitude, fear, enemies, prosperity, hope, despair, trust, glory, humiliation, guilt, praise, blame and much more.

They cry out from the depths of the worst that can happen:  
Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.  
I sink in deep mire where there is no foothold;  
I have come into deep waters and the flood sweeps over me. (Psalm 69: 1 – 2)

They also see all creation taken up into the praise of God's encompassing glory:  
Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!  
Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!  
Beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!  
Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!  
Young men and maidens together, old men and children!  
Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted;  
His glory is above earth and heaven (Psalm 148: 3 – 13)

There is not only realism about passions, chaos, hatred, death and destruction – there is submersion in them, and bitter lament. The joy, praise and abundance of good things are not answers or 'solutions' to all that. It is a much more richly complex picture of multiple overwhelming which has only one sure orientation – to God.

*The Shape of Living: Spiritual Directions for Everyday Life, David F. Ford  
Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2012*

## Using the Psalms in worship

Monastic prayer, such as St Benedict describes in his Rule, has at its heart the ongoing meditation of the community on scripture. The psalms have a particularly important place. Chapters 17 and 18 of the Rule set out how many psalms are to be said at each office so that the whole Psalter is recited through on a weekly basis and begun again each Sunday at the Night Office. Some of Benedict's monks clearly thought this was a bit much but were rebuked by Benedict. '*We read that our holy Fathers strenuously fulfilled that task in a single day*' he wrote. '*May we, lukewarm that we are, perform it at least in a whole week!*'

### **Discussion:**

**Today the regular recitation of the Psalms still plays a key part in daily worship with every service having one or more psalms as a set reading. Why do we do this? Is it still important?**

## Daily Offices in the Church of England

The regular office pattern of the Church of England today is fourfold, consisting of Morning Prayer, Prayer During the Day, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer, all in Common Worship: Daily Prayer.

### Structure of Morning and Evening Prayer

#### Preparation

- ¶ an **opening response**
- ¶ one or more of the following
  - ¶ a **prayer of thanksgiving**
  - ¶ a suitable **hymn**
  - ¶ an **opening canticle**
- ¶ an **opening prayer**, if desired
  
- ¶ One of the following may replace the Preparation
  - ¶ a Form of Penitence
  - ¶ in the morning, The Acclamation of Christ at the Dawning of the Day
  - ¶ in the evening, The Blessing of Light or a Form of Penitence may be inserted into it

#### The Word of God

- ¶ **psalmody**
- ¶ a **canticle**, if desired
- ¶ **reading(s) from Holy Scripture**
- ¶ a **responsory**, if desired
- ¶ the **Gospel Canticle**

#### Prayers

- ¶ **intercessions** and, especially in the evening, **thanksgivings**
- ¶ the **Collect of the day**, or the prayer which is printed
- ¶ the **Lord's Prayer**

#### Conclusion

- ¶ a **blessing** or the Grace
- ¶ a concluding **response**, if desired
- ¶ the **Peace** may replace or follow the **Conclusion**

**There are a number of optional elements but to maintain the shape of the order these should always be included:**

**Opening response**  
**A prayer of thanksgiving or a suitable**  
**hymn or an opening canticle**  
**Psalmody**  
**Reading**  
**Gospel Canticle**  
**Intercessions**  
**Collect**  
**Lord's Prayer**  
**Conclusion**

If you are preparing a free style act of morning or evening worship and are wondering what to put in or what order to have things in, this is a good guide. You can pick and choose from among the texts and resources available to create the framework. You then add other elements such as music, more hymns or songs, more readings, or a presentation or activity to build up the content.

## Structure of Prayer During the Day

Praying During the Day is probably the least used of the fourfold Church of England pattern, mainly because many people are at work or occupied with the day's activities. But if it is possible to find a quiet space for ten minutes or so, a short midday office can be an oasis of refreshment in the midst of busyness. The following simple structure is used and could be combined with one's own daily pattern of scripture reading and study. Or Common Worship: Daily Prayer gives a suggested order of service for each day of the week.

### ¶ Preparation

Opening responses, or another introduction. A Form of Penitence may be used here or in the Prayers.

### ¶ Praise

Either the printed text or another acclamation, hymn or song

### ¶ The Word of God

A psalm, and one or more Bible readings

### ¶ Response

The printed text, or a less formal response

### ¶ Prayers

Intercession, a Collect and the Lord's Prayer

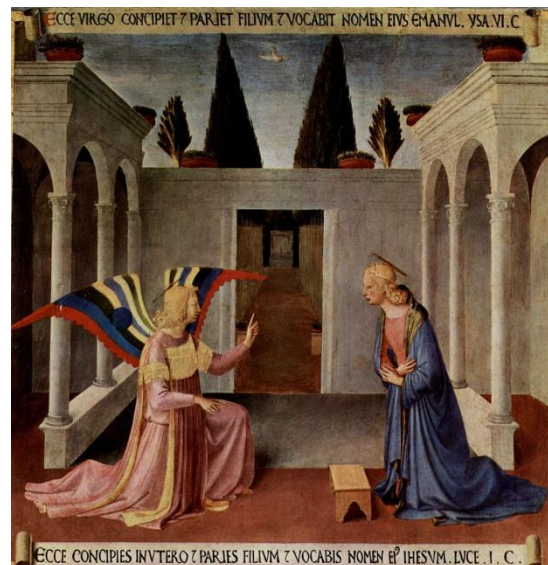
### ¶ The Conclusion

A closing prayer, dismissal, blessing, or other ending

## The Angelus

If you have stayed in a Roman Catholic monastery or convent or have Roman Catholic friends you may have come across this devotion which often takes place at noon as well as at other times of the day. The ringing of a bell invites everybody to stop whatever they are doing and share in a brief moment of prayer, remembering the annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26 – 38).

Three verses from Luke describing the incarnation are recited, alternating with the prayer 'Hail Mary': *Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*



Fra Angelico Annunciation (circa 1395–1455)

## Structure of Night Prayer

Night Prayer or Compline (from the Latin word 'completorium' meaning 'completion') remains very popular and for some people this is the office they are most familiar with. There is something very appealing about a time of quietness and reflection before we retire for the night, letting go of any burdens we may be carrying and putting ourselves right with God before we lay down to sleep. In a monastery, Night Prayer is always followed by silence which lasts until the community reassembles for worship the following morning. Common Worship: Daily Prayer contains the night office together with daily and seasonal variations.

### Preparation

The minister **asks a blessing** on the life of all God's holy people

Authorized **Prayers of Penitence** may be used

A **hymn** may be sung

### The Word of God

This includes

¶ **psalmody**

¶ a **short reading from Holy Scripture**

¶ a **responsory**, committing oneself into the hands of God

¶ the **Gospel Canticle: Nunc dimittis**

### Prayers

**Intercessions and thanksgivings** may be offered

**The Collect** is said

**The Lord's Prayer** may be said

### The Conclusion

The service concludes with

¶ a **calling on God for protection** through the coming night

¶ a simple **blessing**

To gain a flavour of the different daily offices you might like to take a look at some of the hymns specifically written for the different hours of the day.

Morning hymns might include 'Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go' or 'Morning has broken'. Evening hymns might include 'The day thou gavest, Lord, is over' or 'Glory to thee, my God, this night', sung to Tallis's Canon.

The night time hymn 'Phos Hilarion' is the earliest known Christian hymn still used today. It has been translated from the original Greek into many languages and there are two English versions of it which are very well known, 'Hail, Gladdening Light' by John Keble and 'O gladsome light' by Robert Bridges.



Copyright:Grisha Bruev/Shutterstock.com



Hail, gladdening Light, of His pure glory  
poured  
Who is th'immortal Father, heavenly,  
blest,  
Holiest of Holies – Jesus Christ our Lord!

Now we are come to the sun's hour of  
rest;  
The lights of evening round us shine;  
We hymn the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
divine!

Worthiest art thou at all times to be sung  
With undefiled tongue,  
Son of our God, giver of life, alone:  
Therefore in all the world thy glories, Lord,  
they own.

**John Keble**

O gladsome light, O grace  
Of God the Father's face,  
The eternal splendour wearing;  
Celestial, holy, blest,  
Our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
Joyful in thine appearing.

Now, ere day fadeth quite,  
We see the evening light,  
Our wonted hymn outpouring;  
Father of might unknown,  
Thee, his incarnate Son,  
And Holy Spirit adoring.

To thee of right belongs  
All praise of holy songs,  
O Son of God, Lifegiver;  
Thee, therefore, O Most High,  
The world doth glorify,  
And shall exalt forever.

**Robert Bridges**



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***Discussion:***

**Using your notes, share your impressions of listening to Choral Evensong on BBC Radio 3. Does this style of worship appeal to you? If so, why? What is there about it that feeds you spiritually? Or if not, why not? What did you feel was missing? Do you think it is important that the Church preserves this style of worship at least in some places? What if anything would be lost if it died out?**

## Individual patterns of daily prayer

For clergy there is an expectation that they will say the offices of morning and evening prayer every day. It is one of the promises they make when they are ordained. Some clergy do this alone at home. Some say their offices in church where they may be joined by other ministers and lay people. Might it be possible for you to join your incumbent/ other ministers in praying the office in church on some occasions? It can be a great comfort and encouragement to a busy minister to have fellow Christians to pray with.

*Seven whole days, not one in seven,  
I will praise thee;  
In my heart, though not in heaven,  
I can raise thee.  
Small it is, in this poor sort  
To enroll thee:  
E'en eternity's too short  
To extol thee.*

**'King of glory, King of peace'  
George Herbert, 1633**

As well as Daily Prayer in a printed book, Church House Publishing has produced a new, free Daily Prayer app to make it even easier to access Daily Prayer wherever you are. This can be downloaded as either an Apple or an Android app onto your mobile phone or tablet. The app gives Morning, Evening and Night Prayer for the day and for a range of past and future dates. You can choose between BCP (traditional) and Common Worship (contemporary) versions. Churches and individuals can also add a 'feed' to their website or blog so that visitors there can access the services. Could this be an encouragement to Christians in your community to share in the daily offices?

Apart from the formal offices of the Church of England there are many other patterns of prayer and scripture reading and many different resources available to help us remain faithful in daily worship. Some may be structured in a similar way to the offices we have been looking at. Some may be more free flowing and spontaneous. Whatever our choice, some kind of disciplined offering of daily prayer is important to sustain us in our discipleship.

### ***Discussion:***

**In pairs or threes share something about your own pattern of daily prayer. How has this changed over the years?**

**To close this session the group may like to say a brief office together, using either the traditional or the contemporary Common Worship order and perhaps with a suitable hymn. The course leader should bring along books or a printed sheet or ask someone else to do this. Those with mobile phones or tablets may like to follow the service on their devices**

## **Preparation for next session**

In our next session we will be thinking about how we 'break open' the word of God in the context of worship. How can we as worship leaders prepare ourselves to do this? A wealth of resources is available to help us get to know and love the bible better – far too many to mention here.

Please browse your bookshelves, visit your local Christian bookshop or go online and come to the next session armed with some great resources to share.

NOTES ...

**SESSION 6**  
**'BREAKING OPEN THE WORD IN WORSHIP'**



*In this session we will be exploring ...*

**Which reading?**

Using the lectionary

**Which bible?**

Comparing different translations

**Resources for scripture study**

Equipping yourself to equip others

**'Something other than a sermon'**

Creative ideas for breaking open the word in worship

*Please bring with you to the session ...*

Your course book or session material

A notepad and pen

A bible

The current Common Worship lectionary (paper or electronic copy)

Information about the resources for scripture study you have discovered

## Welcome to the session

*We take a few moments to greet one another and catch up on any news*

### 'Lord, thy word abideth'

This reflective hymn was written by Henry Williams Baker, a nineteenth century baronet, clergyman and prolific hymn writer who also prepared and compiled *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. It is often sung as a 'gradual' hymn in the Eucharist ie just before the gospel, or in the context of a Service of the Word.

*A member of the group reads the hymn aloud. Or if feeling tuneful the group might sing it*

Lord, thy Word abideth,  
and our footsteps guideth;  
who its truth believeth  
light and joy receiveth.

When our foes are near us,  
then thy Word doth cheer us,  
Word of consolation,  
message of salvation.

When the storms are o'er us,  
and dark clouds before us,  
then its light directeth,  
and our way protecteth.

Who can tell the pleasure,  
who recount the treasure,  
by thy Word imparted  
to the simple-hearted?

Word of mercy, giving  
succour to the living;  
word of life, supplying  
comfort to the dying!

O that we, discerning,  
its most holy learning,  
Lord, may love and fear thee,  
evermore be near thee!

## Prayer

*The course leader prays for the group and asks God's blessing on the session*

*We pray together*

**Almighty God,  
whose only Son has opened for us  
a new and living way into your presence:  
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## Which reading?

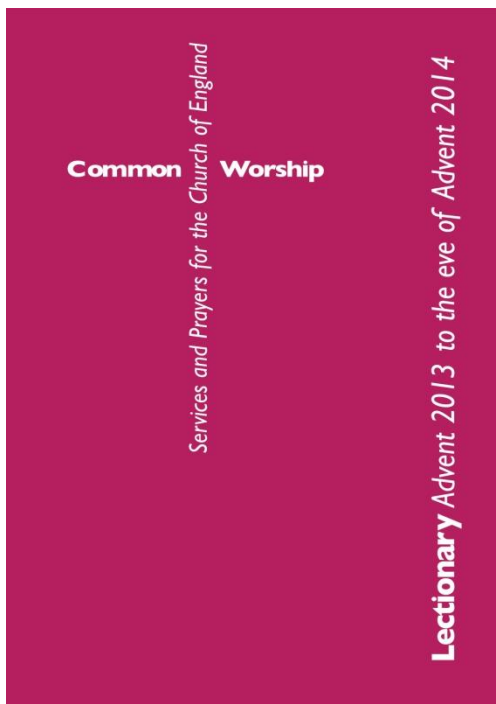
### Introducing the lectionary

The reading of scripture is at the heart of any act of worship. Additional elements of worship such as music, hymns, prayers and other activities are normally chosen to complement whatever texts of scripture are being read. Although some churches may choose their own worship themes and select texts of scripture to go with them, most Church of England churches will follow a set pattern of readings week by week.

A lectionary is a table of psalms and readings from the scriptures setting out which passages are to be read at which services throughout the year. The Church of England uses a version of the Revised Common Lectionary, authorised from 1994. The RCL was produced by a number of churches working collaboratively so the same readings are likely to be heard day by day and Sunday by Sunday in both Catholic and Protestant Churches in America, Canada, Australia and other parts of the world as well as in Great Britain. Many people value the sense of solidarity with other Christians that this gives and like the idea that on any given day the Church is proclaiming the gospel 'with one voice'.

Those involved in planning, preparing and leading worship will need access to the Church of England's Annual Common Worship Lectionary which is available in a range of formats:

- *As a printed booklet in both standard and large sizes*
- *As a digital download, as a spreadsheet or for Electronic Calendars*
- *As an app for mobile phone or tablet*



Booklet copies can be bought from Christian booksellers or ordered online. A hard copy which you can carry around with you may be the most practical option (remember not all churches have a mobile signal so you may find you cannot access information online at the crucial moment). Most churches will also keep a copy somewhere in the vestry – but don't rely on it!

Electronic versions can be accessed on the Church of England website:

**<http://www.chpublishing.co.uk/features/common-worship-lectionary>**

Full details of how to download are available there.

The Common Worship Lectionary App for iPad/iPhone can be downloaded from the Apple App store. It is free and includes a week's worth of content but a subscription is required to access readings after that date.

**Note to the unwary** – there is also a separate lectionary for the Book of Common Prayer. Many Church of England churches will use the Common Worship Lectionary even for BCP services but you may come across some which use the traditional BCP lectionary for some or all services. Set readings for BCP can be found online or you can buy a hard copy of the lectionary which contains both the Common Worship and BCP readings – but be careful not to get them mixed up! For the purposes of this session all information relates to the Common Worship Lectionary only.

## What's in the lectionary?

The lectionary gives the recommended scripture readings for every Sunday, plus Principal Feasts and Holy Days and Festivals, worked out from Advent to Advent. Three sets of readings are provided for each day.

The Principal Service readings are for use at the main service of the day whether this is a Eucharist or some other form of worship and may be used more than once (eg if there is an early and a mid morning celebration of the Eucharist). If the service is a Eucharist and only two readings are used one must be the Gospel.

The Second Service readings are intended for a second main service of the day. In many churches they are used for Evening Prayer. A gospel reading is always provided so that these readings can if necessary be used where the second main service is a Eucharist.

The Third Service readings are shorter and are used where a third set of psalms and readings is needed. They are most suitable for use at an office eg Morning or Evening Prayer but not for a Eucharist as a gospel reading is not always provided.

Each year the Principal Service readings focus on one of the three 'synoptic' gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke): Year A being the gospel of Matthew, Year B the gospel of Mark and Year C the gospel of Luke. This rolling programme began in 2000/2001 with Year C and from this can be calculated the gospel which will be used in any given year. The Gospel of John is read throughout Easter and is used for other liturgical seasons including Advent, Christmas, and Lent where appropriate.

Readings for weekdays are included in the lectionary with a set for Holy Communion and a set each for Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer to accompany Common Worship Daily Prayer. More detailed instructions about which readings to choose can be found in the notes at the beginning of the Common Worship Lectionary or online on the Church of England website.

### ***Exercise:***

**We spend some time familiarising with the structure and content of the lectionary and looking up the correct readings for different occasions until everyone feels confident**

*The painting on the front cover of this session is 'The Four Evangelists' by Pieter Claesz, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Flemish artist. It imagines Matthew, Mark, Luke and John at work together – a flight of fancy as the evangelists wrote their gospels at different times and in different places!*

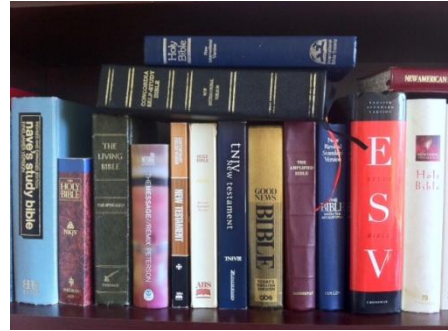
*Christian tradition has long connected the authors of the four gospels with the four 'living creatures' that surround God's throne, as described in Revelation 4:7. Matthew – man, Mark – lion, Luke – bull, John – eagle.*





## Which bible?

People sometimes have strong feelings about this. Many of us have a 'favourite' version of scripture and some traditions within the Church also prefer certain versions above others. Local churches may have preferences too – if a particular version of scripture has been on the lectern for a number of years that may be the one people are accustomed to hearing. So it is a good idea to consult about which bible is going to be read from in an act of worship, especially if you are suggesting a change to what has happened previously.



The House of Bishops has issued the following guidance on choosing a version of scripture for use in worship. It can also be found on the Church of England website at <http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/the-calendar/lect/scriptver.aspx>

### Versions of Scripture

#### A Note by the House of Bishops

1 While the Church of England authorises the Lectionary - what passages are to be read on which occasion - it does not authorize particular translations of the Bible. Nevertheless, among the criteria by which versions of Scripture are judged suitable for reading in church during the course of public worship are the following:

- Faithfulness in translating the Hebrew or Greek
- Resonance with the language of prayer used in the particular authorized service
- Suitability for reading aloud in a public gathering
- Use of familiar language in well-known quotations or figures of speech
- Familiarity to the listener
- Intelligibility to the listener
- Appropriateness to the linguistic register of the particular congregation

2 A distinction needs to be drawn between translation and paraphrase. Versions which are read in church during the course of public worship should be translations of the Bible, not paraphrases of it. In less formal contexts, paraphrases may be useful.

3 Versions of Scripture which are translations and appear to satisfy at least four of the criteria set out in paragraph 1 above include:

- The Authorized Version or King James Bible (AV), published in 1611, of which a Revised Version was published in 1881-5
- The Revised Standard Version (RSV), originally published in the USA in 1952 and based on the 1901 American Standard Version of the 1881 revision of the AV
- The New International Version (NIV), copyrighted 1973-1984 by the International Bible Society
- The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), published in 1985 - a revision of the Jerusalem Bible (JB), originally published in 1966, which was based on the Bible de Jérusalem (1956)

- The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), an inclusivized revision of the RSV, published in an anglicized version in 1989
- The Revised English Bible (REB), published in 1989 - a revision of the New English Bible (NEB), which was originally published between 1961 and 1970
- The English Standard Version (ESV), published in 2002 and based on the RSV, with priority given, in the area of gender language, to rendering literally what is in the original

4 Decisions about which version to use on which occasion are best made as locally as possible.

5 It should be noted that the NIV and the ESV do not include the Apocrypha, which is a necessary resource for Church of England lectionaries.

6 Some of the translations listed in paragraph 3 are 'inclusive' translations which avoid the use of masculine nouns and pronouns when reference is made to women as well as men. Where a masculine noun or pronoun is used in the original language, making an English text 'inclusive' necessarily involves a degree of departure from accurate translation. A conscious choice would have to be made between the two criteria of inclusivity and accuracy in respect of any of these versions.

**On behalf of the House  
+ DAVID EBOR  
9 October 2002**

### ***Exercise:***

**Take a well known short passage of scripture and read it aloud in two or three contrasting versions. The group leader might provide copies of the different versions for easy comparison. What do you notice? Are some versions more appropriate than others for certain kinds of services?**

*The word 'lectern' comes from the Latin 'lectus', past participle of 'legere', 'to read'. In many churches the bible is permanently kept on the lectern. Your church may have a heavy brass or wooden lectern or something more modern and portable. The identification of St John the Evangelist with the eagle is the reason why many church lecterns are in the form of an eagle. Some eagles gaze soulfully up to heaven. Others seem to look sternly down their beaks at the congregation – no doubt as an encouragement to pay attention to what is being read!*

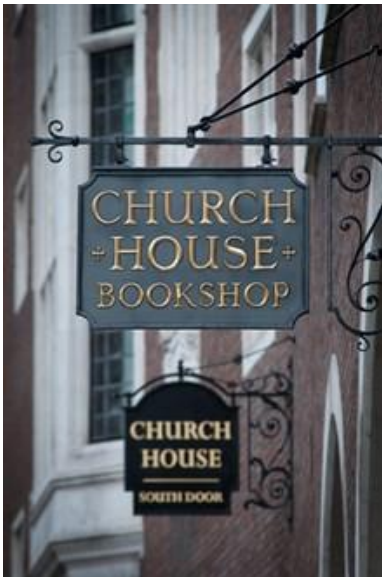


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## Resources for scripture study

A fantastic variety of resources is available to help us study the bible, from large erudite volumes to more popular shorter books. A commentary is a useful tool which will guide you through the text sometimes a line at a time. Some commentaries cover the whole bible, some focus on either the Old or the New Testament, some explore a single book in depth.

There are too many books to mention here but a good way to find out what's on offer is to visit your nearest theological library or Christian bookshop and browse the shelves. Some Christian libraries and bookshops offer discounts for ministers – no harm in asking!



Church House Bookshop at Church House, Westminster is an excellent place to while away some time if you happen to be in the area.

**Church House Bookshop**  
**31 Great Smith Street**  
**London**  
**SW1P 3BN**

**Tel: 0845 017 6965 (mail orders)**  
**Tel: 020 7799 4064 (general enquiries)**  
**Email: [bookshop@chbookshop.co.uk](mailto:bookshop@chbookshop.co.uk)**

You can also shop online

**[www.chbookshop.co.uk](http://www.chbookshop.co.uk)**

There are many online resources for bible study. Not all are equally reliable or helpful and some may be misleading or controversial in some way so take care which sites you choose to use.

Go to **[www.ntgateway.com](http://www.ntgateway.com)** to explore **The New Testament Gateway**, a comprehensive directory of academic internet resources on the New Testament.

**The Old Testament Gateway** at **[otgateway.com](http://otgateway.com)** is a separate site containing scholarly material on the Old Testament which you might find helpful.

For a lighter touch less academic approach try **[rejesus.co.uk](http://rejesus.co.uk)** where you will find all kinds of imaginative and interactive ways of engaging with scripture.

### ***Exercise:***

**Share the resources for scripture study that group members have discovered. Which ones might be particularly helpful to Lay Worship Leaders?**

## 'Something other than a sermon'

### Sharing the faith of the Church

The vocation of the Church is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. That is the reason it exists. A primary way in which it does this is by pointing people towards the scriptures and seeking to interpret and apply the stories, insights, examples and principles which they contain. As individual Christians we are all called to share our faith with others. But the Church also has a corporate 'ministry of proclamation' which it calls some people to exercise on its behalf.

In order to do this, a great deal of study and preparation is usually undertaken. An ordinand or candidate for licensed lay ministry will typically spend three years or longer studying the Old and New Testaments, Christian history, doctrine, ethics, comparative religion and the principles of liturgy and pastoral care as well as the art of actually preaching, before beginning public ministry.

Lay Worship Leaders are not called to exercise the Church's 'ministry of proclamation' and they are not trained as preachers. However nearly every service will include one or more scripture readings and the person leading worship will want to find ways of engaging the congregation with these. There are many imaginative and interactive ideas for 'breaking open the word in worship' which don't involve preaching a sermon. And guess what – a great many people actually prefer them!



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### Creative ideas for 'breaking open the word'

Thanks to all those who provided the following examples ... we're sure there are many more ...

#### Word based

A simple option is to choose another non scriptural reading which complements the scripture reading(s) but prompts reflection or adds a new layer of meaning. Readings from the spiritual classics, poems, lives of the saints, or extracts from the writings of contemporary Christians work well. Extracts from newspapers or magazines about matters of current political or social interest are a different kind of possibility. This could be followed by a time of discussion in pairs or small groups.

Prayer is a natural response to listening to and reflecting upon scripture. Why not create some space for members of the congregation to write their own prayers. These could be read aloud in the intercessions, pinned to a notice board or attached to a prayer tree. Or they could be collected at the offertory and placed on the altar. Provide slips of coloured paper and pens.

If your incumbent or another ministry colleague preaches particularly fine sermons you might consider reading his or her sermon of the day – make sure he or she gets it to you on time! Some high profile clergy such as the Archbishops make their sermons available online – over a period of time you could compare and contrast different styles and insights. Or take a look at **sermoncentral.com** a website which offers sermons by a range of regular contributors. Some clergy are rumoured to frequent this site!

## **Meditative**

If your church has a good sound system why not play a seasonal piece of music. This could be introduced with some background information about the piece and why it is relevant and could lead into a time of silence or prayer. If you have a choir or music group this could be a live musical offering including perhaps an opportunity for a soloist. There are many resources which explore the spiritual meaning of some of our favourite hymns.

The Holman Hunt picture 'The Scapegoat' which we looked at in Session 2 could aptly be used as a meditation during Lent or on Good Friday. For an Easter theme Tintoretto's Noli Me Tangere could be chosen. At Christmas time there are literally hundreds of classical or contemporary representations of the nativity including some which are quirky or unusual such as 'Census at Bethlehem' by Peter Bruegel the Elder. Many classical paintings are reproduced in postcard form – for a small cost you could give everyone a copy which they could take away afterwards and use as a bookmark.



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Don't forget the power of silence as an aid to meditation. Many Christians say they welcome a time of silence during worship but this doesn't happen often enough. For silent meditation to work well the surroundings need to be fairly quiet – no rampaging Sunday School right next door. Start with shorter periods and work up to longer ones as people become accustomed. To help people use the space fruitfully do indicate in advance how long the silence will be – 2 minutes, 5 minutes – then draw the silence to a close eg with a collect.

## **Activity based**

Drama is an enjoyable way of engaging with scripture especially in a multigenerational congregation. There are many books of dramatic readings and short sketches as well as more ambitious possibilities involving props and costumes – although you may want to save these for special occasions. Not all the people in your congregation are extraverts so best to ask people beforehand rather than pounce on them to participate without warning.

Craft work such as colouring or modelling is less appropriate for a short slot unless you have a separate space where things can be set up in advance and tidied away afterwards. Moving venue can have the disadvantage of disrupting the dynamic of worship – you may need to 'regather' people before the service continues. If your congregation loves to engage in this kind of way 'Messy Church' is worth looking into.

## **Technology based**

Not all churches have in house technology but for those that do this opens up fresh possibilities. Consider showing an extract from a film or documentary.

Younger people love their electronic devices (and so do some older people!) if you have an online connection you could also project a 'twitterstream' onto a screen so that people could read and respond to one another's comments – easier and more effective than trying to engage the whole congregation in a discussion.

### Interactive

Churches are full of interesting things. Each building has its own story to tell as well as telling the Christian story. Does your church have an unusual wall painting, stained glass window or other architectural feature? Newcomers to the church might like to hear more about the font, lectern and altar. You might invite the congregation to walk around inside or outside the church and explore the 'hidden message' of these things over a number of weeks.



Children love 'show and tell' and are always happy to bring something into church for others to see and talk about. In fact this can also work well with an adult congregation, for instance if someone has recently been on a pilgrimage and brought back something of interest. Pet services are an extreme form of 'show and tell' and thankfully only happen once a year!

In many churches people may not know one another as well as they think – for instance we may be surprised to learn about people's 'day jobs'. What about interviewing a member of the congregation about what they do during the week and hearing how they live out their discipleship as a carer, solicitor, teacher, scientist, hairdresser or whatever it may be? This can be spiritually enriching for a congregation as we learn to support one another in prayer.

Another way of getting to know fellow worshippers is to arrange a panel discussion with people from different walks of life. It may be helpful to ask the congregation to suggest questions in advance rather than have a free for all. A slightly different way of doing this is to facilitate a discussion among a group of people while the congregation listens. There are literally hundreds of different possibilities for you to explore ...

### ***Exercise:***

**Choose a scripture reading and on a side of A4 prepare an outline plan of how you might engage a congregation with it. Think about the occasion (what time of year?) and the type of congregation (adult, all age?) and include a list of any equipment or props you think you will need. You can complete this exercise after the session if you need more time**

## Preparation for next session

Next week we will be thinking about prayer and in particular about leading intercessions as an important element of worship or even a ministry in its own right. Maybe you already lead intercessions in worship but for some this will be new.

Take the opportunity to observe the person leading intercessions next time you worship. What are they doing – or not doing? What resources are they drawing on? What works well? What is less effective? You may like to have a conversation with them about their intercessions to see what more you can find out – using all tact and kindness of course! Or if your church has a group of people who regularly lead intercessions this could be a group discussion. Make some notes and add your own reflections.

NOTES ...



**SESSION 7**  
**'PRAYER AND INTERCESSION IN WORSHIP'**



*In this session we will be exploring ...*

**What is prayer?**

Some understandings ...

**The Lord's Prayer**

'As our Saviour has taught us'

**Intercessions in church**

What's going on?

**Preparing and leading intercessions**

Practical tips

*Please bring with you to the session ...*

Your course book or session material

A notepad and pen

A bible

Your notes on observing other intercessors in action

## Welcome to the session

*We take a few moments to greet one another and catch up on any news*

## 'Ask and it will be given to you'

The course leader or another member of the group reads the bible passage slowly and meditatively. You may like to look at the picture on the next page as you listen rather than following the text.

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial.'

And he said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him." And he answers from within, "Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything." I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

'So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

**Luke 11: 1 – 13**

*The picture on the previous page is 'Praying hands' a pen-and-ink drawing by the German printmaker, painter and theorist Albrecht Dürer, dated around 1508*



Brooklyn Museum - The Lord's Prayer (Le Pater Noster) - James Tissot

## Prayer

*The course leader prays for the group and asks God's blessing on the session*

*Then we pray together*

**Almighty God,  
whose only Son has opened for us  
a new and living way into your presence:  
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## What is prayer?

Prayer is a wide subject. A ten session course on prayer alone would barely scratch the surface. There are many opportunities to learn more about different aspects of prayer through the CMD programme which Lay Worship Leaders may want to explore.

But doing it is more important than learning about it – in fact prayer is something that is best learned about by doing. A trusted person such as a Spiritual Director or soul friend can help us reflect on our experiences and how we are growing in and through prayer.



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## Prayer in scripture

There are many examples of prayer in the bible. Our human understanding of prayer has certainly evolved over time from primitive to more sophisticated but the essence remains the same – in prayer we reach out to God and God responds to us.

Many early examples of prayer in the bible are expressed in symbolic actions rather than in words. As we saw in session 2, animal sacrifice was integral to the Jewish faith and is often described in the Old Testament. Gruesomely there is also evidence of human sacrifice.

Moses and the prophets seem to have been on particularly intimate terms with God and their prayers often sound like the kind of conversation which might take place between human beings. They even argue with God if they don't agree with his plan, often because they doubt their own capabilities. *'But Moses said to God, 'If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.''*

The book of Psalms is a book entirely composed of prayers, encompassing the full range of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. These are the prayers which Jesus himself would have learned to pray. As we saw in session 5 the psalms were intended for use in liturgical settings.

The gospels tell us that Jesus himself prayed continually and often went away to a quiet place alone or with his disciples to do so but in fact there are few examples of actual words that Jesus himself prays. The best known ones are those spoken in the Garden of Gethsemane and from the cross.

According to Acts 2:42 members of the early Church 'devoted themselves' to prayer and we read of many occasions on which the prayers of the believers were answered. The apostle Paul begins and ends all his letters with prayer. The very last words in the bible at the end of the book of Revelation are words of prayer. *'Amen, Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.'*

## Different ways of praying

Many people will say that they cannot remember a time when they didn't pray. It feels like a natural and instinctive activity. Others can remember being taught or encouraged to pray. We have all been formed in our prayer life to some extent – and understanding early influences can help us understand why we do what we do.



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- What is your earliest memory of prayer? What kind of experience was it for you?
- As a younger person did someone show or tell you how to pray – Sunday School teacher? family member? other? What do you remember about how and what you were taught? Thinking back was this helpful or unhelpful to you? In what way?
- When you were growing up, what was the attitude of other people around you to prayer and praying? Was it positive or negative? Can you think of specific things which people said or did which shaped your attitude to prayer?

It is often said that personality affects the way we like to pray. Do you know your Myers Briggs personality 'type'? If your type includes the letters **SJ** you may be drawn to an **Ignatian** style of prayer, which encourages us to use our imagination. If your type includes the letters **NF** you might naturally pray in an **Augustinian** way, tuning into intuitions and feelings. If your type includes the letters **SP** your style may be **Franciscan**, using the five senses as ways into prayer. Or if your type includes the letters **NT** your prayer style may be **Thomistic**, that is, more words based and logical.

The essence of prayer could be captured in two simple actions. First we call to mind who God is – we praise God for his attributes using words such as 'almighty', 'eternal', 'loving', 'merciful'. In this context we may also call to mind who we are – sinful creatures who fall short of God's plan for us and need to confess and be forgiven.

Then we call upon God to act – we may appeal to God's benevolence in general terms or we may mention specific situations and needs. Many prayers take this twofold form including the great prayers of the Church, such as the Eucharistic prayer. In a way, all we are doing in prayer is appealing to God to continue being true to God's own nature.

**'I AM  
WHO  
I AM'**

Prayer does not have to consist of words. Contemplative prayer is a means of stilling our thoughts so that we can experience God's presence more deeply and give God the opportunity to speak to us in the silence. This kind of 'waiting on God' is a particularly powerful form of prayer.

## Some understandings

You may be familiar with some of the following quotations, from people wise in the ways of prayer. Which ones 'ring true' for you?

**'Prayer is ... a little like children coming to their parents ... with the craziest requests at times'**

*Richard Foster*

**'Whether we like it or not, asking is the rule of the Kingdom'**

*C. H. Spurgeon*

**'Prayer requires that we stand in God's presence with open hands, naked and vulnerable, proclaiming to ourselves and to others that without God we can do nothing'**

*Henri Nouwen*

**'Pray the way you can, not the way you can't'**

*Dom Chapman*

**'Meditation is the tongue of the soul and the language of our spirit'**

*Jeremy Taylor*

**'The whole reason why we pray is summed up in the sight and vision of him to whom we pray ... the more the soul sees God, the more by his grace does it want him'**

*Julian of Norwich*

**'Prayer is the most natural thing in the world. It can also be the hardest. Because it is relationship it is about letting go and allowing someone else to be at the centre of your life. In so many ways the human being will recoil from this kind of loving. We like to be at the centre ourselves'**

*Stephen Cottrell*

**'The Lord Jesus Himself will teach you how you should pray. He is the creative Word which you may receive in the silence of your heart and the fruitful soil of your life'**

*Rule for a New Brother*

**'To be with God wondering, that is adoration. To be with God gratefully, that is thanksgiving. To be with God ashamed, that is contrition. To be with God with others on our heart, that is intercession. The secret is the quest of God's presence; 'Thy face Lord will I seek'**

*Michael Ramsay*

**'Nothing so stifles prayer as our prayerful efforts. So the first piece of practical advice is: don't try too hard'**

*Gerard Hughes*

**'It is painful to come before God just as we are in all our poverty and nakedness; and the nearer we get to God the more we are aware of it. It's the easiest and the hardest thing to do – just to remain there with all our deficiencies and hang ups, and not to pretend to be the good pious people we would like to be, but rather accepting the people we actually are'**

*Elizabeth Obbard*

**'Love to pray. Feel often during the day the need for prayer and take trouble to pray. If you want to pray better you must pray more'**

*Mother Teresa of Calcutta*

**'Children who see and hear their Mums and Dads speaking with and listening to their Heavenly Father learn more about prayer than any amount of formal teaching can ever give'**

*Jane Keiller*

**'Don't make your prayer life dependent on the whims of the moment; make it a regular, daily practice. God is always present, always loving, and he is waiting for you'**

*Michel Quoist*

**'Prayer is not an activity of the mind, for God is not in the head. It is an activity of the whole person, and God is in the wholeness'**

*Ken Leech*

**'Prayer is not an art to be mastered, but a way into an ever-deepening experience of the love of God through our lives'**

*Ralph Townsend*

**'It is the prayer of agony which saves the world'**

*St Mary of Jesus*

**'What cannot prayer do when the people of God have their hearts quickened, and raised to pray? Prayer can open heaven. Prayer can open the womb. Prayer can open the prison, and strike off fetters'**

*Richard Sibbes*

**'To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world'**

*Karl Barth*

**'God has instituted prayer so as to confer upon his creatures the dignity of being causes'**

*Blaise Pascal*

**'When the church becomes a house of prayer the people will come running'**

*Brother Roger of Taize*

***Exercise:***

**Can you write your own prayer definition in no more than a few lines? Share in twos or threes**



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## The Lord's Prayer

'For 2000 years people have cherished, prayed, proclaimed, translated, interpreted and embellished the Lord's Prayer. It has proved a living text for public and private use, endlessly rich for everyone in its meaning and power.'

*The Lord's Prayer, Gerald O'Collins, Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 2006*

Almost all services will include the Lord's Prayer at some point. Since this is such an important part of Christian worship it is worth taking time to find out a little more about it. A version of it from Luke's gospel was read aloud at the start of the session. But as you will have spotted, this version is not identical with the one we pray in Church. The words we know so well are actually to be found in Matthew's gospel, as part of the Sermon on the Mount.

'And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And do not bring us to the time of trial,  
but rescue us from the evil one.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'

*Matthew 6: 5 – 15*

The Lord's Prayer is not in Mark's gospel or John's gospel but Gerald O'Collins points out that those two gospels certainly embody the spirit of the Lord's Prayer and sometimes the letter. For instance in Mark's gospel he finds parallels to the language of the Lord's Prayer and seven of the petitions from it. John's gospel, he suggests, is a contemplative commentary on the other gospels. The themes of the Lord's Prayer are there, even if the actual text is not.



**Exercise:**

**Take a moment at this point to compare Luke's and Matthew's versions of the Lord's Prayer. What differences do you notice? Why might the two versions differ? Which do you prefer and why?**

Although Matthew's is the version we use in church even Matthew's text is not quite as we know it. To find out why, we need to look at the 'Didache', (pronounced 'Diddakay') a brief early Christian writing supposedly by the twelve apostles. Originally people thought it ought to be part of the bible but in the end it was left out as it is almost certainly of later date.

'But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week. Rather, fast on the fourth day and the Preparation (Friday). Do not pray like the hypocrites, but rather as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, like this:

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 (needful) bread, and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (or, evil); for yours is the power and the glory for ever.

Pray this three times each day. '

***Fasting and Prayer (the Lord's Prayer), Didache, Chapter 8***

What we see here is that from very early times Matthew's text was used but with the addition of a final line, 'for yours is the power and the glory for ever'. Later Christian teachers and scribes then added the word 'kingdom' before the words 'power' and 'glory' giving us the doxology we know today, 'for yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory'. 'Doxology' comes from the Greek word 'doxa' meaning glory and is the proper term for this way of ending a prayer or a hymn by giving glory to God. Last but not least the word 'Amen' was added to the end of the doxology.

Why though does Luke's gospel contain a different version from Matthew's? Luke's gospel was written later than Matthew's so there is a good chance that Luke would already have encountered Matthew's version before he wrote his own. There have been lots of theories. Did Jesus himself for instance provide both a longer and a shorter version on two separate occasions? No-one can prove he didn't! A more likely explanation is that Matthew's version and Luke's version are reflecting something about the worshipping communities from which each of them came. There are two variants that particularly suggest this.

Luke changes 'give us today' to 'give us each day'. We know that as the years went by the early church focussed less and less on the idea that the Lord would return any moment and more on the idea that discipleship was likely to be an ongoing challenge and this is borne out by the way Luke follows the Lord's Prayer with a whole passage on perseverance. If this is true then 'give us each day' would suggest a later variant.

Luke also changes the original language of 'forgive us our debts' (opheilemata) for the new language of 'forgive us our sins' (hamartias) using a different Greek word from Matthew's original. This was for the benefit of Greek readers who would not understand that in Aramaic 'debts' is a euphemism

for 'sins'. Interestingly the NRSV version reverts to the term 'debts' rather than 'trespasses' or its modern equivalent 'sins'.

Although Matthew's is the version we have inherited, the Lukan version in some ways helps us appreciate the Lord's Prayer more fully. In Luke the disciples have been watching Jesus pray. When he stops they ask him to help them to pray. They want to pray like him and with him. In Luke Jesus is responding directly to this request, and as it were making a gift of the Lord's Prayer to his followers. 'As our Saviour has taught us, so we pray' is an emphasis that does not appear in Matthew.

A word of caution here – although we very often call it 'the Lord's Prayer' this does not mean that Jesus prayed it himself in quite this form. For one thing we believe that Jesus was without sin and therefore cannot have prayed 'forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us'. We call it the Lord's Prayer because he taught it not because he prayed it. This is one reason why the title the 'Our Father' ('Paternoster' in Latin) is probably less misleading. But other aspects of the Lord's Prayer clearly do draw upon Jesus's own prayer relationship with his Father, especially in the use of the very first word Abba, a familiar term which was never used in Hebrew prayer but only by Jesus himself and which means, we think, something like 'beloved Father' or even 'Daddy'.

Two versions of the Lord's Prayer are currently authorised for use in the Church of England. Most of us will have grown up with the 'traditional' version, '*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name*' etc'. Then when the ASB was published we were presented with an alternative so called 'modern' version, '*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name*' etc. This did not meet with universal approval and some churches have never used it. But we should not make the mistake of thinking that the traditional version is closer to the original. Or as someone wrote in a letter to the Church Times: 'No thank you. Jesus' own words good enough for me!' If anything the modern version is truer to the original as Jesus would have spoken it in everyday Aramaic. By the time it was written down by Matthew and Luke it had already been translated once into Greek or in Matthew's case possibly into Hebrew. But if you want to hear it as it might originally have sounded in Aramaic there are versions online. Or for a truly contemporary version try this. Matthew Campbell, a history student at York University, won the 'Ship of Fools' text messaging competition with this version of the Lord's Prayer in text speak! **dad@hvn,ur spshl.we want wot u want&urth2b like hvn.giv us food&4giv r sins lyk we 4giv uvaz.don't test us!save us!bcos we kno ur boss,ur tuf&ur cool 4 evalok?**

'A building which stands to the east of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives, the Church of the Pater Noster (Our Father), vividly attests the universal devotion to the Lord's Prayer. The Emperor Constantine, soon after he gave religious freedom to Christians in 313, began a building programme in Palestine focussed around three caves: the cave of Jesus's birth in Bethlehem, the tomb cut out of rock near Golgotha, and a cave on the Mount of Olives which tradition linked with Jesus's teaching and ascension. Over this cave a church was built under the direction of Constantine's mother, St Helena; a raised sanctuary covered the cave. Persians destroyed this church in 614; five centuries later the Crusaders erected an oratory in the ruins. By that time the cave and the site had become exclusively associated with the teaching of Jesus and, in particular, with his teaching the 'Our Father'. After the foundations of Helena's church were uncovered in the early twentieth century, the present Church of the Pater Noster was built on the same site. Tiled panels in the church and the adjacent cloister were decorated with the Lord's Prayer in 62 languages. Up to the year 2000, other versions of the Lord's Prayer were added and one can now read the prayer in at least one hundred versions. Like the story of his birth, death and resurrection, the prayer Jesus shared with his disciples has gone out to all nations and cultures.'

*The Lord's Prayer, Gerald O'Collins, Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 2006*

## Intercessions in church

### What is intercessory prayer?

#### The mystery of prayer

'Intercession is not magic. When we pray we are not asking God to cast a spell. But neither is the whole of life pre-programmed. Things can change for the better or for the worse. God has made us free. Free to accept his will, free to reject it. We have control over our lives. We are not puppets being controlled or manipulated by God. We can influence events. Intercession is not a technique for changing God's mind, but it is a releasing of power as we place ourselves in a relationship of co-operation with God. When we pray we are in communion with God, we seek his will and the channels of communication are open. We are available to God and he will work through us.

There is no real distinction then between prayer and action. Prayer is action, because God's energy is released into a situation. Prayer leads to action because we cannot with integrity pray for something which we are not also prepared to do something about.

Many Christians fail in this respect. We pray for the suffering of the world, but most of us will spend more money each week on newspapers to read about that suffering than we will give in charity to alleviate it. But to pray 'your kingdom come, your will be done' commits us to the values of God, and should bring us openly to challenge so many of the ingrained habits of our culture which are far removed from the gospel.

By all means let us pray for family and friends and our own needs, but let us not be trivial in our prayer. Always be seeking the mind of God: praying for the people and causes which are closest to God's heart, and then let that prayer make a difference in the life we lead.

We are back with Jesus in Gethsemane. We would rather this cup was taken away. Prayer takes us into dangerous places. It commits us to act. When we ask, we are asking that God's will be done in our lives. When we search, we are searching out God's way of love and justice. The door on which we knock is the door to the kingdom of heaven.'

*Praying through life: how to pray in the home, at work and in the family, Stephen Cottrell, Church House Publishing, 2003*





## Preparing and leading intercessions

### Preparation

- Prepare in good time. If another person is helping to lead the intercessions liaise early. Nervous intercessors or younger members of the congregation may like to have the words well in advance so that they can practise
- Decide on the style to adopt – how formal or informal should you be?
- Decide what to pray for. You may want to pick up themes from the season of the year or from the set bible readings or it might be a good idea to speak to the person who is preaching to find out what they are going to say
- Check the Anglican and Diocesan cycle of prayer and the local prayer diary or pew sheet
- Check the news. What things are going on locally or nationally that are likely to be in people's thoughts? When praying about emotive subjects such as war, the latest political scandal or a falling out in the community avoid expressing a personal opinion
- If you are aware of individual needs check that people are happy to be prayed for publicly and how much detail to include. Make sure you verify your facts, especially names and how to pronounce them. Be prepared for people to give you prayer requests just before the service – it can be helpful to have a pen with you to write things down
- Ring the changes by using a range of resources. Different forms of intercession and prayers for various occasions can be found in Common Worship as well as a wealth of material elsewhere
- Unless you are experienced it is usually better to write down your intercessions, either in note form or in full. A smaller A5 sheet of paper is easier to manage and less inclined to rustle into the microphone than an A4 sheet
- Remember – less is more. It's not possible to include everything and God knows our needs before we ask. Perhaps focus on different things week by week. Avoid unnecessary detail – we don't need to know the time and place of the PCC meeting or particulars of Mr Smith's hernia operation!

### Beginning

- Give yourself time to get to the lectern or place from which you are leading the prayers so that you are ready to start
- Explain to the congregation if there is anything they need to do eg turn to the service sheet or a particular page in the book, keep times of silence, or join in at a particular point. Keep it simple – or people will spend all their time worrying about what comes next instead of actually praying
- If there is a response to be used, teach it to the congregation before you begin. For instance, you say: 'To the bidding 'Lord, in your mercy' the response is 'Hear our prayer'. You then repeat the response with the congregation. It usually gives the congregation confidence if the intercessor leads the response each time. A sung response can also work well and if using something new this could be taught before the service
- Keep a quiet moment before launching in, to signal a change of gear from whatever has gone before. This gives people the opportunity to get comfortable and begin to focus
- Your first words should be an invitation to pray. 'Let us pray' is short and sweet or it may be helpful to add a little more information. To whom are we addressing our prayer? To God, of course, but are we addressing God as Father, Son or Holy Spirit? Jesus invited his disciples to make their petitions in his name. St Paul urges us to pray in the power of the Spirit. A traditional way to begin the intercessions is to say 'In the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Father'

### Content and delivery

- A simple and familiar way of organising the intercessions is to pray in turn for the Church, the world, the local community, the sick and suffering, and the departed but this pattern does not need to be followed on every occasion
- Just as it is important to remember *who we are praying to*, we also need to keep in mind *whose voice is doing the praying*. Is the intercessor addressing God directly eg 'Heavenly Father, we pray for all prisoners and captives etc'? In this case the congregation should respond 'Amen' at the end. Or, is the intercessor inviting or 'bidding' the congregation to do the praying themselves eg 'Let us pray to our Heavenly Father for all prisoners and captives etc'? In this case a time of silence should follow to allow the congregation to actually do that ending with a suitable response. It is important to stick to the same 'voice' throughout
- It is easy to speed up too much when leading intercessions, especially if you are a bit nervous. Aim for a slower and more reflective pace than eg reading the bible reading. Don't be afraid of silence

### Ending

- At the end it is good to gather the prayers together in some way rather than signing off with just a brisk 'Amen'. Common Worship provides a final response ('Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen**')
- If not used elsewhere in the service the Collect for the day or the Lord's Prayer can be used or there are many other possibilities
- However you do this, all should join in with the final 'Amen'. The word 'Amen' comes from the Greek, meaning 'so be it'. In this way the congregation 'owns' the intercessions and signifies that this is the prayer of us all

### Gender neutral language

In general these days we use 'gender neutral' language in most contexts. Most people would not say eg 'all men' when they meant 'all people'. Some people would go further and say eg 'humankind' instead of 'mankind' or 'chair' instead of 'chairman'. They would see this as an important courtesy but to others it is 'political correctness gone mad'. A still thornier issue is the language we use to address God. The language of 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' is deeply ingrained although scripture and tradition both teach that God does not really have human attributes such as gender. In fact the bible contains many other titles for God which are not gender specific and even some which are specifically feminine but they are far less frequently used. We also know that some people have had life experiences which make them very wary of male dominated and authoritarian language and can even be an obstacle to worship and this is something for the worship leader to be alert to. Be prepared for people to react to your choice of language or even challenge you about it.

### **Exercise:**

**In twos or threes look up the readings for the coming Sunday and begin to draft some intercessions. If you are not already leading intercessions in your church this is a good time to ask your incumbent if an opportunity can be created for you to try out your skills. Don't forget to ask others to give you some feedback**

## **Preparation for the next session**

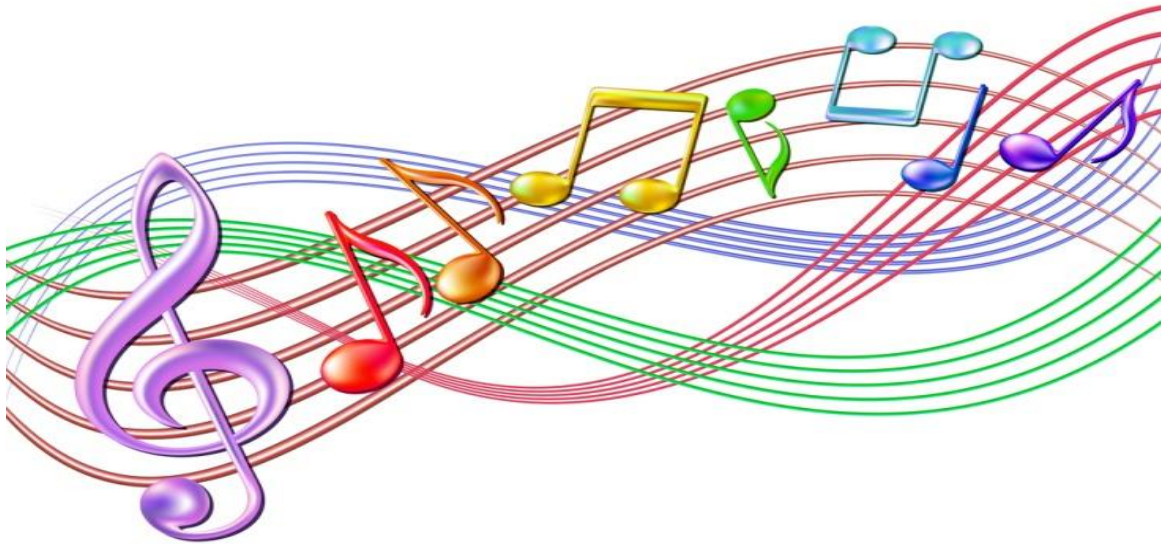
In our next session we will be thinking about 'The Role of Music in Worship'. In preparation for the session please read 'Stories of the four churches' from the session material.

On a side of A4 do a brief audit of the church or churches where you worship. What resources are already available for including music in worship and what are the challenges? This may be a good opportunity to talk to eg the organist, members of the choir or music group, and find out what THEY think! If you are looking at a number of churches you may need to spread over onto a second page.

NOTES ...



## SESSION 8 'INCLUDING MUSIC IN WORSHIP'



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*In this session we will be exploring ...*

**Musical preferences – a very personal thing!**

Why do we like what we like?

**Stories from the four churches**

Every church is unique

**Understanding the place of music in worship**

Why, how, where, what, when?

**Making the most of music in worship**

Including improvising where musical resources are few

*Please bring with you to the session ...*

Your course book or session material

A notepad and pen

A bible

Your audit of musical resources available in your church or churches

## Welcome to the session

We take a few moments to greet one another and catch up on any news

## 'How Great Thou Art'

In 2013 Songs of Praise conducted a nationwide survey. Tens of thousands of people voted for their favourite hymn. From a list of one hundred hymns, 'How great thou art' was chosen as the top favourite. The words are based on a Swedish poem written by Carl Boberg and the melody is a Swedish folk song. It was translated into English by British missionary Stuart K. Hine, who also added two original verses of his own composition. It first became popular during the Billy Graham crusades.



*The Songs of Praise Big Sing: Michael Ball and Russell Watson perform at The Royal Albert Hall*

Go online to [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006ttc5/clips](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006ttc5/clips) to listen to a clip of Russell Watson singing the winning number. Or there are many other clips of famous performers both male and female singing 'How great thou art' including Aled Jones, Dolly Parton and of course Elvis Presley. There's even a karaoke version and below are the words. You know what to do!

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder,  
Consider all the works thy hands have made;  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.  
*Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art, How great Thou art.  
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art, How great Thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander,  
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.  
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur  
And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze. *Refrain*

And when I think, that God, His Son not sparing,  
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;  
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
He bled and died to take away my sin. *Refrain*

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation,  
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart.  
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration,  
And then proclaim: My God, how great thou art! *Refrain*

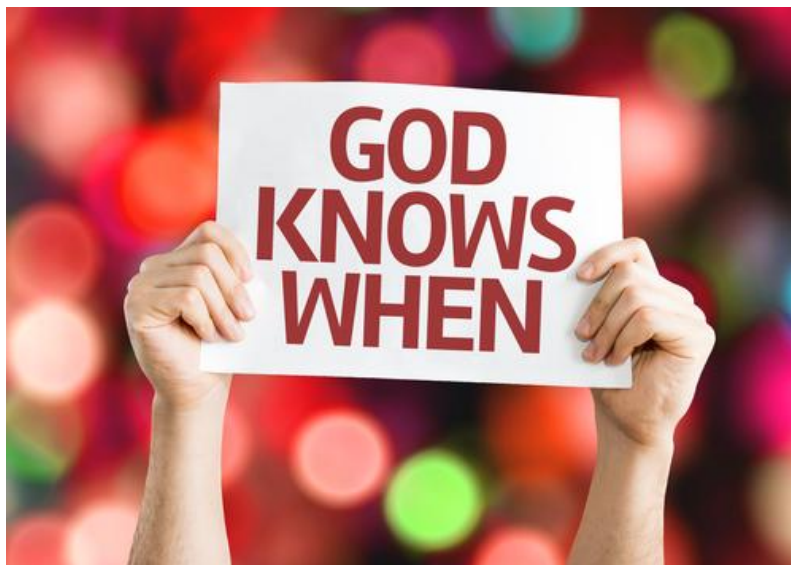
## Prayer

*The course leader prays for the group and asks God's blessing on the session*

*Then we pray together*

**Almighty God,  
whose only Son has opened for us  
a new and living way into your presence:  
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

*Timing is crucial in music ...*



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## Musical preferences – a very personal thing

What is music? Wikipedia defines it as ‘an art form whose medium is sound and silence. Its common elements are pitch (which governs melody and harmony), rhythm (and its associated concepts tempo, metre, and articulation), dynamics, and the sonic qualities of timbre and texture’. The word derives from the Greek ‘mousike’ – ‘art of the Muses’. Music has existed in all human cultures, so far as we know.

How do human beings experience music? Psychologists tell us that the brain responds to music in a similar way to language. Music ‘speaks’ to us and draws an emotional response from us. Major tones are associated with happiness, minor tones with sadness. Smooth rhythms and melodies are agreeable and relaxing while jagged rhythms and disharmonies are agitating and upsetting. Music is connected with memories both pleasant and unpleasant – a familiar lullaby will rock a baby to sleep while a nostalgic song or tune can bring tears to our eyes. So it is not surprising that music evokes strong feelings in us.



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Add to that religious associations and it is easy to see why people will often disagree quite fiercely about which music should be used in the context of worship. If we come from a church where choral evensong is cherished we may find it hard to worship to the accompaniment of songs and choruses or vice versa. Our musical preference may become not just a matter of taste but a matter of belonging and identity. The risk is that music turns into a cause of disunity among us.

‘Because the Christian community is a single body made up of young and old, progressive and traditional, our liturgy should embrace as many musical traditions as possible, so that we may learn from one another every time the assembly meets to worship. Under no circumstances should the community submit to dividing itself on the basis of a polarisation of musical tradition, formalised in mutually exclusive meetings of the assembly.’

***Re – Pitching the Tent: reordering the church building for worship and mission***  
***Richard Giles, Canterbury Press Norwich, 1999***



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As worship leaders we will obviously have our own preferences but perhaps we also have a responsibility to set an example of tolerance and openness to diversity and change. It is helpful if we have a good understanding of the place of music in worship including why, how and where to use it and how to choose and teach it.

'In Colossians 3.16 Paul says '... as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.' Notice that it's 'as' not 'if'; it's 'and' not 'or'! In Paul's mind there is clearly an expectation of variety of musical style and content in worship. Thus there is a biblical mandate for this — so how does each category deepen and enrich our worship?'

*Royal School of Church Music*

***Discussion:***

**What is your favourite hymn or worship song and why do you like it? Do you think some hymns/ worship songs are 'better' than others or is it purely a matter of personal taste?**

***If you go to the [BBC Songs of Praise website](#) you can find out where your favourite hymn appears in the UK's Top 100!***



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## Stories from the four churches...

**St Ann's** has a music planning group which consists of the organist and representative members of the choir, the music group, the worship group, and the clergy. They meet regularly to look at themes for services, special occasions etc, to plan the music three months in advance. Representatives of this group go to youth events and to diocesan music events so that they keep abreast of new music resources. A training day was recently held in the parish when a tutor from the RSCM came to introduce them to some new music for the *Common Worship* services, and new ways of singing psalms, as they felt that their worship was in danger of being stuck in a rut musically. The organist and a member of the congregation who is a music teacher are working together to write some music which will suit their congregation and musical resources. The choir and music group have practised a new song, and some of the congregation have learnt it in their home groups. Today the music group is teaching the new song before the service starts, so that it is familiar before it is sung in the service later.

**St Bartholomew's** organist is very willing and enthusiastic, but only has limited time, as she also plays for the Methodist church down the road. She chooses the music for two Sundays a month, using the RSCM's guide, *Sunday by Sunday*. The music group (two or three adults and a group of enthusiastic children) have been playing simple music together for a while. Because of their limited resources, they have been accompanying songs in the usual 'hymn slots' in the services, but have also been experimenting with using music in other ways. They have used Taizé chants as responses to the prayers. These chants work well as the music can be adapted to the number and skill of the instrumentalists available. Today they are playing a piece after the readings, when the congregation can have space to reflect on what they have heard. The music is simple enough for the children to join in, yet the skills of the adult musicians are also used in playing and singing the harmonies. When the music group learn new songs, they are very keen to share them with the congregation. They have made a few mistakes along the way by using too much new material without giving people a chance to learn it, but, by and large, the congregation are pleased at the enthusiasm and commitment of the music group, and are happy to learn new music alongside using the traditional hymns which they know.

**St Christopher's** have an organ, but no one who can play it. Their large robed choir is now reduced in numbers and its members are all growing old; several can no longer get to church regularly. There are no other musicians in the congregation, so the church decided to send one of their younger members, who can sing, to have guitar lessons. He is getting more proficient at basic chords and will soon be able to lead and accompany some simple songs for the congregation to sing. Meanwhile, as they felt that using music adds something special to a service, the congregation have been trying unaccompanied singing. Today the songs are 'The Lord's my shepherd' and 'Amazing grace', which people feel they know well enough to sing confidently. They find singing hymns with a number of long verses difficult to sustain, so they are using music which is simple and short. The response to the prayers today is a sung one from Iona, 'Through our lives and by our prayers, your kingdom come'.

The organist at **St Dodo's** chooses all the music – without consultation with anyone. He tries to fit in with the theme or season, using the index in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. He also directs the choir, who are a group of enthusiastic singers, many of whom don't read music. They lead the congregational singing and persevere with Anglican chant, but don't manage many anthems. Sometimes they're tempted to try pieces they hear on CDs made by their cathedral choir – like Schubert's Mass in G. When they tried part of it, it proved far too difficult for them and they faltered

and then completely stopped halfway through. The youth group would like to sing more up-to-date music, so for today's all-age service, the organist has agreed to play 'Sing Hosanna' and 'Shine, Jesus, Shine'. The vicar announces the number of the song, and reads out the first line, but his words are drowned out as the organist, keen to get the modern songs over, starts to play. There is a retired schoolteacher who has offered to involve some of the children who play recorders, and she has taught them to play a song from the Iona community, 'Will you come and follow me'. They haven't had much time to practise, and haven't checked how many verses there are. When they stop playing, the vicar says, 'There's another verse yet,' and there is a long pause while they all get ready to play again.



Saint Cecilia was a 2nd century Roman martyr about whom little is definitely known. Legend has it that as the musicians played at her wedding she 'sang in her heart to the Lord'. After being struck three times on the neck with a sword she lived for three days and asked the Pope to convert her home into a church. A number of English churches are dedicated to St Cecilia. She is the patron saint of music and musicians and her feast day is on 22 November. This oil painting by the Pre Raphaelite artist John William Waterhouse (1849 – 1917) is in the Legion of Honor, San Francisco

***Discussion:***

**What's the 'story' of your church or churches? What resources are already available for using music in worship – and what are the challenges? Draw on your audit of musical resources available in your church or churches**

## Understanding the place of music in worship

### Why use music in worship?

- \* To make the text special, 'different' from everyday speech
- \* It is corporate, something we can all join in with, and encourages participation
- \* It is memorable, and helps us to remember the words
- \* It expresses feelings and emotions in a deeper way than words alone

### How to use music in worship

#### \* To 'break up' a section of a service or a whole service

It may be useful as a response after a period of listening, or to allow a change of posture after a period of sitting or kneeling

#### \* To complement action

It is often used to 'cover up' an action, e.g. taking the collection, but is better used in its own right or complementing an action, e.g. singing a meditative prayer while giving people space to light candles or use some other symbolic action

#### \* To heighten our awareness.

Music makes us more aware of shape. Its use can make sound and silence more meaningful, and can give shape to the time we spend in prayer and praise

### Where to use music in worship

\* **Gathering.** This is not just music for the entry of the ministers, but music which will help the people of God to gather for worship. Thought needs to be given to the exact position for the music in the opening section of the service

\* **Praise.** The obvious places are the Gloria, Gospel Acclamation and Eucharistic Prayer in a communion service, but praise as a response to God may come at various points and be expressed in different styles of music

\* **Response, e.g. after the readings and the sermon.** How do we use psalms as a response to the readings, and is there a balance of word and song in that part of the liturgy? Music does not always have to have words in order for us to use it to respond to God – just as words do not always need to have a musical setting

\* **Proclamation of the Gospel.** Do sung Gospel Acclamations heighten the expectation of listening to God's word? If they do, should we use music in a similar way around other readings from Scripture, or the sermon?

\* **Affirming our belief.** One of the authorized Affirmations of Faith is a hymn. Are there other ways in which we could affirm in song the underlying principles of our belief?

\* **Prayer.** Often sung responses are used. What other music would enable us to deepen our collective prayer?

\* **Offering.** We offer ourselves and our gifts to God. How do we express the joy of our offering in song?

\* **Contemplation.** There should be space for both silence and reflection in our worship. What kinds of music can contribute to that contemplation? Or is this a time for the music of silence?

\* **Sending.** We are sent out to the mission of the Church in the world. What kind of music enables and strengthens us for this task?



## Questions to ask when choosing music

- \* How does this fit into the overall theme of the service, or the readings?
- \* How does it fit into the shape of the service, e.g. is it suitable for the gathering, or the offertory, or a prayerful response?
- \* How does the music fit with the overall style of the service, e.g. is it an upbeat family service or a meditative Evening Prayer?
- \* Is the music well known to the congregation, or does it need to be introduced to them first?
- \* What resources do we have? What is achievable by our musicians and congregation?

## Teaching the congregation new music

- \* Be positive: 'We are going to learn a song which fits with today's theme ...', not 'I know you don't like learning new music but...'
- \* Know the music well enough to sing it in the bath yourself
- \* Pitch the music at a sensible level to suit everyone - if possible, get somebody to give you a note first
- \* If at all possible, use your voice to teach the melody – or at least, an instrument which plays the melody line, not full harmony
- \* It may help to sing the whole of a verse to the congregation, so that they get the gist
- \* Then learn the music line by line, unaccompanied. You sing a line, and let them sing it straight back to you. Warn them of any tricky bits, or point out where the tune repeats. If they make a mistake, put it right straight away. But always be encouraging
- \* Using your hand to show where the notes go up and down can be a helpful guide – both when singing each line to demonstrate, and when encouraging the congregation to sing it back
- \* Think about when you're going to teach the new song. Don't do it immediately before it's sung in the service – it breaks the flow of the worship. You could teach it before the service. Ideally, it could be taught the week beforehand, and then rehearsed briefly before the service in the week it is to be sung. If your church has a choir or music group, they can sing the song one week (if it is appropriate to the service), to help people to become more familiar with it

*'Believe in the voice God has given you. It is the voice of an apprentice angel. Believe in the voices God has given other people.'*

*John Bell, Iona Community, in Heaven Shall not Wait*

### **Exercise:**

**Based on the season, theme and set readings for the coming Sunday, what musical items might it be appropriate to include at different points in the worship and why? Or if you already know what has been chosen, share why you think these choices are appropriate or not. If the group is large you may want to do this in pairs or threes**

## Making the most of music in worship

### Three principles

When choosing music for worship it may be helpful to bear three principles in mind: is it liturgically proper, is it pastorally appropriate and is it musically good?

#### **Liturgically proper:**

In worship, music should serve the liturgy not the other way around. So even if the choir or the music group is longing to perform their latest piece we still have to ask whether it is suitable in this particular place on this particular occasion. Understanding what the liturgy is trying to do helps us to understand how music can contribute to and heighten the worshipping experience.

#### **Pastorally appropriate:**

The purpose of worship is to enable the congregation to draw closer to God. Depending on the cultural and sociological make up of a congregation some musical choices may resonate better than others. Music that does not 'connect' with the worshippers is unlikely to be helpful however good it may be in itself. On the other hand this should not become an excuse for never trying anything new.

#### **Musically good:**

It is easy to confuse style and quality especially if we have strong preferences about the kind of music we like. Directors of music, choir leaders and organists are no more immune from this than the rest of us! Whatever the style of the music it should be performed reverently and to a good standard so choosing music that is within the reach of those who are performing it and of the congregation as a whole is important.

### Working in partnership with musicians, organists and choirs

Good relationships between ministers and musicians are worth working at. Problems may occur where people have different understandings and expectations. For instance a minister may regard everyone as a worshipper while some musicians and singers see themselves as performers who are happy to play or sing in church even though they don't have a personal faith.



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Difficulties may also arise if the minister assumes everyone is an amateur who is willing and able to offer their gifts free of charge. Some musicians and singers offer their services on a professional basis. They may be employees of this or another church. Or they may be available for hire in return for a fee. Make sure you know who your musicians and singers are and on what basis they are participating.

Canon law contains guidance for ministers and musicians working together. Final decisions regarding music rest with the incumbent in consultation with the PCC but there is a clear expectation that s/he will consult with those responsible for music in worship. If in doubt consult your incumbent or in a vacancy the Rural Dean and/ or the Archdeacon will be able to help.

## Canon B 20 Of the musicians and music of the Church

1. In all churches and chapels, other than in cathedral or collegiate churches or chapels where the matter is governed by or dependent upon the statutes or customs of the same, the functions of appointing any organist, choirmaster (by whatever name called) or director of music, and of terminating the appointment of any organist, choirmaster or director of music, shall be exercisable by the minister with the agreement of the parochial church council, except that if the archdeacon of the archdeaconry in which the parish is situated, in the case of termination of an appointment, considers that the circumstances are such that the requirement as to the agreement of the parochial church council should be dispensed with, the archdeacon may direct accordingly. Where the minister is also the archdeacon of the archdeaconry concerned, the function of the archdeacon under this paragraph shall be exercisable by the bishop of the diocese.

2. Where there is an organist, choirmaster or director of music the minister shall pay due heed to his advice and assistance in the choosing of chants, hymns, anthems, and other settings, and in the ordering of the music of the church; but at all times the final responsibility and decision in these matters rests with the minister.

3. It is the duty of the minister to ensure that only such chants, hymns, anthems, and other settings are chosen as are appropriate, both the words and the music, to the solemn act of worship and prayer in the House of God as well as to the congregation assembled for that purpose; and to banish all irreverence in the practice and in the performance of the same.

## Grappling with terminology

Music has a language all of its own. What's the difference between a psalm, canticle, motet, anthem, hymn or song? Your church may not use this language but you never know, it could come in useful ...

**Psalm:** for more about psalms look back at session 5 on 'The Daily Office'.

**Canticle:** from the Latin canticum, a diminutive of canticum ('song'). Some canticles are from the bible eg the Magnificat (Luke 1: 46 – 55), the Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2: 29 – 32) and the Benedicite (Daniel 3:57 – 88 in the Apocrypha). Some psalms are also used as canticles eg the Venite (Psalm 95); Jubilate Deo (Psalm 100) and Cantate Domino (Psalm 98). There are also non biblical canticles eg the Te Deum is traditionally ascribed to Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine.

**Motet:** a musical piece in several parts with words sung by a choir, often in Latin, often unaccompanied.

**Anthem:** similar but often in the vernacular, often accompanied.



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RSCM offers the following definition of the difference between a hymn and a song.

**Hymns usually:**

- 1) have an unchanging set structure; they are divided into verses of equal length, sometimes with a refrain.
- 2) have a regular metre and rhyming scheme, and are thus generally easy for a congregation to pick up quickly and remember.
- 3) are rhythmically straightforward — the melody is the principal musical element.
- 4) have a definite playover at the start and a definite end.
- 5) tell us truths about God — often they are about God rather than addressed to God, though there are many examples of hymns addressed directly to God. We remember what we sing is a saying that contains much truth, as has often been said: ‘Show me your songs, and I will tell you your theology.’ So a key purpose of hymns is as a teaching aid.
- 6) work well with just organ or piano accompaniment (or a cappella).
- 7) have a notated arrangement that is followed precisely by choir and accompanist.
- 8) are harmonized with a four-part choir in mind.
- 9) are pitched a bit too high for the average congregation!

**Songs usually:**

- 1) have a flexible verse, chorus, and bridge structure (an extra short section to add variety and emphasis on a key theme in the song).
- 2) have an irregular metre, and sometimes no rhyming scheme.
- 3) are rhythmically more complex, including syncopation or following natural speech rhythms. Songs are often rhythm driven rather than melody driven.
- 4) do not have a set beginning and end, leaving this up to the musicians.
- 5) are addressed to God, as a heart response, rather than about God, so not designed principally as a teaching aid, though will still contain key biblical truths.
- 6) are designed to be led by guitar and for full effect need rhythm instruments such as drums and bass guitar.
- 7) have a piano part as a guide, but in practice are mostly improvised or embellished by the musicians.
- 8) are designed to be sung by a lead singer with backing vocalists.
- 9) are set a bit too high for the average congregation! (At last, something hymns and songs have in common!)

**Copyright: Roger Peach**

### **Favourite hymn books**

Unlike some other Churches and denominations the Church of England does not have an ‘official’ hymn book. Widely used are Hymns Ancient and Modern, the English Hymnal, the New English Hymnal, New English Praise, 100 Hymns for Today, Songs of Praise, Mission Praise, Anglican Hymns Old and New and a number of others.

Buying a set of hymn books is an expensive commitment and requires careful thought and consultation. Increasingly some churches are doing without hymn books and using overhead projection facilities instead. This has the advantage of flexibility but see the section on copyright below!

If you are taking a service in a different church and have set your heart on a certain hymn it is wise to check that their hymn book contains it or you may wish to print copies.

## Introducing variety

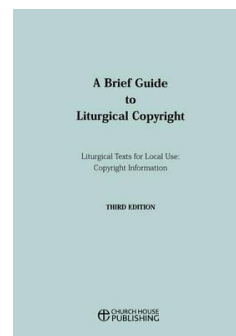
Worship can grow dull when a congregation only ever sings a limited number of well known psalms and hymns. An easy way to ring the changes is to try a different tune or setting.

Psalms can be sung in various ways. The traditional way is to chant them to either plain or Anglican chant. A little practice is required and people will need a copy of the words with 'pointing' (marks to show when the tune changes up or down). Or psalms can be sung responsorially, with the choir or a cantor singing the verses and the congregation joining in with the response. Metrical versions of the psalms are also available, in which the text is set to a hymn tune. Examples include several well known versions of Psalm 23. 'Crimond' is popular at funerals or for a livelier tune try the Scottish metrical version known as 'Brother James's Air'.

Many hymns too can happily be sung to different tunes. Singing well known words to a new tune or new words to a favourite tune can add interest. A hymnbook may suggest more than one tune or see the index at the back for a list of tunes which use the same metre. Before choosing a new tune make sure you sing the hymn through to see if the words really do fit and that the stresses fall in the same places. Otherwise the effect can be very odd!

## Copyright – don't get it wrong!

Copyright is a complex area and it can be expensive if you get it wrong. It's wise to remember that all texts, music and images are owned by someone – if it doesn't belong to you it belongs to someone else and you need their permission to use it. There may also be a fee. This helpful guide is available from Church House Publishing and contains the answers to most frequently asked questions.



## Improvising where musical resources are few

Some churches have one of these...



Copyright:Andrealzzotti/Shutterstock.com

... and some have one of these!



Copyright:Radomir/Shutterstock.com

Some churches have neither or you may have an instrument but no-one to play it. No matter how humble its resources, no church need be without music. All it takes is a little preparation.

Modern sound equipment is so portable and sophisticated that it is simple to play music from a CD and the choice is endless. Or music can be downloaded onto and played from a phone or tablet using a Bluetooth speaker. However some people would say that using 'canned music' turns a congregation into an audience – do you agree or disagree?

If you prefer not to use recordings there are many simple chants and rounds that can be sung unaccompanied. The meditative short songs of the Taizé and Iona monastic communities are favourites with all ages and can easily be taught and learned.

Or for congregations that love their hymns there's always the 'Hymnal Plus', a handy gadget that plays thousands of traditional hymns and modern worship songs, plus music for weddings and funerals. The standard UK repertoire includes over 2880 recordings, covering over 7300 hymn book entries. It is straightforward to operate and you can even choose the tempo, key, number of verses etc. Google it to find out more ...



**The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM)**

[www.rscm.com](http://www.rscm.com)

*Psallam spiritu et mente*

**'I will sing with the spirit and with the understanding also'**

'The RSCM supports a world-wide network of over 8,000 churches, schools and individuals. We are committed to achieving the best use of good music in worship – whatever the resources, whatever the style. Through education, training, publications, advice and encouragement, we aim to support church music today and to invest in church music for the future.'



The RSCM also publishes 'Sunday by Sunday', a quarterly for church musicians, clergy and all who plan and lead worship. At its core is a week-by-week guide for every Sunday and major festival of the Church's year. Visit the RSCM website for all kinds of useful materials and resources.

***Exercise:***

**This one is for the course leader! Choose a hymn, song, chant or other musical item for next Sunday's worship, perhaps something that will be unfamiliar to some of the group members. Explain where it fits into the service and why you have chosen it. Then teach it to the group. Provide copies of the words and music so that group members could teach it to others. (If you don't feel confident for any reason perhaps another group member would be willing to do this?)**

## **Preparation for next session**

In our next session we will be exploring multi generational and all age worship. In preparation for the session interview a local family with children that comes to church occasionally to get their view. Why do they choose to come to some services and not others? What do they most enjoy or value about an act of worship? What could the church do better?

Don't forget to ask the children as well as the parents! Capture your findings on a side of A4 and add your reflections.

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**Grateful thanks to RSCM for advice on the material in this session**

NOTES ...



**SESSION 9**  
**'MULTI GENERATIONAL AND ALL AGE WORSHIP'**



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*'One generation shall praise your name to another'*

*In this session we will be exploring ...*

**What is multi generational/all age worship and who is it for?**

Thinking it through

**The journey of faith**

'Children on the Way'

**Elements of multi generational/all age worship**

Including learning and spiritual styles

**Godly, Messy, reflective, growing Church**

Other new approaches to try

*Please bring with you to the session ...*

Your course book or session material

A notepad and pen

A bible

Your notes on an interview with a local family with children

## Welcome to the session

*We take a few moments to greet one another and catch up on any news*

## 'Who is the greatest?'

A group member reads aloud the following passages from the gospels of Matthew and Mark. The passages have many similarities and some significant differences. What is God saying to us?

### **Matthew 18:1 – 5**

'At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.'

### **Mark 10:13 –16**

'People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.'

## Prayer

*The course leader prays for the group and asks God's blessing on the session*

*Then we pray together*

Almighty God,  
whose only Son has opened for us  
a new and living way into your presence:  
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

## What is multi-generational/ all age worship and who is it for?

For adults – with something to occupy children?

For children – with adults looking on?

For everyone to be involved?

### The story so far

At some point during the 1970s, all age or family worship slid into the church calendar, becoming a regular feature in churches and chapels across the nation. This type of worship probably arose out of the dramatic decline in Sunday School numbers after the Second World War and the steep increase in the number of children born in Britain during the same period. Many churches sought to reach out to children and their families but had to experiment with new methods. Today such worship is an accepted part of the UK church scene. Whether it's a weekly event or an experience that is shared on a monthly, quarterly or every fifth Sunday basis, all age worship is a familiar congregational guest. But what is it?

Critics of all-age or family worship accuse it of being a form of worship that offers nourishment to neither children nor adults. More often than not, such worship is based around an 'adult' structure, attempting to accommodate children.

'Adding a children's talk does not make an adult service suitable for all ages. Worship that meets the desire of many generations to bring their own needs of the world before God begins when the leaders ask themselves: 'How can we best use the special dynamic created by putting adults and children next to each other, while staying faithful to the tradition to which we belong?''

***A Church for All Ages, Peter Graystone and Eileen Turner, Scripture Union Publishing, 1993***

There are excellent precedents for doing this. Scripture is full of references to worship which is genuinely multi generational. Children asking at Passover, 'Why is this night different from all other nights?' All ages listening together as Joshua renews the covenant with God, Solomon blesses the temple, Nehemiah rebuilds the Jerusalem wall, Jesus hugs and blesses children. Pentecost comes about just as the prophet Joel foretold – sons and daughters prophesying, old men dreaming dreams. God's people have always included all ages in worship.



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'It's not enough to say 'Children are welcome here'. This belonging needs to be demonstrated through the policies and practices of the community. Forming relationships with children is the responsibility of all members of the community, not just those who work with them in educational programmes.'

***Postmodern Children's Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21st Century Church, Ivy Beckwith, Zondervan, 2004***

The Church of England's Going 4 Growth website [www.going4growth.org.uk](http://www.going4growth.org.uk) challenges us with these questions:

- How can we engage children and young people in worship which enables them to come close to God?
- How can we offer children and young people the possibility of being transformed through worship?
- How can we help children and young people offer their skills and abilities in leading others in worship?

We might also include the word 'families', adding another dimension to these questions.

Stephen Cottrell in his book *'Praying through Life'* describes children as natural charismatics (since they like expressing themselves in worship), natural evangelicals (since they love reading Bible stories), and natural catholics (better, 'sacramentalists', because they love rhythm and ritual). If pantomime is anything to go by, this last is true—and if all age events in church can draw on this, they will engage not only children, but people of all ages.

'It does not matter whether the style of worship is free or liturgical, churchy or secular, but that it needs to be an inspiring experience. The sense that you really are 'at heaven's gate', in some liminal place where heavenly happenings should be expected. Very challenging stuff for those involved in leading worship. For me, the all-age aim is for everyone to be caught up into something far bigger than 'what I like'. It takes a lot of care, planning, good teaching, energy and patience to help a congregation to be aware of and concerned for the spiritual needs of everyone there!'

*Praying through life: how to pray in the home, at work and in the family, Stephen Cottrell, Church House Publishing, 2003*

When children are baptised not just the parents and godparents but the whole congregation including the wider Church community promises to pray for and support them on their Christian journey. The minister asks: 'People of God, will you welcome these children and uphold them in their new life in Christ?' Everyone then replies: 'With the help of God, we will.' So we have a promise to keep. Bringing all ages together happens successfully in many other ways in our culture through all kinds of accessible multi generational activities. What can we learn from these and how can we make our churches a place of genuine welcome and nurture for Christians of all generations?

'Worship is for the whole people of God, who are fellow pilgrims on a journey of faith, and those who attend services are all at different stages of that journey.'

*Preface to Common Worship*

### ***Exercise:***

**Group members share what they learned from interviewing a local family with children that comes to church occasionally. Is the Church getting it right? What are the challenges?**

## The journey of faith

### 'Children on the Way'

'When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope and love abide, but the greatest of these is love.'

*1 Corinthians 13: 11 – 12*

Implicit in this passage is the idea of faith as a journey. Children and young people have distinctive ways of speaking, thinking and reasoning which are appropriate to their years but in adulthood these ways are no longer appropriate and are replaced by others. But even human maturity is not the end of our faith journey. So long as we are on earth we cannot fully know God, only in the life to come will we see God face to face. Meanwhile we rely on faith, hope and love as the best approach to life's mysteries and this is just as true for adults as for children.

Some aspects of faith development are linked to the general development of the human being. We grow older, our bodies and therefore our brains and cognitive functioning mature, we gain experience and we are able to have a more sophisticated engagement with matters of personal belief. But does faith development always keeps pace with general development – ie is an early level of general development always accompanied by an early level of faith development? Or are the two areas of development in a more complicated form of relationship so that someone with an early level of general development may have a more advanced level of faith development and vice versa? Do 'clever' people always have the richest and fullest faith or is it easier in some ways for 'simple' people to draw close to God?

It seems that growing in faith is not just a one way process of the 'every day and in every way I'm getting more and more holy' variety. Wise Christians warn us that there may be many obstacles and setbacks on our walk with God. What we find easy at one time in our lives may become mysteriously difficult at another time. Faith may be shaken or we may go through dry periods when we are unable to pray. The saints regularly had such experiences and even Jesus endured times when God felt far away. Elsewhere in 1 Corinthians St Paul warns us not to become over confident in our spiritual lives. *'So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall'*. We should never take our faith for granted or think that we understand everything.

Are children in our churches 'in the way' or 'on the way'? If we think that church is really for adults and everything is set up to meet adults' needs then those who come to worship may well feel that any children are 'in the way'. But if we see people of all ages as on a journey of faith together our perspective changes. In a very real sense we are all 'children on the way' – or is that perhaps the very definition of a Christian?



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## Stages of faith

In 1981 developmental psychologist James Fowler, published a well known book, 'Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning'. In it he tried to map how human beings develop spiritually over the course of a lifetime. See the diagram on the next page.

Fowler's approach has since been refined and developed by others and further work has been done specifically on children's spirituality. John Westerhof ('**Will Our Children Have Faith?**') encouraged the idea that faith is 'caught' and not 'taught'. Rebecca Nye ('The Spirit of the Child' and 'Children's Spirituality: What it is and Why it matters') has helped the Church understand that traditional Christian nurture and education has often failed to meet children's spiritual needs. Children are not mini adults – they approach questions of life and faith very differently from older worshippers.

Take as an example a well known bible passage such as Jonah and the whale. The narrative ranges over many themes such as obedience and disobedience, sin and repentance, the nature of God and the meaning of prophecy. But what everyone remembers and almost certainly what will be read aloud in an all age service is the part where Jonah is swallowed by the whale and then spat out again onto dry land. It's a powerful image which may conjure up very different ideas in the mind of a 3 year old, a 10 year old and an adult. Each may take away quite a different understanding of what they think is happening in this story and why. Even the word 'story' poses a question.



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### ***Discussion:***

**What does the 'story' of Jonah and the whale mean to you and what is the key message that you would want people to take away from it? Drawing on the 'stages of faith' diagram, how do you think different ages might experience this bible passage? What should the worship leader bear in mind when planning and leading an act of worship on this theme?**

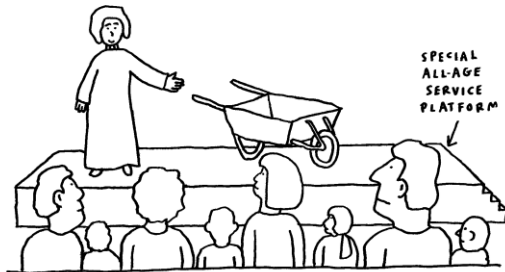
## Fowler's stages of faith

<b>Pre-stage</b> Infancy <i>Age 0 – 4 approx</i> Undifferentiated Faith	Helpless, dependent, receptive Learning basic trust or mistrust Discovering the possibilities of mutuality from significant others
<b>Stage 1</b> Early Childhood <i>Age 3/4 – 7/8 approx</i> Intuitive-Projective Faith	Child still largely in play mode Fuses fantasy, fact and feeling Lack of grasp of cause and effect
<b>Stage 2</b> School Years <i>Age 6/7 – 11/12 approx and some adults</i> Mythic-Literal Faith	More orderly, temporarily linear and dependable world. Distinguishes real from make believe Beginning to ask for facts and logical explanations Demands fairness and justice Values law and order
<b>Adolescence</b> <i>Age 11/12 – 17/18 approx and many adults</i> Synthetic-Conventional Faith	Revolution in physical and emotional life Growing importance of peer intimacy Ability to reflect upon one's thinking Prone to conceptual idealism while sometimes judgemental of real situations and people Moral authority tends to be located outside the self
<b>Stage 4</b> Young Adulthood <i>Age from 17/18 approx or from the 30s or 40s onwards</i> Individuative-Reflective Faith	More critical and reflective way of thinking Everything subject to questioning Lessening dependence on external sources of authority No longer tolerates faith at second hand Needs to choose and own an individual faith May seek tidy faith or impossible simplicity Potentially intolerant of others' faith positions
<b>Stage 5</b> Mid-life and Beyond ... <i>Age: rare before 30</i> Conjunctive Faith	Has learned through making mistakes Capable of living with tensions and paradoxes Does not need to have everything cut and dried Own experience of the truth is central Enhanced empathy with others Openness to others insights
<b>Stage 6</b> Later life ... <i>Rare</i> Universalising Faith	Self is no longer at the centre Ability to relinquish even precious things Union of opposites Life is seen as a whole Prepared for next stage Sense of transcendence

## Elements of multi-generational/all age worship

### THE ALL-AGE SERVICE

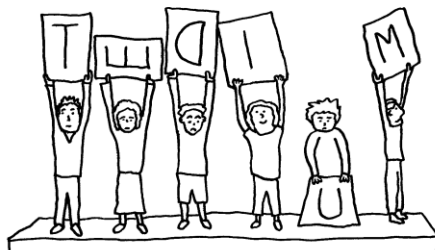
THIS IS A SERVICE DESIGNED ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS INCLUDE:



A VISUAL AID OF SOME SORT



ACTION SONGS



CHILDREN HOLDING UP LETTERS



DISTRIBUTION OF CONFECTIONERY

CartoonChurch.com

Cartoon by Dave Walker – used with permission

## Can all age worship be a place where ...

- a child/young person can wrestle with the questions of what it is to be a human being?
- a child/young person can be loved and not just admired?
- a child/young person can learn both to give and to receive love?
- a child/young person is engaged, not just entertained?
- a child/young person can learn to put her faith into action?
- There is more going on than just Holy Childminding/ Holy Youth Entertaining?

## Some features of good all age worship

Structure, pattern and repetition (gathering, action, sending out etc)

Ritualisation to facilitate involvement

Multi-sensory

Multi-level

Mystery and wonder

Story and humour

Universal themes/questions

Direction

Participative/interactive

Every part is not 'dumbed down' to make it suitable for every participant

Children are parented (they do not 'invade the pitch')



## Structuring all age worship

**We gather** – what are you going to do to create a sense of community and a sense of sacred space? How will this set the theme? This section should include something that is the same each time. If it is responsive then both the trigger and the response need to be simple

**(We say sorry** – think about creating space for people to bring their emotions: regret, sadness, anger. Remember that people come as victims as well as perpetrators of wrong doing)

**We listen** – how are you going to tell the story? It could be read and then unpacked through the talk; or it could be an event in itself. How are you going to give the talk? Keeping the theme in focus; connecting to different ages and stages of life, use of wondering and questions

**We respond** – key activity is prayer, for the world and for ourselves. Think about how to be multi-sensory, how to use movement, how to make things real

**We go out into the world** – how are you going to bring an ending? This is a good place for notices to shift focus towards life going on. Are you going to give people something to take away with them? Use some words that are the same every time

## Other elements:

**Time** – is Sunday morning the best time?

**Location** – in church, school, outside?

**Physical stuff** – how could you make the service a sacred space for children? Where should the children sit? With carers or each other?

**Involvement** – of different ages with the programme and helping

**Visual** – including technology, environment and space

**Music** – when and where; balance between singing and listening, familiar and new

**The Peace** – a good way of interacting with people, introducing movement, building a sense of belonging



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## Learning and spiritual styles

Whether we are children or adults, each of us has a preference for learning in one of these three ways:

**V – Visual**

**A – Auditory**

**K – Kinaesthetic (movement)**

A good multi generational/ all age act of worship should include all three – something for everyone!

David Csinos, a researcher of children's spirituality and former children's pastor, also identifies four different spiritual approaches:

*A word centred approach*

Clarity, precision, accuracy and concreteness matter

When it comes to spiritual formation, word centred individuals equate growth in faith with increases in knowledge

They know God when they know about God

*An emotion centred approach*

Upholds feelings as the core of spirituality

For these people, having deep emotional experiences is what tends the garden of the soul

Spiritual formation involves helping others have similar experiences

They grow spiritually through performing arts

*A symbol centred approach*

Values abstract symbols, images and metaphors over concrete words and emotions

They are mystics who see God as ultimate mystery, the being that surpasses all understanding

When they sense God, they may not wish to speak about the experience, for words cannot describe these transcendental encounters

For them, God and experiences of God can never be fully understood

*An action centred approach*

A seemingly unquenchable thirst for justice

Instead of focusing on what one thinks, feels or senses, people of this style focus on what brings about positive transformation in the world

They are activists who would rather get to work than attend another book study or worship service

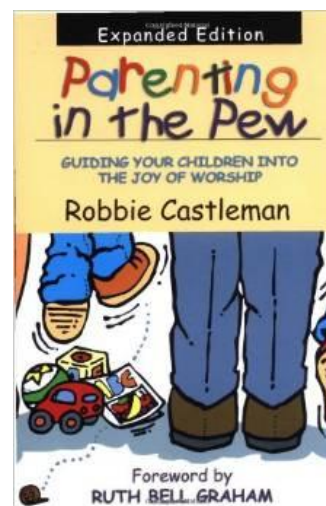
Spirituality is more lived than spoken or felt

Action centred people encounter God and nourish their spiritual lives through work to transform the world

If as worship leaders we use all four styles we would not only meet people's needs but also stretch them and help them to grow.

## Parenting in the pew

Sometimes parents come into church believing that they're exempt from parenting and taking responsibility for their children during the service. That can be a trial for the congregation. How can we as worship leaders work with parents to give children a rich experience of worship? It is important that there is space for younger ones to be able to ask parents to explain aspects that they don't understand. Carers can be encouraged to be enablers, encouragers and prompters through welcome, a sense of a sacred space for children and young people, pew bags, prompt cards or leaflets to explain how to help their children join in/what is going to happen.



***Exercise:***

**Taking Jonah and the whale as the theme, begin to plan a family service. How might we incorporate some of the elements of multi-generational/ all age worship identified in this section? How might we provide for different learning and spirituality styles? Work in pairs or threes. This exercise can be completed outside of the session**

*You might also be interested in ...*



## **International Association for Children's Spirituality**

The International Association for Children's Spirituality seeks to promote and support research and practice in relation to children's spirituality within education and wider contexts of children's care and wellbeing.

The Association understands spirituality broadly and inclusively as having relation to the religious and beyond the religious. We encourage holistic approaches to children's spirituality and personal development across a variety of disciplines, professions, organisations and communities.

The International Journal of Children's Spirituality is the official journal of the Association and the IACS supports the annual International Conferences on Children's Spirituality.

## Godly, Messy, reflective, growing Church

'Jesus said: 'I will use stories to speak my message and to explain things that have been hidden since the creation of the world.'

**Matthew 13: 34**

Research into children's spirituality has led to the creation of a range of different ways of helping children reflect on life and faith, some of which have become well known and popular worldwide. 'Godly Play' and Messy Church' are two you may have heard of.

## About Godly Play ...

'Godly Play' refers to an imaginative approach to religious storytelling. It has roots in Montessori educational practice and philosophy. The experiential context for the spoken word (through the visual, kinetic, creative emphases of this approach) aims to ensure that children don't hear the story as an end in itself. Instead, children are actively encouraged to recognise clues to profound experiences and insights.

Each story has its own simple set of materials (wooden figures, felt underlays etc) which the storyteller uses to shape the unfolding drama. Following the initial storytelling presentation, children are encouraged to 'work' (or play – whichever you like) with these materials for themselves. Creative materials (paper, paint, clay, costumes, musical instruments etc) are provided so that children can choose to extend their response to a story.

You do not 'explain' what stories 'really' mean, and there are no 'right' answers. Immediately following each story, the group shares in a 'wondering' session, reflecting on how different people, feelings and issues in the story raised feelings or thoughts in their own minds. Questions might include ...

*I wonder which part of the story you like best?*  
*I wonder which part of the story is the most important?*  
*I wonder which part of the story you like the least?*  
*I wonder if there is a part of the story we could leave out and still have all of the story?*  
*I wonder which part of the story is most about you?*



You may also wish to ask some 'wondering' questions about a particular story you have just presented, eg 'I wonder what it felt like for Noah and his family to be shut inside the ark for so long?' or The Good Shepherd e.g. 'I wonder who the sheep could really be?'

You can find out more about Godly Play at [www.godlyplay.uk](http://www.godlyplay.uk). Go to the section on 'courses' for details of Taster Workshops, one day Introductions or 3 day accredited Core Training. Courses are run regularly at venues around the UK. To buy books and materials for Godly Play visit [www.godlyplayresources.com](http://www.godlyplayresources.com). It's not necessary to spend a lot of money – the method is more important than the materials – but these fascinating resources may help you get started.

## About Messy Church ...

### Messy Church:

- is a way of being church for families involving fun
- is a church, not a craft club, that helps people encounter Jesus as Lord and Saviour
- is found across the world
- values are about being Christ-centred, for all ages, based on creativity, hospitality and celebration



### The story so far:

The first Messy Church began in 2004 when a group at St Wilfrid's in Cowplain near Portsmouth were frustrated because, as a church, they were hardly reaching any children with God's story. They felt they had lovely buildings and facilities but weren't using them enough. They had creative people in the church, and the area needed as much community building as possible, being a rather featureless suburb. There was a lot of sympathy towards church in general but the church wasn't offering anything that really gripped the imagination of local families.

They decided very early on to try to do something for all ages together, partly out of a belief that we grow best as a church when we walk the journey with as many different people as possible, and partly from a desire to help families to grow together in their walk of faith, and not see Christianity as something you grow out of when you're 11. One of the original team members was Lucy Moore. As she was working for BRF at the time, BRF became the natural home of the ministry when training and resources began to be needed for other churches to start their own Messy Church. Messy Church is now a core ministry of BRF.

To find out more, visit the Messy Church website at [www.messychurch.org.uk](http://www.messychurch.org.uk)

See the Messy Church Directory to discover nearby Messy Churches. Why not visit and discover what they do? View resources and information and the Messy Church blog and newsletter. Learn how to become a Messy Church leader yourself.

## Other great resources

There is a huge amount of excellent material available for multigenerational/ all age worship in printed form and online. Try these:

**Worship Together: Creating All-age Services that Work** and **Festivals Together: Creating All-age Worship through the Year**

Sandra Millar, SPCK Publishing, 2012

### Discussion:

**What new approaches to multi-generational/ all age worship might work for your church? What would be worth exploring and how will you do this? Make a resolution and write it down**

## **Preparation for next session**

In our next session we will be thinking about worship and outreach. We will be looking at resources for some of those occasions when people who are not regular worshippers may want to come to church including Mothering Sunday, Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday and All Souls.

In preparation for the session please see what resources you can find for these four occasions and bring along a selection with you. See if you can find some new or unusual resources that others may not have come across. Ideas about where to look are included in the session material. Don't forget that many of these occasions will include all ages so you may also want to reconnect with some of the ideas and further explore some of the resources mentioned in this session.

## SESSION 10

### 'WORSHIP AND OUTREACH'



*In this session we will be exploring ...*

#### **The missional challenge**

What's really going on out there?

#### **Fresh Expressions or traditional worship?**

How do we strike a balance?

#### **Four community occasions**

Mothering Sunday, Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday and All Souls

#### **Christmas unwrapped**

Going deeper and celebrating with a difference

*Please bring with you to the session ...*

Your course book or session material

A notepad and pen

A bible

The resources you have collected for worship on community occasions

## Welcome to the session

*We take a few moments to greet one another and catch up on any news*

## 'We have a gospel to proclaim'

This hymn by Edward Burns is almost like a mini catechism, setting out the heart of the gospel message – the humble birth, sacrificial death, glorious resurrection and eternal reign of our Lord Jesus Christ who has also sent us the Holy Spirit to guide us and whose name we praise.

*A member of the group reads the hymn aloud. Or if feeling tuneful the group might sing it*

We have a gospel to proclaim  
Good news for all throughout  
the earth;  
The gospel of a Saviour's name:  
We sing His glory, tell His worth.

Tell of His birth at Bethlehem,  
Not in a royal house or hall  
But in a stable dark and dim:  
The Word made flesh, a light for all.

Tell of His death at Calvary,  
Hated by those He came to save;  
In lonely suffering on the cross  
For all He loved His life He gave.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn:  
Empty the tomb, for He was free.  
He broke the power of death and hell  
That we might share His victory.

Tell of His reign at God's right hand,  
By all creation glorified;  
He sends His Spirit on His Church  
To live for Him, the Lamb who died.

Now we rejoice to name Him King:  
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.  
This gospel message we proclaim:  
We sing His glory, tell His worth.

## Prayer

*The course leader prays for the group and asks God's blessing on the session*

*We pray together*

**Almighty God,  
whose only Son has opened for us  
a new and living way into your presence:  
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**



## The missional challenge

‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.’

*Matthew 28: 19, 20*

From the very beginning evangelism was at the heart of the Church’s calling. In 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain making new disciples has become an urgent challenge. Many people in today’s society no longer know or understand what Christians believe and many are indifferent. A recent survey by the Bible Society shows the extent to which both children and adults are more and more unfamiliar with key elements of the Christian story:

### A growing problem

Three Bible stories top the charts as the nation’s clear favourites. Despite being asked independently, children and parents alike name the same three stories as their top choices - Noah’s Ark, The Nativity and Joseph and his coat of many colours. And yet, 1 in 5 children (20%) did not choose Noah’s Ark when asked to select from a list the stories they think are from the Bible. A similar proportion (19%) did not choose Adam & Eve. Almost one in three (29%) did not select The Nativity as a part of the Bible, rising to 36% for The Good Samaritan, 41% for David & Goliath and well over half, 59%, for Samson & Delilah and Jonah & The Whale. By contrast, around 1 in 10 (9%) believe that King Midas and Icarus appear in the Bible, while 6% think that Hercules does. In fact, asked to select stories that appear in the Bible from a list of popular children’s books, Greek myths and fairytales, just 14% answered all correctly..

### And it’s not just young children

Having polled children aged from 8 to 15 there could be a tendency to think that these figures are skewed by those at the younger end of the scale. But our findings show that the picture is similar across the ages, with older children perhaps even faring worse, possibly as their engagement wanes and memories falter. For example, despite our research being undertaken just a few weeks after Christmas, 30% of secondary school children (those aged 12 to 15) did not choose The Nativity when asked which stories they thought were in the Bible. Among 15 year olds, the figure rises to more than a third (35%). The number of 15 year olds that indicated they had not read, seen or heard The Nativity is similarly around 1 in 3 (34%).

### Bible literacy is little better among adults

Parents themselves find it hard to distinguish the plot lines of well-known Bible stories from the latest Hollywood blockbusters. Asked to decide whether a series of plot lines appeared in the Bible almost half of parents (46%) failed to recognise the plot of Noah’s Ark as a Bible story; around a third were unsure or did not recognise the stories of David & Goliath (31%) and Adam & Eve (30%) as being from the Bible; and a quarter (27%) failed to identify the Bible with the plot of the Good Samaritan. By contrast, over a third thought that storylines featured in the Hunger Games (54%) and Harry Potter (34%) were or might be. More than one in four (27%) thought the storyline of Superman was or could be in the Bible; while (46%) thought the same for Dan Brown novel The Da Vinci Code.

*‘Pass It On’, The Bible Society, February 2014*

It's a daunting picture – and no-one feels a greater sense of responsibility for making the gospel attractive and accessible than those who lead worship. We particularly tend to focus on times of the year when those who are not regular worshippers seem to want to come to church, such as Christmas and Easter, 'folk festivals' such as Harvest, or times of national mourning or celebration. It's understandable – but are we getting the balance right?

**Discussion:**

**Do you recognise the picture painted in the extract from the Bible Society report 'Pass It On'? When people who are not regular churchgoers come to church what do you assume they will understand? What do you assume will need explaining?**

# OCCASIONAL ATTENDERS

## EXAMPLES OF 'TWICE A YEAR' CHURCHGOERS

WE ONLY GO AT CHRISTMAS AND EASTER – FOR THE KIDS MAINLY



WE GO WHEN IT IS A PARADE SERVICE – MOTHER'S DAY AND REMEMBRANCE USUALLY



WE TEND TO GO ON THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY AND THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY – I DON'T KNOW WHY REALLY – IT'S JUST A HABIT WE'VE GOT INTO

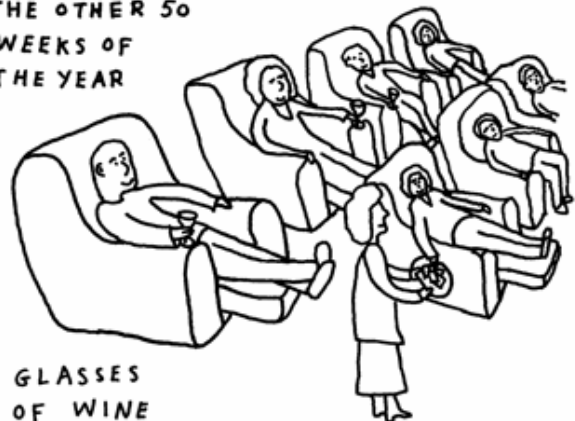


CartoonChurch.com

## HOW TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO COME TO CHURCH A BIT MORE OFTEN

TELL THEM ABOUT THE GREAT TIMES WE HAVE DURING SERVICES FOR THE OTHER 50 WEEKS OF THE YEAR

WE REPLACE THE PEWS WITH RECLINING ARMCHAIRS



GLASSES OF WINE ARE SERVED

AND THE MONEY IS GIVEN OUT RATHER THAN BEING COLLECTED IN

Cartoon by Dave Walker – used with permission

## Fresh Expressions or traditional worship?



‘A ‘fresh expression’ is a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. The Fresh Expressions movement encourages and resources new ways of being church, working with Christians from a broad range of denominations and traditions. This has resulted in thousands of new congregations being formed alongside more traditional churches. ‘

[www.freshexpressions.org.uk](http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk)

One of the most distinctive things about a Fresh Expression is its worship. This extract from the Fresh Expressions website worship page gives a flavour of the non traditional, free flowing, pick and mix style and wide possibilities of Fresh Expressions worship.

### The ingredients of worship

Life would be rather monochrome if we ate exactly the same food day-in-day-out and it also would not reflect the immense creativity and mystery of our God. Just as different weightings of flour-to-sugar-to-butter make different types of cakes and biscuits, so are different 'ingredients' of worship able to create fascinating encounters with God. And just as one meal with even the best ingredients does not exemplify the 'only' way to enjoy a meal, so one style or act of worship with a set menu of ingredients does not embody the 'only' way to worship.

The ingredients of worship can be thought of in the same way that food ingredients come together to form the 'menu items' of a meal in a restaurant: starter, main course, sweet and coffee. These are the traditional stages of a meal, indicating its direction and 'feel'. Of course, you could eat items on the menu in any order. However, our appetite and experience generally dictate the shape of a meal.

Our appetite for worship offers us a similar, though perhaps less rigid, pattern for the menu. The act of worship you prepare, facilitate, lead or curate should have a movement or flow running through it, so that worshippers feel they are travelling forward with a sense of direction.

The page also provides an ‘ideas’ generator which combines a list of possible worship ‘ingredients’ (Intros, Adoration, Confession, Praise, Scripture, Creeds, Intercession, Peace, Lord’s Prayer, Communion, Blessings) with a list of possible worship settings (Children, Teens, All-ages together, 20s-30s ‘café’, Complex lives, Retired, Medium gathering). All you have to do is click on the appropriate box and the generator comes up with a range of resources for that kind of worship!



But not everyone agrees that this is the right approach to worship. An extract from 'Rescuing the Church from Consumerism' by Mark Clavier gives a different point of view:

'One of the most striking features of worship within consumer culture is its heterogeneity. Even within the Church of England, which for most of its history was noteworthy for its 'common prayer', one may now shop among official liturgies – Common Worship (itself with a plurality of options) or the Book of Common Prayer – or among a myriad of additional liturgies such as other Anglican liturgies, Novus Ordo, so-called Celtic liturgies, feminist liturgies, thematic liturgies, and so on. The assumption is that liturgies must be in a form and style that will appeal to a segment of potential customers. So, whereas in the early Church, non-Christians were converted to, not by, the liturgy, now the experience of worship itself is supposed to bear the weight of encouraging customer loyalty. Thus, the spectacle has also become a more apparent feature of liturgical practice as a combination of music, technology and programmes are all employed to provide a memorable and moving experience for the congregation: the 'feel-good factor' to which (Grace) Davie pointed.

Consequently, liturgies have been commodified. For all the proper language about how liturgies are to form and shape the collective and individual identities of Christians, liturgical practice is increasingly subject to pre-existing, secular identities. As mentioned earlier, one aspect of consumerism is the plunder of cultural ideas and artefacts for the sake of a fabricated and individualised identity. Likewise, individuals and congregations pull what they like out of their cultural contexts (for example, Celtic prayers, plainsong chant, South American clay altarware, not to mention prayer, music, techniques and artefacts derived from non-Christian resources) to create a liturgical experience that is appealing to the kinds of people the congregation hopes to attract. This approach to liturgy is as subject to changing fashions as consumption-driven identities. Hence it is not coincidence that the liturgy has become a battleground for contemporary conflicts within the Church.'

*Rescuing the Church from Consumerism, Mark Clavier, SPCK, 2013*

***Discussion:***

**When we plan and lead worship what is our main aim? Are we trying to convert people 'to' the liturgy or to 'by' the liturgy? Should liturgy be 'customer led'?**

## Four community occasions

### Mothering Sunday

Mothering Sunday falls on the fourth Sunday of Lent which means that the date moves around from year to year. It has no connection with the American festival known as 'Mother's Day' but draws together a number of different religious and secular customs, some very ancient.

Traditionally it was a day when girls who had gone into domestic service away from home were given the day off to visit their own mother and family, perhaps bringing with them a posy of flowers or another gift. This became connected in people's minds with the Christian practice of returning to their home or 'mother' church during Lent, usually the main church or cathedral of the area. The Feast of the Annunciation on 25 March (exactly nine months before Christmas Day), when Mary hears from Gabriel that she is to bear the Son of God, also falls on or near the Fourth Sunday of Lent and as Mary is often thought of as the 'mother' of the Church as well as the mother of our Lord, this strand too has become woven into our understanding of Mothering Sunday.

The fourth Sunday in Lent is also 'Laetare' or 'Refreshment' Sunday, a day on which Lenten disciplines could be relaxed – although strictly speaking the forty days of Lent do not include Sundays. It acts as an encouragement to those who are keeping the fast – Easter is in sight, not long to go! In some churches rose coloured hangings and vestments may be used to mark the day instead of purple. Some delicious food may also feature on 'Refreshment Sunday' such as the traditional Simnel cake, a fruit cake featuring two layers of marzipan and decorated with eleven marzipan balls, one for each of the apostles excluding Judas.



Celebrating Mothering Sunday needs a lot of pastoral sensitivity as it may be a difficult occasion for a surprising number of people. Are we too focused on the traditional 'nuclear family' when increasing numbers of people live in non traditional family units? What about single people or those who are not able to have children of their own? Most families go through times of sadness and tension and we may be unaware of what people in the congregation are experiencing.



There are no resources within the formal liturgy of the Church of England for keeping Mothering Sunday but organisations like The Children's Society offer good resources. Go to [www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)

Why not see what else you can find online or in your local Christian bookshop?

## Harvest Festival

'The Jewish and Christian Scriptures give eloquent expression to the creative power and wisdom of God. It is therefore a natural instinct for worshipping communities to develop patterns of worship and prayer around the agricultural year. Of course, there were dangers, and the same Scriptures bear witness to concerns about the idolatry of fertility cults and the worship of created things rather than the creator. Nevertheless, ancient society lived close to the land, and it is no surprise that the ancient Jewish festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread, Weeks and Tabernacles all have agrarian roots.

The Christian tradition, too, has assimilated, but with differing emphases and in different times and places, particular agricultural festivals. Much of this is bound up with the need to provide food to sustain human life, and the accompanying sense of a proper humility before God as source of all things, gratitude for his goodness, and responsibility in stewarding the resources of the earth. In more recent year, urban congregations have explored ways of adapting traditional creation-based festivals for their own contexts.'

*Introduction to Seasons and Festivals of the Agricultural Year  
from Common Worship: Times and Seasons, 2006*

In many of our churches are people who live on, from or close to the land. As well as the ever popular 'Harvest Festival' there may be a demand for worship which is linked to other seasons and festivals of the agricultural year. Visit the Arthur Rank Centre website [www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk](http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk) for wisdom on all things rural. Common Worship: Times and Seasons contains helpful introductions to the following, with material and resources for worship:

**Plough Sunday**

**Rogationtide**

**Lammastide**

**Harvest Thanksgiving**

**Prayer in Times of Agricultural Crisis**

**Creation**



Photocredit: @ashmills.com/salisburycathedral

## Remembrance Sunday

'Remembrance Sunday explores the theme of memory, both corporate and individual, as we confront issues of war and peace, loss and self-gift, memory and forgetting. It is observed on the second Sunday in November, generally the Sunday nearest to 11 November.

An Order of Service for Remembrance Sunday has been prepared by a group representing the churches and convened through Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), working in partnership with the Royal British Legion and the Joint Liturgical Group. It is commended on behalf of the churches by the presidents of CTBI and replaces the service that has been in use since 1968. It has been approved by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York under Canon B4 for use in their respective provinces.'

*Introduction to the Season of All Saints to Advent and notes on Remembrance Sunday  
from Common Worship: Times and Seasons, 2006*

Remembrance services and ceremonies can arouse deep emotions. Although fewer and fewer people were personally involved in the World Wars, families and communities have long memories. Each community wants its own service if possible and Lay Worship Leaders are likely to be called upon to conduct some of these. There is a strong expectation whatever happens will be 'done properly' with due care, respect and solemnity.

A Remembrance service is likely to include some or all of these elements:

**Penitential rite**

**Act of Public Remembrance**

**Binyon's lines 'They shall grow not old ...'**

**The Silence – perhaps ending with the Kohima Epitaph 'When you go home ...'**

**Recommitment to peace**

The website of the Royal British Legion [www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk) is a good source of information and material for Remembrance.



## All Souls

'No Christian is solitary. Through baptism we become members one of another in Christ, members of a company of saints whose mutual belonging transcends death:

One family, we dwell in him,  
one Church, above, beneath;  
though now divided by the stream,  
the narrow stream of death. (Charles Wesley)

All Saints' Day and the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed on All Souls' Day both celebrate this mutual belonging. All Saints' Day celebrates men and women in whose lives the Church as a whole has seen the grace of God powerfully at work. It is an opportunity to give thanks for that grace, and for the wonderful ends to which it shapes a human life; it is a time to be encouraged by the example of the saints and to recall that sanctity may grow in the ordinary circumstances, as well as the extraordinary crises, of human living. The Commemoration of the Faithful Departed celebrates the saints in a more local and intimate key. It allows us to remember with thanksgiving before God those whom we have known more directly: those who gave us life, or who nurtured us in faith.

Redemption is a work of God's grace; it is God who redeems us in Christ and there is nothing to be done beyond what Christ has done. But we still wait for the final consummation of God's new creation in Christ; those who are Christ's, whether or not they have passed through death, are joined in prayer that God's kingdom will be revealed finally and in all its fullness. We also sense that it is a fearful thing to come before the unutterable goodness and holiness of God, even for those who are redeemed in Christ; that it is searing as well as life-giving to experience God's mercy; and this instinct also is expressed in the liturgy of All Souls' Day.'

*Introduction to the Season of All Saints to Advent  
from Common Worship: Times and Seasons, 2006*

All Souls, or the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed as it is also called, is a fairly recent innovation in the life of the Church of England but one which has rapidly gained in popularity.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the souls of the departed are in 'purgatory' for a time, awaiting the final judgement. Protestant Christians have tended to reject the idea of 'purgatory' or any delay between death and final judgement.

For this reason the practice of 'praying for the dead' was for some while a cause of strong disagreement between Catholics and Protestants and All Souls was not kept in most Anglican churches.



*'Good friend, for Jesus' sake forebear  
To digg the dust enclosed heare;  
Bleste be the man that spares thes stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones'*

**Grave of William Shakespeare, 1564 – 1616  
Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon**





**The prayer 'Obsecro te' ('I beseech thee') from the Angers Book of Hours, Bodleian Library**

Experience has shown that All Souls can be an opportunity for outreach and pastoral care and is one of those occasions when those who are not regular worshippers may want to come to church. Many churches put on a special service to which those who have lost a loved one during the year are particularly invited. Others who want to remember relatives and friends may also wish to come along.

Common Worship: Times and Seasons offers some liturgical resources for both word and sacrament and others can be found elsewhere. They can accommodate different elements such as remembrance, thanksgiving, penitence for past hurts, trust in God's mercy and hope for the future as well as prayers for specific individuals and can be interpreted in ways that are appropriate for churches of different traditions.

As so often in liturgy, actions can be more helpful than many words and the opportunity to name those who are no longer with us and perhaps light a candle in their memory, together with the renewed offer of pastoral support can be very warmly welcomed by those we may otherwise not encounter at any other time.

***Exercise:***

**Group members share the resources for worship on community occasions which we have brought along to the session. Which do we think might be most appropriate for the needs of those who are not regular worshippers?**

## Christmas unwrapped

'God's commitment to share our life is the theme of one of the major parts of the Christian year, from Advent to Candlemas. This period, with the celebration of the nativity at its heart, unfolds in liturgical celebration each year the whole range of God's coming among us and taking the risk of sharing our human life.'

*God's Pattern: Shaping our Worship, Ministry and Life*  
David Stancliffe, SPCK, 2003

In our impatient culture there is a great tendency to squash Advent, Christmas and Epiphany together into one Christmas bundle, missing out much of the detail and richness. We can reclaim the possibilities when we take the trouble to unwrap Christmastide and savour the contents little by little. There is plenty of time – Advent may begin as early as the end of November and Epiphany may end as late as Candlemas at the beginning of February. There are only so many occasions on which most of us



Photocredit: @ashmills.com/salisburycathedral

can genuinely enjoy singing 'Away in a Manger'! People are usually very grateful to the worship leader who provides some interest and variety over these weeks.

## Advent

Advent remains on many people's radar, if only because of the popularity of chocolate Advent calendars! But Advent is more than a countdown to the pleasures of Christmas Day. Common Worship: Times and Seasons describes it as 'a season of expectation and preparation as the Church prepares to celebrate the coming (adventus) of Christ in his incarnation, and also looks ahead to his final advent as judge at the end of time'. Advent is a season for renewing our Christian hope, in all that Christ has already done for us, and will do in future. It has a solemn as well as a joyful character. Here are some ideas for adding colour to our worship during Advent.

### Advent antiphons

The Advent or 'O' antiphons were traditionally used as antiphons to the Magnificat at Evening Prayer during the period beginning 16 December. They are prayers of invitation to God by his various titles to come among us as he has promised. You can find the texts in Common Worship: Times and Seasons or with musical settings at the back of the New English Hymnal.

- O Sapientia 17 December**
- O Adonai 18 December**
- O Radix Jesse 19 December**
- O Clavis David 20 December**
- O Oriens 21 December**
- O Rex Gentium 22 December**
- O Emmanuel 23 December**

*'O Wisdom, coming forth from the  
mouth of the Most High,  
reaching from one end to the other,  
mightily and sweetly ordering all  
things:  
Come and teach us the way of  
prudence.'*

### Advent carols

Some churches will have an Advent carol service to enjoy some of the hymns specifically connected with the season such as 'O come, O come Emmanuel', 'Long ago prophets knew' or 'Lo, he comes, with clouds descending'. There are many CDs of Advent music both classical and contemporary which can be played during an Advent service. Try and resist singing the Christmassy ones just yet!

### Advent wreath

Many churches display an Advent wreath of five candles, a purple candle for each of the four Sundays of Advent and a central white candle for Christmas day. The candle for the third Sunday of Advent may sometimes be pink, because Mary is commemorated on this Sunday. Common Worship: Times and Seasons gives a selection of prayers for each Sunday and Christmas Day according to the theme (Patriarchs, Prophets, John the Baptist, the Virgin Mary and Christ). There are also a number of Advent Wreath songs in circulation with a verse for each Sunday.



Photocredit:©mctil.blogspot.com

### St Nicholas and St Lucy



Photocredit:©www.stnicholasinstitute.org

Two interesting saints have their feast days during Advent, St Nicholas on 6 December and St Lucy on 13 December. St Nicholas was a 4<sup>th</sup> century Greek bishop and saint. One of his good works was to give secret gifts to the children of the poor and he has come down to us in the person of 'Santa Claus', the generous bearer of Christmas gifts. Remembering the story of St Nicholas could be an occasion for a collection of money or presents for a local children's charity.

St Lucy, whose name means 'light', is the patron saint of the blind. She was a 4<sup>th</sup> century Sicilian martyr in the Diocletian persecution. Legend has it that her eyes were plucked out and she is often pictured wearing a crown of lights. Hanukkah, the Jewish festival of lights, also falls around this time, offering a good opportunity to make connections with the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

### The Four Last Things

As well as celebrating the first coming of Christ as the baby born in Bethlehem, Advent is a time for looking forward to Christ's second coming at the end of time as Judge and King. The Four Last Things (Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell) are traditional themes at this time of year and provide an opportunity for some more sombre reflection on our humanity and mortality. The rising popularity of so called 'Death Cafes' (check it out at [deathcafe.com](http://deathcafe.com)), where people can go to talk openly about death, dying and making the most of life shows that there is a need in our society for this kind of conversation. With Christian hope to offer we should not be afraid of venturing into this space. Good starting points might include inviting people to share how they would like to be remembered or offering spiritual guidance on how to make a will or how to discuss our own or a loved one's funeral in a helpful and unthreatening way. People may be more grateful than you might think.

## Christmas

### Christmas carols

Christmas carol services may be held during Advent, Christmas or Epiphany and never seem to lose their popularity. Rather than simply singing a range of carols, why not take the opportunity to incorporate some of the other elements mentioned here? They will be new to many people and are an enjoyable and accessible way of teaching about different aspects of the Christian faith.

### Jesse tree

A Jesse tree is an attractive alternative to a traditional Christmas tree.

'A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.'

*Isaiah 11: 1*

Isaiah chapter 11 describes the ideal King who will be descended from Jesse, the father of King David. Jesus was descended from the House of David so for Christians this prophecy points beyond David to the Messiah.

The Jesse Tree commemorates our ancestors in the faith by remembering the important figures of the Old Testament from Adam and Eve to Joseph and Mary. Ancestresses such as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Miriam, Ruth, and Elizabeth feature too. Make your own list or look online for suggestions.

Decorate your tree with symbols, pictures or verses of scripture representing the family tree of our Lord. The tree could be blessed at one of the services before Christmas and could remain in church until Candlemas.



**Jesse Tree window in Chartres Cathedral**



### The crib

No Christmas service is complete without a crib scene and a 'travelling' crib is a pleasant way of anticipating the day. The crib is prepared at the start of Advent while the crib figures may be placed at the back of church and progressed around the church, with Mary and Joseph arriving on Christmas Eve, the baby Jesus on Christmas Day, and the Magi at Epiphany. There are resources in Common Worship: Times and Seasons for a Crib service.

## Epiphany

### Christingle

Christingle was originally a Moravian custom but was adopted by the Children's Society in 1967 as a new and interesting way of presenting the Christmas message. It caught on so well that now many people can't imagine Christmas without a Christingle service. We tend to think of it as an Advent celebration but why not ring the changes and have a service at Epiphany? The theme of the light of Christ being shown to the world is very suitable for Epiphanytide. The Children's Society produces a range of resources and there are also resources in Common Worship: Times and Seasons.



### The coming of the Magi



**The 3 Magi, Herrad of Landsberg, 12<sup>th</sup> century**

The Magi, or Three Kings as tradition would have them, suffer from our tendency to telescope Epiphany and Christmas together. 'The First Nowell' is often sung at Christmas but is really an Epiphany carol and there are many other beautiful Epiphany carols. As with Advent, there are CDs of music both classical and contemporary which can be played during Epiphanytide worship. Make the most of Epiphany by keeping the crib in Church and introducing the figures of the Magi no sooner than the Sunday nearest 6 January. There's no hurry – it can stay there until Candlemas if you like, although most people prefer to take down the Christmas tree before it sheds all its needles!

Presenting the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh at the altar or at the crib with special prayers is a lovely way of marking Epiphany. Common Worship: Times and Seasons does not provide for this but there is material to be found elsewhere. The Catholic Church also has a ceremony of the blessing of the home at Epiphany. You can find it in 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' by Elsa Chaney, also available online. This book has a whole range of other resources too. Water and chalk are blessed and distributed in church then householders sprinkle their house with the holy water and inscribe on the walls or door the year number and the initials of the Magi, for example:

**20 + C + M + B + 14**

C, M and B stand for Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, the traditional names of the Kings, but also for the Latin phrase 'Christus mansionem benedicat' which means 'Christ bless this house'. Neighbours and visitors may well notice and ask about the inscription, giving you a wonderful opportunity to share the Christmas gospel.

The coming of the Magi is celebrated on 6 January or the first Sunday of Epiphany but don't forget the Baptism of Christ on the second Sunday and the miracle at Cana when Jesus turned the water into wine on the third Sunday.

Other Epiphanytide themes that you might like to draw on are Christian Unity (the week of prayer for Christian Unity falls at this time of the year) and the worldwide mission of the Church. Candlemas on 2 February or nearest Sunday then rounds off the great 'incarnation cycle' of the Church's year.



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***Exercise:***

**Try your hand at putting together a family oriented service for an occasion during the period Advent to Candlemas which incorporates some elements that are new to your church and is likely to appeal to those who are not regular worshippers. This exercise can be begun during the session if there is time and completed later**

## Next steps

Congratulations! You have now completed the Lay Worship Leaders training course. We hope that you have enjoyed the learning you have done.

Completing the course does not necessarily mean that you will wish to go ahead and be commissioned as a Lay Worship Leader but if you are still interested please read on.

During the 'Taster' session which you attended before you began the course we ended by looking at 'Becoming a Lay Worship Leader: the practicalities'. You might want to glance back at that material, especially this paragraph and the appendices:

**Remember that training is part of the discernment process and does not guarantee that people will be recommended for commissioning. Once you have finished the course your incumbent will reflect with you again and if s/he is happy to recommend you for this ministry.**

**Commissioning takes place in Deaneries or in your own parish by arrangement and is usually conducted by one of the Archdeacons.**

If you want to go forward please now get back in touch with your incumbent for a discussion. Don't forget – you need to have completed any Safeguarding and DBS requirements before you can be commissioned.

For those going forward for commissioning there will be a final session, to be arranged, in which we will look at the practical arrangements for commissioning in more detail and also explore opportunities for ongoing learning and development.

*The course leader may like to lead the group in prayer at the end of the session, concluding with the Grace or a blessing*

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