

Introduction

Available on the website is a simple form of the Service of the Word, for Sunday mornings or evenings, drawn from *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, together with some forms of intercession and collects.

It is designed specifically as a resource for small worshipping communities. It was originally produced in response to a request from Churchwardens in rural Northumberland who sometimes find the expected arrangements for Sunday upset at the last minutes and are at a loss what to do.

All the congregation will need is a copy of the service booklet and a hymn book or hymn sheet. The additional resources needed by those responsible for leading the service are given in very simple form here, and there is guidance for finding other appropriate resources.

Ministries

This order of service has been designed so that it can be led by a lay person without any need for particular authorisation. This may well be a Churchwarden, who have a traditional obligation to lead Morning and Evening Prayer in the absence of a priest or Reader. But any appropriate lay person may lead the service, and it has been produced as a contribution to the distinctive role lay Christians have historically played in the leadership of this form of worship.

The person leading the service is strongly encouraged to work with a group of people in planning and in celebrating the service. The leader should introduce the service, lead the main verses and responses, and say the opening and closing prayers. Others should be encouraged to read the scripture readings and lead the intercessions.

If a sermon is preached, this must be done by an authorised minister (anyone who holds the Bishop's license to preach). It is very likely that this service will be used in contexts where such a person is not available. Therefore encouragement is given to the creative exploration of other possibilities at this point in the celebration.

Hymns, songs and chants may be used at any appropriate point. A hymn of praise is particularly appropriate after the opening prayer, and this has been indicated in the text. A hymn is also appropriate at the end of the service, and perhaps as part of the Word of God. A chant may be sung between or after the readings.

The readings should be taken from the official lectionary provision of the Church of England. This is found in the volume *Calendar, Lectionary and Collects*. However, local churches are strongly encouraged to purchase several copies of the inexpensive edition of the lectionary each year.

The readings used should normally be those for the Principal Service. All three readings should be used, or two, or even one. Preference should be given to the Gospel reading if all three readings are not used.

The psalm (again, use the one indicated in the lectionary) should always be used. It may be used in a variety of ways. It may be used before the readings, or between the first two. It may be said or sung by the whole congregation. But remember: that means everyone must have a copy of it. Especially if it has not been possible to prepare fully for the celebration, a said or sung responsorial psalm may be very appropriate. The person responsible for the readings needs a copy of the psalm set out with a response (these can be found in full in the volume *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*).

The Collect (the prayer said at the end of the intercessions, before the Lord's Prayer) should be said by the leader of the whole service, and should normally be the Collect of the Day. (found in *Calendar, Lectionary and Collects*). However, especially for use when time is short, we provide a selection of collects from Ordinary Time and Seasons. These are drawn from the official provision given in *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*, as are the resources for intercession.

We have sought to provide sufficient resources for a small worshipping community to celebrate morning service on a Sunday. Leaders and communities are encouraged to draw on resources from other appropriate resources.

Even if you are using this form of service because the reader or priest you were expecting has suddenly fallen ill and no replacement can be found at short notice, preparation is still important. We recommend that Churchwardens in particular make themselves familiar with the material offered here, and the other materials available, well before they *have* to be used. Indeed it is our hope that that and similar forms of celebration will find a place in the regular cycle of services used by the worshipping community.

Introducing this style of celebration also gives the whole Christian community a positive opportunity to think through the ecology of their worshipping space and the manner in which they celebrate. We give real encouragement to this and offer support in the process.

Suggestions for further resources

The Lectionary. The three year cycle of readings for Sundays and feast days, published in a variety of editions.

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England (CHP, 2000)

Common Worship Daily Prayer (CHP, 2002)

Daily Prayer, compiled by Bruce Carlin and Tom Jamieson (DLT, 2002)

The Iona Community Worship Book (Wild Goose Publications)

Praise in all our Days, Daily Prayer from the Taize Community (Mowbray, 1983)

Morning and Evening Prayer from the Divine Office (Collins, 1976), giving a huge collection of intercessions covering every day of the year.

Prayers of Intercession by Susan Sayers (Kevin Mayhew), giving a set of intercessions that links with the readings of the three year lectionary.

Celebrating the Seasons (Canterbury Press, 199), a useful source for non-scriptural and ‘emergency’ addresses.