

Check List

If you do things at the last minute *and* in a hurry it is a bit like putting up a frame tent in the wind. One corner is pinned down and you just think the second one is fixed then, whoosh, off it flies. Defuse the ashram cat syndrome. Worship is not about possessions to guard to gifts to share.

Liturgy whether old or new can be like walls, barriers to keep people out, or to pen them in ... too rigid and too hard. It should be more like a dry stone wall, natural and right for its setting, firm and strong, but still room for the Holy Spirit to blow through.

Start with a blank sheet

- Throw away the idea that 'we've always done it this way'.
- You are under new management and even if you end up doing something very similar to before, at least you will have thought it through and 'owned it' as yours.
- It may be that this gives you the opportunity to do things differently.
- Look at the geography of the building.
If you expect a small congregation, think about using the Chancel or a side chapel or aisle/transept space rather than rattling around in the main body of the church.
- If using chairs, think how to arrange them; rows or semi-circle.
- Make sure there is a copy of the Lectionary available.
Season, readings for the day, colour of vestments and altar frontals etc.
- If this is a new service/time for your community, how will they know?
Put out posters on post Office, shops, pubs, hotels, local B&B's, house windows.
Do the gate test ... Is your church welcoming?
Remove old defunct notices/boards and update information

Planning

- Decide if working on your own or with a team or group.
- Consider setting up a Worship Group and include people like Lay Readers, the organist, musicians, intercessors, sides-people etc.
- Share the tasks:
choosing hymns, prayers, asking folk to take part.
- Think about the ecumenical dimension. Can we share our act of worship with other Christian groups locally?
- Know your audience and pitch it at the right level.
Academic or Keystage 1?
- Have you made adequate provision for children being present?
- Aim for forward planning rather than working on the hoof.
Try to plan a week or two ahead.
- Gather resources together, anthologies of prayers, music etc.
- Walk it through. Know when you want the congregation to sit or stand and decide whether you will give page numbers and/or instructions.
- Time it.
- Do a sound test for Mrs Bloggs in the back who is deaf.

Setting up

Don't take anything for granted; make sure you know who is responsible for:

- Church keys ... main door and vestry
- Heating
- Light switches
- Matches
- Microphone and switch
- Getting out and giving out books
- Collection plate
- Hymn numbers on board
- Reading the lessons
- Playing the organ/piano/penny whistle
- Giving the notices

What service/books can we use?

BCP Morning Prayer or Evensong

CW Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer
 Night Prayer
 A Service of the Word – Family Service

What do we read and which translation of the Bible?

Use the Lectionary to find references; season/day/choice of service.

Practice reading out loud to yourself as you 'hear' the difference in the various Bibles available.

What do we have to put in the service?

Check the rubrics/instructions.

Read the notes and introduction.

Study the skeleton framework and flesh it out.

Use symbols and simple actions; icons, candles, incense, a cross.

Don't forget silence.

How should we speak in Church?

Not parsonically or with a Sunday best voice, or God won't recognise you!

Speak clearly, project your voice.

Alternate people/verses of Psalms etc. to get a change of voice and pace.

Pause at colons: 'Ave Maria' or 'Boiled Potatoes' but be consistent.

Sing instead of say.

Managing change

Get the approval and support of the incumbent and the PCC, or if in an interregnum, the Area Dean.

Be confident in your role; do not apologise for being there.

After you have made your choice of service, stick with it; do not chop and change unless you have really boomed!

If you have the skills and the money, consider printing an order of service booklet/leaflet if you have not got hard copies. It helps give credibility.