

Leading Worship



**A Handbook for Training
Authorised Worship Leaders
in the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway**

**Produced by the
Diocesan Worship and Liturgy Group**

Introduction

From the very beginning, it is the task of the Worship Leader to draw the assembled company into a congregation. From that point the leader does all he or she can to enable the people to enter into all that we have come together to do – to enter into the fullness of God's presence, to meet with God and to step onto the very edge of heaven with all those who are gathered around God's throne in praise and adoration. Gilly Myers Canon Precentor at Manchester Cathedral

This workbook has a very specific aim: to equip those who have been selected to train as Authorised Worship Leaders in the art of leading the people of God in non-Eucharistic worship. The five sections are tailored to that goal; those who wish to learn about the history of Anglican worship or about the Eucharist will need to look elsewhere, as referenced on page 50.

Here we simply offer guidance in understanding the shape and purpose of Services of the Word, skills for leading such worship, some introductory techniques for the Exposition of the Word and the means for evaluating all these skills. The workbook is offered as a resource to those congregations who opt to focus upon the Worship, Prayer and Spirituality strands of the Growth Strategy.

It is written for groups of people *training together*; while the material could be read solo, there is added value in working together on the exercises and pooling experience and wisdom in that way. We suggest, too, that each session concludes with a Service of the Word appropriate to the time of day at which the session is being held, drawn from our SEC rites and led by different members of the group each time.

Reading material is provided separately in pdf form in preparation for each session; it is recommended that participants do try and read this prior to the relevant session, as this will enhance discussion. Sessions are expected to be 90-minutes long; timings for individual parts are left up to the Facilitators who may choose to omit certain exercises as wished.

The material does not pretend to be original; it has been compiled from a number of sources, all referenced in the text. Such a compilation, however, makes for easier access of the material by those training for this important ministry.

**Diocesan Worship and Liturgy Group
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1. Worship as a journey of discovery

Introduction

The Authorised Ministries Handbook produced by the Diocese in 2011 describes the role of a Worship Leader as follows: *a lay person, not a Licensed Reader, who may lead worship and/or preach in a particular congregation at the invitation of the priest and with the Bishop's approval. As agreed in a working agreement, this may include:*

- *Leading worship as agreed locally*
- *Preaching several times a year*
- *Assisting in teaching within study groups*

In this Diocese, then, it is a role which may include putting together aspects of a service of the Word (including music), preparing or delivering an address, and helping the people of God to grow through worship and education. It is, in other words, a very responsible role and one for which training and preparation are necessary.



In twos or threes, share which part/s of the role excite/s you. And which parts do you feel you need the most help with?

Facilitator to invite feedback to gain a sense of the level of expertise in the group and where the emphases of the training sessions might best lie.

But more than that, it is an authorised ministry, a service to God and the people of God. Leadership is primarily about service; 'leaders exist in order to serve the people they lead, or, more particularly, to enable the group they lead to achieve the aims of that group. So worship leadership exists in order to enable the congregation to worship God'.ⁱ

Definitions of worship

So what is 'worship'? Seeking to define the term is not merely a semantic exercise but a means of helping determine and describe what it is we are trying to do with and for others and why we do it.



Write your own definition of worship and why we do it here

Let us look at some of the definitions offered through the ages. (For a longer version of the following, see James White *Introduction to Christian Worship* Chapter 1).



Luther says of Christian worship “that nothing else be done in it than that our dear Lord Himself talk to us through His holy word and that we, in turn, talk to him in prayer and song of praise.” A similar approach appears in the Large Catechism where Luther says that in worship the people “assemble to hear and discuss God’s Word and then praise God with song and prayer.”

Calvin wrote that the ultimate purpose of Christian worship is union with God: “We are lifted up even to God by the exercises of religion. What is the design of the preaching of the Word, the sacraments, the holy assemblies, and the whole external government of the church, but that we may be united to God.”

Archbishop Thomas **Cranmer** found the end of the ceremonies of worship to be the “setting forth of God’s honour or glory, and to the reducing of the people to a most perfect and godly living.”

Russian Orthodox theologian George **Florovsky** said that “Christian worship is the response of men (sic) to the Divine call, to the mighty deeds of God, culminating in the redemptive act of Christ.”

Pope Pius X described worship as “the glorification of God and the sanctification of humanity”



What elements do you detect in these various definitions?

In Luther's definition, worship has a duality - revelation and response - both of them empowered by the Holy Spirit, a duality that is echoed in Florovsky's definition. In Calvin's, the ultimate purpose of Christian worship is union with God, while in Crammer's, worship is directed to God's glory and to human rectitude. The Catholic definition speaks of the glorification of God and the sanctification of humanity.

These definitions include the element of celebration of God's glory; worship as an activity focused on and inspired by God. Indeed the very word worship comes from the old English word *weorthscipe*; literally 'weorth' (worthy) and 'scipe' (-ship) signifying the attribution of worth or respect to someone. But more than that, they describe an encounter in which humanity engages with God *and is changed as a result*. Christian worship is indeed 'a gathering of the church, in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, in order to meet God through Scripture, prayer, proclamation and sacraments, and to seek God's Kingdom'.ⁱⁱ But it has effects, powerful effects.

William Temple wrote as follows:

Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of the mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of the will to His purpose - and all this is gathered up in adoration, the most selfless attitude of which our nature is capable, and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centredness which is original sin, and the source of all actual sin.

When genuine worship takes place, the worshipper becomes more like the one worshipped. Thus in secular hero worship, the admirer is inspired by his or her actions, values and preferences and tries to emulate them. Similarly when we worship God, aspects of the character of God and of the Kingdom of God influence our character and values. If, in our worship, we delight in the gracious and selfless love of God, then we become more loving. If, in our worship, we model the Kingdom of God, then the Kingdom of God is furthered in our community.

In short, worship is above all *a transformative encounter with the living God*. And our leadership must strive to enable that to happen for others. 'The people of God deserve nothing less than worship that takes us to the threshold of heaven', wrote Richard Gilesⁱⁱⁱ. Worship should operate at two levels; the awareness of being rooted in the here and the now of everyday place and time, and also a sense of standing at the heavenly gate, handling holy things and touching the eternal mystery.^{iv}

But all too often worship fails to achieve the latter; as Annie Dillard writes in the following passage, congregations arrive at the church doors not expecting to experience a breathtaking encounter with the living God:

On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children, playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping God may wake someday and take offence, or the waking God may draw us out to where we can never return.^v

Worship should be awesome, putting us in touch with the Holy, with the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. It is not something to be handled 'unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly'.



'The assembly of God's people gathered for worship is drawn into a realization of its blessedness, into a discernment that not only is this holy ground, but that those around them are holy people who have been charged with the energy of God and irradiated with God's light. It is here, at the gate of heaven, that we become fully ourselves, caught up by God's grace into a continual process of transformation, changed 'from one degree of glory to another'.^{vi}

Discuss your experience of this description of worship.

Worship, then, should be like "a raft ride down a mountain river, with exciting passages that leave us breathless and calm places where we sit and contemplate - with bends and curves where we cannot see where we are going Our liturgies should lead us into a real encounter with God and liberate (us) into a new state of seeing and being."^{vii} Worshipers are on a *journey* that is *leading them* somewhere. Participants in worship come to events in which they engage with God and which result in change in their lives, either immediately or in the future; a journey in which they find their bearings in the midst of God's people on earth and in heaven, amidst the great story of salvation.

Worship leader as guide

The task of Worship Leaders is to *guide people on that journey of discovery*, and for this they require a great deal of preparation. They must understand the pace of the journey and the course that it has and is taking. At the same time they must appreciate that no stage of a journey is ever exactly the same. The time, the terrain, the other passengers, the weather and one's mood may all be different. Discerning when we should journey as we have always journeyed and when we should journey differently - to meet the needs of those who now journey with us or to tackle new terrain - is the task of all who prepare and lead worship.

Together, Worship Leaders need to know and understand travellers, context and route.

“Worship should be contextual, sensitive to the particularities of the people and the situation.. One of the challenges of leading worship is therefore to know something about the needs of that particular congregation, whether it is your usual place of worship or a church you are visiting, and to think about how you might set about discovering those needs. As we shall see, people can be shaped in their discipleship, formed in their faith, challenged and encouraged in good worship. But the converse is also true: poor worship can lead to questionable views of God, or dysfunctional relationships, and can depress people or make them dependent. We have to take these things seriously when we are entrusted with leading worship.”^{viii}



**How might you go about this? In what sense should worship be ‘pastoral care’?
And what do you think might be the pitfalls?**

But worship is not simply about the *local* context but about seeking God's Kingdom; in it, we bring the needs of the world to God and are sent back into the world commissioned and blessed. Worship leaders need to enable appropriate connections to be made between the wider world and what happens in the service. Worship must never become a cosy place of escape from the real world. “The God on whom we focus is the One who is passionately concerned about the world, and our worship must reflect that reality. Any worship which avoids the needs of the world for which Christ died is not going to be worship which is true to the gospel. ... When we separate worship and the rest of our life, our worship is ghettoized and our living is secularized. When the connections are not made, our worship becomes inward-looking and dysfunctionally cosy, while our daily living continues unaffected by what we have done, discovered or learned in worship”.^{ix}

Leading worship in an unfamiliar congregation focuses the mind very effectively in preparation; you cannot take anything for granted. But even leading worship in a familiar church can benefit from a step backwards to examine the context in which the act of worship will take place. For instance:

The global context. What is happening in the world that will affect the worship this week? An obvious example would be something such as the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, or the Dunblane tragedy. World events will not necessarily dominate the act of worship, but the leader who fails to acknowledge these events gives the impression that worship is unconnected with the rest of life.

The community context. What is happening in the life of the community which will affect the way worshippers approach worship? This might include such things as recent large-scale redundancies in the area.

The church context. What is happening in the life of the church? Has a key church member recently died, or is everybody conscious of a church family coping with a particularly difficult situation at the moment?

The worship context. What sort of service is this, at what time of day and how many people will be there? What is the likely age profile of worshippers and how does the size of the worship space compare with the size of the congregation (are we going to be rattling around a huge building, or squashed into someone's living room)? What are the possibilities for movement and action and what are the 'built-in' symbolic elements of this building? All of these questions and more will affect the way the service is led.

from *Leading Worship* Mark Earey Grove Worship Series 152, (1999)

In seeking to contextualise worship, however, worship leaders should never forget that the worship they offer is part of something much, much bigger: "*An individual Christian coming to church comes not so much to offer worship as to join an offering continually going on. He comes not to initiate worship but to contribute to and be carried up by a worship which never ceases, the source and fountain of which lies in the eternal activity of Christ.*" (Colin Dunlop Cited by M. Perry "*The Paradox of Worship*" 1977, 10)



Think of a service you attended recently. Work out the ways in which the person leading worship sought to make a connection between that act of worship and the rest of life, and also to kindle a vision of a yet more glorious life with God. How else might s/he have gone about this? List some further suggestions.

Knowing the travellers and the context... the third element is that of the manner in which we journey, and that is what we will turn to in the next session. In preparation for that, please download and read the new Service of the Word and accompanying notes, and bring them with you next time.

http://www.scotland.anglican.org/index.php/liturgy/liturgy/service_of_the_word/

2. Becoming familiar with the character and shape of the journey

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you; pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

As we saw in the last session, a community of faith at worship is a community going somewhere, travelling onwards with a purpose in mind. Worship recalls us 'to our essential nature as people on a journey; tired, a little afraid, not sure when or where the next stop will be, but exulting in the call of God to go forward, and in the glorious company and goodly fellowship whom God gives us as companions on the way'.^x Being a Worship Leader is not about orchestrating a series of static worship moments but leading the people of God on a journey towards God and God's world.

Our liturgical frameworks shape that journey, giving structured access to the immensity of God and preventing local leaders simply doing their favourite (repetitive/selective) thing. Those which shape the Offices contained in Daily Prayer and the new Service of the Word are based on the logic of God's word and our response. We begin by approaching God together, focusing our attention in penitence and praise. We then proclaim and listen to God's word in lection, sermon and creed. The service moves to a period of response in which we face God, the world and ourselves differently in the light of God's word. Finally we are commissioned to re-enter the everyday world as witnesses.

A Service of the Word

In this section, we shall 'walk through' the new Service of the Word together, discussing the accompanying notes and raising issues for attention as we go. Its origins lie in early Jewish Sabbath day worship. When Jesus worshipped in the synagogue, he joined in liturgy largely based on the reading and exposition of Scripture, and the saying or singing of Psalms – a 'Service of the Word'. Early Christian gatherings for worship were also based on this pattern, eventually combining with the Eucharist to provide the familiar shape of the Eucharistic liturgy of Word and Sacrament. At the heart of the service is the Proclamation of the Word. This must not be so lightly treated as to appear insignificant compared with other parts of the service. As a Service of the Word, the liturgy uses texts from scripture, such as the Psalms, as the basis for responses, prayers of penitence, praise, and other elements.

Preparation	<i>Greeting</i>
	<i>Penitence and Forgiveness</i>
	<i>Praise</i>
	<i>Collect of the Day</i>
Proclamation of the Word	<i>Reading(s) from Scripture</i>
	<i>Sermon or other exposition of the Word</i>
	<i>Reflection</i>
	<i>Affirmation of Faith</i>
Prayers	<i>Intercessions</i>
	<i>Lord's Prayer</i>
	<i>Offering (Collection)</i>
Conclusion	<i>Act of Dedication</i>
	<i>Dismissal</i>

Preparation

1 Whenever it is possible, an Opening Hymn or Song helps to gather the people of God for worship. All kinds of congregational songs – traditional hymns, praise songs, reflective chants, responsorial psalms - can be used here and at other places in the Service.

2 ‘The Lord bless you’ is the response of the harvesters to Boaz’s greeting, ‘The Lord be with you’ (Ruth 2.4). Any introductory words that follow about the theme of the service should be very brief and clear. The versicle and response from Isaiah 55 introduces the Prayers of Penitence and Forgiveness.

3.1 Three of the ‘penitential psalms’ form the basis of the Prayers of Penitence. They can be used in a variety of ways. Other translations of the psalms could be used. They can be read together or by different voices or parts. One verse can be used as a congregational response between the other verses. For example, verse 1 of Psalm 38 could be the response, as follows:

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your loving-kindness.
*All: Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your loving-kindness.*

Have mercy on me, O God:
according to your loving-kindness.
I know my transgressions:
and my sin is ever before me.

*All: Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your loving-kindness.*

Purge me from my sin and I shall be pure:
wash me and I shall be clean indeed.
Create in me a clean heart, O God:
and renew a right spirit within me.

*All: Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your loving-kindness.*

- 3.2 The Collect for Epiphany 5, a prayer for forgiveness, has traditionally been used in Anglican worship in place of an absolution, when a priest is not presiding.
- 3.3 The versicle and response from Psalm 28 provide a positive declaration of faith in God's loving mercy.
- 3.4 The traditional Gloria Patri and its alternative form are from Daily Prayer.
- 4 Venite Exultemus (Psalm 95) is a traditional canticle at Morning Prayer. It, or a hymn, enables the congregation to respond in praise to God's mercy. Contemporary and traditional versions are provided in the Appendix. Other versions or musical settings could be used.
- 5 The Collect of the Day brings the Preparation to a close and leads into the Readings. The authorised Collects for the Sundays and Feast Days of the year are found in Scottish Liturgy 1982 Propers (online at <http://www.scotland.anglican.org/index.php/liturgy>), or from the Scottish Prayer Book 1929 (online at <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Scotland>). The Collect is a link with all the other worship of the Church on that day. It may be introduced very briefly, for example, "As we prepare to use the Collect of this Sunday, let us in silence pray for God's guidance" (the central point of the particular collect). After a short period of silent prayer by all, the Collect is said by the president.

Proclamation of the Word

- 6 The readings from Holy Scripture, and their exposition in address or sermon, are central to this Service, and, together with the liturgical season, may determine the theme of the rest of the worship. The readings for the Sundays and Feast Days of the year are found in the Scottish Episcopal Church Calendar and Lectionary, together with its annual Guide (online at <http://www.scotland.anglican.org/index.php/liturgy>).

"Readings for Sundays and Principal Holy Days are taken from the *Revised Common Lectionary*. This offers a three-year cycle of readings for use at the principal service of the day on Sundays and certain Holy Days. It is based on the table of readings produced by the Roman Catholic Church in 1969, which in turn was developed by the Consultation on Common Texts and published in 1984 as the *Common Lectionary*, which was included in the *Scottish Liturgy (Eucharist) 1989*. Reflection on the 1984 text led

to the current revision, undertaken by members of the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC), which included ecumenical associations of churches from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA.

The Synoptic Gospels are read semi-continuously, Matthew in Year A, Mark in Year B, Luke in Year C, with passages from the Fourth Gospel occurring at significant points during the three-year cycle. The other New Testament writings are also arranged to be read semi-continuously over the three years. Old Testament passages have been selected for every Sunday and many holy days, and a psalm is provided as a congregational response to the reading of the Old Testament.

If Old Testament passages were to be selected only to reflect the themes of readings from the New Testament at the same service, there would be little opportunity of listening to the Old Testament in its own right. The *Revised Common Lectionary* has attempted to address this problem by arranging that the Old Testament readings from Advent Sunday through to Pentecost continue to be linked with the Gospel. On the Sundays after Pentecost (except on Trinity Sunday) two Old Testament readings are provided, each with its accompanying psalm. The first set offers semi-continuous reading of the Old Testament texts, the second set offers readings which relate to the theme of the Gospel readings.

It is important to make a deliberate choice between 'semi-continuous' and 'thematic' readings of the Old Testament, and to stay with whichever set of readings reflect that choice, through to the Last Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 34).

The Scripture references given in the *Revised Common Lectionary* follow those of the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible. Those who use other versions of the Scriptures should check these against *NRSV*, especially where verse numbers are concerned. All references to Psalms are based on the Canadian Psalter adopted for use in the Scottish Episcopal Church.” (From the *Introduction to the Calendar and Lectionary of the Scottish Episcopal Church*)

We shall spend a bit of time at this point in the session checking that everyone is familiar with usage of the Lectionary.



Facilitators should devise some training and an exercise that will enable participants to practise finding the appropriate lections for a variety of occasions; and should also take time to gather and answer any questions that arise.



- 7 A sermon may be preached in the normal way. The term 'other Exposition of the Word' includes less formal exposition, the use of drama, interviews, or discussion. (We will look at this in Session 4.)
- 8 The time of Reflection is intended to offer a silent space for prayerful thought after the Proclamation of the Word.
- 9 This leads into the Affirmation of Faith as the liturgical expression of the community's response to the Proclamation of the Word.

9.1 and 9.2

The question and answer form of the Apostles' Creed, and the shorter alternative form, are from Holy Baptism 2006. Using them is a reminder that the response of faith begins with Baptism, and that Christian discipleship is a Baptismal calling.

- 9.3 The Nicene Creed and The Apostles' Creed are the ancient forms of the Creed and are used in the worship of many churches. They are familiar to many Anglicans from the Eucharist and from Morning or Evening Prayer. Contemporary and traditional versions are provided in the Appendix.

Prayers

- 10.1 The Prayers of Intercession follow the structure given, but can use many different forms, as considered appropriate for the community. Supportive preparation and training is desirable, to enable members of the congregation to lead the Prayers.
- 10.2 The Lord's Prayer is an appropriate conclusion to the Prayers of Intercession, drawing them together 'as our Saviour taught us.' It is provided in contemporary and traditional versions.
- 11 The Offering of gifts for the work of the kingdom is linked with the offering of prayer for the needs of the world. When the Offering has been collected it may be received and the Prayer can be used, but actions such as presentation at the altar are unnecessary and should be avoided.

Conclusion

- 12 The Act of Dedication is intended to offer liturgical expression to a dedicated response to the call to faith and service proclaimed in the Word.
- 12.1 The person(s) who gave the Sermon or Exposition of the Word should select a verse from one of the Reading(s), as appropriate.
- 12.2 and 12.3
The versicle and response from Psalm 119 leads into a Prayer of Dedication, said by all. The prayer is from *Affirmation of Holy Baptism 2006*.
- 13 Two traditional canticles, Gloria in Excelsis and Te Deum, are offered as alternatives to a hymn. Contemporary and traditional versions are provided in the Appendix. Other versions or musical settings could be used.
- 14 The Dismissal is intended to be the final part of the service, and it should not be followed by any other hymn or prayer.
- 14.1 'The Lord bless you' is the response of the harvesters to Boaz's greeting, 'The Lord be with you' (Ruth 2.4).
- 14.2 In the same way that a Collect replaces the Absolution in a lay-led service, the Collect for Epiphany 3 is offered here in place of a blessing. Other prayers may be appropriate here, but they should focus on God's equipping his people for mission and service, as this Collect does.
- 14.3 The versicle and response are part of the traditional ending of Daily Prayer. We bless God, as God blesses us at the conclusion of worship.
- 14.4 As a traditional ending for Christian worship, the Grace enables *A Service of the Word* to end with the words of Holy Scripture. If preferred, when a priest or bishop is presiding, a Blessing may be used instead.

Components of SEC Daily Prayer for comparison

Introductory verse and response	invoking God's presence and help
Praise to God	Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with the implied request that our worship and our life reflect God's glory
Psalmody	morning: attitude of praise evening: attitude of reflective trust Within this overall frame it is intended that the psalms reflect the mood and images of the seasons of the year
Scripture reading	(use of lectionary)
Silence	allows time for reflecting or simply being in God's presence
Response	device for concentrating on a particular verse and making it the vehicle of our response to God's word
Gospel canticle	morning: Benedictus evening: Magnificat
Intercession and Lord's Prayer	collect of the day, morning/evening collect.
Conclusion	Verse and response to end

In the next session we will look at techniques of worship leading. In preparation for this, please read Chapter 9 'Presiding' from *At Heaven's Gate; Reflections on Leading Worship* Richard Giles Canterbury (2010)

3. Tools for the journey

In preparing for this session, you have read Richard Giles's list of characteristics of a good Worship Leader: someone who is humble, competent, in charge, invisible and in relationship, and who also acts as 'narrator', 'model', 'presence', 'signpost' and 'choreographer'. Here we build upon that reading by looking at a complementary list of attributes from Mark Earey's guide *Leading Worship*^{xi}, supplemented by other useful texts.

Firstly, however, one characteristic which Earey does not mention but which we might term '**being a non-anxious presence**', someone who calmly guides fellow travellers along the way. The first obligation of the Worship Leader is to get a firm handle on the service in question and all its parts; to know what will happen, when, by whom, how and for what purpose. Hovda writes:

Some (leaders) affect a slightly dazed look, as if wondering what is coming next. Others wear that look quite honestly. Neither type should be permitted to go near a chair, altar or lectern. The appearance of the person in that role is the most powerful signal the congregation has that the work it is engaged in has some importance, some meaning, some clarity and logic, A leader who looks baffled demoralizes an assembly without uttering a word, whereas one who is confident of the rite and its progression communicates positively with everyone.^{xii}

Being on top of the rite through meticulous preparation in the preceding week and by being silent and prayerful in the vestry immediately beforehand – there should be absolutely no fussing in the sanctuary or vestry for the last ten minutes prior to a service – means that you can settle into the role of being a 'non-anxious presence' when worship begins. Thus when others are reading scripture, you will be free to listen with the rest of the congregation rather than turning up the next hymn; when others are preaching or interceding, you will be able to listen or pray likewise, modelling the congregation's response in your own body language and attentiveness.

'Slapdash worship starts and finishes with the (Worship Leader); if his (sic) posture spells a casual or amateurish approach – sitting cross-legged, hands forever fiddling and moving around – this soon spreads throughout the assembly. The leader carries the burden of embodying the worship of the whole group and his body language must be measured and impeccable.'^{xiii} We may not think that what we do as Worship Leaders 'all the way up there' in the sanctuary/stalls or 'hidden' behind a screen is visible or distracting – but the following excerpt from Robin Green's book *Only Connect* would suggest otherwise.



A friend exploded into my home one morning. 'That was an absolutely dreadful induction last night,' she said. 'I just hope the new vicar didn't see what was going on. It would have ruined the whole event for him.' 'What on earth happened?' I responded. 'That

bishop... that bloody bishop... all he did throughout the service was to fidget, look around. . . and every five minutes he checked his watch. It was unbelievable; completely wrecked the liturgy for me.'

It would be easy to dismiss that as an over-sensitive reaction to a minor matter. But perhaps it helps us face up to a serious issue. Liturgy is often experienced very differently in the pew than it is in the sanctuary of the pulpit. Elizabeth's reaction leaves us in no doubt as to the value and significance she was giving to that liturgical event. Because of the peculiar jobs that I have had over the last ten years, I have also spent a great deal more time than most clergy in the pew. It is a privileged place from which to reflect on the conduct of liturgy and those who conduct it. My experience has not been exhilarating. I could count on one hand the number of times when I have felt really cared for in a liturgy. But that is not my major concern. What disturbs me much more is the deadness, sloppiness, lack of preparation and any sense of making connections which characterise the leadership of so much worship. It has felt too often like a nod towards the absence of God. Why, I kept on asking, are sermons so badly prepared, when numerous lay people tell me in the course of my work that they are longing for connections to be made between their life experience and biblical tradition? Why do some clergy slouch around the altar or alternatively walk around as if God was a regimental sergeant-major barking his orders? Why do clergy, servers, choir appear in tatty, and sometimes dirty, linen? Why do some bend over backwards to assure us apparently that nothing of very great significance is happening? Why are the intercessions so poorly constructed, so sterile and repetitive, so devoid of empathy and raw human need and real human passion?

Those who sit in the pew do not miss these things and, like Elizabeth, are baffled as to why (the church) invests so much time and energy in so many other activities and gives so little time to the conduct of corporate worship. In her particular instance, time seemed to be grudged in what was almost certainly an over-busy life... When worship leaders perform sloppily in their liturgical work, they are obviously not attributing a high professional value to this part of their activities. And when they perform badly in benediction, the unspoken messages to the congregation are that: (1) benedictions are rather meaningless, (2) the pastor does not deem the people worthy of receiving them, (3) the pastor himself has long given up thought of providence, or (4) the pastor refuses to shoulder the shepherd's role.

Robin Green *Only Connect. Worship and Liturgy from the Perspective of Pastoral Care* (1988) 119-20



Discuss your reactions to this passage and what can be done about the problems which Green highlights.

Close the discussion by practising sitting with in an upright position with both feet firmly on the floor and hands clasped in your lap. Share any hints and tips about posture and breathing that aid stillness which may be present in the group.

We will deal at greater length with the issue of stillness and silence in Session 4

We continue, then, with Mark Earey's list (Earey, 1999, Chapter 4 'Laying some personal foundations'); the Facilitator should summarise each section and invite discussion of the points made therein.

Be a servant:

It is not easy to combine servanthood and leadership, and Worship Leaders often tend to one of two extremes: either totally dominating and intrusive, or else so shy of giving a clear lead that they are ineffective.

Leadership is a gift from God, given for the benefit of the body. The leader serves by leading well. To serve in leadership is to give more attention to the act of worship as a whole than to one's own part in it, or enjoyment of it. The leader's chief role is to ensure that God is the focus and that others are enabled to use their gifts and play their part.

Liturgy (the corporate, public worship of the church) is 'work for the people' and 'work of the people'. This means that the worshippers must be inspired and enriched by the worship offered by the church and enabled to play their proper part in it. The worship must be owned by the worshippers and the leader must respect the expectations of the worshippers. This is not to say that the congregation must never be challenged, or that nothing must ever change. What it does suggest is that the leader who changes things for the sake of his or her interests or preferences, without consultation and without regard to the wider church, does violence to this principle. The increasing flexibility and variety of liturgy brings with it great opportunities, but also carries the danger of spending hours each week tinkering with the liturgy, searching for new texts and imposing them on a defenceless congregation week after week. Any sense of continuity in worship is subsumed by the desire for something new, and the worship becomes the property of the leader alone. The person who controls the photocopier (or computer, or OHP) controls the liturgy.

Be a Worshipper

Learning to worship while you are leading worship can be hard. For most of us, our expectations of worship are so tied up with our own emotional needs, expression and fulfilment that anything that gets in the way feels like a hindrance. The truth is that you cannot worship in the same way when you are leading, but that does not mean you cannot worship. It simply means that you have to learn to see the act of leading itself as part of your offering to God. Over time, it becomes easier to be less distracted by the practicalities, less nervous and more confident. But always the leader of worship is there primarily as the servant of the worshipping community, and that means an offering to the Lord of a different sort.

Christopher Ellis's analogy of the host is helpful in coming to understand what that other offering might feel like. **Read and discuss the following passage:**



Remind yourself of what you experience when you pray in your own personal devotions. Sometimes you may be able to focus on God such that you become unaware of your surroundings. Sometimes you might feel like an aeroplane that fails to get off the ground. But occasionally you may experience an intense feeling of longing, or gratitude, or love for God. Now think what it is like to be led in prayer in a church service. The insight, sensitivity and faith of the person leading the prayer might be able to help you focus on God in a way which gives you a deep sense of God's presence and grace.

Now try and imagine what is happening when you are asked to lead the congregation in prayer. Your main responsibility is not primarily to offer your own prayers and be 'lost in wonder, love and praise', but to help other people to pray. Of course, you are still praying, and you need to be sincere in the things you say, but the prayers need to be offered in such a way that the members of the congregation are able to make the prayers their own. One consequence of this is that different congregations may require our praying in different ways. For example, in a family service we will use different language and perhaps follow different themes than in a healing service. If we are leading a small group of friends in a home group we will pray in a different way from when we are leading a congregation of a couple of hundred people. The needs of the situation and the people involved affect how we lead prayer - because our leading prayer is a service to them, as well as to God.

Imagine you are hosting a party where there is a buffet meal. Yes, of course you will have something to eat yourself - and usually at the same time as your guests. But as the host, your first responsibility is to ensure that your guests are fed and have all they need. Only after this will it be time for you to have some food yourself. In a similar way, when you are invited to lead worship you will indeed worship God yourself, but your primary responsibility will be to help others to worship. This means sacrificing the freedom to be lost in what you are doing, and this sacrifice is a large part of your offering to God in that particular service - it is your worship. You will need to worship God in a different way.^{xiv}

Be an appropriate guide:

Make sure you lead to scale, getting your leadership right for the size of the building, the type of service and the number of people. Scale affects a whole range of things, such as volume and tone, use of gestures, level of formality, how many procedural announcements to give, the use of humour and what you wear. Dress for unity, not to make a point. If wearing your Mickey Mouse tie/ear-rings speaks to you of your freedom from stuffy formalism, but speaks to half the congregation of a lack of respect for God and a trivial approach to worship, then your leadership will serve to divide the congregation and draw attention to you – and that is before you have said anything. Dress to scale and to context. What is right for a packed Carol Service in a Cathedral will not suit an informal service in a small chapel. Whatever you choose, *if* the choice is yours, what you wear will probably create the first impression on the congregation, and you want that impression to open the door to worship, not close it.

Be an audible/visible guide:

The Worship Leader is the one who holds the service together; through her gifts, it has shape, pace and direction. This means not only that s/he has to be both audible and visible, but that there needs to be clarity about who the overall leader is, especially when liturgy is enacted collaboratively. In some churches, this will be indicated by vesture or position (who sits where), or by some other means such as who wears the radio microphone. The important thing is that it is clear who is leading the worship. This may include introducing yourself in order that the congregation can see that someone is in control of the service so that they can focus on God. Being visible is also important in order that, as leader, you can give visual clues as to what is happening. Visitors in particular will instinctively look at the leader to see what to do. It is important, however, that worship leaders recognise that a Service of the Word is different to a celebration of the Eucharist and that their role is different to that of a Presbyter. Thought must be given to where the worship leader sits and stands to lead this service. Worship leaders are not presiding over the gathered community; they are leading the gathered community in prayer.

When speaking, stand straight upright and balanced, with your feet apart. If you have your weight on your toes rather than on your heels, you will find breathing easier. Open your mouth so that the words are heard clearly, and speak more slowly and loudly than you think is natural. By far the most common mistake is to speak too fast, and being nervous makes things worse. Listen to the pace of a good reader and see how slowly they take it. If you feel you are speaking at half your normal speed, it is probably about right. The larger the building, the slower you need to speak; when a building is full of people, the sound is absorbed very easily and tends not to be heard clearly, so you have to take extra care. Hold your script and your head well up so that you are looking out rather than down. Imagine that you are talking to someone right at the other end of the church. That way you will “throw” your voice.

Using a microphone

- If there is one, use it, even if you have a loud voice. There may be an induction loop to help the hearing impaired, and some churches record parts of the service. In both cases, the microphone is the pick-up for the system.
- Always stand so that you are speaking towards the microphone.
- Ignore the fact that the microphone is there at all. It is there to reinforce your voice, not to do all the work for you. If you speak as if you had no amplification, you will be doing fine. Imagine that you are talking to someone right at the other end of the church.
- If you have to turn over the page from which you are reading, do it very gently to avoid the mike picking up rustling noises.
- Microphones tend to flatten the voice, so remember to make an extra effort to vary your tone

Be a clear and consistent guide:

The Worship Leader needs to be clear in giving directions and giving a lead for spoken texts. There are different ways of introducing words that the congregation join in:

You can say '*We say together...*'

You can start them off with the first line and they join in with the rest.

You can say the first line yourself as a cue, and they then repeat it and carry on with the rest.

You can give them a separate 'cue' line.

Separate cue lines require either a printed text with the congregation's words clearly indicated in bold, or a familiar cue line for a particular prayer. Well-established Anglican examples would include, '*Lord in your mercy,*' which will normally elicit the response, '*Hear our prayer,*' or, '*As our Saviour taught us, so we pray,*' which should produce, '*Our Father...*' Consistency is the name of the game.

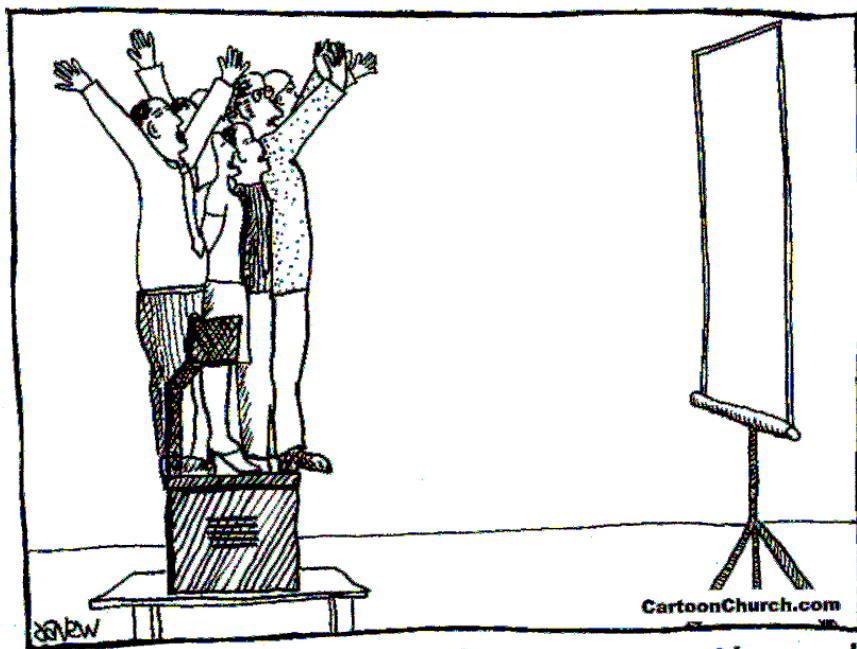
The Lord's Prayer is a particularly tricky case. Many congregations now use both a traditional and a modern form. As the prayer is not always printed, it is vital that leaders make a good clear start in such a way that the congregation knows which form to use. If the text is not printed, and there is no 'cue line', leaders tend to introduce the traditional form like this:

'Our Father [slight pause, then everyone joins in] who art in heaven...'

The modern form needs to be introduced slightly differently:

'Our Father in heaven [all said in one breath, then a slight pause, then everyone joins in] hallowed be your name...'

Once you have launched a congregational text, maintain a clear lead right to the end. Do not fade out halfway through or start getting the next thing ready. The same rules apply to leading a time of silence. Be confident and clear and give a strong lead; (do not fidget or get a book ready during silences).



"We will now stand and sing the next song on the overhead projector"

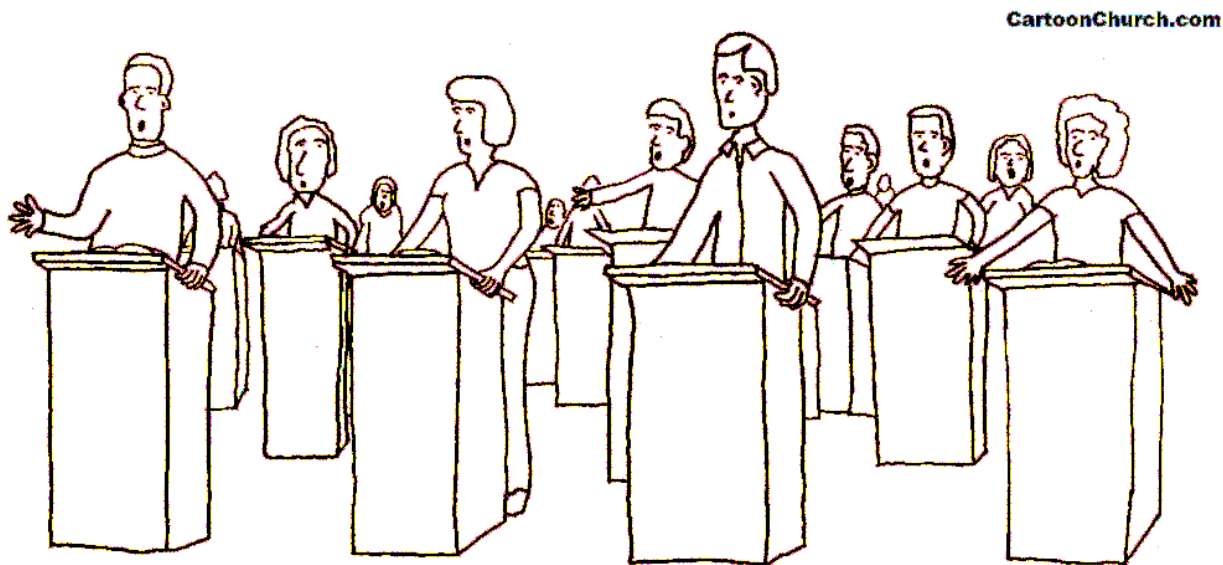
Make sure you use language carefully and mean what you say. Try to avoid saying things like, 'After the prayers, we'll have a time of worship' if what you mean is, 'After the prayers, we'll spend some time singing quietly.' Careless talk can cause confusion, as left!

If you are suggesting a posture, it is usually best to mention it last: 'Our next hymn is number 7, we stand to sing.' If you do it the other way round, the sound of movement will drown out the instruction. Be careful not to exclude people in the way you invite participation. Offering choices on the service sheet – 'here we stand, kneel or sit to pray' - is one way of accommodating all abilities; 'please stand if you are able' is another.

Be a human guide:

Humour can be a great help in 'humanizing' an act of worship and can be useful when things go wrong, but it needs to be used with care. Jokes are often a cover for a lack of confidence, and a wisecracking Worship Leader may simply make the congregation feel they are not in safe hands. Similarly it is perfectly all right to make the odd mistake in liturgy – we are, after all, human - but not to make a subsequent fuss about it. Never use asides that only part of the congregation can hear, or in-jokes that only part of the congregation will understand. Both will undermine the sense of unity that the Worship Leader should be focussing.

Do not assume a pompous or parsonical voice. It is important to project the voice, enunciate clearly and not to drop your voice at the end of lines – but not to assume a false 'in church' tone in so doing. 'Living mirrors' in the form of friends or trusted advisors can give valuable feedback on audibility and tone, and videotaping can also be a powerful learning tool for a Worship Leader.



ANGLICAN ORDINANDS LEARN TO SPEAK FROM LECTERNS USING
THE SPECIAL "REVERENT AND TERRIBLY APPROPRIATE" CLERGY VOICE

Be a graceful guide:

Hovda reminds us that "the visual and experiential impact of one's posture and carriage is influential; even when people are not conscious of it".^{xv} In some churches, the Worship Leader never has to move far during a Service of the Word, but if yours is the sort of church where things are well spaced, and where movement between them is given symbolic significance, then you will need to be able to move properly. There are all sorts of rules about how you should hold your hands, how and when you should

bow and which way you should face (which we will practise in a moment), but one essential rule is *to move with purpose and confidence and otherwise to stay still*. Another is to ‘walk in squares’, rather than going directly and diagonally towards your next position. And to move reverently.

“Reverence has everything to do with pace, with timing. When liturgy is the work of the whole person, the spirit and body together, then the beauty of prayer makes for a pace that is reverent. The liturgical way of doing something has nothing to do with efficiency; hurrying liturgy can only seem foolish.” ^{xvi}



At this point the Facilitator should spend some time with the participants practising issues of liturgical deportment, especially bowing, walking in procession, and the use of hand gestures.

If the Facilitator requires further information on these issues, then s/he should consult *The Priest's Companion*, a copy of which is in the Diocesan Library.

Then in conclusion, either

- **review the attributes listed in this sessions and see if there are others you wish to suggest**

or

- **read the following section from Hovda together and discuss any other issues that have arisen from the session that have not yet been addressed**



One who leads in common prayer must be more than prayerful. By definition, any believer is a prayerful person, but there are different kinds of prayerfulness. (Leading worship) requires a kind of modest prayerfulness that is heavy on awe and

mystery, light on answers and recipes. The one who frequently succumbs to the temptation to spell out God's will in lurid detail may be marvellous in a rally but is unsuited for the task of presiding in liturgy. This has something to do with liturgy's commonness. It has to do with vibrations which ring out self or God ... with quite unequal results. Together with this needed sense of awe and human limits, the presider must have some confidence in himself/herself. Leadership in worship as in anything else is a service to the community that flounders if one is unsure of one's training, understanding, efforts to “keep up,” etc. We can recognize inadequacies and seek to correct them, but an underlying confidence is

required to do even that. One need not have “all the answers” to be strong in this kind of leadership, strong in the conviction that one can function well in this role, strong in our efforts to improve.

And no faceless assembly can help us. Until that congregation appears to us as people with faces, personalities and names, we cannot really preside. A pastoral respect and reverence for people is an indispensable prerequisite. One sea of faces is very much like another, and the presider who sees only a sea of faces is the one whose manner will seem phony, distant, and preoccupied with self. But when one sees different faces, with different responses, different faces with different names and attitudes and needs (all with a claim on one who aspires to serve them), then the whole atmosphere is different and the vibrations are right.

A feeling for the movement and rhythm of ritual action is another requirement of a good approach to preparation. There is nothing terribly complicated about this sensitivity - one need only be aware of one's reactions (interest, attention, or the lag thereof) in any human social activity. The structures of the rites do not assume a long attention span. They are full of alternations between persons and groups of persons, between sounds and silences, between reading and singing, between rest and movement, between word and action, between light and darkness, between listening and other kinds of doing, and so on. If one takes a rite as a whole, there is a progression from gathering, to building up, to climax, to dismissal. Anyone who can take such rites and make them appear to be without form, rhythm or movement possesses a certain genius, to be sure, but it is not the genius of presiding.

Finally, among these mindset prerequisites, a word about words, about the poetic character of all liturgical texts. A society and culture that places a high value on accuracy of detail and the avoidance of figures of speech is going to have trouble with the verbal as well as the nonverbal language of liturgy. In liturgy we deal with things beyond our ken, with aspirations beyond our experience, with the givens of faith which strain our formulas at every point—in other words, we read and speak as symbolically as we act (notwithstanding the jingles that pass for lyrics in some of our music). This means a care with words, a striving for paucity of verbal expression in liturgy . . . and, when we do use words, an effort to make them really count. If we are aware that our words are poetic and symbolic, we may learn to be less heavy-handed with them, more delicate, more modest, more humble. ^{xvii}

In preparation for the next session, please read Chapter 12 “Silence” and Chapter 16 “Preaching” from *At Heaven's Gate. Reflections on Leading Worship* Richard Giles Canterbury Press (2010).

4. Stopping for silence and speech

*A gifted musician was once asked how he handled the notes so well.
"The notes I handle no better than any others, but the rests between the notes,
that is where the art resides"^{xviii}*

On any journey, there are moments of great activity – toiling up the mountain or scurrying down – and moments of tranquillity - pausing to take stock of the ground covered, catch one's breath and admire the view. So it is in liturgy; not everything goes at the same pace. You will recall the comment of religious sociologist Keith Hadaway, quoted in Session 1, that a worship service should be like 'a raft ride down a mountain river, with exciting passages that leave us breathless *and calm places where we sit and contemplate*'. In this session, then, we will look particularly at those 'calm places'.

Corporate silence

In a frenetic world, one of the gifts that the Church has to offer people is silence, and good liturgy should be replete with the same. Indeed the new Service of the Word creates just such a silent space for prayerful thought at Section 8, after the Proclamation of the Word, as does Night Prayer/Compline. Richard Giles reminds us (2004, 26) that silence in worship frees us to hear God's speech, and so needs to become an accepted part of worship, 'the thing we do' in the assembly at worship, naturally, without embarrassment, and without sneaking a look at our watches. In the silence, in listening, we are enabled to enter the stream of God's being, and discover our deepest selves.

Thus Worship Leaders need to be able to handle corporate silence well; they must learn to be comfortable in leading silence, and above all enable it to be of adequate length. If this means counting to 20 slowly in one's head for the first few times, or praying the Lord's Prayer internally, then so be it; no-one else will know and the length will have been well-timed. An inadequate period of silence, on the other hand, creates an uneasy and coldly rubrical impression; congregations will sense the impatience and anxiety of a leader who simply has to get on with the words, and who cannot allow the silence to become real for them.

Silence in a corporate setting takes some time to establish itself; it does not begin until the coughing, creaking and shuffling cease, and that takes time. But congregations will be helped by – indeed take their cue from - the stillness and the silence of the Worship Leader sitting with feet firmly on the floor, hands clasped in lap and eyes shut, or standing in a balanced manner with head bowed. Think of the density of the two minutes' silence on Remembrance Sunday; this level of attention *is* indeed possible.



The Facilitator should devise some exercise that enables all the participants to experience leading a substantial period of silence within the group setting.

Use this time also to share hints and tips about leading silence in liturgies other than the new Service of the Word (e.g. Compline, Taizé); the use of instrumental music/singing to open and close periods of silence; what might be stated on a service sheet about silence, and so on.

The Exposition of the Word

*Preaching is a corporate activity of the Church,
an act of worship in which preacher and the people in the pew go into action together.*
Donald Coggan

A second period for corporate pausing is in the sermon slot. Worship Leaders in this diocese are authorised to preach in a particular congregation at the invitation of the priest and with the Bishop's approval, and may find themselves so doing several times a year. This course cannot teach Worship Leaders the art of preaching - a separate course is planned for that particular skill – but it does seek to address Rubric 7 which states that “the term ‘other Exposition of the Word’ includes less formal exposition, the use of drama, interviews, or discussion”. (The Facilitator should choose which methods listed on the following pages to address, and enable the group to discuss the merits or otherwise of these.)

Brief reflection on the text

One such ‘less formal’ method of exposition is simply to offer a brief reflection on the text, in which a connection between the faith tradition and the lives of those who are gathered is made. The art of preaching has been described as “at once the proclamation of God’s word and the naming of grace in human experience.”^{xix} The “good news” of God’s abiding presence, love, and mercy is to be found in our everyday human experience, and laypeople who are called upon to preach can be assured that God is indeed to be found in their own, unique, life experience. With spouses, families, careers, community responsibilities and a myriad of relationships, they have endless opportunities to experience and name grace in their own lives and many ways to connect life and faith. If a Worship Leader can articulate his/her experience of God, the community before them will resonate with that experience and be moved to find that “good news” in their own lives. Lay preachers should never feel that they have nothing to share.

One way of preparing to offer such a reflection is to engage in a form of personal Contextual Bible Study using *one* of the lections set for the day. The process works through a sequence of ever-deepening questions, beginning with the eliciting of your immediate response to the passage after you have read it several times through:

- *What jumped off the page at you?* **(opening)**

From there, the enquiry moves to the type of question that encourages you to examine the particulars of the story more closely ... **(close reading)**

- *Who is involved? Where? When?*

A further analysis of the response to that question then follows ...

- *From the text, what can you tell about one or two of these characters?* **(questions that reflect on the text and its context)**

At this stage, the analysis starts to bring in knowledge and expertise about the social, historical or religious context of the passage. It is at this stage that you might consult commentaries.

After this, the focus of shared reflection begins to move away from the text into the present experience of the Worship Leader or context of the church community **(resonances between the text and the now)**

Finally one asks what difference the insights elicited from the passage might make to the church community/wider local community's life and involvements.

- *How might our exploration of this passage affirm or challenge the faith and action of the Christian community today?* **(seeking transformation)**

Overleaf is a worked example using Psalm 23, used a few years ago in St Mary's Ullapool just before the start of Advent. While this was done *corporately*, the method is equally applicable and appropriate to the preparation of a reflection upon scripture on the part of a Worship Leader.

*The Lord is my shepherd: I lack nothing.
 He makes me lie down in green pastures,
 he leads me to water where I may rest;
 he revives my spirit;
 for his name's sake he guides me in the right paths.
 Even were I to walk through a valley of deepest darkness
 I should fear no harm, for you are with me;
 your shepherd's staff and crook afford me comfort.
 You spread a table for me in the presence of my enemies;
 you have richly anointed my head with oil,
 and my cup brims over.
 Goodness and love unfailing will follow me all the days of my life,
 and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord throughout the years to come.*



- Q1 What jumps off the page at you from this text?
- Q2 Name the images and characteristics of God that you hear in this psalm.
- Q3 What kind of situation do you imagine this text to have addressed in ancient Israel? (Why might it have been written? Why might it have appealed to the people?)
- Q4 What kinds of situation, do you think, does this Psalm speak to in our time - personally or generally?
- Q5 In particular, thinking of this congregation of St Mary's,
 a) what "dangers" do you see facing you?
 b) what "anointings" are there which might bring renewal/new life?
- Q6 What might we take out of this reflection to help us as a congregation prepare for this new year in our life together, set as we are in this particular community?



Is this method helpful? If so, why? If not, why?

Using a published resource

In some churches worship leaders read pre-prepared published homilies. These can be a very helpful resource for those who wish to offer a reflection on the readings but feel unable to write their own sermon. It is important, however, to read carefully through these before delivering them so that they can be delivered naturally and with appropriate feeling. Reading through them in good time also gives the worship leader a chance to change references or allusions which might seem out of place in their context, e.g. changing a reference to an English footballer to that of a Scottish one. Another way is adopt the monastic custom of supplementing the Scriptural reading with a passage from a book such as *Celebrating the Seasons* or *Celebrating the Saints*, anthologies of non-scriptural readings from the Christian tradition. A simple reading of one such passage followed by silence for reflection or the (unargumentative) pooling of responses is a good way to use the sermon slot.

Yet another way of engaging in 'less formal' methods of exposition is to use a resource which enables discussion of a Gospel passage. One of the best of these is John Pritchard's *Living the Gospel Stories Today*.^{xx} These are lively retellings of, and reflections upon, Gospel stories which could be easily read aloud in the space of 5–8 minutes, followed by questions for group reflection. Trevor Dennis has published a series of compilations of stories and poetry which can be easily adapted for use in this way: *The Three Faces of Christ* SPCK (1999); *Keeping God Company* SPCK (2002); *The Christmas Stories* SPCK (2007) and the following web sites also publish helpful materials: <http://www.brf.org.uk/> and <http://www.textweek.com/>

With reference to "The paradox of being a disciple" (Matthew 10, 1-8), Pritchard offers these questions:

- *Which of Jesus' first followers do you most identify with, and why?*
- *If everyone in your church were doing and contributing what you are, how healthy would the church be?!*
- *Can you sense any direction in your discipleship, a developing movement of your spirit/God's Spirit?*

If you want people's response to be more active, then there are also suggestions for group activities:

- *On a flip-chart, make up the front page of a local or national newspaper (in outline, not in every word) which reports the news of what God is doing (and suffering) in the world today. What stories would you put in, and what pictures? You could develop this with what features there would be inside; would there be cartoons? What would be on the sports page?*

If you want the reading to lead into prayer, then there are suggested avenues for this too.

Discussion

Used as we all are to ‘monologue’ preaching, the idea of more participatory methods can at first seem alarming, even improper. But it is important to remember that Jesus has been called ‘the dialogic Christ’ because he was always engaging people in conversations that allowed the interlocutor to respond freely, to be partners in creating the message. As Ched Myers has pointed out, more than three-quarters of the episodes in Mark’s Gospel are posed around questions to, by or about Jesus; “Jesus is presented not as a sage who explains life’s mysteries but as the great interlocutor of reality.”^{xxi} Preaching in New Testament times took a variety of forms, both monologic and dialogic, and while the evidence suggests that preaching after that period took the form of a homily based on the text, a number of Patristic writings – Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho*, Origen’s *Against Celsus* – reflect a dialogic approach to communicating the Gospel, at least to outsiders. This section, then, looks at ways of encouraging such dialogue; of moving from a silent audience to a verbal one.

Dialogue occurs when the contribution of the congregational members takes the sermon on beyond what the questioner had envisaged. “In dialogue, what one says is not fully predetermined but is in large measure in response to the preceding comments of the other. There is in the act of speaking a consciousness of movement, change, uncertainty, openness to interruption and, of course, insecurity.”^{xxii} Two recent Grove Booklets suggest ways in which such a dialogical method might be encouraged. Jeremy Thomson's booklet *Preaching as Dialogue*^{xxiii} suggests three methods: firstly the preacher can invite questions at the end of a usual sermon or stop for questions in the course of the sermon. Alternatively, s/he might hold up the argument of the sermon to allow for a contribution, personal insight or relevant experience by which the congregation can illustrate a sermonic point. Or s/he might break the sermon to invite listeners either in pairs or groups to react to what they have heard so far and feed the results back into the sermon.

- inviting and stopping for questions, answering them or providing for their subsequent answering
- allowing for a contribution or insight to be made which the preacher might otherwise not have included
- asking a member to recount an experience of relevance to the subject
- getting the listeners into small buzz groups of two or three to explore initial responses (ideas, feelings) to key issues being raised, followed by a short time of feedback to the whole congregation of some of these

adapted from Jeremy Thomson *Preaching as Dialogue* 23-24

Tim Stratford's *Interactive Preaching* invites a more open strategy whereby the preacher begins the sermon but then pauses to leave space for the congregation to contribute:

Once the congregation have recognized clearly enough the relationship the preacher perceives between God's message to his people in the Bible and life today, they should be given space with judicious questions to take the sermon on. The preacher's duty is to echo back what is said so that all can hear, and to interpret what is said and make the connections the unprofessional speaker might have intended but not vocalized - always checking back with the questioner for assent. At the end the preacher will need to tie up the loose ends again. This tying-up can be prepared from within the preacher's own assumptions and the basis of where he or she has come from - but also leaving space to recall what others have said.^{xxiv}

He argues that though this approach may leave the preacher feeling vulnerable, the big advantage is that contributions will reflect the real life of the congregation and not simply the preacher's world view.

One priest speaks of how dialogue was encouraged in a congregation within which he worshipped:

'The Word is very near to you'. This text was 'fulfilled in my hearing' in a church to which I used to belong in which the custom was for the preacher to speak for 10 minutes and for the next 20 to be given over to anyone present to offer their take on the biblical passages or the theme as the roving microphone was passed round. Coming from the person sitting next to us, the Word was indeed very near us ... even at times on my own lips and always in my own heart too.^{xxv}

This is an excellent way to encourage interaction, but may be a step too far for some congregations, presuming a level of ease with speaking into a microphone that may be daunting for some. Several SEC congregations have *begun* by encouraging discussion of sermons at coffee time, sometimes distributing a typed summary of the sermon so as to enable discussion of the themes.

Such feedback to the sermon trains laity and clergy in attitudes and skills helpful in full participatory preaching. There is a necessary granting of permission to speak that must accompany participatory models. Most people in church have been carefully schooled to sit quietly and speak only when addressed. Persons who have no difficulty talking before and after the service may find it anxiety-producing to say anything during worship.^{xxvi}



What do you think about these methods of enabling a discussion?

Which ones do you think would work in your context?

Which ones would you feel comfortable trying?

Interviews are a good way of ensuring that connections are made between the resources of faith and daily living. One method suggested by Mark Greene in his booklet *Supporting Christians at Work*^{xxvii} is called 'This Time Tomorrow'. Here a Rector speaks of his experience of using this method:

At the Church of the Good Shepherd we have tried to involve others in the "sermon slot" by borrowing an idea called TTT – This Time Tomorrow. We asked three members of the congregation to tell us in 3 minutes what they would be doing 24 hours later on an ordinary Monday morning. Two were office workers and the third a shop assistant. It was almost the first time in our church when we felt we actually began to know one another and the sorts of problems we were all facing. People spoke simply, honestly and from the heart about the challenges of daily ministry - one even got his mobile phone to ring half way through his time to illustrate the endless interruptions that happened in his workplace!^{xxviii}



If a person does not want to speak single-handedly, then another method is for the Worship Leader to interview him/her. Interviewer and interviewee prepare in advance a few questions about the latter's job and how his/her faith impinges upon it. While the *responses* are best left unscripted, nevertheless the possession of a running order of questions allows both parties a measure of security. Possible questions for such an interview include: What do you do? What are the issues you face at work? How does your faith help you with those issues?

- Tell us how you spend your day.
- What is satisfying for you in your work? What is stressful?
- What is the impact of your work on your health and on your family?
- How does your workplace need to change? How can you help, or not?
- What are the ethical and justice or fairness issues you have to deal with at work?
- Does it make any difference that you are a person of faith in your workplace? How does your faith connect to your work?

Adapted from *The Empowering Church* Davida Foy Crabtree The Alban Institute (1989), 2.

A further variation on this theme is to run a series called 'My favourite hymn'. In interview, ask people to explain why they chose the particular hymn, to outline what it says and to share what it has meant to their life. Again a profound depth of theological discussion can emerge from such a series.

Biblio-drama is a form of Bible study whereby dramatized biblical stories are related to the life stories of the acting participants; their present experiences of life helps to interpret the Bible and vice-versa. The dramatized biblical passages throw new light on the life-situation and fundamental human questions of those who participate. While we may often have seen biblical stories enacted by children, it is often new for adults to try their hand at this, so Worship Leaders need to be sensitive and gentle in the way they encourage people to participate, and respectful of those who decline to do so.

The simplest form is a *dramatic reading*. People will be familiar with the custom on Palm Sunday and Good Friday of a group reading the Gospel aloud, each main character having a reader and all joining in for the words said by the crowd. It can easily be adapted for other times of the year; the best way is to print out copies of the Gospel text for each character and highlight the parts individually. (Allow a short period of silence following the reading, and then invite everyone to reflect upon what they read or heard, what it said to them, how they felt and what resonances they experienced with their own lives.)

Role-play is even more imaginative. The group works out who are the main characters in the action of the Bible story, and then the roles are distributed. Some may act as the onlookers, others may group together as 'the Sadducees', 'Herod and his followers', or whatever else the story may require. Where the group has more members than there are characters in the story, a small number may choose one character to play together. As well as lending support to shy members, this sharing of characters can be very beneficial in getting people to understand the role they have chosen, for some time is always taken for getting into role before playing through the story. The story is acted through just as many times as seems helpful. When the play is finished, everyone says their own name aloud to make sure all are out of the role they have just played, and then everyone then gets a chance to say what happened for them and what they feel they have learnt from the experience.

Then there is the *role interview*. This is where one or more of the group opts to play a character from the Bible and is then 'interviewed' in role by another group member. Others look on and then, after getting out of role, everyone discusses the experience. Another similar approach is *character identification*. Each group member chooses character in the biblical story with whom they feel they can identify and then explains why. We can even do this without actually acting the play through, and this can particularly be beneficial for those who like to talk but are too embarrassed or frail to act.

Adapted from *Let's Do Theology A Pastoral Cycle Resource Book* Mowbray (1990)



Once again the Facilitator should enable to the group to discuss the following questions:

What do you think about these methods of discussion, interview and drama?

Which ones do you think would work in your context?

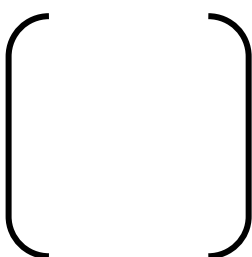
Which ones would you feel comfortable trying?

Are there any other methods which you would recommend?

Practical issues

In using any of these formats, it is best if people can move out of sitting in serried ranks. Small congregations are often able to do this, moving to another area in church if there are fixed pews, or rearranging the chairs if such flexibility exists. Something as simple as the way in which you set out chairs can make or break the level of participation. If you want to encourage the congregation to interact, then sitting them in rows facing the front is less likely to work than sitting people in a u-shape or boat-shape, or even grouped round small tables. The default “classroom” seating arrangement also subliminally creates the impression that the Worship Leader is the “teacher” and the participants passive recipients of her/his instruction. Creating seating arrangements which break down this impression and enable eye-contact between members is vital if participation is to be encouraged.

Single circles are widely adopted as democratic and participatory; the symmetry of the seating is obvious. All the same they can intimidate, especially when there are large numbers. Shy people can feel



exposed and the Worship Leader can still dominate. “Open clams” (left) - two arcs of chairs facing each other - appear to work better. Each seat has an opposite seat. No seat can command as much attention as in a circle. With larger numbers too, open clams also have the advantage of allowing entry at both ends. They entail slightly less sense of personal exposure. Double circles

and double open clams have further advantages: the eye-contact to numbers ratio is lower and any sense of exposure less; no one person can be seen by all the others; the leader is less dominant; voices can come from many directions. Do however bear in mind the needs of those with hearing impairments if using any of these more informal methods of seating.

Jeremy Thomson points out that the *amount of time* needed for interactive forms of Exposition of the Word is greater than a normal sermon requires. However, time passes more quickly when people are engaged in participatory learning as opposed to listening to a monologue, and experience shows that people will more readily give time to what is interesting, helpful and involving. One way of introducing such a method is to try using it 'as an experiment' during a short season, say Lent or Advent, or perhaps once a month. Encourage wide feedback, evaluation and discussion of the method before deciding whether or not to proceed in this vein more regularly.

The *number of people* involved is likewise a significant factor. "Preaching that is participatory and invites response works best in the small church."^{xxix} It is more difficult to incorporate elements of interactive preaching in gatherings of over thirty participants unless congregations are prepared to divide into smaller groupings for that part of the service. While there were certain occasions in the New Testament when large crowds heard teaching, we need to take seriously the high incidence of preaching and teaching in small- to medium-sized groups; few of the early churches which met in people's homes would have numbered more than twenty to thirty. Small churches have a definite advantage over large ones when it comes to encouraging interactive preaching.

In the final session we shall be looking at how to plan - and critique - acts of worship for which we have responsibility. Please choose an Order of Service from an act of worship that you have either led or attended *recently* - a special event, if possible, (e.g. Harvest, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Remembrance Sunday, wedding) and critique it as follows.

- **What was its purpose and did it serve it well?**
- **If so, how? Be specific**
- **If not, why? Be specific**

Please bring the Order of Service with you to the session.

5. Reviewing the journey; travelling on

True liturgy empowers all God's people, connects with the past and with the wider church, engages the senses, and structures time and space to reflect the truths and priorities of God and His reign.

Mark Earey *Liturgical Worship*

When planning each stage in a journey, there is a great deal to take into consideration beforehand: direction, route, equipment, fellow travellers and terrain. Similarly when responsible for an act of worship, all these components need likewise to be taken into consideration at the planning stage.

What is the **direction** of the journey (both the journey and this stage of it)?

DIRECTION

What would be the most effective **structure** to make the worship work?

- what are the key elements?
- what is the best order for these elements to follow?
- what is the appropriate mood for each part of the service?
- does the order make sense and flow?

ROUTE

What are the best **words** for each element of the service we are planning?

- are the register and style of words suited to the congregation?
- if certain texts allow alternatives, are there more suitable ones?
- are there points at which our own composition might be more appropriate?

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Which elements of this service can be made more **multi-sensory**?

- can we present the meaning of the text visually?
- how is it possible to use symbol and action?
- could the Bible story be told in another way?
- are words necessary at all?

How can we find ways to enable worshippers to **engage** with the word of God?

- how can we *do* the liturgy rather than just say, see or sing it?
- how can we engage the whole congregation with the symbols we are using?
- how can we enable and encourage individuals to experience the truth of the Gospel we proclaim?

**PARTICIPATION
OF FELLOW
TRAVELLERS**

What might be the most effective way to create a **setting** for this particular act of worship?

- how can the church lighting be used more effectively?
- how can colour be best used?
- what is the most appropriate seating arrangement?
- where is the best place to conduct each part of the liturgy?

TERRAIN

In an engaging book entitled *The Gospel According to Starbucks*, Leonard Sweet suggests that worship needs to be 'epic', an acronym for

- Experiential:** people are starved for experiences that ring true; they seek authenticity. Worship should put them in touch with God as a reality to be experienced rather than a belief to be remembered.
- Participatory:** authentic experiences insist that we join ourselves to the experience. Observing an experience might be inspiring but meaning comes with your personal participation. We are participants in Jesus' resurrection life and partners in creation
- Image-rich:** all of this is empowered by vivid imagery. We live in an image-hungry, image-driven world; God speaks in more than just words. The Bible thinks, not in propositions and bullet-points, but in images, metaphors, narratives, symbols and song. Poetry is more the language of biblical faith than prose or philosophy.
- Connecting:** we seek connection with others in life; relationships with others and the world.

Sweet sums up his philosophy in these words: *'The life of faith, to fully qualify as a life of faith, is characterised by experiences that are meaningful; full participation in those experiences of meaning; a richness of imagery wrapped around those experiences and deep connections with God, others, self, creation. (This is) the life we're all thirsty for;'*^{xxx} characteristics which are almost identical to those identified by liturgist Mark Earey at the top of this section.

This, then, is the kind of *worship* that people are thirsty for; worship that is meaningful, participatory and conveys a sense of *koinonia* and of a wider connectedness; worship which addresses the whole person, *all* their senses and capacities, body, mind and spirit.¹ Worship Leaders need to check that what they offer covers all these bases, and the following checklist helps in that task.



Work through the checklist overleaf as a group, stopping to consider any issues that arise – questions of clarification, issues for discussion - on the way.

¹ One definition not quoted on page 5 is that is of D.H. Lawrence: worship is about humanity 'in its wholeness wholly attending'.

Questions to ask yourself when planning a service

When planning an act of public worship, one needs to take into account not simply the words and the music that will be used, but also the arrangement of the worship space, use of visual symbols and silence.

1. What is the organising principle of this service? Will the decisions about the content of the service be determined by (choose as many that apply): lectionary; liturgical year; something happening in the church/local community, nation or world; the text of the choir anthem; something else? (be specific).
2. Consider carefully how the following elements will be evident: scripture; psalmody; thanksgiving; prayer.
3. How will the intention of the service be conveyed? What thematic weight will be carried by: the prayers; the hymns; the choir anthem; other music; visual, symbolic or ritual material; the sermon; other elements?
4. Are there logistical or organisational problems with the service which will need to be overcome?
5. How many leaders (including readers, intercessors, singers and so forth) will be required for the service to run smoothly? Do any of these people need special preparation or training?
6. Are there particular issues on which negotiation will be necessary? With whom must this negotiation be done? At what stage will this be done? If this is a special service (a wedding or a funeral, for example) can the persons most directly affected be involved in the planning and the execution of the service? What will happen if they disagree with you about the direction the service will take?
7. What is the general feeling or attitude you are hoping to invoke among members of the congregation during this service? (For example: attentiveness; commitment; joy; peace; reverence; penitence; awe; admiration; something else?)

8. After the service do you want people to feel: happy; rededicated; relieved; wiser; refreshed; remorseful; sociable; reflective; something else? (Choose as many as apply.) How will this be encouraged?
9. What are the focal points of this service? What is its climax? Which elements do you hope will be particularly meaningful to participants?
10. Are there patterns of repetition which may help to carry the theme of the service? Can silence be used to good effect (without making people anxious)?
11. Can the worship space be used creatively? What material symbols e.g. banners, colours, candles, would help? Must the congregation and leadership always be in an audience/performer position?
12. What corporate rituals, movements or gestures might help the congregation to move into closer communication with God and with other worshippers?
13. Who has overall leadership of this service? Can this person relinquish total control so that others can participate creatively?
14. If this is an ordinary Sunday service, how does it relate to the service which went before it and the one which follows it? Is there a sense of progression and momentum, or is each one an isolated event?
15. How long will this service last? How important is accurate timing in this case? What plans are made if the service looks as if it will run longer than is allowable? Are there elements of the service that can be cut out in this instance? How will such changes be communicated?

In the early days of learning to be a Worship Leader, it is helpful to enlist the help of a friend in order to critique your practice – not *immediately* after the event (when you will be most vulnerable to criticism) but a few days hence. The checklist overleaf may be helpful in this respect.

Reviewing the Worship Leader's performance

Name of worship leader

Type of service/event Date.....

1. Did the service fit its context? (time of year, community's situation, pattern of previous worship)
2. What to your mind was the organizing principle?
 - how was it conveyed?
 - how was it reinforced?
3. What atmosphere was conveyed? How?
4. Was the Worship Leader audible? When and how did his/her actions/movements/presence leading of silence aid the worship? When and how did it hinder?
5. Was the worship space used creatively?
6. Was symbol/ritual movement/colour used, and if so, how effectively?
7. How were any key elements of Christian doctrine (e.g. incarnation, redemption, creation, resurrection) expressed or interpreted?
8. Who was being addressed principally? (e.g. the redeemed, the sinner, the seeker or the Judge, the Saviour, the Creator)
9. Did the service feel to be of the right length, or did it feel overly long or overly wordy?
10. Did the Worship Leader enable others to participate creatively?

For ten minutes, on your own, use the checklist to review the act of worship whose Order of Service you have brought along, and then share any insights and responses with the rest of the group, as directed by the Facilitator.



Read the following passage aloud in the group once you have finished the exercise above, in order to achieve a proper perspective on the issue of reviewing practice.



Many areas of life now have to face up to issues of quality assurance, especially in the public sector. We justifiably want the best possible health service, the best possible schools and universities - the best possible customer satisfaction. But what might quality assurance mean for worship? What is the sliding scale from weak

to strong or from great to awful? How are we to judge what is the best?

Here are two suggestions for assessing the quality of our worship. First, judge the activity by assessing how far it enables the purposes of worship to be achieved - meeting God and seeking God's kingdom. So after a worship event we can ask, 'Has this service enabled the congregation to meet the living God?' and 'Have we been enabled to seek the things which God wants?' The questions not only raise issues of technique and music selection - but challenge as to whether or not the authentic gospel has been proclaimed. Has the living God been allowed to speak through Scripture and silence, through openness to devotion and openness to the world? Quality worship is to be found in truthfulness and sincerity, in love, joy and repentance.

Second, the benchmark of good worship may differ according to the one who judges. With a diverse congregation of young and old, highbrow and lowbrow, traditional and trendy, black and white, the standards of quality may differ wildly. When this happens, one mark of quality will be whether the worship has enabled fellowship, whether it has built up the body of Christ in its rich diversity.

Who judges what is good? Is it the visitor who is welcomed or ignored, is it the child who is celebrated or shushed, is it the musician who feels fulfilled or the pensioner who can't cope with the noise?

A worship leader is called to help a particular congregation, on a particular day and in a particular place to worship God. We are called to give our best - but the best is what will best help this congregation give its best to God. We will want to make technical judgements about the quality of the music or the preaching (we would never improve otherwise) but we will also do all our judging in the light of God who is gracious and loving. If we are judging ourselves, we need to do it in the light of God's grace and calling of us. If we are judging the performance of others, we need to do it gently and in love.

Approaching God. A Guide for Worship leaders and Worshippers Christopher Ellis (2009), 184-5

Worship for all?

An important issue to consider in ensuring that worshippers can be participants and fully engage with the word of God in worship is to consider *'what might exclude some people'?*



Here are six instances of aspects of church life that might exclude some potential worshippers. See if you can come up with others.

- **church architecture** – stairs into the building, steps up to the sanctuary, narrow pews, lack of disabled toilets, no dedicated space for wheelchairs, dim lighting, lack of a loop system. Invitations that assume that all can stand (or assume another other bodily posture that is awkward)
- **notices** that name members of the congregation by name – ‘speak to Margaret over coffee if you want to help with the Coffee Morning’ - but who are not otherwise identified. In-jokes and asides that only the cognoscenti will understand. Invitations to coffee but no directions given.
- **musical settings** for which no music is provided – ‘well, we all know it’
- **small font** on pews-sheets and in hymn books, with no provision being made for those with sight impairments (large print and Braille books).
- **exclusive language in hymnody, scripture, prayer and sermon;** use of ‘words that hurt rather than heal’.²
- no provision for **infants, children or nursing mums** - ‘well, we don’t have any’

² It is important that Worship Leaders are aware of the permissive changes to the text of the 1982 Liturgy even if they themselves are not in a position to use them

http://www.scotland.anglican.org/media/liturgy/liturgy/permitted_changes_to_the_text_of_the_1982_liturgy.pdf

Music

Worship Leaders may find themselves being responsible for the choice of music when planning an act of worship. The best answer to this dilemma is to enlist the help of someone whose gift is liturgical music, and work collaboratively on the choice of music you might use. However, failing that, the following hints and tips derived from the Common Worship web-site and the writings of John Bell may be of use.

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.

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 a celebratory Eucharist 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?

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?) Should we use music in a similar way around other readings from Scripture, or the sermon?
Affirming belief	Are there 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?

The way we sit has an effect upon congregational song. If people sit more than three feet away from each other, they won't sing in case they are heard. If they sit closer than three feet away from each other, they will sing because they hear others singing. A new organ, a new praise group, a bigger choir will not make a congregation sing any better if they are encouraged to sit all over a church, preserving the maximum of private space around themselves. Public worship is not private devotion, and ministers and musicians have to be clear that encouraging this kind of individualism is the enemy of corporate liturgy and community singing. When people are encouraged to sit close to each other and sing together, they will make a good sound even in the dullest of buildings; but where, amidst carpets, sound systems and acoustic tiles, they loll in splendid isolation in their favoured pew, they simply cannot fulfil the mandate to praise their Maker as the community God has chosen. Numerous congregations have

discovered that when the heating breaks down and a smaller hall has to be used, or when the congregation is decamped for renovation work, the strange and more intimate temporary worship space often produces a greater sense of community and a more fulsome kind of singing than the usual place of worship.

From *The Singing Thing: A Case for Congregational Song* and *The Singing Thing Too* John Bell (2000 and 2007)

If you are leading worship in a small congregation (less than 20), don't just stick to 'big' six-verse hymns; these can be tiring for a small number of voices; chants from the Iona and Taizé Communities are simple to learn and sing, and can be easily harmonised by those with musical skills or if sung as a round. They have the added advantage in being suited to all ages singing together. The following resources will be helpful if you decide to go down this path:

<i>Come All You People</i>	John Bell Wild Goose Publications (1994)
<i>There is One Among Us. Shorter Songs for Worship</i>	John Bell Wild Goose Publications (1998)
<i>We Walk His Way</i>	John Bell Wild Goose Publications (2008)
<i>A Wee Worship Book</i>	Wild Goose Publications (1999)
<i>Iona Abbey Worship Book</i>	Wild Goose Publications (2001)
Songs and Prayers from Taizé	Mowbray (1997)
<i>Praying Together in Word and Song</i>	Taizé Mowbray (1989)

The Taizé community has its own web site www.taize.fr/en which contains much helpful information about their music, for example in the section "Prayer and Song". There is also advice about copyright in the "Practical Information" section. The Iona's Community's website <http://www.iona.org.uk/> gives an account of the Community's background and its current work. For information about copyright, visit the Wild Goose Publications section <http://www.ionabooks.com/> There is also a complete list of which songs are in which book in a database which can be accessed from the same website.

Music and prayer

One of the best ways of introducing this kind of music is during the Intercessions. Singing deepens a congregation's participation in the prayer. St Augustine wrote: 'For he who sings praise, does not only praise, but also praises joyfully; he who sings praise, not only sings, but also loves Him whom he is singing about/to/for.' (*Augustine Commentary on Psalm 73*, 1) This has been abridged over the centuries to 'He who sings, prays twice'. One way of using this music is to teach a sung response at the beginning of the prayers which the congregation then uses at intervals throughout; for example:

♪ "Listen Lord" chant

Let us lay before God our concern and confusion over any known to us who have been the victims or the perpetrators of child abuse. (Silence. ♪ "Listen Lord")

Let us lay before God our outrage, our anger, our helplessness as we remember those affected by the trade and misuse of drugs in our community. (Silence. ♪ "Listen Lord")

John Bell in *Come All You People*

Another effective way of using music when short petitions are being used is for the congregation to hum the last note of the response while the intercessor is speaking, and then sing the response in the space between petitions.

♪ Kyrie eleison (or Gospodi pomiluj) (hum.....)

O Christ, your life was not spectacular: you carried a cross: help us to walk along your road...

♪ Kyrie eleison (or Gospodi pomiluj) (hum.....)

O Christ, when wounded you did not make threats: show us how to forgive to the very end...

♪ Kyrie eleison (or Gospodi pomiluj) (hum.....)

Wind or stringed instruments provide appropriate accompaniment to a smallish number of voices gathered in a fairly confined space, whereas they would be lost in a larger crowd or venue. A recorder gives a clear note, though the usual descant instrument is an octave higher than expected – but the advantage of using this instrument is that many children learn it in school and might be interested in playing for services.



Share experiences of using different types of music, gathering examples of good and bad practice as directed by the Facilitator.



Further Reading

Worship and Liturgy

- Brown, Kathleen *Lay Leaders of Worship. A Practical and Spiritual Guide* Liturgical Press (2004)
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