

*An Introduction to*  
**L**iturgical  
*Leadership*

**A Workbook for Training**  
**Eucharistic** *Ministers*

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# Lesson One: Holy Word

**I**n the beginning was the Word. . . . With these words the Gospel according to St. John proclaims the miraculous link between God and humanity made possible by the gift of communication. Words, we all know, have the power to be life giving or death proffering. Words have the power to bless, to strengthen, to heal, to inspire. They also have the power to curse, to weaken, to wound, and to demoralize. In the next several weeks you will be given the opportunity to explore the ministry of the holy word. You do so as a result of your own personal spiritual interest in becoming a minister of God's sacred word to the people of God gathered for Christian worship.

Your own desire to pursue a license as a Eucharistic Minister implies an interest in growing spiritually and exploring both the nature of Christian worship and the ways in which you might be a minister of Christ's Word and Sacraments. Through this training program you will have the opportunity to learn about the primary responsibilities of a Eucharistic Minister. This will include both the ways in which you function as a minister of the word and also as a minister of the table. Both of these are integral parts of the ministry of Eucharistic ministers.

Language. . . words, serve a powerful function in human life. They are one of the primary means by which human beings construct and understand their world. Language shapes our reality by giving us a way of expressing important truths. At the most basic level that may mean

learning to say "I'm hungry." rather than simply crying when one is hungry. At a more advanced level, they offer us the opportunity to speak of and imagine realities beyond our sensate world. Sacred language, the language of worship, allows human beings to articulate a deeply held sense of connectedness to one another, to all of life, and to the creator of all life. Sacred language empowers us to set priorities for our existence beyond meeting physical needs. Through sacred language we not only express our connectedness to God, we also deepen that connectedness.

Sacred language is symbolic language. It participates in that which it names. When we invoke God's forgiveness through the pronouncement of an absolution, we not only recall the forgiving nature of God, we make God's forgiveness present so that it may be experienced by the community in the moment and not simply remembered. The theological word we often use to describe this special kind of remembering that unites past remembrances with present realities is called *anamnesis*. Much of what we do in worship and much of what has been done for thousands of years in worship is a form of anamnesis, pronouncing and remembering a past event so that it can be made real and present to us in this time and this moment.

The Eucharist is perhaps the Christian church's most profound liturgy of anamnesis. Just as the Jewish Seder meal plays a similar role in Judaism. In both, we are called upon to believe that by remembering the ways in which God has redeemed us through history; we can experience and claim anew for ourselves that same redemption. As a Eucharistic minister, you will have the opportunity to help others enter

into this kind of sacred remembering based on sacred word. If you are aware of this profound process, your own sense of the mystery of God made present through remembered sacred word will be communicated to those for whom you lead prayers.

All of this is to say that leading prayers is about much more than being able to read aloud in front of an audience. Firstly, one must remember that the real “audience” to whom one is speaking, is God. This alone makes liturgical leadership different from other forms of public speaking. As you prepare to lead worship by reading collects, proclaiming scripture, leading the prayers of the people, or reciting the words of administration at communion, be aware that God is your primary audience.

At the same time, much of what you do is a ministry to the people of God. You become in this moment a servant of the whole community. What you say, how you speak, what tone you use, how prepared you are all have the power to effect the spiritual lives of an entire community ...and through them the world. If the wings of a butterfly flapping in Japan can change the climate in California, how much more might your words spoken to an entire community affect the shape of the world to come!

If all of this has left you a little inhibited about continuing on in this ministry, then please remember that all our ministries are completely dependent for their success upon the power of the Holy Spirit working through us. In order to give the Holy Spirit a chance, however, we must do our part. We must enter ministry with thoughtfulness, with prayer, and with a humble

and open heart. Confidence in leading worship is a gift. Cockiness or nonchalance is an affront to God.

Before we leave the topic of sacred word, we should spend a few moments on the subject of sacred symbol. Symbolic language is central to faith and to the communication of that faith from one generation to the next. Symbols are powerful, because they have the power to invoke deep complexes of meaning through one simple word or image. Sacred symbols are particularly powerful because they speak of those things that stand at the very heart of human existence, the things we care about most deeply. Because of this, sacred words and sacred things must be treated as sacred by those who lead worship.

A chalice is not just another cup. It is the cup of life, a memorial of death, the Holy Grail, the promise of Christian unity, an instrument used in a family meal, an expensive treasure that represents the treasures of heaven and earth. We do not hold a Eucharistic cup in the way we hold our go cups for our car. Nor do we focus on its utilitarian function in the same way. To be sure, much of what is said and done in worship has a utilitarian function. The cup does hold wine to be drunk. But it also has a much greater purpose than its utilitarianism. This is just as true with holy words as holy things.

As you prepare for your ministry of holy word and holy table, pay attention to the depth of meaning and affect that arises when we contemplate the sacred words and sacred objects that make our worship so familiar and yet so unique. Remember that as a licensed Eucharistic Minister you are given a sacred trust to uphold and protect these holy things.

# Assignment: Lesson One

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① Write down all the associations you can make with **communion bread**. What does the symbol of bread communicate to the people of God? Feel free to share a story to make your point.

② Rate these components of worship from 1 (most powerful) to 10 in terms of the **holiness** they hold in your own piety.

- ✧ The Kyrie (Lord Have Mercy)
- ✧ The Gloria (Glory to God in the Highest...)
- ✧ The Lord's Prayer
- ✧ The Collect for Peace (Almighty God unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known)
- ✧ The Absolution
- ✧ The Peace
- ✧ The Prayers of the People
- ✧ The Words of Institution
- ✧ The Invocation of the Holy Spirit over the gifts and people
- ✧ The Blessing

③ Ministry takes thought and preparation. How might you regularly **prepare yourself** to be a minister of holy word? of holy table?

# Lesson Two: Exploring the Prayer Book

## *The Calendar*

**A**s Episcopalians, we have a rich storehouse of tradition that serves as the centerpiece for our worship life. As leaders of worship, it is important that you be familiar with the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, its theology, and its ecclesiology. Begin by opening a prayer book and examining the Table of Contents.

You will see that following several documents that outline the nature of corporate worship in the Episcopal Church, there follows a calendar for the church year. One of the hallmarks of a “liturgical” church like the Episcopal Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, or the Lutheran Church is that we follow a calendar built around saints days, fast days, and most especially the remembrance of key moments in the life of Christ and in the ancient church.

Robust Episcopal worship recognizes this movement of the liturgical seasons of the church year and actively works to make use of it to more effectively express the Gospel of Christ both within the church and to the world. It is important for Eucharistic ministers to be familiar with the seasons of the church year and their theological emphases. As in all other aspects of liturgical leadership, the more you understand, the more adept you will be at communicating this understanding to the communities you serve.

Our church year begins always, unlike our secular calendar year, with the season of Advent. This is the season that frames all of what will follow in the coming months. It is at the same time a looking forward and a looking back in history. At Advent we celebrate the coming of Christ, both in his coming as Jesus in Bethlehem and also in his return to reign over a restored earth in the time of the world’s fulfillment. It is the remembrance of all that Jesus was and all that Jesus taught that guides the lives of Christian persons in every year. It is also the anticipation of a day when Christ will truly reign in fulfillment of all that has been promised by the prophets that gives our lives hope and purpose in times of suffering and despair. Advent is the season that reflects both the already and the not yet of our salvation.

Christmas is the season in which we celebrate the incarnation. We give thanks for God with us, God among us, God made human in Jesus the Christ.

Epiphany is the season of the manifestation of God’s power in Jesus Christ. In Christmas we emphasize the immanence of God made real in Jesus, the truth that God is present in our world in a way that we can sometimes see and touch. In the season of Epiphany we acknowledge God’s transcendence by attending to those moments in the life of Christ when it was made clear to those around him that Jesus was the Son of God with power and wisdom from on high. This season begins with the Feast of Epiphany and the remembrance of the adoration offered to Jesus by the magi. The Sunday after the Feast of the Epiphany is the Feast of Christ’s Baptism. On this day we remember Jesus’ bap-

tism and the Spirit's manifestation of Jesus as the Son of God at that baptism.

The season of Epiphany is followed by the season of Lent. During Lent Christians prepare for Easter and for the reception of those being baptized into the Christian church at Easter celebrations. Lent is traditionally a time of intense spiritual reflection, penitence and fasting. It lasts 40 days from Ash Wednesday until the Saturday before Palm Sunday.

At the end of Lent the church recognizes the most holy week of its liturgical year, a week of intense remembrance of the paschal mystery and preparation for its Easter Resurrection celebrations. Holy Week begins with the remembrance of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem through the Palm Sunday procession. This day also includes the reading of the Passion account appointed for the year. The day is meant to take Christians through the roller coaster experience that Jesus and the disciples must have felt as they moved from Jesus' welcome in his entry into Jerusalem to his rejection and crucifixion at the end of that week. This day reminds us that it is Christ's life, his teaching, his presence among us, and his death that form the complete canvas backdrop for our understanding of the resurrection and its meaning for our lives.

Each day of Holy Week has its themes. Maundy Thursday focuses on the institution of the Eucharist through the Last Supper, the role of servanthood in the life of the church, and Christ's betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. Good Friday focuses on Christ's torture, his death, and his burial. Along with Ash Wednesday, it is one of the true fast days of the church year, days on which Christians are especially encouraged to

fast and refrain from full celebrations of the Eucharist. On Holy Saturday we remember Christ's time in the grave and we wait hopefully and expectantly for the coming miracle of Easter.

Holy Saturday ends at sundown on Saturday. Many churches celebrate Easter vigils built upon the models provided for us by the early church. The Easter Vigil tells the story of salvation history from creation to the resurrection of Christ. Easter, and especially the vigil, is an important time for baptisms and the renewal of baptismal vows. The Easter Vigil concludes with the first celebrations of the miracle of Easter, climaxing in the Easter Gospel and the Easter Eucharist. Celebrations of the Day of Resurrection continue on Easter Day.

The season of Easter, a season of celebration of resurrection, lasts 50 days and includes within it Ascension Day. Ascension Day is the day we celebrate Jesus' glorious ascension into heaven from whence Christ reigns.

Fifty days after Easter we celebrate the great feast day of Pentecost. This day commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Body of Christ, the church. The Sunday after Pentecost is Trinity Sunday, a day set aside to honor the mystery of our one God in three persons, a God we have at this point in the year already encountered in all three persons in the great feast days of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.

After Trinity Sunday the church stretches into a long period of the season after Pentecost. During these months the church focuses on learning the teachings of Christ and coming to understand more fully what it means to be the Body of Christ. Toward the end of this season,

on November 1, we celebrate the mystery of the communion of saints with our All Saints Day celebration. Just a few weeks later, the church year will begin again with a new Advent and a new set of readings to help us grasp the nature of the Christian faith and the most important theological principles of the faith as we again journey through the Christian calendar.

## *Sections of the Prayer Book*

Following the calendar, the Prayer Book lays out various rites that you may lead from time to time over the course of your ministry. The **Daily Office** is a collection of rites that are designed for personal and communal use. These include Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Compline, and several short prayer forms ideal for use by families and individuals in their personal prayer life. Eucharistic ministers should feel familiar enough with these materials to be able to lead worship in a situation where the most appropriate worship for the day is a non-Eucharistic word focused rite.

The **Great Litany and the Collects** provide liturgical leaders with a wealth of resource materials for use on various occasions in the church. Included in this section are the specific collects set aside for each Sunday and each major feast day of the church year, as well as for other special events or occasions.

Following the collects are the services for Ash Wednesday and all the days of Holy Week from Palm Sunday through the Easter Vigil.

Directly following the Easter Vigil in the Prayer Book is the rite most closely associated with the Easter Vigil, Holy Baptism. This is followed by the Eucharistic rites of the church. Included in the Eucharistic section of the prayer book are various forms for the Proper Preface, the Offertory, and the Prayers of the People.

At the end of the **Eucharistic** section on page 400-401 there is an outline that can be extremely helpful in helping Eucharistic Ministers come to understand the structure of the service in which they are participating and the important elements within that structure. Studying these pages can be very valuable in helping EMs develop greater clarity about their spoken and unspoken ministries within the Eucharistic celebration and how their ministry fits into the greater whole.

Then follow the **pastoral offices** of the church in what might very loosely be considered the chronological order in which one might find one's self participating in them from confirmation to burial. Immediately following the pastoral offices are the Episcopal offices where the bishop or the bishop's representative would preside.

At the end of the book is the **Psalter**, additional prayers and thanksgivings one might find helpful on specific occasions, and finally the lectionary for the daily offices and for the Sunday Eucharist. The presence of all these materials, so easily accessible to all Episcopalians, is one more visible sign of the role the entire community plays in the safe guarding and administration of the worship life of the church.



# Assignment: Lesson Two

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① Identify your favorite **liturgical season** and explain why it is so important to you.

② **Optional Assignment:** Choose one of the **daily office** services. (Morning prayer, evening prayer, noon day prayers, compline, etc.).

Design a daily office service, being careful to attend to all the decisions that need to be made regarding choosing scriptures, psalms, canticles, collects etc.

Offer this service as a public service for your faith community or some part of your faith community, and serve as the officiant at that service.

Afterward describe your own experience of leading worship. Ask one participant at this service to tell you what was most meaningful about the worship experience.

Include in your written reflections, the name of the person, a brief description of the person and what feedback you received from them

## Lesson Three: The Role of the Liturgical Leader

**W**hen Thomas Cranmer developed the *Book of Common Prayer*, he did something extraordinary. He put together a book for worship that could be read and used by both clergy and laity. He did this, in part, out of a deep sense of the necessity of lay involvement in true spiritual worship. In the medieval period worship was in the hands of the priest and for the most part, lay people were interested (or disinterested) spectators.

What Cranmer envisioned in his development of the Prayer Book was what other reformers envisioned as well, a style of worship that involved the people of God in worship, which gave them speaking parts and a sense of ownership in worship. The deep valuation that Thomas Cranmer placed upon participatory worship was strengthened exponentially by the authors of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*. It is largely because of this commitment to participatory worship that the roles of lector and Eucharistic minister were developed in the Episcopal Church.

**The work of any liturgical leader, lay or ordained, is to support and facilitate full conscious active participation of the people of God** in the worship of the church. All Eucharistic ministers stand as representatives of the whole church when they stand to pray—just as ordained ministers do. What the authors of the 1979 Prayer

Book believed was that it was important to have lay persons serving in this capacity to even more clearly emphasize that liturgy is, indeed, the work and the purview of all the people of God.

Within the church, different **orders** have held different ministerial functions, and those functions are concretely expressed within a liturgical celebration. The priest's primary role is sacramental in nature. Priests are the primary administrators of the church's sacraments. The sacraments belong to the church—not the priest. But the deep link between stewardship of the sacraments and priesthood is made visible through the priest's leading of the Eucharistic Prayer and pronouncing of the absolution during worship. Deacons have the function within the church of calling the faith community to prayer and action on behalf of those in need. This is symbolically represented by having the deacon lead the congregation in the prayers of the people. The deacon also reads the Gospel, reminding all Christians of the responsibility they hold to be bearers of the Gospel to the world.

Christian theology makes it clear that **Holy Scripture belongs to all people**, and therefore it is highly desirable for the Old and New Testament readings to be read by a lay person. In situations where there is not a deacon available, the tradition has developed of having a priest read the Gospel and a lay person lead the prayers of the people. In a return to the tradition of the early church there are also, scattered throughout the service, places for responses of the whole community. This reflects the deep awareness that it is in the unified voice of the commu-

nity in response to God's word and in the great amen at the end of the Eucharistic prayer that the congregation's voice affirms the power and the validity of the prayers being offered by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Eucharistic minister also plays a critical role in the expression of the full **authority** found within the community by being a minister of the sacraments. This action makes it clear that the Eucharist belongs to us all, and that it is by virtue of our baptism that we, the church, receive authority to "do this in remembrance of me".

When one is functioning in the role of liturgical leader, it is important to remember that the primary actor in the liturgy is not the leader, but the **people**. What one does in that role will be effective and fruitful only if it is deeply responsive to the community and serves to aid their worship—not take away from it. To be a liturgical leader, one must listen to the tempo of speech within the community and match one's leading of prayers to the community's natural tempo. One must speak with an intensity that encourages the community to full hearted response, but does not dwarf their voices through one's theatricalism or overbearing presence. At the same time, one's role is to lead worship. Passivity when leading worship often leaves the community confused about what they should be doing and how it should be done.

Effective liturgical leaders do not call attention to themselves, but they do call attention to the words they are speaking. They match their emotional tone to the tone of the content of what

they are reading. They match their intensity to the level of intensity the text and the season implies. They strive to be neither overly sentimental in the annunciation of the prayers, nor detached. Good reading often embodies remembering that the prayer or reading being offered was chosen because it had the power to touch the spirit of a person of faith in the midst of their particular life circumstance. Good liturgical leadership lets the text speak its message in a way that can be heard, felt, and understood.

Effective liturgical leaders understand that **common worship is worship we do together, in common**. It is not just the voice of an aggregate of individuals each marching to their own drum. It is meant to be choral with each voice blending with the others around it. Just as a choir director cannot control the sounds made by the voices in a choir, liturgical leaders do not try to control worship, but facilitate it. They listen for the choral participation of the community as they lead communal prayers and adjust their own volume levels and pace to blend with the voices of the community, not overshadow them or pre-anticipate them. If a congregation is lagging in the prayers, they do not charge ahead. If a congregation is moving swiftly and without forethought, they may, however, attempt to blend their voice with the voice of the community in a way that signals a need for an adjustment in pace. Eucharistic ministers cannot control worship. Worship is, by nature, a communal action. Eucharistic ministers must, however, help lead thoughtful, meaningful worship.

# Assignment: Lesson Three

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Identify someone in your congregation that you consider a **highly effective liturgical leader**. Observe a service they are leading and afterward reflect on what they did that seemed to enhance their effectiveness, not at calling attention to themselves, but at leading a whole community in worship.

# Lesson Four: Effective Public Speaking

In addition to the attributes of an effective liturgical leader we have already described, there are certain basic public speaking skills one must develop to be an effective liturgical leader.

## Practice

Practice is essential to good public speaking. The more deeply familiar one is with the text being read, the easier it becomes to make that text one's own. In doing so, reading becomes praying or proclaiming. Without practice one has no option except to simply read what is before you—thereby giving short shrift to the subtleties, nuances, and meanings of what one is reading.

## Knowledge

When one is engaged in public speaking, knowledge of one's subject matter is imperative. This is no less true in a church setting than in any other arena. It is vitally important to effective liturgical leadership that one be familiar with the context in which one is reading, the content that one is reading, and the purposes for which the text was written. When this is not already known or readily apparent from the text itself, it is necessary to seek out resources to help one gain this basic knowledge. This may involve looking at a Bible or Prayer Book commentary. It may involve discussion with someone more familiar with the material than you are. It may involve sitting down with the prayer

book and spending time developing a deeper understanding of the basic structure of the worship service you are leading.

## Volume

Projection is critical in effective public speaking. If one cannot be heard, one cannot be successful. In situations where amplification is available, it is essential that one learn how to make use of a sound system. This can only be done by practice. Learning how sensitive a system is, what volume you must speak at to have your voice most effectively received naturally, and learning how to adjust a microphone to your height and proximity are basic skills for a good public speaker. Ask whoever is in charge of sound equipment in your church to teach you how to turn the equipment on and off and make needed adjustments to it.

Whether there is a sound system in your church or not, it is important to learn how to use your whole voice emanating from your whole body and not just your throat. This skill is one you will have an opportunity to practice in your hands on training. Again, like most aspects of public speaking, the key to success is practice.

## Variety

Effective public speakers know how to vary the pace, the volume, the intensity, and the tenor of their voice so that listeners can remain engaged with what is being said. While it is possible to be too theatrical in leading worship, creating a note of inauthenticity in what is being said and done, many readers err in the other direction. Public speaking should never be monotone and

dispirited. Inflection and movement in voice is essential to effective liturgical leadership.

### Eye Contact

Eye contact with a listening community is vitally important. It keeps the community engaged and helps maintain the relational nature of worship life. It allows the speaker to gauge whether or not the listeners are still engaged. Listeners will provide important nonverbal cues about volume, intensity, and the coherence of what is being presented. Without eye contact these cues cannot be received. Being able to make eye contact with listeners is deeply dependent upon being familiar enough with the text to allow for movement away from the printed material.

### Enunciation

Effective public speaking requires sensitivity to the difference between how a word or phrase or sentence is heard and how it is spoken. While a speaker, and especially a reader, has visual markers to indicate the beginning and ending of words, the presence or absence of plural forms or possessive forms, the presence of punctuation within a text, listeners do not have these cues and rely upon public speakers to create them with their voices and their silences. Effective speakers leave appropriate space between words. They finish the sounds at the end of words. They attend to word endings. They recognize how much time is needed to keep the sounds from one word from bleeding into the sounds of the next. Enunciation is another skill

you will have the opportunity to practice in the hands on section of this training.

### Tone

An awareness of the tone that is called for is an important aspect of good public speaking. In worship some of this sense of tone will be set by the season in which you are leading worship. Some will be set by the context of where in the service your reading is happening. Some will be set by the events that precede or follow your reading.

Another cue to tone comes from the nature of the text you will be using. It is important to remember that one's tone should vary with the circumstance. On festive occasions the tone should be celebratory. On somber occasions the tone needs to reflect the activities of the moment.

Sometimes the tone required will be shaped by the events or words immediately preceding your reading. Because of this, it is critical to not become distracted and disengaged during worship. Doing so may lead you to miss important cues about the appropriate way to respond to the specific context of that specific moment.

The mood of the speaker should generally reflect the mood of the listeners unless one is being called upon to specifically help effect a new mood within the community. Even then it is important to create a tone that is compatible with the existing mood in the room.

# Assignment: Lesson Four

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At the end of this training program you will also have the **opportunity to practice** many of the skills addressed above by participating in a practice session at either your home church or at a diocesan event.

Completion of this hands-on training will be required before your license will be granted.

## Lesson Five: Reading Holy Scripture

**H**ow much do you know about the Bible? The more you know, the more effective a liturgical leader you will be. Good reading like good preaching is many layers deep. Even when what listeners are presented with is only the top layer of the text, by being aware of the depth of meaning a scriptural text may have, one is able to help others appreciate and seek a greater depth of meaning as well.

Much of what we find in scripture is anything but transparent. All of scripture is ancient by contemporary standards and even when read from the most modern translations, it continues to express an ancient understanding of the world—often using metaphors and images that are no longer familiar to the people hearing these words. **It is the responsibility of the lector or Eucharistic minister to make these readings as accessible as possible to the listener.** The only way to do this is if the readings have become accessible to the speaker. When one is befuddled by the meaning of a text, that confusion is communicated to the listener. In those moments one can become an obstacle to worship rather than a facilitator of worship.

Similarly, pronunciation of Biblical names can prove difficult. If you encounter an unfamiliar name, seek out a pronunciation guide to help you find the preferred pronunciation. After

checking the guide and practicing, enter confidently into your public reading and do not falter as you approach difficult to pronounce words. When one is confident and prepared in reading and makes a mistake, many will not notice and even those who do will not be seriously distracted by the mispronunciation. If you do stumble, try not to get flustered. Go forward with the rest of the reading as quickly and smoothly as possible with no need for apology.

Lectors and Eucharistic ministers are encouraged to make use of Bible dictionaries, Bible commentaries and pronunciation guides. These resources are developed to aid us in our understanding of the possible meanings of a scripture passage, often providing us with insights into the historical, social, and religious context in which it was written. You may want to purchase (or ask your faith community to purchase) a commentary to help guide you through difficult passages. Excellent one volume general overview commentaries are available, as well as more in depth individual commentaries on specific books of the Bible. Many church libraries contain excellent commentaries that can be used for this purpose. In order to make use of these resources, however, one must plan ahead and not leave preparations for reading to the last minute.

Sometimes readings are, by their very nature and purpose, deeply complex and rich in multiple meanings. In these instances it is important not to misinterpret the reading to make it seem simpler than it really is. It is also important to allow the ambiguity and the deeply symbolic nature of what is being read stand on its own



without commentary or excessive direction. One of the deep values of the reformation was the importance of placing scripture back in the hands of the people and allowing the Spirit within them to lead them to truth. When we truncate the depth of meaning of a passage by either introducing it with commentary or reading it in a way that only allows for one interpretation among many, we have done a disservice to the scriptures and to the communities hearing them.

Different pieces of scripture were written for different purposes. Understanding the purpose of the passage you will be reading is an important additional step in the process of preparing to read publicly in church. A passage may be a poem, a prayer or a hymn—in which case a prose, narrative style will not be most appropriate. A passage may be a recitation of an important event in salvation history and lend itself to being told as a story with an introduction, a climax, and a conclusion. A passage may be a proclamation of some important truth of the Christian faith; thereby requiring a proclamatory style of address to the community.

Much from the Epistles needs to be read as if one were reading a letter aloud, so that a whole community can hear it in much the same way that it would likely have been heard by the early church. Some passages of scripture were meant to be heard as humorous. Others are laments to God. **Identifying the form and purpose of the passage you are reading will help make you a better reader and will help your community members become better listeners.**

In the Orthodox Church when it is time for the Gospel, the Gospel is virtually danced out into the people where they are encouraged to touch it, kiss it, and venerate it as a reminder of just how precious to our faith are these sacred texts which we have been given. We know that “The Gospel never stands alone” and all of scripture is a priceless treasure to the lives of the faithful and a primary authority of the church. To be entrusted with the public reading of sacred scripture is a wonderful honor and privilege, one we dare not take lightly over the course of our ministries as ministers of God’s Holy Word.

# Assignment: Lesson Five

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Eucharistic Ministers often find themselves reading aloud to their communities difficult passages from the Epistles. Read the Epistle for the Feast of the Epiphany, [Ephesians 3:1-12](#).

**Practice** this reading until you can do it fluidly without unnecessary pauses and with a full sense of the cadence and rhythm of the writing.

Write a five-sentence **synopsis** of the message of this passage.

**Consult** a commentary before doing so. Include the name of the commentary you used on the assignment sheet. If your church does not own a commentary that you can consult, you may want to consult an online resource. You will probably receive the most help from a denominationally affiliated commentary that makes use of current authoritative biblical scholarship. Your clergy can also be a valuable resource in helping you locate helpful materials.

## Lesson Six: Leading the Prayers of the People

In communities that have a deacon, the deacon is usually the liturgical leader of the prayers of the people. In communities without a deacon, this responsibility is very often given to a Eucharistic Minister. The prayers of the people are most effectively read by someone with not just a gift for public speaking, but also a gift for intercessory prayer. *If you are functioning in a congregation where the Eucharistic Minister is the person who leads the Prayers of the People, cultivate a heart for intercessory prayer.*

Consider for yourself what a heart for intercessory prayer might mean in your life. How frequently do you engage in intercessory prayer in your own life? Remember that our *Prayers of the People on Sunday are a public reminder of the prayers that we carry through out the week for those in need.* In the ancient church these common prayers for those in need were considered one of the most sacred acts a Christian person could engage in. Catechumens preparing for baptism and penitents who had lost their place in the community through notorious sin were not even allowed to be present when the Prayers of the People were being prayed. They were understood to be sacred and powerful—one of the most important ways that Christians could together intervene for good in the world. They carried the heart of the community and created bonds of affection, support, and unity

within the faithful. At a time when our world is in such desperate need, dare we imagine our prayers to be any less important than those of the early church?

Many leaders of the Prayers of the People use one or more of the six forms provided in the *Book of Common Prayer*. It is important to know that these forms were provided as outlines and examples for the Prayers of the People and that the authors of the Prayer Book expected and assumed congregations would adapt these prayers to their own particular communal contexts.

Much of the language in these prayers has already become somewhat out of date. In the time since these prayers were written the term minister has come to be applied more and more to all of the people of God and much less uniquely to ordained persons. Also, the ministry of all the baptized is somewhat overshadowed by the ministry of priests, deacons, and bishops in these original prayers. Your own congregation's sense of ministry may call you to rewrite these prayers so as to either deemphasize the role of the clergy or add prayers for other ministries led by lay persons so that the prayers more fully reflect the nature and import of all forms of Christian ministry.

There are also liturgical resources available through liturgical printing houses that provide weekly Prayers of the People expressly tied to the lectionary. If your community has not yet explored these resources, you may want to consider doing so.

No matter what form of the Prayers of the People your community is using, **the Prayers of the People should reflect the needs and concerns of your own faith community from global needs to very personal ones.** Included in the *Book of Common Prayer* at the beginning of the Prayers of the People section (page 383) is an outline of the suggested spheres one might pray for in a fully developed set of Prayers of the People. These include: the universal church, its members and its mission, the nation and all in authority, the welfare of the world, the concerns of the local community, those who suffer and those in any trouble, and the departed.

Often the Prayers of the People include particular prayers for individuals and communities in need. If you find an unfamiliar name in the Prayers of the People you will be reading, seek direction on how it should be pronounced. Ironically, when names of individuals who are faithful, active members of a community are mispronounced week after week in the Prayers of the People, the person being prayed for may have a deeper sense of alienation and disconnectedness from a community (that doesn't even know their name), than a sense of connectedness growing out of the shared prayers.

Our prayer life is meant to unite us and bind us to one another and to God, not accentuate boundaries and strata that sometimes separate us in our congregational life. This is also true for names related to diocesan and Anglican prayer cycles. It is not easy to pronounce names that are derived from another language than one's own. However, it is important to read these with as much smoothness and agility as possible. By

doing so, we show respect for the people being prayed for and a sense of connection rather than disconnection with these brothers and sisters in Christ.

One of the calls placed upon our life by Christ is the call to **be engaged with the world.** We are baptized and anointed for service to God's world. In order to live out our calling as baptized persons, we must have some clear sense of the wants, needs, and hungers of the world. Most of these deep needs are beyond our power alone to fulfill. They can only be met through the help of our powerful and loving God. They require a power greater than our own. And yet, God also requires us to be agents of God's life transforming love for the world.

The Prayers of the People in our Sunday worship find their fullest expression when they articulate not only the concerns of specific individuals within our worshipping community, but also a sense of the needs of the greater whole. When we come together to pray, our prayers should become a first step in responding to the tragedies, possibilities, and challenges the world is facing today. This involves both an awareness of current events and a commitment to publicly asking God to intervene in these situations and to empower us to be agents for help and healing to our world.

The Prayers of the People should consistently address the important issues of 21st century life — including local and global hunger and poverty, homelessness, the environmental crisis, issues of peace and justice, world epidemics, issues of oppression and violence in the world

and natural catastrophes. The moral imperative of the Christian Gospel calls us all to stand up against the evil forces that confront our world, and our prayers should help to empower us for this work. While it is not possible to pray specifically for all these concerns at great length on every Sunday, our prayers can mention various concerns on any given Sunday and thereby draw us back into a mindfulness of all the world's hungers and needs.

At the same time, there are many moral decisions which Christians face where different Christians may come to different remedies for the situation based upon their personal moral theology and their understanding of the Gospel. It is vitally important to Christian unity that our prayers not be politicized in a way that oversimplifies complex moral dilemmas and assumes that all Christian persons share the same conviction regarding complex societal, moral, and geo-political issues. Prayers should be framed in a way that encourages unity and mutual respect within the congregation, calling us to cry out to God for help in one voice, united in faithfulness even when divided in political opinion.

There is much in the world that is truly out of the control of any individual Christian, and yet our Prayers of the People are a call and a reminder that we are never powerless to help. **Prayer is the starting point for all Christian action.** Our communal prayer life helps to shape us as a Christian community. Let the prayers we pray be prayers that invite us to deeper unity with God's vision for the world and deeper faithfulness in fulfilling God's calling on, each of our lives as individuals, and our common life together.

# Assignment: Lesson Six

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Keep a **prayer journal** for one week, writing down the names of all those individuals, communities, and issues you feel called to pray for.

Read the newspaper or listen to the news during this week so that you develop a global picture of the world's needs.

At the end of the week adapt a set of prayers of the people from the *Book of Common Prayer* or *Intercessions for the Christian People* to meet the needs of your particular faith community. (You do not need to include your prayer journal. That is between you and God.)

# Lesson Seven: Creating Prayers

One of the great treasures of our Episcopal tradition is the *Book of Common Prayer*. Within the BCP there are a wide variety of collects, intercessions, and thanksgivings which may provide a suitable prayer for most any occasion on which one is leading worship. It may also be that on specific occasions there is a sensed or an expressed need within a community for an original prayer that speaks directly to the immediate context of the gathered community.

## Creating Collects

It is possible for Episcopalians to create particular prayers that are imbued with the comforting structure of our prayer book collects and yet have a timeliness and immediacy that BCP prayers may not always be able to provide. This can be accomplished by writing or extemporaneously creating prayers built on the basic structural elements of a liturgical collect.

The structure of a collect is a five-part structure. It includes —

- ① Address to God
- ② Description of Who God is / What God does for us
- ③ Petition (which may end with an affirmation of what may result from the granting of this petition)

④ Acknowledgement of the Trinity or some other concluding acknowledgement of a person of the Trinity

⑤ The community's *amen*.

Look closely at this very familiar Episcopal collect and attend to the structure that undergirds it.

“Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*.” (BCP, 236)

While it is not necessary for liturgical leaders to be able to create such prayers for themselves, it is highly desirable. Praying specific time-certain prayers allows for a level of intimacy and spontaneity in worship that speaks directly to the incarnational nature of the Christian life. Christ did not pray generically. Christ prayed for specific people in specific circumstances with specific needs. Our ability to offer similar prayers honors the uniqueness of the individual and reminds those individuals that God is present and active in our lives in this day and age we are living in.

Clearly one is not limited to a prayer life within any given formula, including an ancient formula such as the collect. However, the use of these forms can help to ground individuals and communities in a sense of participating in something greater than themselves. It can help connect us to a deep tradition that supports and upholds us in the midst of our current life circumstance. A short rule of thumb is, the more momentous the event in the life of the indi-

vidual, the more comfort they may receive from formal, somewhat formulaic prayers such as the collect form.

Eucharistic ministers who are also called to the ministry of Eucharistic Visitor may find it especially beneficial to practice this form of **prayer writing**. Often individuals receiving a Eucharistic visitor into their home or hospital room are among the most disempowered of individuals in our society. Offering prayers which make use of familiar words or are framed through a familiar structure can help to return some small modicum of control to the life of an individual being ministered to.

## *Creating Prayers of the People*

In some circumstances it may be advisable for a person with particular gifts for intercessory prayer to exercise that ministry by writing Prayers of the People appropriate to the day and context in which Christian worship is taking place. If one pursues this approach to the Prayers of the People, it is imperative that one do so with the full support of the presider at that service.

Such prayers will be most readily received —

- ✧ If they speak to the social, ethnic, and societal context of the community gathered
- ✧ If they attend to the readings for the day
- ✧ If they fit the liturgical season, feast day, or fast day in which they will be prayed
- ✧ If they include the voice of the people in some consistent repeated response to the petitions

✧ If they are expressly written to voice the joys, cries, and needs of the community, not the individual who writes them

✧ If the language used is appropriately formal in tone to match the rest of the service and yet the words and phrasing used are easily accessible in aural communication

Reminder: the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP 383) provides an outline that one should use in the development of rich, full prayers of the people for any given occasion.

## *Creating Healing Prayers*

Individuals leading healing prayers either at healing services, healing stations, or within the context of a Eucharistic visit may be greatly aided by facility with creating prayers using the collect form. Such ministers must also attend to the individual theology and piety of the person or community to whom one is ministering.

Scriptural viewpoints on healing do not always promise physical healing. Jesus was not miraculously saved from the sufferings of the cross. Instead, God redeemed that suffering. Indeed, scripture is clear that God is concerned with our whole being, not simply our physical being. Prayers that deny the realities of human physical suffering and speak as if we are only spiritual beings deny the nature of created human existence. At the same time, prayers that suggest that the only kind of healing God can bring is physical healing, deny the nature of God's relationship to a spirit filled humanity. The most important values to attend to in voicing healing prayers are truthfulness and integrity, hope, and respect for the theology of the individual receiving those prayers.



# Assignment: Lesson Seven

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① Create a collect for one of these three events –

- ✧ The launch of a **congregational mission** event that two dozen of your members will be traveling to and many dozens of your members will be supporting with their financial resources and prayers.
- ✧ An opening collect for the **blessing of a civil union** within your community
- ✧ A **prayer** for a member of your community who has just been diagnosed with breast cancer

② Create a set of **Prayers of the People** for your community to use reflecting your context today. Describe some important communal, national, global specific concerns that existed as you developed those prayers, and give the date in the liturgical year for which you wrote the prayers.

③ Create a **healing prayer** for someone who has asked you to pray with them and for them, because their mother has just been diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease).

## Lesson Eight: Administering the Sacraments

The precise mechanics of when Eucharistic ministers come forward to administer the sacrament and what procedures are followed can vary greatly from congregation to congregation. Although you will be licensed to administer either the bread or the wine, in many congregations the older custom of the ordained administering the bread and lay persons administering the wine may still be adhered to. While this is not a canonical expectation, it is still the pattern you are most likely to see in an Episcopal congregation. Please be assured, however, that if you are asked to administer the bread; that is a completely appropriate function for you to hold in your community. The understanding that only priests should handle the host is the result of certain no longer held Medieval pietistic understandings and is clearly belied by the fact that we all receive the bread into our own hands. In actuality, the administration of the bread is potentially much less accident fraught than administration of the cup.

### *Things to Remember in Administering*

#### **Words of Administration**

Use the administration form that is the custom of your own community for the particular service in which you are serving. In most, but not all places, this will be “The Body of Christ, the Bread of Heaven” and “The Blood of Christ, the Cup of Salvation”. It is very important that you learn these words by heart and that they become second nature to you. The reception of communion is an important time in the life of a Christian person. Communion should be administered in a way that draws the least attention possible to the ministers and allows the communicant to draw deeper into their own communion with Christ –present in the Eucharistic elements and in the whole gathered community.

#### **Practice Bearing the Chalice**

You will have an opportunity to practice administration of the cup at either your regional training or event or training within your own congregation. Learning how to guide the chalice to someone’s lips, allow them to grasp it enough to make sure they will receive a sip, and still maintain enough control of the chalice to assure that it will not drop takes practice. Under no circumstances should you wrestle a communicant for the chalice. If they are insistent on holding it themselves, relinquish the chalice and keep a wary eye so that it is not dropped in the transfer.

## Sanitation and Intincting

Sanitation is a very important issue in Eucharistic administration. Always wash your hands before you come to the Eucharist. If the person you are communicating drinks directly from the cup, which should be the situation in the greatest majority of communicants, be sure and visibly wipe the chalice with the purificator after each person.

Rotate the cup following each person. This will help maintain even wear on the chalice and also help with hygiene.

Occasionally someone who is ill, or is especially susceptible to illness because of an immune condition, may receive the Eucharist by intincting (dipping the bread in the wine to receive both elements together). Ideally, intincting should be done by the Eucharistic Minister who then places the Eucharist on the communicant's tongue. This is to protect the chalice from significant contamination by human fingers. Fingers are far more germ laden than mouths. However, if your community's customary calls for individuals to dip their own bread, then this customary should be followed. If you find that individuals are often dipping their fingers in the chalice when they intinct; report this to the presider after the service. It is an important health and pastoral issue which the priest may need to address either publicly for the whole community or in private for an individual.

## Administration of Children

Baptized persons of any size or age are full members of the body of Christ and full communicants in the church. This includes infants. When administering the sacraments to smaller children, it is helpful to have them stand rather than kneel so that you can see their faces better. If a parent wishes for their infant to receive the bread, break off a small piece and place it in the baby's mouth. If the parent wishes for the infant to receive the wine, put a drop on your finger and place it on the baby's lips. It is entirely appropriate for infants to receive communion, and to receive it in both kinds. If a child asks for communion and the parent forbids it, follow the parent's wishes and inform the priest that the situation occurred so that they may offer helpful sacramental instruction for the family.

## Communing Unbaptized Persons

While normative practice and church canon state that communion is administered to baptized person, ultimately the decision about who to commune is an important pastoral decision made by the priest. Pastoral decisions made at the altar regarding who should receive communion are determined through the policies of the local community and the pastoral judgment of the priest presiding at the Eucharist. As a Eucharistic Minister you have neither the authority nor the obligation to make decisions about whether the person to whom you are administering communion is baptized.

## Respecting Boundaries at the Table

In any given service there are a variety of individuals functioning in a variety of liturgical ministries. These range from acolyte to deacon to Eucharistic minister to the people of God to bishop to organist to priest to cantor to choir. Be respectful of one another's ministries. Ministerial roles are not assigned in a hierarchical pyramid. They are built on the specific gifts and training of the minister and the function that minister fulfills in the service.

When ministers begin stepping on one another's toes, doing one another's jobs, or exercising authority over another which they do not rightfully possess, the deep order of Christian worship is harmed. If you are the Eucharistic minister at the table, do your own work and also respect the boundaries of your ministry. This is most especially true in relation to acolytes who because of their age may, unfortunately, be treated as underlings by some.

Well trained acolytes do not need on the job instruction from the other ministers present. If there is a need to provide specific direction to an acolyte, that responsibility is best handled by the presider or the acolyte coordinator. By the same token, if you feel that your ministry at the table is being usurped by another minister, bring this to the attention of the presider after the service is ended. The Eucharistic celebration is a symbolic representation of our whole life as the Body of Christ. In the Body of Christ all parts of the body have their function and their role. Allowing all ministries to function without creating an atmosphere of territorialism is part of the dance of effective liturgical leadership.

# Assignment: Lesson Eight

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This assignment will be completed by participating in a **diocesan training event** where you will have the opportunity to debrief the lessons in this workbook and practice administering communion. Please bring this workbook and your completed assignments to this training.

After you have completed this training event, you will receive a **certificate of completion** for the “Introduction to Liturgical Leadership” course, which satisfies canonical requirements for licensed Eucharistic Minister training. Present this certificate to your rector, associate rector, or vicar who may then request a diocesan license in your name if the community believes you are called to this ministry.

# Summary of Liturgical Leadership

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**T**he work of a liturgical leader is holy work that at its best helps to make visible the depth and breadth of the Christian life.

Liturgical leaders are called to be representatives of their community; to speak the heartfelt prayers of all in a manner that allows all to participate with open hearts and spirits. Preparation, practice, mindfulness, and facility with the structures and content of Holy Scripture and Episcopal worship are imperative for those seeking to fully pursue this God-given calling.

## *Dedication Prayer*

Gracious, loving God, who called Mary to be your handmaid and the bearer of the Christ to the world, empower us to serve you in the ministry of Eucharistic Minister so that we, too, may act as your faithful and willing servants, and through both Word and Sacrament be bearers of Christ in your church and to a world in need. We ask this through your Son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. *Amen.*

# Notes

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*An Introduction to*  
**L**iturgical  
*Leadership*

A Workbook for Training  
Eucharistic *Ministers*

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## Credits

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Produced by the Diocese of California, Department of Faith Formation,  
Julia McCray-Goldsmith, Coordinator — [www.diocal.org](http://www.diocal.org)

Design and layout by Sarah C. Jones — [sarahcjones@mindspring.com](mailto:sarahcjones@mindspring.com)

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