

Extracts from the
HANDBOOK FOR
LITURGICAL ASSISTANTS
AT THE EUCHARIST
for Readers and Intercessors



HANDBOOK FOR LITURGICAL ASSISTANTS AT THE EUCHARIST

Selected extracts for
readers and intercessors

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3.2 READING THE SCRIPTURES IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

In the Archbishop's *Ad Clerum* on July 12th 2012, he states:

The proclamation of the Scriptures is integral to every liturgy of the Church. As the Scriptures are read the Ordinal requires that deacons and priests enable God's people to reflect "upon their meaning." The starting point for that reflection is the actual reading aloud by the appointed person.

For those appointed to read the scriptures in public worship it is advisable to have input from those whose experience and training will allow the scriptures to be read in a way that, "... [connects] with people's hearts and minds" (Rev'd Dr Elizabeth J. Smith, Diocese of Perth, July 2012) (Dr Smith's article is reproduced in section 3 of Part 4 of this Handbook).

The work known as "The Bible" is a library of over 60 different books ranging from history to poetry, philosophy, letters and myths. The books were written in different times by people whose world views and received knowledge were vastly different to the world in which the Church now exists. The "Introduction to the Bible Seminar" offered by the BIBLE360 project provides a one-day introduction and overview which many people have found helpful.

Purpose

Those who are appointed to read the scriptures in public worship are called to be the messenger of the "message" and use their voices to carry the words to the listener. Upon hearing those words, listeners will have their own interpretation and understanding of what has been written and read and all three things – written word, spoken word and heard word – are entwined to produce insight and understanding.

The sense that the person reading would like to convey to the listener is one of hearing the text for the first time. By engaging with the text in a way that entices the ear of the listener to connect with the meaning, the listener will be encouraged to reflect on the text.

Preparation

It is essential for readers ("lectors") to read the appointed scripture before the service to familiarize themselves with the text, structures of grammar and punctuation and the vagaries of pronunciation (*The HarperCollins Bible Pronunciation Guide* by William O. Walker is a useful guide). Alternative translations and renderings of the passage to be read can also be a useful guide to the lectors' understanding what it is they are reading and the online resource; Oremus – <http://bible.oremus.org> – is a valuable guide.

Reading the appointed text out loud prior to the service is vital to accustom newer lectors not only to the sound of their own voice but also to the rhythm and structure of the passage. It helps to practise pronunciation, to look for styles of grammar and to note punctuation. It is helpful to read the text as one would tell a story or a piece of news to a companion, not being pompous or too overbearing.

If possible, prior to the service have the bible open at the text to be read.

Reading

Once the time comes to read aloud before a congregation, the following steps will assist a new lector to become confident and to read the scriptures so that it will "... connect with people's hearts and minds".

Arrive at the lectern with enough time to be ready to read.

Be yourself and be comfortable. Take a steady deep breath in and allow the words to be carried in a steady, open fashion on the out breath, using the full depth of the sternum down to the diaphragm. Standing upright and evenly balanced on both feet also will assist in allowing the breath to project the sound of the words to the hearer. A relaxed open mouth and not a clenched jaw will assist in steadying the breathing to the pace required.

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Begin by introducing the reading in the manner normal in your parish, school or other authorised worshipping community. For example: "A reading from (name), Chapter x, beginning at verse y".

Read at the pace that you have practised. Don't be tempted to slow the pace down because of some idea that it is more "reverential". Conversely, don't let the nervous energy push the reading into "fast forward mode" either.

Some lectors like to use a finger as a pointer; this can be a helpful guide.

Stumbling over an occasional word or missing something out is natural and should not be corrected too obviously. Most people tend to hear "whole sentences" rather than individual words at a time, so unless the reader is totally lost in a passage keep on reading in a calm and engaged manner.

Microphone Use

Many churches use amplified sound and the use of microphones should not hinder a lector. A microphone is there to assist the voice and allow it to be heard clearly across a wider distance than normal. Every vocal timbre is different and microphones and the system that powers them are capable of dealing with a wide variety, almost all at once.

When using a microphone there is no need to change what the lector would do if speaking in an unamplified space. Speak in a clear voice, perhaps slightly louder than a normal conversational voice. There is no need either to speak slowly or to gabble. The practiced speaking pattern is desirable.

Prior to the service, check that the microphone is at the height that is comfortable. (Try not to move a microphone when it is on as the sound is distracting.) A microphone works best when the voice is projected over the top of the cage that surrounds the actual microphone. Getting too close or speaking too loudly into it will distort the sound. Being too far away also defeats the purpose. A general guide is to be the distance of the open palm of the hand (side-on) away from microphone.

Ending

At the end of the reading, allow a short silence for people to reflect on it. Then finish in the manner normally used in your parish, school or other authorised worshipping community. For example: "Hear the word of the Lord" (to which the congregation responds: "Thanks be to God").

As was said earlier, the sense that a lector would like to convey is one of hearing the text for the first time, by engaging with the text in a way that entices the ear of the listener to connect with the meaning.

Summary

Things to Do

Prepare by practising.
Be in place to read in plenty of time.
Be yourself and be comfortable.
Read in your natural voice.
Bring the reading alive for the listener.

Things to Avoid

Reading too fast and reading too slowly.
Correcting minor mistakes.
Touching the microphone.
Getting too close to the microphone.

3.3 LEADING GOD'S PEOPLE IN INTERCESSION

Intercession is praying for the needs and concerns of others. Thus, the main responsibility of the intercessor is *to lead the congregation in prayer, offering thanksgiving and making petitions*.

The Intercessions "may be offered by a deacon and/or other members of the congregation" (*APBA*, p.124). Often there will be a roster of people who will lead intercessions. Before the service, the LA should check that the person rostered has arrived and is ready to lead intercessions. The LA should be prepared to lead the intercessions in the absence or unavailability of the rostered person.

The *APBA* has a recommended (not mandatory) pattern with 5 sections:

1. The world (nations)
2. The church
3. The local community
4. Those who suffer/sick
5. The communion of saints

A 'suitable pattern' of intercessions is set out on *APBA* pages 172-73, 183-187. Silence is also recommended and a sample of responses listed (page 124).

The Intercessions are **not**:

1. Confession
2. Notices or news to the congregation
3. Telling people what God is really thinking
4. Telling people what you think (about the latest hot topic!)
5. A sermon (or telling what you thought the preacher ought to have said!)
6. Your personal private prayers.

The Intercessions are where the intercessor *leads the congregation in prayer, offering thanksgiving and making petitions*. Intercessions are addressed to God, not to the congregation.

General Guidelines for Leading Intercessions

- ▶ Intercessions should be **4 - 5 minutes at most** (approx. 1minute per section).
- ▶ Know your congregation and its diversity.
- ▶ Connect with other parts of the liturgy – use images in Bible readings/or connect with the preacher (if possible).
- ▶ Concentrate on **intercession** i.e. prayer that asks God to do things for and with people.
- ▶ Don't refer to God in the third person. The intercessor is addressing God.
- ▶ **Adequate Preparation** – write, then pray them out aloud at home, revise and **TIME** them.
- ▶ Use lots of imperatives (request/command words) – Bless us, Send us, Bring them, Teach us, Stir up every, Renew us, Refresh us.
- ▶ Use inclusive language.
- ▶ Do not use subjunctives or pseudo-subjunctives – “that you might,” “we just ask,” “that you would really” – Be direct (widow of Luke 18).
- ▶ **Responses** – use appropriate responses and make certain the congregation knows when/what they must respond: (most well-known: “Lord in your mercy; **hear our prayer**”) (refer *APBA* page 183).
- ▶ Shape each section into the same length and **use the same response** to help people get into the rhythm.
- ▶ Where appropriate, leave some space for silence or for others to pray wordlessly; about 10 to 15 seconds is usually sufficient. If you want to have a longer time of silence, introduce it (e.g. “During the next minute, I invite you to pray for ...”. A minute of silence is a long time without warning).
- ▶ **Audibility** – make certain that you can be heard/use the microphone properly, project your voice, speak S-L-O-W-L-Y and C-L-E-A-R-L-Y.
- ▶ **Intelligibility** – can the congregation understand what you are leading them in and asking them to pray for?
- ▶ Conclusion – use the concluding prayer – congregation and clergy should know that the intercessions have finished!

At all times, remember that these are corporate intercessions made/prayed on behalf of the congregation.

Recommended resources for leaders of intercessions

Section 4.6 in Part 4 contains the names of many resources useful when preparing to lead intercessions.

4.3 READING THE SCRIPTURES: LETTING THE BIBLE SHINE



Letting the Bible Shine

By The Revd Dr Elizabeth Smith
Mission Plan Co-ordinator

I WAS lucky at Pentecost this year. The woman doing the reading from Acts in the parish I attended was a terrific reader. She was organised, so there was no dithering around finding the page in the Bible to begin with. She was prepared, so there was no stumbling over the Parthians, Medes and Elamites in the middle. She was clear and loud, so we didn't miss a beat of what was happening in the upper room. And she was gripped by the story, so the rest of us found ourselves drawn into the drama too.

This reader wasn't just on a roster. She was performing an important ministry, for which she has a gift that she exercises with great care for her listeners. Even though I know that Pentecost reading almost by heart, I heard it afresh this year, and was moved, thanks to that woman's good stewardship of her gift. She was helping her parish make good progress in two areas of the Mission Plan: Vital Worshipping Communities, and Inspirational Leadership.

Was I just lucky that day, or was it parish policy to have really good, gifted readers always on the roster? I hope it was policy, and I hope such a policy applies in all our worshipping communities. God uses the Bible readings in worship to connect with people's hearts and minds. If the Bible is read poorly (inaudibly, inaccurately, without inflection), we put obstacles in the way of God's communication with us. It is quite possible that even in a large congregation, only a handful of people will have both the gifts and the discipline necessary to be trusted with this important ministry.

How are readers chosen in your congregation? Does someone with a discerning ear check to see whether those who offer to go on the roster can make a reading shine with meaning and power? God's word deserves to be carried by our very best voices!

How are your readers trained and kept accountable for their ministry? Are the good readers gathered regularly for teaching specific to their ministry, and for peer feedback and constructive critique? God's word deserves to be expressed by people who understand the importance of the message they are delivering.

Do your congregation's practices around the public reading of scripture put the Bible itself in the spotlight? Or we just giving everyone who puts their hand up a chance to have their special moment at the microphone? God's word deserves its chance to edify the congregation.

I hope all Perth worshipping communities are served by gifted, skilful liturgical Bible readers who keep learning more about this ministry. Readers will understand how the lectionary works, the why, what and when of the readings. Readers will explore the many different kinds of writing in the bible, from narrative to love-song, from lament to law-code, each requiring different oral skills to proclaim them. Then the whole congregation will confidently expect that, in the Ministry of the Word, we truly will "hear the word of the Lord!"

The above article was originally published in the Anglican Diocese of Perth magazine, *Anglican Messenger*, July 2012, and is reproduced here with the very kind permission of *Anglican Messenger* and of The Reverend Dr Elizabeth Smith.

4.6 USEFUL RESOURCES

You may wish to check with the Roscoe Library at St Francis College about the availability of the books listed below as well as other resources (www.ministryeducation.org.au/theological-studies/roscoe-library-resource-centre/).

APBA is published in 4 main editions, of which 3 are full editions. Of these, the red cover full edition is probably the most widely used and is the edition recommended that LAs use. There is a blue cover large print edition and also a small size edition (*A Gift Prayer Book*). All are available from The Cathedral Shop.

Seminars and Workshops. Through its various agencies, the Diocese offers a number of courses and activities that many LAs have found useful. These include BIBLE360 (an initiative of Parishes and Other Mission Agencies and Ministry Education offering people of all ages and backgrounds a one-day introduction to the Bible), Certificate in Theology and Ministry, and Education for Ministry. Further information about Lay Ministry Studies is available from the St Francis College web site (ministryeducation.org.au/your-calling/lay-ministry) and about other activities and workshops from the Parishes and other Mission Agencies web site (faithfulandeffective.com).

Adam, David. *Clouds and glory: prayers for the church year. Year A.*
Harrisberg, PA: Morehouse, 2001.

Adam, David. *Traces of glory: prayers for the church year. Year B.*
Harrisberg, PA: Morehouse, 1999.

Adam, David. *Glimpses of glory: prayers for the church year. Year C.*
Harrisberg, PA: Morehouse, 2000.

Black, Ian. *Intercessions for years A, B and C.*
London: SPCK, 2009.

Brown, Teresa L. Fry. *Delivering the sermon: voice, body, and animation in proclamation.*
Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2008.

Carden, John. *A procession of prayers: prayers and meditations from around the world.*
London: Cassell, 1998.

Chapman, Raymond. *Leading intercessions: prayers for Sundays, holy days and festivals - years A, B and C.*
Norwich, UK: Canterbury, 1997.

De Lange, Anne; Simpson, Liz. *How to...lead the prayers: a training course.*
Cambridge, UK: Grove, 2003.

De Lange, Anne; Simpson, Liz. *How to...read the Bible in church: a training course.*
Cambridge, UK: Grove, 2003.

Diocese of Brisbane. *Diocesan Handbook.* (Available on-line from Diocesan web site - anglicanchurchsq.org.au/diocesan-handbook).

Ferlo, Roger. *Opening the Bible.*
Boston, MA: Cowley, 1997.

Guenther, Margaret. *The practice of prayer.*
Boston, MA: Cowley, 1998.

- Kavanagh, A. *Elements of Rite. A Handbook of Liturgical Style*.
New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1992.
- Lee, Jeffrey. *Opening the prayer book*.
Boston, MA: Cowley, 1999.
- Morley, Janet. *All desires known*.
London: SPCK, 1992.
- Myers, Gilly. *How to...lead evensong*.
Cambridge, UK: Grove, 2005.
- Nelson, Janet. *Let us pray: intercessions following the Revised Common Lectionary*.
Sydney, NSW: HarperCollins, 1999.
- Prayers encircling the world: an international anthology of 300 contemporary prayers*.
London: SPCK, 1998.
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London: SPCK, 1997.
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- Pritchard, John. *Leading Intercessions*.
London: SPCK, 2005.
- Sayers, Susan. *Living Stones – Prayers of Intercession*.
Suffolk: Mayhew, 1997.
- Sayers, Susan. *Complete resource book / Pebbles / Rocks / Boulders*.
Stowmarket, UK: Mayhew, 2000.
- Sinden, Gilbert. *When we meet for worship: a manual for using an Australian Prayer Book 1978*.
Adelaide, SA: Lutheran Publishing, 1978.
- Walker, William O. *The HarperCollins Bible Pronunciation Guide*.
HarperCollins, 1994.
- Wells, Samuel. *Crafting prayers for public worship: the art of intercession*.
Norwich, UK: Canterbury, 2013.

Notes