

An Order for Lay-Led
Liturgy of the Word
in the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh



ORIENTATION & LEADER'S GUIDE

Adapted from The Holy Eucharist: Rite Two
in the Book of Common Prayer

INTRODUCTION

Parishes without a clergy person to lead worship may use the following order of service, led by a trained and licensed lay Worship Leader. While Morning Prayer also remains an option for lay-led worship, the Liturgy of the Word, as outlined below, provides an alternative that may be more fitting to the preferences of some congregations.

In the Book of Common Prayer (BCP), the *Additional Directions* for the service of Holy Eucharist state:

“If there is no Communion, all that is appointed through the Prayers of the People may be said. (If it is desired to include a Confession of Sin, the service begins with the Penitential Order.) A hymn or anthem may then be sung, and the offerings of the people received. The service may then conclude with the Lord’s Prayer; and with either the Grace or a blessing, or with the exchange of the Peace.

In the absence of a priest, all that is described above, except for the blessing, may be said by a deacon, or, if there is no deacon, by a lay reader.” (pp. 406-407)

The following Order of Service uses Rite II; it may be adapted for Rite I when desired.

USING THIS DOCUMENT

This document may be used as a guide for licensed lay Worship Leaders who are leading, or preparing to lead, their congregation in this form of liturgy. It may also be given to new parish members, visitors, and anyone wanting to orient themselves to the worship of your parish and of The Episcopal Church.

In the pages that follow ...

- **Bold black text** indicates parts spoken by the leader.
- *Italicized red text* indicates instruction for the leader to follow, or to consider following.
- Gray boxes contain seasonal variations or additional information helpful to the leader and other participants.

An appendix at the end of this document provide guidance for leaders on how to prepare for the service and other details.

Opening Acclamation & Sentence

(BCP p. 351-352)

Stand facing the people and say the opening acclamation.

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

All: And blessed be his kingdom, now and forever. Amen.

Note the following seasonal variations:

From Easter through the Day of Pentecost

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

All: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

In Lent and on other penitential occasions

Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

All: His mercy endures for ever.

Read one of the following sentences.

Jesus said, “The first commandment is this: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.” *Mark 12:29-31*

OR

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *1 John 1:8, 9*

OR

Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. *Hebrews 4:14, 16*

Confession of Sin
(BCP p. 352-353)

Then say:

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Kneel, and invite the people to kneel.

Allow a few moments of silence for personal reflection and confession. Then say:

Most merciful God,

All: we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Still kneeling, say:

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.

Reminder: As quoted in the Introduction on page 2, the Book of Common Prayer states that if a Confession is desired, it should take place here, as part of the Penitential Order at the beginning of the service, rather than following the Prayers of the People, as in a service of Holy Eucharist.

Gloria (or Kyrie or Trisagion)

(BCP p. 356)

Invite the people to stand and to join you in saying the Gloria.

All: Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

During Advent and Lent, the Gloria should be replaced with one of the following:

The Kyrie

Lord, have mercy.
All: Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

OR

The Trisagion

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One,
All: Have mercy upon us.
Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One,
All: Have mercy upon us.
Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One,
All: Have mercy upon us.

Collect of the Day
(BCP p. 357)

The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Let us pray.

Read the Collect of the Day, to which the people should respond, “Amen.”

(See Appendix for guidance on where to find the Collect of the Day.)

The Lessons
(BCP p. 357)

Invite the people to sit for the lessons.

At this time, the lessons appointed for the day are read by one or more individuals who have been assigned in advance. Whatever the parish’s custom is for the reading of lessons during a service of Holy Eucharist may be used here, with the exception of the reading of the Gospel, which, during lay-led worship, is read in the same manner as the previous lessons.

The Reading of the Gospel during Lay-Led Worship:

The lesson from the Gospels is read in the same manner as the previous lessons.

- It is read by an assigned reader.
- It is read from the same location as the previous readings.
- The reader announces the lesson in the same way (“A reading from ...”).
- The reader concludes with, “The Word of the Lord,” and the people respond, “Thanks be to God.”
- The people remain seated during the reading.

(See Appendix for guidance on where to find the appointed lessons.)

The Sermon
(BCP p. 358)

A sermon may be provided.

If there is a licensed lay Preacher who is a part of the congregation, whether it is the Worship Leader or another individual, then they may prepare and deliver a sermon in response to the day’s lessons. Otherwise, a sermon may be selected from an authorized source. See the diocesan resource, “Sermon Options & Alternatives for Lay-Led Worship.”

The Nicene Creed

(BCP p. 358-359)

Invite the people to stand and join you in saying the Nicene Creed.

All: We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Prayers of the People *(Form III, BCP p. 387)*

The Prayers may be led either by the Worship Leader or by another member of the congregation who has been assigned to do so.

If it is your parish's custom to kneel during the prayers, then invite the people to do so now. Announce the form that will be used and the corresponding page(s) in the Book of Common Prayer. For the purpose of this guide, Form III is given below, but any of the other forms may be used. (If using Form VI, omit the optional prayer for forgiveness at the end, since the Confession was said at the beginning of the service.)

Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church;

All: That we all may be one.

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;

All: That your Name may be glorified by all people.

We pray for all bishops, priests, and deacons;

All: That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.

We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world;

All: That there may be justice and peace on the earth.

Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;

All: That our works may find favor in your sight.

Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;

All: That they may be delivered from their distress.

Give to the departed eternal rest.

All: Let light perpetual shine upon them.

We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy;

All: May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others.

A moment of silence may be observed, during which the people may be invited to add their own petitions.

The Collect at the Prayers

(BCP p. 394-395)

When sufficient time has been given for additional petitions, say one of the concluding collects. The Book of Common Prayer provides eight collects to choose from. The four provided below are appropriate for a Rite Two service during any season.

Heavenly Father, you have promised to hear what we ask in the Name of your Son: Accept and fulfill our petitions, we pray, not as we ask in our ignorance, nor as we deserve in our sinfulness, but as you know and love us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

OR

Almighty and eternal God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth: Mercifully accept the prayers of your people, and strengthen us to do your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

OR

Almighty God, to whom our needs are known before we ask: Help us to ask only what accords with your will; and those good things which we dare not, or in our blindness cannot ask, grant us for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

OR

O Lord our God, accept the fervent prayers of your people, in the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, and to you we give glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Offertory

Invite the gathering of offerings using one of the offertory sentences from the Rite II Eucharist (BCP p. 376-377), such as:

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and make good your vows to the Most High.
Psalm 50:14

OR

Ascribe to the Lord the honor due his Name; bring offerings and come into his courts.
Psalm 96:8

OR

Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God.
Ephesians 5:2

The Book of Common Prayer also suggests this as an appropriate time for a hymn or anthem. If music is not provided, the collection may take place in silence.

After the collection, receive the offering plate(s) and place it on the altar. This should be a simple action, without a doxology or special ceremony.

The Lord's Prayer ***(BCP p. 364)***

Invite the people to stand or kneel, according to the custom of the parish. Lead the people in saying The Lord's Prayer, using the form below that is familiar/preferred.

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

All: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,

All: Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

The Grace

Close the service by saying:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

APPENDIX: *Liturgy of the Word Q&A*

1. Who is permitted to lead this service?

This service may be led by any licensed lay Worship Leader who is a member of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh. Worship Leaders function under the direction of their parish clergy, who provide instruction and ongoing guidance. Individuals in parishes without settled clergy may be under the direction of another designated leader, such as the diocese's Small Church Missioner. Following the necessary training, an [Application of Licensed Ministries](#) must be completed and sent to the Bishop's Office. (This form can be found on the diocesan website.) The Bishop grants licenses for this and other lay ministries, typically with a term of three years.

2. What do I wear?

Ideally, a Worship Leader will vest in a cassock and surplice. The cassock is a full-length black garment. The surplice is a shorter, white, loose-fitting garment worn over the cassock.

The alb, a full-length white garment, is a *Eucharistic* vestment, but one can be worn if a cassock and surplice are not available. The service can also be conducted without vestments, if none are available or in cases of extreme heat.

3. Do we light the candles?

The candles on the altar are considered "Eucharistic lights" and should only be used at services that include Holy Communion. Other candles (e.g., *behind* the altar) should be used for the Liturgy of the Word. (If the church *only* has candles on the altar, then they should be lit; it is better than having no candles lit at all.)

If the service takes place during the Easter season, when the Paschal candle is present, or during Advent or the Christmas season, when candle wreaths are present, those candles, too, may be lit. (The Paschal candle, when present, is always lit first and extinguished last.)

4. Where do I find the Collect of the Day?

You can find the Collect of the Day in a couple of places:

- *The Book of Common Prayer*. Contemporary-language collects, appropriate for Rite II liturgies, are found beginning on page 211. If adapting this liturgy for Rite I, it is

more appropriate to use the traditional-language version of the Collect of the Day; these can be found beginning on page 159 of the BCP.

- **The Lectionary Page website, www.lectionarypage.net.** Click the appropriate date on the liturgical calendar to access the appointed lessons and, at the top of the page, the Collect of the Day. (Only the contemporary-language versions are included here. If using Rite I, you will need to consult the Book of Common Prayer as directed above.)

5. Where do I find the lessons appointed for the day?

The easiest way to find these is to go to the Lectionary Page website, www.lectionarypage.net. Click the appropriate date on the liturgical calendar to access the appointed lessons.

6. What if the lectionary provides multiple options for one or more lessons? How do I know which lessons to select?

During part of the liturgical year, there are two “tracks” of lessons:

- Track 1 includes Old Testament lessons that, week by week, follow the story of God’s people.
- Track 2 includes Old Testament lessons that thematically complement the Gospel of the day.

The rule of thumb is to remain consistent. So, if your parish has been using Track 1, then continue with Track 1; if you’ve been using Track 2, stick with Track 2.

If multiple options are given for the lessons, but not as part of the track structure, then you have more flexibility. Just be certain that, if a sermon will be provided as part of the liturgy, the sermon addresses the lessons that are chosen (and *not* the lesson that are *not* chosen). If a sermon will be provided by a Lay Preacher, be sure to coordinate with them on the lessons that are used. If reading a sermon from an authorized source, take care to select a sermon that aligns with the selected readings.

7. Our congregation loves to sing. Can music be included as part of this service?

Of course! As noted above (page 10), the Book of Common Prayer suggests the offertory as an appropriate time for a hymn or anthem to be sung. Opening and closing hymns can also be sung, with or without procession. If it is your parish’s custom to sing a hymn prior to the Gospel lesson, you can do so during the Liturgy of the Word; however, it should not be accompanied by a procession or any additional ceremony. (See page 6 above for more on the treatment of the Gospel lesson.)

8. When should we provide our announcements?

You can remain consistent with whatever your parish's custom is for this during services of Holy Eucharist: before the service, prior to the offertory, or at the end of the service. Giving announcements before the service would have the benefit of allowing you to orient the congregation to the Liturgy of the Word and how it will be different from what they are used to.