



## Diocese of Monmouth · Esgobaeth Mynwy

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# Worship Leader

## Session 5 – Solo Course

*Material adapted from 'Living and Learning: Pastoral Visiting'  
published by St Padarn's Institute.*

# Session 5: Creating new services

## Introductory Reading

As we have seen, for Anglican Christians, the Eucharist is a vital part of their spiritual growth and nourishment, and for many Anglicans, the traditional services of Morning and Evening Prayer will also be important. However, there is an increasing desire in all Christian denominations to explore new ways of worshipping God and in particular to find ways of attracting newcomers, especially young families and children to church worship. Recent years have therefore seen the development of 'Family Services', 'All Age Worship', 'Pram services', 'Services of Praise' and the increasing use of services from Christian centres like Taize and Iona.

In an alternative order for Morning and Evening Prayer 1988, the Church in Wales provided an outline structure for constructing services like these. It says that any order should contain the following:

- **Penitence**, and declaration of divine forgiveness;
- **Praise**;
- **The Word**, including one or more bible readings, at least one from the New Testament, with comment;
- **Intercession**;
- **Affirmation of faith**, or some other opportunity for response to the Word.

There has also been an attempt in the Church of England to regularise these services and to provide help for those who are charged with planning acts of worship that are generically described as 'Services of the Word'. This is a title given to any service that is not a Eucharist and can be used in a variety of different contexts for a variety of different purposes. The Church of England initially published 'Patterns for Worship' in 1989 and followed this with the publication of 'New Patterns for Worship' in 2002 to resource these services. Although provided for use in the Church of England, they can provide a useful starting point for all Anglicans and other Christian denominations.

'New Patterns of Worship' was produced as a directory of resources to provide a wealth of material, section by section, for each element of a Service of the Word or a Eucharist. It also provides stories from four imaginary churches throughout, which are designed to help the reader explore different ways of worshipping in different contexts and traditions. In addition, it explores ways in which services might be constructed, as well as providing some sample services.



Also available online<sup>1</sup>, New Patterns can provide a helpful support for all who are constructing and leading acts of worship. In the Introduction to the Service of the Word we read:

*'Leading people in worship is leading people into mystery, into the unknown and yet the familiar. This spiritual activity is much more than getting the words or the sections in the right order. The primary object in the careful planning and leading of the service is the spiritual direction which enables the whole congregation to come into the presence of God to give him glory.'*<sup>2</sup>

In the section, 'How to put a service together'<sup>3</sup> consideration is given to structure, theme, direction and content. It suggests that the Service of the Word should normally consist of:

- **The Preparation**, including a greeting, prayers of penitence and a collect;
- **The Liturgy of the Word**, including readings from scripture, a psalm or song, a sermon and an affirmation of faith;
- **The Prayers**, including intercessions, thanksgiving and the Lord's Prayer;
- **The Conclusion**, including a blessing, a dismissal or other liturgical ending.

It is assumed that this basic structure will remain constant in any act of non-Eucharistic worship, though the content and the emphasis on different parts of the structure may change as the context changes. It emphasises that services need a clear sense of overall direction and cohesion which is determined by the occasion or the season. It also recognises that there will be various 'ingredients' that make up the service. Additional to those elements identified above will be:

- **Praise**, including hymns and songs and acclamations;
- **Actions**, including, for example, a drama, a procession, a dance, a musical presentation, a symbolic act like lighting a candle, a visual presentation, or movement around the church.

Services of the Word can be planned out using either a 'block' structure or a 'conversation' structure.

## 'Block' Service Structure

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-38>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-1>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-2>



**Items you must include**  
for a Principal Service on Sunday  
(individual items and order will vary)

**Additional items**  
you may wish to include

**Preparation**

- |               |   |                    |
|---------------|---|--------------------|
| Greeting      | 1 | Scripture Sentence |
|               | 2 | Hymn               |
|               | 3 | Opening Prayer     |
|               | 4 | Invitation         |
| * Confession  | 5 |                    |
| * Forgiveness | 6 |                    |

**Word**

- |                      |    |              |
|----------------------|----|--------------|
|                      | 7  | Introduction |
| Old Testament        | 8  |              |
| Psalms or paraphrase | 9  |              |
| New Testament        | 10 |              |
|                      | 11 | Song or hymn |
| Talk                 | 12 |              |
| * Creed              | 13 |              |
|                      | 14 | Song or hymn |

**Prayer**

- |                      |    |  |
|----------------------|----|--|
| * Collect            | 15 |  |
| Form of intercession | 16 |  |

**Praise**

- |  |    |                         |
|--|----|-------------------------|
|  | 17 | Versicles and responses |
|  | 18 | Song or hymn            |

**Action**

- |                    |    |   |
|--------------------|----|---|
|                    | 19 | All stand while the candle is carried out |
| Blessing or ending | 20 |   |

\* Starred sections are those in which authorised texts must be used.



## 'Conversation' Service Structure

The four liturgical elements of Word, Prayer, Praise, and Action may come many times within the same service. This structure imagines a conversation between God and the congregation. The Word elements present what God is saying, and the other three elements may be used as the response or reply to God. The service may be built from a series of Presentation and Response units, like building blocks.

This example is from Morning Prayer in The Book of Common Prayer:

### Presentation (God Speaks)

#### Word

Scripture Sentence

#### Word

Invitation

#### Prayer

Declaration of forgiveness

#### Word

Psalm  
Old Testament

#### Word

New Testament

#### Word

Sermon

### Response (We Respond)

#### Praise

Hymn of adoration

#### Prayer

Confession

#### Praise

Open our lips... Glory be... Canticle

#### Praise

Canticle

#### Praise

Canticle  
Creed  
Lord's Prayer  
Collect

#### Praise

Hymn



A block structure is more traditional. It follows the basic elements of the service in the traditional order (preparation, liturgy of the word, prayers and conclusion) but allows for additional items to be inserted. A conversational model is less traditional and includes these elements in a less structured way.

In this structure there is a 'conversation' in which God speaks and then we speak in response. The service can therefore be built on a series of presentation and response units used like building blocks. Either way, it is the theme that will most often determine the pattern of worship.

Music will obviously play an important role in worship. The choice of music will depend on the nature and setting of the worship. It will also depend on how the music will be accompanied and supported. Some hymns work better when accompanied by an organ, others work better with a piano, some music needs a choir, and some worship songs work better with a band or music group. Many hymns, worship songs and chants work well unaccompanied. Psalms can be sung to traditional chants or to new responsorial settings. Canticles can also be sung to traditional settings or can often be sung as hymns.

The guidelines provided by 'New Patterns' are helpful in supporting the creation of acts of worship for different occasions. It makes the point that we do not start with a blank piece of paper, but rather with elements that need to be included in some form to make worship balanced and effective. Many resources now exist, in book form or online, to help in this process.

But it is also important to examine how the space in church may be used most effectively. It is important to consider the whole worship experience. Therefore, we need to ask: what can be done to make the worship space more appealing? What can people see, hear, touch, taste and smell? What is the welcome like? And if there are likely to be only a few people present, should we consider holding the service in a smaller space like the church hall, a side chapel or even the choir stalls?

Planning a 'Service of the Word' can be an exciting and rewarding experience that can help spearhead the mission of your church. So practically:

- Try to plan worship, where possible, in a group where you can benefit from the gifts and skills of a variety of people.
- Structure the service carefully around its theme and pay careful attention to the balance and thrust of the worship.
- Prepare thoroughly and rehearse as appropriate. Make sure everybody knows what they are doing and can be seen and heard by everybody.



- Think about how you will use the building to best effect.
- Make sure that the congregation have orders of service of good quality and try not to give out a pile of books to people who attend the service.
- Make sure that there is a warm welcome for everybody who comes.
- And if you are working with children, expect the unexpected and make sure you have a robust Plan B.

Finally, remember that it is necessary in the Anglican Church, as in many other denominations, to have a licence before you are able to preach in church. Normally licenses to preach will be given in the Anglican Church to Clergy and Readers and not to local worship leaders. However, local worship leaders are sometimes asked to give 'talks' or 'reflections' at 'all age worship' services and children's services. In this case you should follow the outlines of talks provided in resource material and/or check out what you intend to say with your local priest or authorised minister.

In practice, there is, of course, some flexibility for individuals to be invited by the local priest/ministry area to speak on a particular occasion. Although these rules seem bureaucratic to some, sadly, experience shows how easy it is for individuals to put themselves forward as 'preachers', even though they are not gifted in this way, or have not been trained, or are really doing this for their own sense of importance, and not to benefit others. What a preacher says can have a real impact on people, hopefully, but not always, for good, so it is right that the church is careful who they allow to preach.



# Solo Reflection Questions

## 1. Beginning

Spend a few minutes in silence, offering any worries or concerns from everyday life to God, and acknowledging God's presence alongside you and within you as you prepare to reflect more deeply.

**Holy God,  
faithful and unchanging:  
enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,  
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,  
that we may truly worship you,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## 2. Reflecting

Today, you will start to construct a proposal for a Service of the Word that you could actually lead in your ministry area. You can then take discuss this with your mentor and, if they agree, work with them to deliver the service.

First, think about the context of the act of worship:

- Decide when and where the service will take place.
- Consider who is going to attend – e.g. is it Sunday morning worship, an evening service for a particular occasion, or a special all-age service etc.
- Consider the theme or intention of the service – You may like to look up the date of the service in a lectionary and read through the set readings and choose those you are going to use.
- Decide who is going to take part in leading the service.






Next, begin to discuss the elements and structure of the service:

- How are the congregation to take part – e.g. through singing, responses or symbolic action?
- What resources will you have available – e.g. organist and choir, worship band, CD's, projection equipment?
- Will there be a sermon or talk or discussion time?



Finally, what structure is most appropriate? You may want to use either of the structures in the Introductory Reading as a template to work from.

Map out the structure of your service, without, at this stage, adding detail such as hymn choices or specific prayers.



### 3. Exploring

Now start to fill in the detail on your service outline. At each stage reflect on how the content you have chosen helps your service meet its intention and how these elements are appropriate to your context.

- Sketch out the details of any act of reflection, sermon, talk and symbolic action.
- Add prayers and liturgical elements, such as the Lord's Prayer or a Creed or Affirmation of Faith if you are including these. You may wish to include a confession, intercessions, a collect or a blessing.
- Choose hymns or music, chants or songs if you are including any.



Finally, read through the service as a whole and reflect on whether the service as a whole meets your intentions and is appropriate to your context.

Address the following questions:

- Is there a proper balance between word, prayer, praise and action?
- Is the worship directed to God?
- Is the structure and direction of the service clear?
- Does the service have a climax and if so, where is it?
- Is there space for reflection or silence?
- Does the music support the main thrust of the service?
- Does the service enable the gifts of a variety of people in the congregation to be used?
- Is the service appropriately inclusive of the needs and experience of all those present?

### *Next Steps*

*Why not send your plan through to your mentor ahead of your next meeting with them? This way you can discuss whether you might lead the service together in your ministry area as part of the experience you will gain as a new Worship Leader.*



## 4. Responding and Concluding

Describe one particular thing you have learned from this lesson, either from the reading or your own reflections.

