



## Diocese of Monmouth · Esgobaeth Mynwy

Diocesan Office, 64 Caerau Road, Newport, NP20 4HJ  
01633 267490 · [monmouth.churchinwales.org.uk](http://monmouth.churchinwales.org.uk)

Monmouth Diocesan Board of Finance is a company registered in England and Wales.  
Company no: 003489945 · Charity no: 1067653

# Worship Leader

Lay Ministry Training Courses - Groups

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

# Introduction

## Serving the Church as a Lay Worship Leader

On this course, we explore the importance of worship within the community of the local church. The calling to lead worship alongside the ordained clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers forms part of a range of commissioned opportunities for ministry that are recognized by the diocese. Your own sense of *calling* to this particular ministry needs to be affirmed by yourself and by your local ministry area. The process of participating in this course will give you the opportunity to think and pray this through as well as enable you to have practical experience of leading worship. It is in your subsequent experience of actually leading services in your church under suitable guidance that you will be able to test this calling out and receive further encouragement and training.

The sessions in the course are intended to combine theological and practical considerations. They will also quite consciously draw on your own experience and faith as participants; as we reflect together on the challenges of how to worship meaningfully within the cultural context in which the church finds itself. Hence its style is not 'academic' in nature and for this reason the course will not so much talk to you, as help you learn by doing and then discussing. Worship, prayer and reflection will be integrated throughout.

## Worship

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:16-17)*

As participants in God's purposes for the world, we aim to provide worship that is honouring to God and helpful to those gathering: to deepen our love for God and each other and to be sent out to serve as part of God's mission.

In our worship as a Church, we aspire to be a dynamic and vibrant community which is alive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, whilst mindful of the rich inheritance we have of his work in those who have faithfully gone before us. So, as well as being creative and forward looking, we learn about what is of value from the past; learn



how to use present opportunities and to manage the process of inevitable change in a gracious, loving and positive way.

Worship is a way of life rather than an activity, nevertheless being together in a specific, regular time of worship of God, in prayer, and for mutual encouragement and learning, is central to the life of the Church. When the Apostle Paul was exhorting the Christians at Ephesus to be careful how they lived, we find that worshipping together came high up on his list of instructions:

*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:19-20)*

The writer to the Hebrews similarly encourages members of the congregation “to consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together (as is the habit of some), but encouraging one another...” (Heb.10:24-25). These considerations may all seem a far cry from ‘simply’ reading services from the prayer book, but we’ll have the opportunity to discover how they need to be linked with a wider understanding of worship.

It is both our vocation and our joy to be able to spend time with God together as well as on our own; to be in the presence of Almighty God, focussing on him, celebrating our oneness in Christ; listening to his word and encouraging one another in its message to us; giving thanks and declaring our praise of God and his works; praying with one another, both looking out to the needs of the wider world and upholding one another in prayers; remembering Christ's death until he comes again, and knowing his presence with us in the breaking of the bread, as we celebrate the Eucharist or Holy Communion together.

## Lay Ministry

1. Signifies that the ministry of Christ is a shared ministry amongst the people who comprise his Body;
2. Can help create community amongst the faithful volunteers that make up the Church;
3. Enriches and enhances the quality and dynamics of the services by using people's evident gifts.



When we consider and encourage Lay Ministry, we're not talking about any kind of new idea. The idea is built into the very fabric of what it means to be God's people. In fact it could be argued that we're not being truly Church if lay ministry isn't taking place and if the gifts of the whole people of God are not in evidence (apart from this being a horrible waste of talent!). We need to use all the gifts found in the congregation, especially as this will encourage people's participation and commitment.

We find this idea throughout the New Testament teaching about church leadership and structure, but it's perhaps most clearly outlined in Peter's Second letter to the Christians in Asia Minor – the area we know as Turkey today.

*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people; in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1Peter 2:9. See also 2:4-8)*

So as Christians we are a "chosen people" in a similar sense that the descendants of Abraham were a chosen people, called by God for his special purpose – to be a blessing to all the families of the earth (you can check it out in Genesis 12).

If you do proceed to become Commissioned as a Worship Leader, there will be certain expectations that it is sensible to consider now:

- You will need a clear DBS check and will need to undertake safeguarding training (Level A and Level B or E). These must be kept up to date as appropriate.
- There will need to be an agreement of the amount of time you are willing to give to this ministry – this must fit what you're able to do, but will also need to be consistent so that we can ensure that worship leading is properly arranged. This agreement will be made with the member of clergy or lay person responsible for leading the worship rota.
- You must ensure that you clearly communicate any problems, concerns, or worries you have yourself about this ministry, to the member of clergy or lay person responsible for leading the ministry team.
- As part of the wider ministry team, you will work together with other commissioned ministers, as well as licensed and ordained colleagues. Meetings will be arranged for this team and it is important to attend these.
- You should make every effort to attend any diocesan events for Commissioned Ministers.



- It is possible that as a Worship Leader and therefore someone in a position of trust, you may be entrusted with personal information by some people, and you will need to demonstrate appropriate confidentiality in not sharing this with others in your congregations or community. Remember you should never promise complete confidentiality to a congregation member, as it may be that you need to share any pastoral concerns with a member of clergy, and any safeguarding concerns or disclosures must be reported to the Church in Wales Safeguarding Team.



# Session 1: What is worship?

## Introductory Reading

Worship is often described as the church's primary act of mission because in worship we offer witness in prayer and thanksgiving to the God who creates and redeems the world. As we join in worship, we become part of the sacred story of salvation. That story is told as we gather to worship God. We hear how God creates and redeems his world and, as we gather as a community of Christians, we experience our own part in the story of salvation, as individuals and as a church.

All worship has a common underlying structure. This may be reflected differently in different traditions and denominations, but essentially we gather together, bringing with us the busyness of our daily lives.

As we gather, we prepare for worship, as individuals and as a community. Often at this stage there is an opportunity to reflect on the mistakes that we have made and confess the sins we have committed, 'in thought, word and deed, and in what we have left undone' and we hear God's forgiveness. Sometimes that opportunity comes later and in a different form. We then encounter God's Word, through readings from the scripture, possibly a psalm, a sermon and an affirmation of our faith. There will be prayer which will include intercessions for the church, the world, the local community, and for those who are sick, remembrance for those who have died, and often thanksgiving for the gifts God has given us. There will then be a conclusion through which we are sent back out into the world. This may include a blessing and a dismissal. And there will often be music, hymns and/or songs of praise.

Each section of our liturgy is effectively a theological statement, telling us about our God and his mission for us and for the whole of creation. Therefore, we encounter him through our liturgy as a God who forgives, a God who teaches us his ways, a God who cares passionately for his world and a God who calls us to journey with him and to witness to him in the world. Liturgy is an unfolding drama which proclaims how God acts and how we may respond.

We express our worship through adoration, worshipping of the being of God, God's wonder, beauty, power and might; through thanksgiving, offering thanks for God's gifts both personal and universal; through praise, the believers' outward expression of their worship and adoration of God; through supplication and petition, asking for particular gifts and graces from God for those in need; and through repentance,



saying sorry to God individually and as a community. We also reflect on God's word and affirm our faith together.

In worship we recognise that there are sacred places. Corporate worship is most commonly held in church buildings and even within these churches there are spaces marked out that are of particularly spiritual significance. These spaces commonly include the chancel and the sanctuary, the space around the altar. There is sacred time. Sunday is a day traditionally associated with Christian worship and that remains important for many people. However, within services there are times or moments of particular focus or significance. Traditionally the 'words of institution' when the priest repeats the words of Jesus at the last supper are one such moment. There are sacred people. These are the people who usually dress up within the Anglican tradition to take worship, indicating that they have been 'set apart' for a particular task. Traditionally the sacred person has been the priest or minister who performs actions that others cannot perform. These are sacred actions like making the sign of the cross during absolution or raising the chalice and pattern during the Great Thanksgiving at the Eucharist.

In traditional liturgies sacred places, sacred time and sacred actions are all associated with the priest or minister who is the sacred person. In modern liturgies, this is no longer the case. Church buildings can be used in new and creative ways. Everybody present can take part in the service and new liturgies often provide sacred actions (e.g. lighting a candle) that involve everybody and look to create sacred moments at different points in the service.

In worship we experience many different kinds of encounters. We will encounter God through all our senses. We will encounter God through others in the community. We will encounter the traditions of the church that have helped form our liturgy and we will encounter the present hopes and aspirations of our church community in mission and service. Therefore, there can be nothing passive or reluctant about worship. Although no two people respond in exactly the same way to any act of worship, authentic worship will usually be vibrant and able to reflect the emotions, experiences and needs of those present. Whatever its form, worship will often be at its best when it is dynamic, challenging and nurturing.



Worship has been defined in various ways. Archbishop William Temple claimed:

*'To worship is:*

*To quicken the conscience by the holiness of God*

*To feed the mind with the truth of God*

*To purge the imagination by the beauty of God*

*To open the heart to the love of God*

*To devote the will to the purpose of God.'*<sup>1</sup>

In worship we become bound up in the story of salvation. We encounter the living God in word and in sacrament and we witness to his saving presence in our world today. In worship we truly become the body of Christ and part of his mission in our world. In worship we are gathered together to hear God's words of salvation and encounter God's presence in and among us so that we may be sent out in mission and service.

If worship tells the story of our salvation and teaches us about God, so the way in which we lead worship says a great deal about our own faith and who we believe God to be. And this is true whether we are reading a lesson, taking the prayers or leading 'all age worship'. That is our challenge.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://theologyandchurch.com/tag/william-temple/>. Accessed on 11th January 2019.





## Group Work Discussion

### 1. Gathering

Spend a few minutes in silence, offering any worries or concerns from everyday life to God, and acknowledging God's presence among you as you meet together.

**Almighty and everlasting God,  
by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church  
is governed and sanctified:  
hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people,  
that in their vocation and ministry  
they may serve you in holiness and truth  
to the glory of your name;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

### 2. Reflecting

In groups of 2-3, describe an act of worship that you have experienced that was positive, meaningful or significant to you.

- What made it so?
- How did you respond to it and what made you respond that way?

Next, each describe an act of worship that you have experienced that was unhelpful or unsuccessful, using the same questions above.

As a whole group, discuss together:

What makes an act of worship 'successful' or 'unsuccessful'?

Consider the importance of:

- practical considerations;
- personal experiences and preferences;
- the ways in which God is reflected and portrayed.



### 3. Exploring

Look through some booklets, outlines or notes from services regularly taking place in your ministry area. Work together to identify these different elements in each service:

- Praise
- Thanksgiving
- The Word
- Intercession
- Repentance
- Affirmation of Faith

Then discuss together:

- What role is each element playing in the unfolding drama of the whole service?
- What is each element telling us about who God is and what God does?
- How might you lead each of the different parts of the service effectively to express its particular role in the service?

### 4. Responding and Concluding

- a. Each share briefly one particular thing you have learned from this session.
- b. Plan your preparation for the next session.
- c. Finish by saying the Grace together, or some other form of prayer.



# Session 2: The Bible in worship

## Introductory Reading

The scriptures are at the heart of our faith. We believe them to be the Word of God. We believe them to be inspired and we understand that the scriptures shape and form the consciousness and character of our Christian communities and the individuals within it.

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we read,

*All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.*

Growing as disciples in Christ therefore requires a lengthy and ongoing encounter with the text of scripture that challenges us, guides us and leads us into truth.

Although all Christians are encouraged to read the scriptures regularly at home, it is right to recognise that many people only encounter the scriptures when they hear the Bible read during Christian worship. This makes the liturgical encounter with scripture of great importance. The Lectionary provides bible readings for all public worship on both Sundays and weekdays. These are selected to support the different church seasons (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week and Easter and the Sundays after Trinity).

The Church has used sets of readings following this pattern since the fourth century and the Church in Wales' Lectionary (sometimes called the Almanac) is based on the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) which is used by most denominations in the world today. This means that, on any particular Sunday, many millions of Christians across the world will be listening and responding to the same scriptures.

You can view the lectionary on the Church in Wales' website<sup>2</sup>. It follows a three-year cycle and each year focusses on one of the three synoptic gospels. Year A features Matthew, Year B features Mark and Year C features Luke. John's Gospel is used every year in the period before and after Easter and on other Festivals, including Christmas. The Lectionary encourages the continuous reading of scripture from Sunday to Sunday and lessons are selected for use with whichever form of service

---

<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/publications/>



the church uses. Hence readings are provided for the Principal Service in church that day, be it a Eucharist, Morning Prayer or a Family Service. Readings are then provided for a Second and Third service. Churches with evening services normally use the readings for the Second Service.

Over the years concerns have been expressed about the fact that the Old Testament has not been heard regularly in worship. This is because a large number of churches have traditionally read only an Epistle and Gospel during the Eucharist. This has arguably led to a decline in the congregations' knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament. However, this omission has now been addressed by most churches and the Lectionary provides both continuous and related readings each Sunday for the Old Testament, the latter being chosen to fit into the broad themes chosen for that Sunday which are reflected in the Epistle and Gospel.

Reading scripture regularly in our worship not only helps to form us as disciples of Jesus Christ, it also helps us to understand God's saving work in the creation and redemption of the world. Through hearing scripture, we will gain a better appreciation of the significant people who have shaped our faith and we will become more aware of the historical and cultural contexts in which our faith has developed and grown. We will become familiar with the life and teachings of Jesus who is the Word of God and we will learn to recognise the action of the Holy Spirit who leads us into truth.

However, because scripture is so central to our worship as a Christian community it needs to be presented in a way that will help the congregation to fully engage with its meaning. Therefore, it will be important to read from a version that best portrays its meaning and in a way that presents the message in the best possible way to the people who are present.

Scripture is written in a number of different literary forms. There is history, law, prayer, prophecy, poetry, liturgy, letters and gospels that each tell the story of salvation in different ways. There are a number of different strategies employed by different writers to make their point from storytelling to closely worded argument and these reflect a wide range of emotions. These factors will all affect the way that the scripture is read in church.

Practical issues are important. In the past people who read lessons in church needed to project their voices so that they could be heard throughout the building. This did not just require a loud voice but clear diction and a requirement to project



the voice effectively. Today many church have microphones. However, using a microphone isn't straightforward and mistakes are common. It is not unusual for readers to begin reading their lesson without turning the microphone on. Others fail to speak into the microphone effectively or speak loud enough to make themselves heard. Practising with the system does make sense.

It is important that the books of the Bible are introduced correctly. It is normal to announce the reading by saying, 'A reading from the Book of ...', and sometimes including the exact reference, eg. 'chapter ... starting at verse ...' Sometimes the readings are printed on a weekly sheet, but if churches have pew bibles it might help to announce the page number and pause for the congregation to find the page. If you are reading two lessons together, it is good practice to leave a pause in between for people to turn to the next one.

If you want to introduce individual books by their full titles, be careful. Most of Paul's letters are named after the place that they were sent to – so Thessalonians is the letter he sent to the church in Thessalonica, Colossians to Colossae etc. However, some of his letters were sent to individuals like Timothy, Titus or Philemon. James, Peter, John and Jude wrote their own letters so they are *not* the letter of Paul to Peter etc.

Nobody knows who wrote the letter to the Hebrews, so that is normally introduced simply as 'The letter to the Hebrews'. Lessons in Morning and Evening prayer are traditionally concluded by saying 'Here ends the first/second lesson' (with no response from the congregation). In Eucharistic worship, the Old Testament and New Testament readings are concluded with either, 'This is the Word of the Lord' or, 'Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church' and the congregation respond, 'Thanks be to God'. At the Eucharist the Gospel is introduced and concluded with its own set of responses.

It is also important to recognise that reading in church is a performance. Remember that the scriptures were written originally to be read out loud during worship and not to be read privately at home. Unfortunately, extremes are common. Often the scripture is read in a monotonous tone or, on rarer occasions, is read in an over-dramatic way. A failure to pause appropriately, to vary the strength of the voice and to emphasise certain words and phrases will often rob the reading of its power and energy. Also, too many readings in church are unprepared. In fact, the impact of reading the scriptures to the best of our ability and after proper preparation is often underestimated.



Scripture can be communicated in a number of different ways. Dramatised bibles are now common and are easily available online. To present the scripture as a dramatic dialogue, with characters speaking from different locations in church can be refreshing. And of course, scripture can be presented as drama. Some more technically aware ministers occasionally present scripture against a visual backdrop which adds to the overall experience.

Hearing the Word of God is central to our Christian experience and our experience of worship. The more effectively and imaginatively scripture can be presented, the more telling the impact and the more effective the message that it brings.



## Group Work Discussion

### 1. Gathering

Spend a few minutes in silence, offering any worries or concerns from everyday life to God, and acknowledging God's presence among you as you meet together.

**Blessed Lord,  
who caused all holy scriptures  
to be written for our learning:  
help us so to hear them,  
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them  
that, through patience and the comfort of your holy word,  
we may embrace and for ever hold fast  
the hope of everlasting life,  
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

### 2. Reflecting

In groups of 2-3, discuss your experiences, both good and bad, of hearing the Bible being read aloud.

- What did the reader do well? What could they have done better?
- How was the meaning and mood of the text communicated?
- How did their pace and tone of voice help?
- What about their posture and body language?

As a whole group, share your reflections together.



### 3. Exploring

Read the following passage from Galatians 1:1-10.

*Paul, an apostle – sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead – and all the brothers and sisters with me,*

*To the churches of Galatia:*

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: if anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

In group of 2-3, discuss together:

- Consider how you would best read the reading in a service so as to convey its meaning and mood. Mark any words that you think need to be stressed. Mark any places you will pause or breathe.
- Consider the pace and expression with which you will read different parts of the reading and mark the text accordingly.





Come back together as a whole group and ask for a couple of people to volunteer to read the passage — drawing on the insights from your discussion together.

After each person has read, share some constructive feedback.

Consider these questions:

- What did the reader do well?
- What could be improved?
- Was the reading audible?
- Was the pace and tone of voice appropriate?
- Was the reader's posture and body language appropriate?
- How was the meaning and mood of the text communicated?

#### **4. Responding and Concluding**

- a. Each share briefly one particular thing you have learned from this session.
- b. Plan your preparation for the next session.
- c. Finish by saying the Grace together, or some other form of prayer.



# Session 3: Leading public prayers

## Introductory Reading

Prayer is at the heart of all worship and at the heart of all our prayer is our recognition that God is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although we do on occasion address our prayers directly to Christ or to the Holy Spirit, our tradition in worship is to address our prayers to God our Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the power of the Holy Spirit. This tradition in fact helps us to understand the richness of our relationship with a Trinitarian God and the different ways in which we can encounter God in worship as our creator, redeemer and guide.

Prayer is at the heart of our relationship with God and prayer helps us to discern what God wants us to do and to be. Prayer is transformative as it helps us to grow in holiness and to be more Christ-like in our thoughts, words and deeds.

Worship helps us to recognise that there are different types of prayer. Simply put, there are times for saying, 'sorry God', times for saying, 'God be praised', times for asking, 'please God', times for saying 'thank you God' and times for saying 'may God bless'. In our worship there are therefore prayers of confession, songs of praise, prayers of petition or intercession, prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of blessing. This is true of all public worship and can be clearly seen in the Eucharist, in Services of the Word and in Morning and Evening Prayer.

And just as there are different types of prayer addressed to God in our worship, so there are different vehicles through which this prayer is offered. Within the Anglican tradition there are psalms, canticles, collects, hymns, prayers of confession and absolution, prayers of thanksgiving, and prayers of intercession.

Psalms come from the Old Testament and were used in the ancient worship of Israel. Canticles are most often drawn from the Bible or other ancient writings. Some, like the Magnificat, may have been hymns in the early church. Collects are prayers provided by the Church in Wales (mostly shared with the Church of England) that focus the theme of the day, marking particular seasons, festivals and saint's days. We express these prayers through words, in music and in silence, and we do so standing, kneeling or sitting. Other denominations and traditions share much of these forms and traditions while expressing them in different ways and with different emphases.



When individuals are asked to lead prayers in church it is almost always a request to lead the intercessions. Prayers of intercession or petition have occurred in Christian worship from the beginning.

In the earliest known Eucharistic liturgies, prayers of intercession followed the readings and the sermon, as in modern liturgies, and may well have consisted of a number of biddings, focussing the prayer of the people on a particular theme, read by the deacon that were followed by periods of silent congregational prayer.

In historic Anglican liturgies, intercessions are traditionally read by the priest, but modern liturgies are more flexible in form and allow for intercessions to be led by members of the church congregation. In either case they are the prayers of the people and of the Church, not of one individual. Various forms of pre-prepared intercessions are available but many feel that it is important for those leading intercessory prayer to be creative and to use their own prayers if at all possible.

Traditionally, intercessions have been offered for the Church, the world, those who are sick or in trouble and those who have died or are bereaved. In some forms of intercession, there is also a section for prayers for the local community. In the Order for the Holy Eucharist (Church in Wales 2004) it is suggested that the person leading the intercessions prays for:

- The Church, universal and local, including the bishop and clergy;
- The created order, the nations of the world, our own nation;
- Those in any kind of need;
- The local community;
- The communion of saints.

The service suggests that silence is kept after each bidding and that there be an appropriate response after each section of the prayers, most commonly:

Lord in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer.**

As an alternative to this order, provision is made for the use of one of four printed forms or one of the Shorter Litanies from the order of Morning or Evening Prayer.

Although there is an opportunity to give voice to the concerns, hopes and fears of the congregation when leading intercessory prayer, it will also be important to do so in the setting provided by each particular service. Therefore, the form and context of intercessory prayer will reflect the different seasons of the Church's year,



the style and context of the liturgy and the people present. There will also be different degrees of formality and intimacy depending on the form and intention of the worship.

However, particularly in the Eucharist, this part of the service is designed to enable the church to focus on the needs of others. It is petition. We are praying for others and words that have been used for this purpose in traditional liturgies have included, 'strengthen', 'bless and guide', 'comfort and heal', 'give grace to', 'remember those'. We are asking God to act in the lives of others.

Therefore, we need to be specific about our concerns and be careful to name those in need. If there is a Diocesan Prayer Diary or denominational equivalent, then it is appropriate to use it. It is good to name individuals in need of our prayers but wise to make sure that they have given their permission before doing so. When the prayers are set within a non-Eucharistic service such as a Service of the Word, there will be more freedom and it is important, in that context, to consider adding prayers of thanksgiving to those of intercession, giving thanks to God for his gifts.

As usual, practical details are important:

- If you have been asked to lead intercessions give yourself plenty of time to prepare.
- Read and prayerfully reflect on the scriptures set for the day.
- Check with the person who is leading the service to see if they have any particular form they would like you to follow or any themes they would like you to reflect.
- Work with a clear structure.
- Don't pray on behalf of the congregation, pray with them, inspiring and inviting their prayers to be offered with yours.
- Keep the prayers short and simple. Avoid preaching at the congregation or trying to provide a theological treatise. Use short words where possible and don't make the prayers complicated.
- Make the requests particular and topical, rooting them in the needs of the church, world and community, but be careful about telling God what he should do.
- Don't assume a political or moral stance that might be divisive or exclude individuals or groups of people.
- Avoid giving news bulletins or notices in the prayers (eg. *We pray for the church lunch which will take place on Tuesday from 12.30 – 2*).



- When praying for those who are sick or in need by name, give space for the congregation to also pray for others who are known to them.
- Don't rush the prayers and allow time for silence if it is appropriate.
- Use language which is as simple and specific as possible. Be inclusive.



## Group Work Discussion

### 1. Gathering

Spend a few minutes in silence, offering any worries or concerns from everyday life to God, and acknowledging God's presence among you as you meet together.

**Lord of heaven and earth,  
as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer,  
give us patience and courage never to lose hope,  
but always to bring our prayers before you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

### 2. Reflecting

Ask for a volunteer to read the set of less than ideal intercessions on the next page, carefully prepared from intercessions heard in church at different times!

Identify the mistakes that are being made and why they are problematic.

In pairs, create your own list of helpful tips, a set of dos and don'ts, for those leading intercessions



Dear Heavenly Father Jesus Son of God

I want to thank and praise you that thou art begotten not made, coequal, uncreated, omnipotent, omniscient, immutable and unchangeable.

Anyway, Lord, as you know very well, we have our Church Fete on Sunday and Mavis always works so hard making all the cakes so please make sure it doesn't rain. We don't want to get flooded out like these poor people in Bangladesh last week and while we think of them Lord Jesus please have mercy on them too even though they are all Muslims.

And as we are thinking Father about people who are suffering at the moment I want to mention Jeff especially Lord Jesus cos as you know he has just gone in to hospital again and had his piles sorted out. They've been giving him terrible trouble again despite that special cushion the Wardens gave him to sit on in the pews. Anyway Gladys and I went to see him on Friday and he sends his best wishes to everyone here today and said he will see us at the Fete so that is nice.

On the subject of the Fete we are happy that the MP is coming and Lord we ask you to bless him and his Party for all their good work especially with the elections coming up. May your will be done and the right candidate be re-elected. Lord we heard about the Good Samaritan this morning, help us to remember that he could only help the poor man because he had the money to do it and it hadn't all been taken off him in tax and given to these scroungers.

Please bless our Vicar, Father, she works very hard even if she doesn't always get to visit the people who are sick. Please help her not to be so tired and help her have the energy to visit all the people who need Home Communion. This week if possible.

And Lord Jesus I just want to say that we were all very sorry to lose Frank this week. His funeral is in church on Wednesday at 2pm and Mavis and the team are putting on a buffet in the Hall afterwards so please do stay for that. We hope that he will get to go to heaven soon. And please forgive the Bishop, Lord, for all these silly ideas about ministry areas that they were going on about at the meeting last week. We know you love them Lord and their heart is in the right place but some of us have been living round here for 50 years and we know what works and what doesn't as of course thou knowest also.

Anyway the Vicar was saying I go on far too long in the prayers, so I'll stop now and we'll finish with the response printed in your service sheets.

Lord in your mercy  
Hear our prayer.  
Amen.



### 3. Exploring

In pairs, choose one of these services to write a set of intercessions for:

- A family Harvest Festival
- Midnight Mass
- Mothering Sunday
- Morning Prayer Service
- Evening Prayer at the end of a Lent retreat

Use the structure from our introductory reading as a guide to help you:

- The Church, universal and local, including the bishop and clergy;
- The created order, the nations of the world, our own nation;
- Those in any kind of need;
- The local community;
- The communion of saints.

As a group, share your intercessions, praying them through in turn, as if part of a service.

### 4. Responding and Concluding

- a. Each share briefly one particular thing you have learned from this session.
- b. Plan your preparation for the next session.
- c. Finish by saying the Grace together, or some other form of prayer.





# Session 4: Worship as mission

## Introductory Reading

Worship is at the very heart of the church's life and mission. Through worship we witness to the God who creates, redeems and sanctifies our world. In worship we hear the story of salvation and proclaim through our prayers and our praise, that we are called into fellowship with Christ, that we are nourished by God in word and sacrament, and sent out to serve him in our world.

Anglicans have always seen regular Eucharistic worship as vital for their spiritual health and nourishment, although across the centuries 'regular' has varied from meaning at the great festivals through to every week. The standard pattern since the earliest times has been for the Christian community to gather for worship on Sunday (the day of the resurrection), although there has always been more flexibility and variety than this might imply.

Our Christian sisters and brothers in mainly Muslim countries tend to meet for worship on a Friday, to fit in with the work-patterns of the wider community. Many Roman Catholic churches in the UK today find that Saturday evening mass is the best attended! Recent years have seen the emergence of Anglican orders of service and patterns of worship which maintain some continuity with our traditions, but give more freedom for more imaginative and flexible worship.

The early Church felt that the Eucharist, that central act by which the church is nourished by the body and blood of Christ, could only be experienced by those who were full members of the Christian community. Therefore, visitors and people who were preparing to be baptised, were asked to leave the service at the offertory. Now we are happy for seekers to stay for the whole service, encouraging them to come to the altar to receive a blessing when communion is distributed and most churches welcome members of other denominations to receive communion.

Indeed, we are keen to welcome visitors to our worship because we believe that a good experience of worship may help them to come to faith in Jesus Christ and to seek membership of the church. However, experience suggests that the worship that many actually have on a Sunday morning in our churches may not initially inspire them to join us, or might indeed on occasion have the opposite effect.



Therefore, with declining numbers in mind, the Church has begun to recognise that it might need to make changes to its traditional style and patterns of worship if it is going to engage effectively with those who have no church experience. One way of doing this is to offer a range of different styles of worship that attract different groups of people.

These different types of services include:

- **Pram services**, simple and short acts of worship for parents with young children using song, story and prayer.
- **Taize-style worship**, reflecting the meditative nature of the Taize Community. Taize music emphasises simple phrases, often lines from psalms or other pieces of scripture, repeated to aid meditation.
- **Iona-style worship**, which is based on the experimental worship developed by the Iona community through the 'Wild Goose Resource Group' shaping new forms of participative worship.
- **All Age Worship**, designed for the whole church family (i.e. people of all ages, single and married, parents and non-parents). These services include material that is meaningful to adults and young people as well as children.
- **Services of Praise**, ranging from traditional 'Songs of Praise' to worship focussing on contemporary Christian songs.

These acts of worship may happen on a Sunday and may take the place of regular, more traditional worship, though some may be better delivered during the week. Because not every small rural church has the resources to undertake new forms of worship some of these may be better undertaken in the broader context provided by ministry areas.

Most people are attracted to worship that is authentic, whatever its outward style. However, evidence suggests that young people, as well as many adults, respond well to services that are lively, understandable, utilise all the senses, and are fun, relaxed, simple and clear.



Services that are designed to engage with all ages and with people who may be new to church life should generally:

- Involve the wider family of the church and be open to all;
- Cater for the needs of regular worshippers as well as the needs of strangers;
- Be happy and lively;
- Provide opportunities for creativity in worship;
- Use modern language;
- Be informal in approach, but there still have an underlying structure;
- Encourage the use of the senses in worship;
- Provide spiritual nourishment for all.

All approaches to worship have an intrinsic value and an integrity that should be respected whatever form the worship takes. All worship should evoke a sense of holiness and otherness. Worship should move people from the everyday experience of the material to a fulfilling communion with God.

There is therefore a balance to be struck between making new people feel at home and challenging them with a new experience. And there is also a balance to be struck between the informal and the formal. In an increasingly informal society, there is an expectation that a worship leader will be relaxed and at ease taking worship, being warm in delivery and avoiding unnecessary jargon. However, elements of formality, delivered through structured liturgical form, also help to provide moments of encounter with God.

Worship leaders cannot of course create attractive mission-centred acts of worship without the active, prayerful support of the congregation. However, the role of the worship leader is critical and prayerful preparation is important. Just as a priest has a representative role, representing the Bishop, and so due to the universal, catholic nature of the church, the worship leader has a representative role, focussing the worship of the local church and representing its local membership. Being a worship leader means acting both with and on behalf of the congregation and it is good to remember at all times that you represent God, the people and the Church.

There are different opinions as to whether this representative role means that worship leaders should robe or not. Some will feel that their role involves being set apart and that a form of 'uniform' is therefore appropriate. Robes direct attention away from the individual and towards the role that they fulfil in worship. Others may feel that robing places an inappropriate division between the worship leader and the congregation of which they are a part, and is in danger of making an important lay ministry appear clericalised, confusing people about the roles of worship leader and



priest. Local customs, such as whether servers and choir robe, or only the vicar does, will be important in reaching a local decision on the message that this sends out about worship and worship leaders.

If churches want to encourage new people to join in their worship then it will be necessary to try to imagine what the church might feel like to somebody who has rarely attended an act of worship. It is then possible to imagine what they might need and how the church can best help them. Or indeed, you can go out and ask them – if you are genuinely open to hear the answers!

Important factors in making church worship mission-orientated will include:

- Making the place of worship inviting and welcoming;
- Making it warm and comfortable;
- Helping worshippers to engage with each other;
- Making sure there are not too many books and papers to be used by the congregation;
- Making sure that worshippers are guided helpfully through the liturgy;
- Making sure the service is well prepared, coherent and relevant to those present;
- Making sure the sermon, prayers and music speak into their experience.



## Group Work Discussion

### 1. Gathering

Spend a few minutes in silence, offering any worries or concerns from everyday life to God, and acknowledging God's presence among you as you meet together.

**Almighty God,  
whose only Son has opened for us  
a new and living way into your presence:  
give us pure hearts and steadfast wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.**

### 2. Reflecting

In groups of 2-3, share an experience of being 'the new person' in an unfamiliar place or situation, such as starting a new job, joining a club, being in a situation where you don't know what to do.

- How did you feel?
- What information did you need?
- How could others have helped you?

Come back together as a group, share the key points from your experiences and reflections.



### 3. Exploring

As a group, think about the experience of coming to church for the first time:

- How might people feel?
- What information might they need?
- List the ways that you, in your ministry area, can help them?

Discuss the challenges of leading worship that is engaging for all ages:

- How can we ensure all age worship is easy to understand and follow?
- How can we cater to people of different age groups and from different backgrounds?
- How can we enable as many people as possible to actively participate?

### 4. Responding and Concluding

- a. Each share briefly one particular thing you have learned from this session.
- b. Plan your preparation for the next session.
- c. Finish by saying the Grace together, or some other form of prayer.



# 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>3</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>4</sup>

In the section, 'How to put a service together'<sup>5</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

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-38>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/new-patterns-1>

<sup>5</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.



## Group Work Discussion

### 1. Gathering

Spend a few minutes in silence, offering any worries or concerns from everyday life to God, and acknowledging God's presence among you as you meet together.

**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

In this session, you will start to construct a Service of the Word as a group that you will actually lead in your ministry area. Depending on your group size, you could produce one service as a whole group or split into smaller working groups to prepare several services.

As a group, discuss and agree 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?
- 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?



Make plans to actually hold this service in your local church(es).

Plan the part each person will play and any further preparation, such as producing orders of service, or briefing musicians etc., that is necessary.

#### **4. Responding and Concluding**

- a. Each share briefly one particular thing you have learned from this session.
- b. Plan your preparation for the next session.
- c. Finish by saying the Grace together, or some other form of prayer.



# Session 6: Reflecting on your experience

## Worship Leader Training Course

One of the important ways in which we learn as disciples of Jesus Christ and ministers of the Gospel is through a process of reflection. We learn by reflecting on our practice and making improvements to the way we undertake our work. This process of reflection is often represented by the 'pastoral cycle'.



In this cycle, **experience** (of a situation or event) is explored so that the various elements can be better understood. A number of questions can help this **exploration**. They can be used as a checklist, although not all of the questions will be helpful for each visit.

1. There are questions about the situation.  
What was the worship designed to do? Who prepared and delivered it? Was it well planned? Was the worship well delivered? Were there parts that worked well? Were there parts that worked less well? How long did it last? Did we use the building effectively? Who was present? Did anything unexpected occur?
2. There are questions about those involved.  
Who planned and delivered the service with you? Did you work well as a team, or were there difficulties? Who delivered the worship with you? Did they do their part well, or were there difficulties?
3. There are questions about the leader.  
What did I do in the worship? How did I feel? Was I well prepared? What were my expectations? How did the congregation react to me? Did I know my limitations? Did I do what I intended to do? Was there anything I omitted to do? Did I do a good job?





4. And there are questions about the interaction.

What was happening between the people present at the service? Did they all join in? What was the atmosphere like? Was there a mutual understanding of what we were trying to do together? Were there people who felt unable to join in, and, if so, why? Were there people who particularly enjoyed the worship and, if so, why?

Once we have a clear idea about what happened during the worship, we are able to transition into a period of **reflection** on our own practice.

We may ask the questions:

What can I learn from reflecting on this act of worship? What can I learn from the way I prepared the worship? What can I learn from the way I delivered the worship? What can I learn from those who helped to prepare and/or deliver the worship with me? What can I learn from the way the congregation reacted to the worship?

And because this worship was led on behalf of the church and as a disciple of Jesus Christ there will be a need to address the questions:

How did I serve Christ by preparing and/ or delivering this act of worship? Are there ways in which I could have done that more effectively?

Finally, a **response** can then be formed by asking:

What have I learned from the service? How might I do things differently in the future? Are there skills or knowledge that I lack? Who might help me develop my skills and/ or increase my knowledge?

The Pastoral Cycle is arranged as a spiral simply because each new experience is changed in the light of previous reflection. Variations on this model are common and can be helpful in exploring how the reflective process works.

The best reflections are often undertaken as prayer. Reflection on the worship can lead both to meditation and intercession as we offer the whole experience to God and place before him the needs of the congregation we served. Reflection can lead to confession as we recognise our own inadequacies and the desire to improve our practice can lead to thanksgiving and supplication as we give thanks for the opportunity to serve Christ and seek God's guidance as we move forward.

God calls us to service in many different ways. As disciples of Jesus Christ we are called to witness to his life, death, resurrection and ascension in every part of our lives. Through our baptism we are called to explore the way of Jesus, to grow in friendship with God and in love for his people and in service to others. As disciples



of Jesus Christ we do this in our homes, in our places of work, in our times of leisure and through the membership of his church.

There are many ways in which God calls us to serve, and helping with leading worship is one of those ways. It is a ministry that grows out of our journey of discipleship and is part of our Christian witness. It is sometimes difficult to know quite what God is calling us to be and do during the next part of our lives and we often discover the right way forward for us by trying different avenues of service.

This session is designed to help you to discern whether leading worship is right for you at this point in your life. In order to do this we will ask you to honestly and prayerfully reflect on the work that you have done on this course and the service(s) you have planned and led in your ministry area.

It may be that you are busy with other duties that you feel are more pressing either in the church, at work, or in your family. It may be that you feel that this new work is so rewarding that you decide to give up other forms of service to concentrate on this area of ministry. It may even be that God is calling you to explore this ministry further and you would like to go on and explore Licensed Lay Ministry or ordination as a deacon or a priest.

Indeed, the life-long journey of faith demands that we constantly seek God's guidance on the path that he wants us to take so that we can become the person he wants us to be.

When we undertake a task on behalf of the church the discernment for that task is the responsibility of both the individual who takes on that work and the church in whose name the ministry is undertaken. Therefore, at this stage it will be important for others to engage with you in a discernment process to prayerfully identify whether leading worship is right for you at this time. You will have thought about this before undertaking this course of training and others in the church will have supported you on this journey.

However, you now need to reflect on the work that you have been undertaking with those responsible for leading worship in your church and need to come to a joint decision about the way ahead.



## Group Work Discussion

### 1. Gathering

Spend a few minutes in silence, offering any worries or concerns from everyday life to God, and acknowledging God's presence among you as you meet together.

**God our Father, Lord of all the world,  
through your Son you have called us into the fellowship  
of your universal Church:  
hear our prayer for your faithful people  
that in their vocation and ministry each may be an  
instrument of your love,  
and give to your servants the needful gifts of grace;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

### 2. Reflecting

In groups of 2-3, reflect together on the experiences you have gained planning and leading public worship:

- Were there services you felt went particularly well?
- How did this feel? What were the factors that made this a fulfilling experience?
- Were there services that didn't go as planned, or engage the congregation in the way you'd hoped?
- What difficulties did you encounter, and what lessons have you learned as a result?

Come back together as a group, share the key points from your experiences and reflections.



### 3. Exploring

Continue reflecting together, now sharing as a group:

- Reflect together on the experiences you have had of leading worship.
- Share your positive and negative experiences, and explore what made them so.

### 4. Responding and Concluding

- a. Each share briefly your one most significant piece of learning from the whole training process.
- b. Make arrangements for each member of the group to have a conversation with the appropriate member of the Ministry Team, to agree whether you will go forward to be fully commissioned as a Worship Leader.
- c. Finish by saying the Grace together, or some other form of prayer.

