

# SERVICE OF THE WORD

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE SERVICE

### Preparation

- \* A liturgical Greeting  
An invitation to worship  
A hymn *may be sung*.
- \* Penitence *may be at this part of the service or in Response*.
- \* An Acclamation *and/or* a Song of praise  
*Metrical forms of canticles may be used, or a hymn may be sung.*
- \* The Collect of the day

### Ministry of the Word

- \* Readings *from the Bible*
- \* A Psalm *and/or* a Scripture Song *may precede or follow readings*.  
A Bible Responsory *may follow a reading*.
- \* The Sermon  
A hymn *may be sung*.

### Response

- \* An Affirmation of Faith  
*The Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Affirmation of Faith from the Renewal of Baptismal Vows (page 400) or a scriptural affirmation of Faith.*
- \* The Prayers  
Intercessions and Thanksgiving  
Penitence *(if not used above)*  
A general collect  
*The whole section is concluded with The Lord's Prayer in one of its approved forms.*  
A hymn *may be sung*.

### Dismissal

- \* A dismissal prayer  
The Blessing  
A salutation

*Sections marked with \* are mandatory in any service based on this structure.*

## NOTES

*Service of the Word* is for use on occasions when the prescribed services of Morning and Evening Prayer or Holy Communion may not meet the needs of a particular congregation.

A basic structure for all such services is provided.

Examples of working out that structure approved by the House of Bishops have been published. Resource material authorised by the House of Bishops such as *Patterns for Worship* (Church House Publishing 2002) or *Common Worship: Times and Seasons* (Church of England 2004) may be used to work out other forms based on the Structure.

## GUIDELINES

1 The Structure has four sections:

*Preparation*: A Greeting, an invitation to worship, a hymn of praise to God, an act of penitence (but this may on occasion be more appropriate in the section called the *Response*) and an Acclamation.

The Collect of the day is the climax of the *Preparation* and leads in to the *Ministry of the Word*.

*Ministry of the Word*: The Reading and exposition of Holy Scripture is the central part of the service. The use of the Psalms whether sung in metrical versions, or chanted or recited from the Psalter in this book, enables the congregation to interact with the Readings. Periods of silence also help this interaction. The use of Scripture Songs ('canticles') is recommended.

*Response*: Normally an Affirmation of Faith is followed by prayers for the Church and for the World. Sometimes penitence is also appropriate if not used in the *Preparation*. After a General Collect the climax of this section comes as the congregation says together the Lord's Prayer. In this section the Offering may come before or after the Prayers.

The service ends with *The Dismissal*. Either a Dismissal Prayer or a Blessing may be followed by a final salutation.

2 The keynote of *Service of the Word* is simplicity. It should not have a complicated opening. The service begins with a *Greeting* and *Invitation to worship*. This governs the choice of any hymn to be sung at this point.

- 3 *Penitence* will normally be expressed in the *Preparation*.
- 4 The *Acclamation* is a proclamation of God's majesty and love that derives from the *Greeting* and *Invitation*. Traditional elements like the *Sursum Corda* and *Sanctus*, as well as Canticles such as *Gloria in Excelsis* may have a place here.
- 5 The *Collect of the day* is given a special position, similar to its use in the Communion Service: the climax of the *Preparation*. It is the 'link' with all the other worship of the Church on the day. It may be introduced with a 'one-line' bidding, deriving from the central thrust of the prayer. For example: the minister may say, 'As we prepare to use the Collect of this Sunday, let us in silence pray for God's guidance.' (Or for spiritual strength or whatever is the central point of the particular collect.) After twenty seconds or so of silent prayer the Collect is then recited.
- 6 *Psalms* and what are entitled *Scripture Songs* are vital components of the Service. Metrical versions of some Psalms are to be found in *Church Hymnal*. Other sources of psalmody and different ways of using it can be explored.
- 7 There should be at least two *Readings* from the Bible. Normally the Sunday lectionary will determine the selection. On occasion readings may be presented in dramatised form.
- 8 The use of the terminology, *The Sermon*, the legally recognized word in the Church of Ireland, does not rule out a variety of ways of proclaiming the message of the Gospel; these may include drama, interviews and other techniques.
- 9 When appropriate the *Sermon* may be followed by a hymn. An *Affirmation of Faith* is regarded as essential. On some occasions it might be deemed suitable for an act of penitence to precede the *Affirmation of Faith* in the *Response*.
- 10 The section containing the *Prayers* should conclude with a *General Collect*. The climax of the *Prayers*, indeed of the whole *Response*, is the *Lord's Prayer*, with an appropriate introduction.
- 11 The service ends with the *Dismissal*. If a concluding hymn is customary it is better for this to precede the *Blessing* and final salutation.

12 Periods of silence are important. Some indications of where these are most suitable have been given. Care and instruction are needed so that worshippers can learn how to use silence in worship.

### BIBLE RESPONSORIES

Construction is by one of two methods:

1 A verse of scripture is read by the minister.

This is repeated by the congregation.

The minister says some complementary words of scripture.

The congregation repeats the first verse again.

There is a trinitarian ascription

Finally the congregation repeats the scripture verse a third time.

2 A verse of scripture is read by the minister.

A different but complementary verse is spoken by the congregation.

Another verse is spoken by the minister.

The congregation repeats its response.

The Gloria is spoken by the minister.

The congregation again repeats its response.

Similar responsories will be found in the Canadian *Book of Alternative Services* (1985), in the New Zealand *Prayer Book* (1988), in *Promise of his Glory* (1990) and in *Celebrating Common Prayer* (1992).