

**THE STUDY OF LITURGY  
PASTORAL MINISTRY: MARRIAGE, MINISTRY  
TO THOSE WHO  
ARE SICK, AND BURIAL**

**COMMENTARY ON THE  
BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER 2004**

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## CONTENTS

<b>MARRIAGE</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Marriage One</b>	3
<b>Marriage Two</b>	12
The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth	26
Thanksgiving after the birth of a child/thanksgiving after adoption	28
A form of prayers and dedication after a civil marriage	29
Appendix A: The Remarriage of Divorced Persons in Church	31
<b>MINISTRY TO THOSE WHO ARE SICK</b>	<b>34</b>
Private Communion	48
Holy Communion by Extension	49
<b>FUNERAL SERVICES</b>	<b>52</b>
Funeral Services: The canonical position	52
Funeral Services One: The Order for the Burial of the Dead.	54
Funeral Services Two, entitled "The Funeral Service"	61
When the body is brought to the church on the eve of a funeral	71
A form for use at the burial of ashes after cremation	72
A funeral service for a child	72
A form for use in the home, funeral home or mortuary prior to the Service in Church	72
<b>APPENDIX</b>	
Guidelines on the Liturgical Use of Oil	74
[These guidelines were drawn up by the Liturgical Advisory Committee and issued to the clergy in March 2011. They relate in the first instance to healing, hence their inclusion in this part of the Commentaries, but also to Baptism, Confirmation, and Ordination]	

# MARRIAGE

## MARRIAGE ONE

### The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony

The Church's involvement in Christian marriage from the earliest days is indicated by the following citations from the second to the tenth centuries:-

*Ignatius of Antioch* (c. 107 A.D.) "It is fitting for those who purpose matrimony to accomplish their union with the sanction of the Bishop; that their marriage may be in the Lord, and not merely in the flesh. Let all things be done to the honour of God". [Letter to Polycarp V].

*Tertullian* (c.160 - c.225 A.D.) "How can we find words to describe the happiness of that marriage in which the Church joins together, which the Oblation confirms, the benediction seals, the angels proclaim when sealed, and the Father ratifies!" [Tertull. ad Ux. ii.7,8].

*Fourth Council of Carthage* (398 A.D.). In the thirteenth canon it is enjoined that the bride and bridegroom shall be presented by their parents and friends to a priest for benediction.

*Basil the Great* (c.330-79 A.D.) St. Basil calls marriage a yoke which *dia tes eulogias*, by means of the benediction, unites in one those who were two [Hexaem. vii.].

*Ambrose* (c.339-97 A.D.). St. Ambrose calls marriage a sacrament, as does also St. Augustine in many places of his treatise "on the good of marriage"; and the former again says, "As marriage must be sanctified by the priest's sanction and blessing, how can that be called a marriage where there is no agreement of faith?" [Ambrose, Ep. xix].

*King Edmund* (946 A.D.). Among his laws respecting espousals is one which provides that "the priest shall be at the marriage, and shall celebrate the union according to custom with God's blessing, and with all solemnity."

The church in effect took over the heathen marriage rites of pagan Rome and christianized them, replacing the sacrifices to the gods by the nuptial eucharist. The close correspondence of details may be seen in the following analysis,

### *Heathen (Roman) Marriage Rite*

(1) Sponsalia (Betrothal): (a) Presents (arrhae), i.e. "earnest" money; (b) The Kiss; (c) the giving of the Ring; (d) the joining of hands.

(2) Confarreatio (Wedding proper): (e) (Blood) sacrifices to the gods; (f) Veiling (velum, "flammeum"); (g) Crowning with flowers; (h) Prayers; (i) Partaking of the sacrificial cake. Procession, ceremonies at bridegroom's house, coena nuptialis (marriage supper).

*Christian Marriage Rite* (as described by Pope Nicholas I to the Bulgarians in 866):-

(d) Sponsalia (espousals); (c) Subarrhatio (giving of the ring by the man to the woman); (a) Conveyance of dowry by attested documents; (e), (h), (i) Nuptial Eucharist (with Communion of the bridal couple); (f) Solemn Benediction, the veil being held over them; (g) "crowning" as they leave the Church.

The early Roman Sacramentaries (Leonine, Gelasian, Gregorian) provide for the Nuptial Eucharist the usual Collects, a special Preface, and a Benediction (after the Consecration).

The traditional language Marriage Service - Marriage One ("The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony") is derived from the 1549 Order, as amended (in the Church of England) in 1552 and 1662, and (in the Church of Ireland) in 1878, 1926, 2004 and 2009. Its ultimate sources include the medieval (Sarum and York) rites, Hermann of Cologne, and Luther.

For a brief history of Christian marriage see *A Companion to Common Worship*, Vol. 2, Alcuin Club Collections 81, SPCK, 2006, ed. Paul Bradshaw, Chapter Nine pp 180-184 . This covers Jewish precedents, the early Christian centuries, later eastern practice, the medieval west, the Reformation, and the Church of England.

## COMMENTARY

**(1) The Banns of Marriage** The calling of the Banns of Marriage or (as an alternative) the issuing of a marriage licence (or special licence) has been abolished, the legal side of the marriage having become the responsibility of the Registrar in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Legislation to bring the contents of the 2004 edition of the Book of Common Prayer into line with the secular law was passed by the General Synod in May 2009 and will be reflected in future printings of the Prayer Book. It is illegal to perform the marriage ceremony without the necessary legal procedure having been followed.

There are now no restrictions as to the seasons of the year when marriages may be celebrated. Historically, it was not customary to solemnize marriages from Advent Sunday to the Octave of the Epiphany, from Septuagesima to the Octave of Easter, and from Rogation Sunday to Trinity Sunday. A prohibition of the celebration of marriages during Lent is found as early as the Council of Laodicea (c.365 A.D., the fifty-second canon).

**(2) Entrance** A rubric in the pre-2004 Order referred to the persons to be married coming into the body of the Church, the man on the right hand, the woman on the left and this remains customary. This part of the service takes place at the chancel step. This is a public service, which takes place "in the face of this congregation". There must be at least two witnesses as well as the officiating clergy person.

It is customary for the groom to arrive first (with the best man) and to be seated in good time at the front of the church on the south side. When the bride comes into the church (with her bridesmaids and the person who is giving her away) the groom and the best man come forward and stand before the priest and are joined there by the bride and those who accompany her.

**(3) Preface** The significance of the marriage service should be carefully explained to the couple as part of their preparation for marriage. This should include an exposition of the Christian doctrine of matrimony as set forth in the Preface, and of the binding character of the marriage vows. Points that may be brought out in expounding the Preface include:-

"We are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation..." A wedding in a Registry Office is as legally binding as one in a church and is recognized by the Church as a valid ceremony. But the distinction between a church wedding and one in a Registry Office lies in the latter being a purely civil ceremony - there is no recognition of God whatever. In a church wedding the responsibility to God for the keeping of the marriage vows is fully acknowledged by the couple.

"...an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency..." Marriage was part of God's plan and purpose from the beginning, as may be seen in the Genesis narrative where the creation of Eve comes before the Fall (Genesis 2:18-25). It is essentially wholesome and good.

"...signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church..." The biblical basis for this concept may be found in Eph. 5:23, "For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour", and Rev. 21:2 "And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a

bride adorned for her husband." It is well summed up in Samuel Stone's hymn, "The Church's one foundation" where it says,

From heaven he came and sought her to  
be his holy Bride;  
with his own blood he bought her,  
and for her life he died.

"...which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought, in Cana of Galilee..." The reference is to John 2:1-11, the first miracle recorded in St. John's Gospel being the changing of the water into wine at the wedding feast. The young couple involved had the unique privilege of having the Lord present "in the flesh" at their wedding. However, the Lord is truly present in a spiritual way at every Christen wedding since "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (Matt. 18:20).

"and is commended in holy Scripture to be honourable among all men..." This would appear to be a reference to the teaching of Jesus, "From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh." (Mark 10:8).

"...and therefore is not by any to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly". The extremely serious nature of the commitment is made clear. It must be made "reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God." The positive view of marriage in the Church of Ireland rite is emphasized through the omission of words found in the 1662 Order, "to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding..."

"...and in the fear of God". "Fear" in this context signifies reverential awe as in Psalm 19:9 "The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

[The causes for which matrimony was ordained]

"First, for the increase of mankind, according to the will of God..." This refers back to the biblical "be fruitful and multiply" of Genesis 1:28, and includes the physical aspect of marriage, understood in a positive way.

"...and for the due ordering of families and households..." This is more than ever necessary in a disordered world in which so many young people get into trouble. In particular, children need to be brought up as Christian believers - "in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy name." So marriage is not just a matter relating to the couple getting married, but is, normally, to do with the creation of a new family, which must be Christian in quality.

"Secondly, for the hallowing (that is the making holy) of the union betwixt man and woman, and for the avoidance of sin." Some may feel that the final phrase is negative in tone. However, this wording in the Church of Ireland version of the traditional rite represents a considerable modification of that in the 1662 Prayer Book, which read, "Secondly, it was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency, might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body."

"Thirdly, for the mutual society, help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity." This is the "being together" aspect of marriage. If it is true that "troubles shared are troubles halved" it is also true that joys are multiplied when there is

someone to share them with. If marriages are to remain stable couples need to make sure that they spend time together.

"...if any man can shew any just cause..." This provision no longer has any effect since the legal aspect of marriage is the responsibility of the Registrar. The entire sentence has been deleted from the rite by an act of the General Synod, 2009.

A rubric indicating that in the case of more than one couple getting married the questions and vows are to be repeated for each couple no longer appears in the Order of Service but it may be taken that this remains the procedure to be followed..

The use of the word "priest" is significant in that there is no provision in the Book of Common Prayer service for a marriage to be solemnized by a deacon, and it is not clear whether this is legal. However, theologically speaking, the ministers of the marriage are the bride and groom. The role of the priest as officiant at the wedding is particularly significant in relation to the nuptial blessing (cf Ordination Services Two p.565 where the "job specification" of the priest is explicitly stated to be blessing God's people in the Lord's name).

#### **(4) The Charge.**

The charge places a moral imperative on the couple to disclose anything which might constitute a legal obstacle (impediment) to the marriage and render it invalid.

The General Synod of May 2009 added the following rubric to bring the order of service into line with current law in the Republic of Ireland:

*[RI] Unless the declarations of no civil impediment have already been made by the couple prior to the marriage in the presence of the Registered Solemniser and the two witnesses the man and the woman each make the required declaration now*

*I solemnly declare that I do not know of any civil impediment to my proposed marriage  
with...*

It may be noted that the regulations relating to the remarriage of divorced persons is provided for by means of a new Canon (replacing the former Canon 31) and by regulations approved by the General Synod of 1996 (see Appendix A, below).

#### **(5) The historic "shape" of the rite**

Historically, the rite of marriage consisted of two parts,

- The betrothal ("espousals")
- The marriage proper.

Originally the "espousals" were distinct from the marriage ceremony and represented a formal and religious recognition of what is now termed an engagement; and it took place months, even years, before the marriage itself. The custom survived in parts of Europe, at least up to the beginning of the twentieth century. The ceremonies were,

- (1) The verbal expression of free consent (in effect, the vows)
- (2) The presentation of gifts *arrae* or *sponsalia* (representing the marriage settlement);
- (3) Giving and receiving of a ring;
- (4) A kiss;
- (5) Joining of hands;
- (6) Settling a dowry in writing.

The marriage service was essentially a service of blessing, and, as indicated above, included the celebration of the eucharist (witnessed to by Tertullian in the third century A.D.).

**(6) The Questions** (traditionally known as the "Espousals").

Although this ceremony may appear to be a mere formality, since it is very improbable that persons will appear before the clergyman for the purpose of being married unless they have previously come to a decision and agreement on the subject, yet mutual consent is absolutely essential to the validity of the marriage and it is vital for this to be acknowledged and expressed prior to the vows being exchanged. The man is asked about his willingness to "love, comfort, honour, and keep" his wife. The woman is asked about her willingness to "obey and serve, love, honour and keep" her husband. One may note the positive doctrine of matrimony, which is called a "holy estate", its exclusive content, "forsaking all other", with the only limitation to the commitment implied in the words "as long as you both shall live". Marriage is for life: it is not for eternity.

"Who giveth..." No answer is provided (since the response is properly the minister's receiving the woman at her father's or friend's hands) but it is customary for the bride's father to say, "I do".

The ceremony of "giving away", historically speaking reflected views of woman's dependent status (on her father, then, through the church, on her husband) within the order of creation which are at odds with the concepts of partnership generally held today. However, there is a "letting go" involved which may reflect changing relationships and some brides prefer to have a "giving away" even where it is no longer officially included as in Marriage Two (see below).

**(7) The Promises** (The Marriage Vows). The comprehensive nature of the commitment is here fully expressed. There does not seem to be any difference in meaning between "plighting" and "giving" one's troth, which is an old-fashioned way of saying, "I pledge you my word or my honour", in other words "I make my solemn promise". The word "troth" has the significance of fidelity or allegiance.

The Sarum original of the women's promise included the words, "to be bonere and buxum in bedde and at te borde tyll deth us departhe if holy chyrche it wol ordeyne". ["bonnaire"= gentle, "boughsome" = obedient]

The reference in the rubric to "the accustomed duty" being laid on the book is obsolete - but it is a reminder that the officiating clergyman is entitled to a fee for his services.

**(8) The Giving of the Ring(s)**

In 1549 the man gave "a ring, and other tokens of spousage, as gold and silver". The gold and silver were removed in 1552, and the ring alone represents the ancient bride-price. Nowadays the ring (which is the circle with no ending) represents the permanence of the marriage bond; and it is a widespread custom to have two rings, the bride's and the groom's. If this is the case the ceremony with the ring is repeated, and the wording of the prayer following is modified so as to read, "...whereof these Rings given and received are tokens and pledges". "With my body I thee worship" means "I will render you service and show you honour" (cf Gen. 24:53, 67). "Worship", from "worth-ship" signifies the acknowledgement of worth, and is still found in secular use in such expressions as "your worship" in relation to a magistrate and "his worship the mayor".

Down to the end of the sixteenth century it was customary for the bride to wear the ring on her right hand; since then it has been worn on the left hand. The use of gold, which is usually free from alloy, is a symbol of purity.

In the Sarum Manual an elaborate form was provided for the blessing of the ring, during which it was sprinkled with holy water, and signed with the sign of the cross. The man was

instructed to place the ring on the thumb of the bride, saying, 'In the Name of the Father'; then upon the second finger, saying, 'and of the Son'; and then upon the third finger, saying 'and of the Holy Spirit'; and then upon the fourth finger, saying, 'Amen.' ('And there let him leave the ring').

**(9) The Prayer for Blessing** 1549, altered 1552. Compiled from two prayers in the Sarum Manual used in the blessing of the ring.

'O Eternal God, Creator,' etc. In 1549 after the words 'as Isaac and Rebecca' there was the following clause in parenthesis: ('after bracelets and jewels of gold given of the one to the other for tokens of their matrimony'). Isaac and Rebecca are chosen as the Old Testament types of constancy, their history being free from any trace of polygamy.

**(10) Joining of hands** The words here are a slight misinterpretation of the original in the Greek New Testament (Mk 10:9//) which refers to the relationship, "That which..."

This ceremony comes from Hermann's Consultation and does not appear in any pre-Reformation manuals. However, the words were part of the Gospel reading in the *Missa sponsalium*.

**(11) The Declaration.** This declaration of the completed union is also taken from Archbishop Hermann's Cologne book, and constitutes a proclamation to the church of what has already been effected by previous parts of the rite.

**(12) The Nuptial Blessing** appears almost as an afterthought "And the minister adds this blessing". However, the invocation of God's blessing upon the union is of the essence of the marriage rite, the bestowal of a blessing being a fundamental part of the ministry of a priest (BCP "The Ordination of Priests p.565). The concept of blessing reappears in the prayer "O God of Abraham" later in the rite (see below).

The Declaration followed by the Blessing completes the actual marriage ceremony. Everything else in the service consists of readings and prayers arising out of the marriage, unless the Holy Communion is celebrated. The distinction between the two parts of the service is underlined by the movement from the Chancel Step to the Sanctuary Step during the recitation of the Psalm.

**(13) The Procession to the altar** The rubric says, "The minister goes to the Lord's Table." This originally said "Then shall they go into the quire," and Cosin wished so to restore it, with the alteration "they all." The idea seems to have been that the Clergy, the Choir, the bride and bridegroom, and the bridal party are to go from the body of the church in procession to the chancel, singing the processional psalm 128 - *Beati omnes*. It is customary now for the procession to consist of the bride and groom following the officiating priest. They may be accompanied by the best man and bridesmaid(s) if desired.

**(14) The Psalm** Either Psalm 128 or 67 may be used.

**(15) The Prayers.** These consist of Lesser Litany, Lord's Prayer, Versicles & Responses, the prayers "O God of Abraham...", "O Merciful Lord...", "O God, who by thy mighty power...", and "Almighty God, who at the first beginning..." It may be noticed that only the first and last of these are obligatory. The second and third may be omitted, and it is in accordance with the canons to substitute other suitable prayers at the discretion of the officiating minister. Specifically, those from pp424-427 (Marriage Two) may be preferred.

The concluding prayers have undergone little change in the course of translation from the ancient Latin office.

*The Lesser Litany* 1549, from the Sarum Manual.

*The Lord's Prayer* 1549, from the Sarum Manual. The absence of the Doxology denotes that the prayers which follow are of the nature of supplication, not of thanksgiving. Until 1662 only the last clause, 'But deliver us from evil,' was said by the people.

*The Versicles and Responses.* 1549, from Psalm 86:2; 20:1,2; 61:3; 102:1.

*Prayer for Divine Blessing.* 1549, slightly altered 1552, from the Sarum Manual. "O God of Abraham..."

1549 "And as thou didst send thy angel Raphael to Thobie and Sara, the daughter of Raguel", etc.

1552. For this clause was substituted, "And as thou didst send thy blessing upon Abraham and Sarah," etc.

*Prayer for Fruitfulness.* 1549, altered 1552, from Sarum Manual. "O Merciful Lord, and heavenly Father..."

1549 "That they may see the childer's ('children's,' 1552) children, unto the third and fourth generation, unto thy praise and honour."

1662 "That they may see their children christianly and virtuously brought up, to thy praise and honour."

*Prayer for Holy Married Life.* 1549, altered 1662.

1549 After the words "this woman may be loving and amiable" the prayer ran "to her husband as Rachael, wise as Rebecca, faithful and obedient as Sarah."

1662 Altered to "faithful and obedient to her husband".

*who has consecrated the state of matrimony.* Among the exceptions offered against the Prayer Book by Baxter and his colleagues in 1661 was the following: "Seeing the institution of Marriage was before the Fall, and so before the promise of Christ, as also for that the said passage in this collect seems to countenance the opinion of making matrimony a sacrament, we desire that clause may be altered or omitted." To this the Committee of Convocation replied: "Though the institution of marriage was before the Fall, yet it may be now, and is, consecrated by God to such an excellent mystery as the representation of the spiritual marriage between Christ and His Church (Eph. 5:23)."

*Benedictory prayer for Grace.* 1549. Sarum Manual, from two consecutive forms. Before 1552 the words "sanctify and bless you" were printed "sanctify and + bless you".

## **(16) Scripture Reading**

Prior to 2004 a collection of scripture readings consisting of extracts from Ephesians, 1 Peter and Colossians appeared here for use "if there was no sermon declaring the duties of Man and Wife". These were rarely, if ever, used. To ensure that scripture is read when this office is used the current rubric says, "Unless there is to be a celebration of Holy Communion" (for which an Epistle and Gospel are provided, see below) "a reading from Holy Scripture follows". It may be felt that a single passage of scripture is inadequate and that this is not a particularly appropriate place for it. A better place would be after the psalm.

The Scriptural Address 1549. AV.. 1662

Eph 5:25-33a; Col. 3:19; 1 Pet. 3:7; Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1-6.

## **(17) The Sermon**

This is optional "If there is a sermon it is preached here". A sermon in the form of a short (three to five minutes) address on the significance of Christian marriage, based on the Scripture reading is highly desirable and would be better placed after the psalm (and reading). The selection of readings in Marriage Two (p.418) is helpful.

1549 Then shall be said, after the Gospel, a sermon, wherein ordinarily (so oft as there is any marriage) the office of man and wife shall be declared, according to holy scripture. Or if there be no sermon, the Minister shall read this that followeth.

1552 Then shall begin the Communion. And after the Gospel, shall be said a Sermon, etc.

1662/1926 After which, if there be no Sermon declaring the duties of Man and Wife, the Minister may read as followeth.

2004 Unless there be a celebration of the Holy Communion a reading from Holy Scripture follows. If there is a sermon it is preached here.

**(18) The anthem or hymn**

If there are two hymns to be sung, it is appropriate for the first one to be placed at the beginning of the service and the second here. A solo may be sung during the signing of the Register and what is called in Northern Ireland "The Schedule".

**(19) Conclusion** (without Holy Communion)

An additional prayer, not in the 1926 Order is found here:

O eternal God, we humbly beseech thee favourably to behold these thy servants ... and ... now joined in wedlock according to thy holy ordinance; and grant that they, seeking first thy kingdom and righteousness, may obtain the manifold blessings of thy grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

This is followed by the prayer "O almighty Lord, and everlasting God" and the Grace.

**(20) The rubric about communion**

1549 The new married persons (the same day of their marriage) must receive the holy Communion.

1662/1926 It is convenient that the new married persons should receive Communion at the time of their Marriage, or at the first opportunity after their Marriage.

[2004 substitutes "appropriate" for "convenient"].

In the old manuals the Mass of the Holy Trinity concluded the Office, and there is no reason to suppose that it was ever omitted. The modification of the requirement to receive communion according to the Prayer Book Rite was a response to Puritan objections. However, the word "convenient" had here the sense of "fitting" or "appropriate" as is explicitly recognized in the 2004 service and it may well be considered that the Order is incomplete without it. "To end the public solemnity of marriage with receiving the blessed Sacrament, is a custom so religious and so holy, that if the Church of England be blameable in this respect, it is not for suffering it to be so much, but rather for not providing that it may be more put in use." Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Bk.5, 73:8.

**(21) Holy Communion at the Time of a Marriage.** The provision of a Collect, Epistle and Gospel was a distinct feature of the 1926 Prayer Book and was not found in the previous Prayer Books from which the 1926 Book was derived. The readings here are those from the 1926 book but, as a further rubric indicates, the readings from the list on page 418 (Marriage Two) may be preferred.

The rubric indicating the procedure to be followed if there is an allegation or declaration of an impediment to the marriage is no longer relevant following the taking over of the legal process by the State and was deleted from the order of service by the General Synod of 2009. The legality of the marriage is secured by the addition of the following rubric,

*A couple must produce a Schedule of Marriage (NI) or a Marriage Registration Form (RI) to the officiating priest before a marriage can take place.*

It is helpful for the Schedule/Registration Form to be produced at the rehearsal at day or two before the wedding so that there is no danger of it being forgotten on the day of the wedding.

## **MARRIAGE TWO**

### **THE MARRIAGE SERVICE**

A revised marriage service was authorized for use by the General Synod in 1987 and incorporated into *Alternative Occasional Services* - a companion volume to the *Alternative Prayer Book* in 1993. Its contents were to a considerable extent drawn from the modern language order found in the Church of England's *Alternative Service Book 1980*, pp283-304. The current "Marriage Two" order draws on the Church of Ireland's 1987 order and has some similarities with (but is not identical to) that in the Church of England's *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*, Church House Publishing, 2000 and offers an alternative to the more traditional Marriage One.

#### **Differences from the Marriage One Service**

1. A more positive view of the nature of matrimony, with an emphasis on love and the joy of bodily union as well as the union of hearts and lives.
2. A difference order of priorities in the reasons for the existence of matrimony;
3. There is a more logical arrangement of the service in that the Ministry of the Word, entitled, "Proclaiming and Receiving the Word" together with the sermon preceded by the collect comes at the beginning of this order, immediately after the Introduction. This means that the significance of Christian marriage as scripturally understood can be read and expounded before the marriage actually takes place. However, as in the 1987-93 order it is still possible to have this after the marriage (in this case following the Affirmation by the People).
4. There is a comprehensive selection of readings from the Holy Scriptures allowing for an Old Testament Reading, Psalm, Epistle and Gospels.
5. Equality between the man and women in the form of the Consent and Vows. The word "obey" included as an option in the 1987/1993 rite has been removed.
6. There is no longer any provision for the "giving away" of the bride - which was included as an option in the 1987/1993 rite.
7. A prayer over the ring is included.
8. There is provision for what is now the general custom of having two rings, although the option of one only remains.
9. An Affirmation by the people included (a change from the 1987/1993 rite).
10. A comprehensive selection of prayers which may be led by members of the congregation (A rubric in Marriage One allows them to be used in that service).
11. The use of modern English throughout, including the Common Worship psalter.
12. Better provision for Holy Communion with the marriage rite using Holy Communion Two (or, as an option, Holy Communion One).

#### **NOTES**

These notes appear at the end of Marriage Two and apply to both rites. The material relating to allegation of an impediment, to banns, and to marriage by licence no longer applies since the alterations made in the marriage law in both jurisdictions.

1. As much notice as possible should be given to the minister of the parish to allow sufficient time for adequate pastoral preparation before marriage.

Ideally, the pastoral relationship is such that the officiating minister already knows at least one of the parties well. Formal preparation is difficult to arrange but both parties should be encouraged to come and see the officiant to discuss all the arrangements and begin the planning process. This provides an opportunity to go through the order of service from

beginning to end and explain not only the practical options but the Christian understanding of marriage embodied in the order of service, not least in the introduction, the consent, the vows, and the prayers. It is helpful if the officiant can keep in touch in the period between the initial contact and the actual wedding - which given need to plan the reception well in advance can often be as much as a year.

2. All readings in Proclaiming and Receiving the Word must be from Holy Scripture. These may be used where printed in the service or after the Affirmation by the People. At Holy Communion there are at least two readings, of which the Gospel must be one.

The requirement that all readings in this section must be from Holy Scripture is to prevent non-authorized and possibly inappropriate material being used. As mentioned above, it is highly preferable for this section to come at the beginning of the service so that God's Word may be read and preached in a manner relevant to the wedding before it actually takes place. It is not only at Holy Communion that it is highly desirable for there to be more than one reading and a psalm. The normal order should be deemed to be Old Testament, Psalm, and Gospel, or Epistle, Psalm and Gospel. Not more than one reading should be chosen from each of the three sections: Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel.

3 Hymns or canticles may be sung at suitable points during the service. Normally there is a hymn at the beginning (after the Entry) and at the end (before the Lord's Prayer and the Blessing) and a solo at the signing of the register, but other arrangements are possible including instrumental music at key points (which does not have to be confined to the Bridal March and the Wedding March) and solos or duets especially where some members of the congregation may be unfamiliar with hymn-singing.

4. The minister and the couple should together choose the readings, hymns, music and the prayers to be used in the service. If a Bible or New Testament is to be presented to the bride and bridegroom it is appropriate that this should be done before the readings.

Theologically speaking the ministers of the marriage are the couple themselves and this gives them a special role in the ordering of the service. It may well be that they may need guidance as to what may or may not be suitable and appropriate, particularly in the areas of music and hymns. But, as far as possible the officiant should help them to make choices which reflect what they want to say about their understanding of what will be their marriage. With regard to the Scripture readings it may be helpful for them to be encouraged to read through the recommended passages in their own time and then make their choice - it will be helpful if these could be presented to them in a printed out form, although they may wish to look through their own bibles. Similarly the couple should be encouraged to think about the meaning of the prayers and choose those which resonate with their own outlook and expectation. There are two choices to be made - whether to use the First (Litany) form, which is fixed or the Second (separate prayers) form and, if the latter is decided upon, which two or three prayers best express what they want to say about their marriage.

5. If Holy Communion is celebrated at the marriage, its reception should not be restricted to the bridal party. The congregation are not present as spectators but should understand their role as that of participants and this makes the affirmation a significant moment. Even more so, receiving Holy Communion along with the officiating priest, the bride and groom and the bridal party indicates that the links are not only social and relational but spiritual as well.

Having said this it is highly likely, if the Holy Communion is celebrated, that there will be some present who will be non-communicants, perhaps because their particular church allegiance makes this impossible, or because they have lapsed or their form of church membership is one in which the sacrament is not emphasized or because they feel awkward

and embarrassed with a form of eucharistic liturgy they are not familiar with or may not feel they are welcome at. Some indication that members of other Christian churches are welcome to communicate on the basis of our common baptism may be helpful but sensitivity also needs to be shown towards those who have difficulties or reservations. One partial solution is for those who would like to show their solidarity with the couple but do not feel able to communicate to be encouraged to come forward for a blessing, showing by crossing their arms that they do not wish to receive the elements. Some assistance in the administration may be helpful if there is likely to be a large number of communicants.

### **The Structure of the Service**

This comprises

The Entry

Greeting

The Collect

Proclaiming and Receiving the Word

Readings

The Sermon

The Marriage

The Consent

The Vows

Giving and Receiving of a Ring

The Declaration

The Blessing

Affirmation by the People

The Acclamations

The Prayers

First Form

or

Second Form

The Peace

[If there is Holy Communion]

Celebrating at the Lord's Table (or from the Sursum Corda in HC One)

At the Preparation of the Table

The Taking of the Bread and Wine

The Great Thanksgiving (with proper preface, as appropriate)

The Lord's Prayer

The Breaking of the Bread

The Communion

The Great Silence  
Going out as God's People  
Prayer after Communion  
Dismissal.  
[If there is no communion]  
The Lord's Prayer  
The Blessing

## COMMENTARY

### The Entry

A "greeting", from Ps 118:26, 136:1, specifically of the bridal or marriage party may take place prior to the "Greeting" of the congregation. This may take place in the porch or at the back of the Church. It is desirable for the officiating minister to proceed to the front of the Church prior to the commencement of the entrance of the bride.. He should not "lead in" the bride as it is her procession, not his.

The Bridal March is not the only appropriate music for the bride to enter by. However, care should be taken to ensure the suitability of any alternative and this also applies to the use of a hymn.

The first part of the marriage service takes place at the chancel step, if there is one, although this is not mandatory.

### Greeting

The Greeting proper consists of the Dominus Vobiscum ("The Lord be with you" with its response) and an optional sentence "God is love..." from 1 John 4:16. The sentence establishes the primacy of the thought of "love" which recurs time and again in this order - in the Introduction, the Consent and the Marriage Vows and the Prayers as well as in the Readings from Holy Scripture.

### The Introduction

This comprises the Preface, outlining the Christian doctrine of marriage and the Collect.

With regard to the Preface comparison with Marriage One shows a rather different order of priorities in the understanding of matrimony.

#### *Marriage One*

Increase of mankind  
and due ordering of families  
Hallowing of the union.  
Mutual society, help and comfort

#### *Marriage Two*

Unity in love.  
Comfort and help  
Joy of bodily union.  
Blessing through children  
New life in the community.

### **The Collect**

The role of the Collect is to gather up - “collect” the prayers of the people and may be introduced by a suitable bidding. This collect is to be taken as relating to the rite as a whole, but is nonspecific to marriage. In the Church of England’s *Common Worship* the Collect comes after the Declarations (inclusive of the Consent) and takes the form:

God our Father,  
from the beginning  
you have blessed creation with abundant life.  
Pour out your blessings upon N and N,  
that they may be joined in mutual love and companionship, in  
holiness and commitment to each other.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

### **Proclaiming and Receiving the Word**

#### **Readings**

The rubric specifies “one or more readings from the Holy Scriptures”, although in the Notes at the end of the order of service it is stated that at Holy Communion there are at least two readings, of which the Gospel must be one. There is much to be said for the format at all marriage services of at least Old Testament, Psalm and Gospel *or* Epistle, Psalm and Gospel. There should not be two readings from any one section.

In choosing the readings (together with the officiating minister) it is helpful for the couple to be encouraged to go through them all in their own time and to pick those which seem to them best to represent what expresses what they wish to say about their own marriage. If they are unfamiliar with the scriptures it may be helpful to provide them with a set of fully printed out readings. The message of the various passages may be summarized as follows:

Genesis 1:26-28, 31a God created man in his own image; male and female he created them.

Song of Solomon 2:10-13; 8:6,7 “Many waters cannot quench love”

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven”.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 “Two are better than one”

Jeremiah 31:31-34 “I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts”.

...

Psalm 67 “God be gracious to us and bless us”

Psalm 121 “The Lord shall keep watch over your going out and your coming in”. Psalm

127 “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it build labour in vain” Psalm 128

“Blessed are all those who fear the Lord, and walk in his ways”

...

Romans 12:5-7, 13 “We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Corinthians 13: St. Paul's hymn to love. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Ephesians 3:14-21 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints ... and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 4:1-6 "Forbearing one another in love."

Ephesians 5:21-33 "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ".

Philippians 4:4-9 "Rejoice in the Lord always".

Colossians 3:12-17. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another ... And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...

1 John 3:18-24 "Let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth."

1 John 4:7-12. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."

...

Matthew 5:1-10 The Beatitudes

Matthew 7:21, 24-27 Building one's house on the rock. Mark

10: 6-9, 13-16 "God made them male and female" John 2:1-

11 The wedding feast at Cana of Galilee.

John 15:1-8 "Abide in me and I in you".

John 15: 9-17 "Abide in my love".

These readings for the most part correspond to those in the Church of England's *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* pp137-147, although with some omissions and alterations. The Romans 12 reading in *Common Worship* is superior: 12: 1, 2, 9-13. "I appeal to you ... to present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord". This was the also reading in the 1987/AOS order of service. Among the psalms 128 is traditional, with its emphasis on the gift of children, and in Sarum (followed by the BCP up to and including the 1926 edition) accompanied the procession from the body of the Church to the altar. Cranmer provided Psalm 67 (which does not refer to children) as an alternative, to which 121 was added in 1987/AOS and appears here along with 127.

### **The Sermon**

The Sermon was optional in the 1987/AOS rite but here is to be regarded as an integral part of the rite. It should be brief and positive and to the point and normally should be based on one or other of the scripture readings chosen by the bride and groom. It is convenient that seats should be provided for the bridal party during the Ministry of the Word (including the readings

## The Marriage

The “requirement by law” to ask for a declaration of an impediment has been modified owing to changes in the marriage law in both the United Kingdom and in the Republic of Ireland and the wording of the marriage service at the relevant points has been amended by an act of the General Synod (2009). The service as amended is what must be used by the officiating minister. The two paragraphs in the *Book of Common Prayer* 2004 under the heading “The Marriage” have been deleted and the following substituted:

The minister may say to the couple:

God, the judge of all  
knows the secrets of our hearts;  
therefore if either of you knows any reason  
why you may not lawfully marry  
you must declare it now.

[RI] Unless the declarations of no civil impediment have already been made by the couple prior to the marriage in the presence of the Registered Solemniser and the two witnesses the bride and bridegroom each make the required declaration now.

I solemnly declare that I do not know of any civil impediment to my proposed marriage with...

### The Consent

The questions and answers here are designed to ascertain the readiness of the man and woman to make the actual marriage vows. The word “comfort” has the sense of “strengthen”, “fortify”. The form of the questions is identical for the bride and groom, unlike Marriage One where the option of a question to the woman with the word “obey” is still an option. The Church of England, in *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* both at this point and at the vows permits the bride’s part, if preferred, to come before the bridegroom’s.

### The Vows

The “giving away” of the bride no longer appears, since it seems to reflect ideas of ownership and control. On the other hand some may see the words as expression the “letting go” which is an aspect of a changed relationship. If the “giving away” is desired the words from Marriage One (with “giveth” instead of “gives”) are suitable. The Church of England, in *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* provides an optional alternative and may ask the parents of bride and bridegroom in the following or similar words:

N and N have declared their intention towards each other. As  
their parents,  
will you now entrust your son and daughter to one another as  
they come to be married?

**We will.**

The making of vows and the taking of the other’s right hand by each party are traditional elements of a legal form of conveyance: the contracting parties are named, the legal term “to have and to hold” is used, the limits are stated - “from this day forward ... till death us do part” - and the whole contract is subject to ecclesiastical law - “according to God’s holy law,<sup>1</sup> although the latter expression may refer to biblical revelation.

The form of the vows is the same for the man and the woman. In contrast to the 1987/AOS order where “obey” remained as an option (in brackets), the word does not appear in this form of the marriage service.

The bridegroom and bride face each other to make their vows; and they are not required to say the words “after the minister” as in Marriage One. This is an indication that the ministers of the marriage are, theologically speaking, the couple themselves. The priest and congregation are there as witnesses and in support of the couple, the role of the priest being to conduct the service and to bless the man and woman in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, if it is desired to say the words after the priest this may still be done, the alternative being to provide a printed out form held so that the bridegroom and then the bride may conveniently read them out.

### **Giving and Receiving of a Ring.**

1. One or two finicky objections at the time the 1987/AOS order was being prepared led to the omission of the words "by your blessing" from before "may this ring". There seems no reason why the minister, at his own discretion, may not replace them under Canon 6 (d) so that there is a blessing upon the use of the ring,

Heavenly Father, by your blessing  
may *this ring* be to ... and ...  
a symbol of unending love and  
faithfulness to remind them of the vow and  
covenant which they have made this day.

The use of the ring in marriage needs to be seen in the context of the general Christian use of rings, which includes,

- (1) **Early Christian rings.** In the third and fourth centuries, rings with Christian emblems seem to have been often worn in ordinary life.
- (2) **Episcopal rings.** Rings are first mentioned as an official part of a bishop's insignia of office in the early seventh century, and their use became general in the ninth and tenth centuries. They were emblematic of the bishop's betrothal to his church. Use in the Western church only they are worn on the third finger of the right hand.
- (3) **Nun's rings.** In many women's orders, for example the Benedictine and Cistercian, a ring is conferred at solemn profession.
- (4) **Wedding rings.** The ancient Roman custom was for the man to give a ring to the woman as a sign of betrothal; and by the ninth century this action was duplicated by the giving of a ring at the time of marriage. The giving of this second ring with the formula 'With this ring I thee wed' could be regarded as a sealing of the wedding contract. Down to the end of the sixteenth century the bride wore the ring on her right hand; since then it has been worn on the left hand. The custom of wearing it on the third finger is explained by the practice of pronouncing the Trinitarian formula over the thumb and first two fingers, so that the third was reached at the 'Amen' which sealed the marriage rite.
- (5) **The 'Fisherman's Ring'** This is a gold seal-ring which the cardinal camerlengo places on the finger of a new Pope. Engraved on it is St. Peter in a boat fishing (cf. Lk 5:10), with the Pope's name round it.
- (6) **The 'Coronation Ring'** in England placed by the Archbishop of Canterbury on the fourth finger of the Sovereign's right hand as 'the ensign of Kingly Dignity and of Defence of the Catholic Faith'.

The words used at the exchange of each ring begins with a statement of fact: "I give you this ring as a sign of our marriage" and then goes on to express a totality of commitment, including self-giving and sharing; and this is done in the name of the Triune God whose very Being is an expression of self-giving and eternal love.

### **The Declaration**

The word "ring" should be changed to "rings" where there are two (as is now normally the case).

The Declaration summarizes the liturgical steps that have been taken in words which emphasize the role of the couple as ministers of the marriage "in the presence of God and before this congregation",

Giving consent

Making vows

Joining hands and giving and receiving a ring (rings)

On the basis of this the pronouncement is made in the name of God that they are husband and wife. The strong word "pronounce" is used rather than the *Common Worship's* "proclaim".

"What God has joined together..." is a better translation than "those whom" as in the Marriage One. The underlying concept is of a bond being created rather than the joining of persons together. The joining of hands, which comes *after* the Declaration rather than *before* it as in Marriage One is a sign of this new reality.

### **The Blessing**

The blessing of the couple is highly significant and may be considered to constitute, in a sense, the *raison d'être* of the marriage service. It is regrettable that in this order and in the previous 1987/AOS service it is not made more of. Prior to a form of blessing similar to that in Marriage Two the following optional prayer occurs in the Church of England's *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*:

Blessed are you, O Lord our God,  
for you have created joy and gladness,  
pleasure and delight, love, peace and fellowship.  
Pour out the abundance of your blessing  
upon N and N in their new life together.  
Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts  
and a crown upon their heads.  
Bless them in their work and in their companionship;  
awake and asleep,  
in joy and in sorrow,  
in life and in death.  
Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that banquet where  
your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home. We ask  
this through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives  
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now  
and for ever. **Amen.**

Henry Everett, in Vol. 2 of *A Companion to Common Worship* says of this nuptial blessing that it is a new composition, cast in the Jewish *berakah* prayer form, with a substantial borrowing from the TEC rite (which it modifies to some extent). It follows TEC in using

imagery of love as a seal on the heart from Song of Solomon 8:7 and as a crown on the head from Isaiah 61:10. Mention of the crown recalls Orthodox rites.

There is an additional clause in the *Common Worship* blessing itself: “that you may please him both in body and soul...” Although the use of the prayer and the blessing highlights the significance of this act it is hard to avoid the impression that in *CW* the blessing itself is being duplicated and this is not fully satisfactory. Alternative forms of the blessing are to be found in the Supplementary texts in *CW (Pastoral Services* p.152f), of varied length some of which are in responsorial form. The final section, he says, improves on ECUSA by using “banquet” rather than “table” and makes a pleasing eucharistic and eschatological connection.

There is nothing in *CW*, however, corresponding to the (optional) prayer said together by the newly-married couple after the blessing in Marriage Two, “O God our Father, we thank you for uniting our lives...”

For a thorough review of the history of the marriage rite with particular emphasis upon the blessing itself, see Kenneth Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing - A Study of Christian Marriage Rites*, Alcuin Club/SPCK, 1982.

### **Affirmation by the People**

This feature underlines the presence of the family and friends as more than spectators. They are supporters and encouragers of the marriage.

### **The Acclamations**

In the Church of England’s *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* these acclamations are appointed for optional use after any of the alternative blessings or on their own. This would seem a more logical place than its current situation in Marriage Two after the Affirmation by the People. The same point was made in an earlier edition of these course notes in relation to the 1987/AOS rite.

### **Registration of the Marriage**

It is stated that the registration may take place at this point in the church or at the end of the service (when it may take place either in the church or in the vestry). Much depends on local tradition and on the geography of the building. If the registration is to take place in the church the schedule (N.I.) and the church marriage register should be placed on a suitable table with a chair for the bride at a convenient place, and the register should be filled in as far as possible. The signing should take place quietly and efficiently and with the minimum of disturbance and fuss. Photographers should be kept from intruding on the ceremony (they can take a photograph of the couple at the table at their leisure after the service and the congregation may have to be discreetly encouraged to keep silent and not to hold conversations whilst the signing is taking place. If there is instrumental music or a solo they can be invited to remain quietly seated and listen. If the signing is to take place in the vestry after the service there are fewer constraints and, usually, more time, but it needs to be done with a due awareness of its significance. The schedule (N.I.) should be given to a responsible person with a warning that it is a legal requirement for it to be returned to the Registrar within three days.

The rubric “a psalm or hymn may be sung” can be interpreted liberally, but the officiating minister does have a responsibility to ensure that anything played or sung at a wedding is suited to the occasion.

## **THE PRAYERS**

It is assumed that there has been a procession from the chancel step to the sanctuary step which, if the registration has not taken place at this point could occur during the hymn.

In choosing prayers the couple have to make a decision whether to ask for the first form which is essentially fixed and is a Litany, or the second form, which consists of a number of separate prayers from which a selection or perhaps two or three may be picked. What is provided here (including a prayer which may be said by the couple) is more than adequate but if additional prayers need to be looked at there is a comprehensive selection in *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* pp 112-13, 156-168.

### **The Peace**

It is not clear why the Peace is included if there is to be no communion. It would seem sufficient to have a final hymn followed by the Lord's Prayer and either the Grace or a Trinitarian blessing of the congregation. However, if there is to be communion it is highly appropriate to have the Peace together with the sentence from John 13:14. Holy Communion begins at Celebrating at the Lord's Table (on page 208) or if Holy Communion One is to be used at the Sursum Corda. A proper preface is provided for use with Eucharistic Prayer One in Holy Communion Two. At the Communion the newly-married should receive immediately after the presiding minister together with others most closely involved and then the guests in general. Seats should be provided for the newly-married to sit together after they have received (the place where they have been seated during the Ministry of the Word may suit). The service should conclude with the Trinitarian blessing.

There seems no reason why the extended preface to be found in *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* p.130 can not be used with Eucharistic Prayer One taking the place of everything from "Father, almighty and everliving God" to "for ever praising you and saying",

All glory, honour, thanks and praise  
be given to you, creator of heaven and earth.  
When you made us in your image,  
creating us male and female,  
you gave us the gift of marriage.  
When sin marred that image  
you healed our brokenness,  
giving your Son to die for us.  
Therefore we raise our voices,  
with all who have served you in every age, to  
proclaim the glory of your name:

### **The Lord's Prayer and the Blessing**

If there is Holy Communion the Lord's Prayer comes in its customary place and similarly the blessing of the congregation. If there is no communion it follows here and the service concludes with either the Grace or a blessing of the congregation, "God the Holy Trinity...".

### **Amended Rubrics**

To bring the order of service into line with the provisions of secular law in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland the contents of pp429-30 were deleted by an act of the General Synod in May 2009. The following rubric was inserted,

*A couple must produce a Schedule of Marriage (NI) or a Marriage Registration Form (RI) to the officiating priest before a marriage can take place.*

It is helpful if these are produced at the rehearsal a day or two before the wedding to avoid any possibility of the Schedule/Marriage Registration Form being forgotten.

## **Some Practical Aspects**

### **(1) The legal requirements**

The whole legal side of the marriage arrangements has been taken over by the state in both jurisdictions. In Northern Ireland the officiating minister has to sign a form stating his willingness to conduct the wedding and this must be arranged. It is prudent to arrange for the "schedule" (N.I.) which allows the marriage to occur to be delivered to the officiating minister at the rehearsal and avoiding any possibility of its being forgotten on the day of the wedding.

### **(2) Rehearsal**

It is probably advisable to arrange this at the time that the date of the wedding is fixed - usually on an evening a day or two before the wedding itself. This takes place in the Church and involves a "dry run" through the wedding with an opportunity for questions about details. This should not last longer than half an hour.

### **(3) Punctuality**

Some brides arrive very late. This may be through no fault of their own (there have been cases where taxis have failed to turn up!) but it may also happen through carelessness, and there is even, very occasionally, an element of "showing off". The best approach is probably to represent to them tactfully at the rehearsal stage that arriving as near as possible to the stated time is a courtesy to one's guests. The same consideration applies to the grooms, although it is more unusual for them to be behind time. It may be suggested that they not only arrive well before the stated time, but that they have their photography finished and be seated with the best man in their seat at the front right-hand side about ten minutes before the wedding is due to begin.

### **(4) Orders of Service.**

Most couples have these printed. To encourage participation by the congregation not only the two hymns should be printed but the psalm and other congregational parts (such as the versicles and responses in the Marriage One Order and the Acclamations in the Marriage Two) should be reproduced. As copies of these will be need by the bride and groom, best man, bridesmaids, and (for convenience) the officiating clergy, one should ask that the ushers leave a sufficient number of copies on the altar to be handed out during the service as required. The bride and groom customarily share one copy.

Some clergy keep the whole service on disk and insert the variable parts (including hymns, readings, etc.) for the particular marriage. There is much to be said for printing out the entire service in booklet form (a printer can put on an attractive cover if the couple are not able to do this themselves) and enabling the congregation to follow it all including the readings. Where this is done care needs to be taken not to infringe regulations about copyright.

### **(5) Photographers/videos**

Policy among clergy varies considerably. If there is to be a video of the wedding the operator(s) should be placed as discreetly and inconspicuously as possible to one side and should not be allowed to wander about during the service. This also applies to photographers. A picture from the gallery (if there is one) is probably not too obtrusive, but at all costs one would wish to avoid someone walking around the chancel and leaning over to take shots of the putting on the ring etc. Most photographers are courteous and cooperative, but one meets the occasional "rogue" member of the profession who will take advantage of the goodwill of the clergy.

**(6) Before the service.**

It may be convenient for the officiating minister to wait in the Vestry. If so, one of the ushers should be asked to let him or her know when the bride has arrived. The minister should then go to a convenient place at the front of the Church (reading desk if at the chancel step, seat at north side of altar if in the sanctuary of a small church) to wait for the bride's entry. Some system of communication with the organist is desirable to let him or her know when to begin the bridal march. If there is an inner door into the church, opening this fully (both sides of a double door) by an usher is a useful signal that the bride is ready to come in. The groom and the best man will have been instructed to come forward when the bridal march (or its equivalent) begins. If need be, this can be encouraged by a nod of the head. As mentioned above the clergy should not "lead in" the bride.

**(7) Disposition of wedding party.**

Groom stands to right of bride, both of them at the center of the step, best man (& groom's man) to the right of the groom. Bride's father, having brought the bride to the step goes out to the end of the row leaving room for bridesmaid(s). Whether some bridesmaids, flower girls etc. stand in a row with the bride and groom or behind them depends on the layout of the Church and on personal preference. The principal bridesmaid should take charge of the bouquet during the service. The bride's father (or whoever is "giving away" the bride) remains at the front until he has performed his function, and then retires to sit on the north side of the Nave.

**(8) Directions by Officiating Minister.**

At each stage of the service the officiating minister may give quiet directions to kneel, stand, repeat the words etc. so that the bride and groom may know what is required of them. It is advisable to practice the taking of the partner's hand (as in a handshake) and kneeling (some non-Anglicans may not know how to kneel upright and may sit on their heels if not otherwise directed!)

**(9) Combination of the Marriage Service with Holy Communion.**

As this will produce a service that is too long for the bridal party to remain standing, seats should be provided in a convenient place. The bride and groom make their communion immediately after the celebrant (and any assistants) and are followed by the best man, bridesmaids and other members of the bridal party.

**(10) Posture/Deportment etc.**

At each stage in the service the officiant may indicate quietly to the couple to stand, kneel, or sit. If one of the parties to the marriage is a member of a non-episcopal Church and is unfamiliar with kneeling he or she should be rehearsed to do it properly and with dignity (i.e. upright and not "squatting" on the heel). The officiant should set an example of dignity, for example, walking slowly (and not "cutting corners") and knowing how to stand still.

**(11) Liturgical Colour.** The appropriate liturgical colour is white; and the priest should wear a white stole together with cassock and surplice (unless a scarf and hood are preferred). A cassock-alb would be appropriate if the Holy Communion is to be celebrated. A problem arises whenever a wedding takes place at anything other than a festive season. Probably the Church should retain purple for frontals, pulpit falls, book markers etc. during the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, arrangements for the "green" period of the year being at the discretion of the officiant.

**(12) Participation by clergy/ministers of other denominations not in communion with the Church of Ireland.**

This is governed by Canon 10.

**10. Visiting ministers of Churches not in communion with the Church of Ireland.**

A minister or accredited preacher of such Christian denominations not in full communion with the Church as may from time to time be specified by the House of Bishops may, in such circumstances as may from time to time be prescribed by the House, and with the permission of the ordinary, which permission shall be without prejudice to the normal maintenance of the recognized rules of church order,

- (a) deliver an address in any church or cathedral at any service,
- (b) read the service of Morning or Evening Prayer or any other service (other than the Holy Communion authorized under Canon 5 (1) (or such parts thereof as the ordinary may decide) either jointly with, or in the absence of, a minister of the Church of Ireland or a reader authorized by the bishop.

The ordinary shall satisfy himself, before giving such permission, that the Participation of such visiting minister is acceptable to the incumbent and the churchwardens (if any) of any church concerned, and that it is not contrary to any provision of the civil law.

The permission of the ordinary is nowadays presumed for the assistance of members of mainline churches such as the Presbyterian or Methodist (or wherever this is acceptable, Roman Catholic), but in any case of doubt the bishop or other ordinary should be consulted. The final words of the canon are very important since the marriage service must be performed "according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of Ireland". These would seem to imply that the essential parts of the service (from the **Consent** to the **Blessing**) must be performed by a Church of Ireland clergyman (or woman) and that the marriage might not be deemed valid if these parts were to be performed by the minister of any other denomination in a Church of Ireland Church. The parts of the service that are normally shared are the Preface, a Scripture reading and/or the Prayers.

**(13) Filling in the register.**

This must be done carefully and in full. It is in order for the register to be filled in prior to the wedding except for the signatures of the officiating clergyman and the bride and bridegroom and their two witnesses. The church register is no longer the official record of the wedding, which is contained in the schedule returned to the Registrar but it contains the church's own information about the wedding.

## **The Thanksgiving of Women after Child-Birth Commonly called The Churching of Women**

This rite does not appear in the 2004 edition of the Book of Common Prayer, but has not been repealed and so remains an authorized service of the Church of Ireland. The text may be found in the 1926 edition of the Prayer Book.

The title in Sarum was *Ordo ad Purificandum Mulierum Post Partum ante Ostium Ecclesiae* - The Order for the Purification of Women after childbirth before the church door. In 1549 this became *The Order for the Purification of Women*. In 1552 the title was altered to *The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth, commonly called the Churching of Women*, and this was retained in 1662 and passed into the Irish Prayer Books of 1878 and 1926. The concept of "Purification", derived from scriptural antitypes (Luke 2:22ff //Lev. 12:2-6) no longer appeared, since it was at no time in the text of the service, but it lingered on in popular understanding. The rite is ancient, being mentioned in a letter of St. Augustine of Canterbury to St. Gregory the Great (A.D. 601).

The rite appeared after the Burial of the Dead in Prayer Books up to and including the Irish Prayer Book of 1878, and was moved into its present more logical position following the Solemnization of Matrimony in 1926.

In his classic commentary *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England*, Charles Wheatley (1686-1724) had this to say,

As to the original of this custom, it is not to be doubted, but that as many other Christian usages received their rise from other parts of the Jewish economy, so did this from the rite of Purification, which is enjoined so particularly in the twelfth chapter of Leviticus. Not that we observe it by virtue of that precept, which we grant to have been ceremonial, and so not now of any force; but because we apprehend some moral duty to have been implied in it by way of analogy, which must be obligatory upon all, even when the ceremony is ceased. The uncleanness of the woman, the set number of days she is to abstain from the tabernacle, and the sacrifices she was to offer when she first came abroad, are rites wholly abolished, and what we now regard: but then the open and solemn acknowledgement of God's goodness in delivering the mother, and increasing the number of mankind, is a duty that will oblige to the end of the world. And therefore though the mother be now no longer obliged to offer the material sacrifices of the law, yet she is nevertheless bound to offer the evangelical sacrifice of praise. She is still publicly to acknowledge the blessing vouchsafed her, and to profess her sense of the fresh obligation it lays her under to obedience...

The structure of the rite is,

Preface  
Psalm (116 or 127)  
Lesser  
Litany  
Lord's  
Prayer  
Versicles and Responses  
Collect

Blessing.

It may be noticed that no mention of the husband is made in this rite except in Psalm 127.

### **Commentary**

The woman is instructed to come into the church "at the usual time after her delivery", but this is not defined. In medieval times the rite took place "before the door" with the attendant symbolism of readmission to the church, but from 1549 the rite has taken place within the church. 1549 referred to the "choir door" as the place where it was to occur, the direction in 1552 being "nigh unto the Table". A churching stool or form was provided in some places. She is to come "decently apparelled", a reference to the woman wearing a white veil, an ancient custom which was enforced by law in the reign of James 1 and was still widely observed in the late seventeenth century. Bishop Wren's orders and injunctions for the diocese of Norwich, in 1636, enjoin, "That women to be churched come and kneel at a side near the communion table without the rail, being veiled according to the custom, and not covered with a hat; or otherwise not to be churched..." The Irish Prayer Books of 1878 and 1926 follow 1662 in directing woman to kneel down "in such place and at such time, as hath been accustomed, or as the Ordinary shall direct."

The Preface indicates the purpose of the rite in words which reflect the real dangers of childbirth in the pre-modern age,

Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his goodness to give you safe deliverance, and to preserve you in the great danger of Child-birth; you shall therefore give hearty thanks unto God, and say,

Psalm 121 was prescribed in 1549 and 1552, and this was altered to Psalm 116 in 1662 (with Psalm 127 as an alternative).

The versicles and responses come from Sarum.

The prayer is based on a collect in Sarum. The element of thanksgiving "we give thee humble thanks for that thou hast vouchsafed..." was added in 1662.

The blessing was added in the Irish Prayer Book of 1878 and retained in 1926.

The concluding rubric prescribes "accustomed offerings" and also mentions the Eucharist, "and if there be a Communion, it is convenient that she receive the Holy Communion". The churching of women therefore, has properly a eucharistic context.

## THANKSGIVING AFTER THE BIRTH OF A CHILD THANKSGIVING AFTER ADOPTION.

This order is intended as a replacement for the Churching of Women (but see above on the status of the 1926 order of service). The emphasis is on the thanksgiving of both parents for the safety of the mother in giving birth to the child and for the life of the newborn baby. A single order is provided for birth and adoption but with suitable variation, the prayer “after the birth” giving thanks “for the life of this child, for a safe delivery, and for the privilege of parenthood” and that “after adoption” being “for the life of this child, for his/her adoption into our family, and for the privilege of parenthood”. When used after the birth of a child it is deemed most appropriate to be held in hospital or in the home. The rubric emphasizes that it is in no way a substitute for the sacrament of baptism, indicating that no support is being given to the concept of having a “thanksgiving” service after birth and postponing or even ignoring altogether the sacrament of the new birth. The thanksgiving after adoption may be used in the home, or, if the child has already been baptized, the suggestion is made that it provides an opportunity for receiving him or her into the life of the parish and may be used at Holy Communion or at Morning or Evening Prayer. It must not be used before the official Adoption Order has been made.

The prayer of thanksgiving (said by both parents) is followed by a prayer in which the minister asks God to bless the parents that they may cherish their child and be wise and understanding to help *him* as *he* grows. Suitable psalm verses are followed by suggested readings and a choice of prayers. If the child has not been baptized the prayer is made, “that in faith *he* may be received by baptism into the family of (the) Church and become an inheritor of (the) kingdom”. The Lord’s Prayer is followed by scriptural verses from St Luke’s Gospel (the Magnificat) and Revelation, and the service concludes with a blessing.

In many cases the prayers that are offered in the hospital ward are informal and it may not be practical to have an actual order of service. However, this service provides resources that might be drawn upon even in an informal ministrations. A prayer for the baptismal service (p.369) which may also be found suitable is,

Almighty God,  
bless the home of this *child*  
and give such grace and wisdom to all who have the care of *him*,  
that by their word and good example  
they may teach *him* to know and love you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

[NB the notes on these two orders of service are reproduced from the Commentary on Christian Initiation]

## **A FORM OF PRAYER AND DEDICATION AFTER A CIVIL MARRIAGE**

The provision of legislation to permit the remarriage of divorced persons in church has reduced the use of this order, which for a long time was the only option for people in this category. However, there still is a need for an order for those whose marriages or remarriages have been of a civil character and who wish to add an explicitly Christian dimension to their union.

The married couple enter the church together since they are man and wife. The order of service commences with the greeting.

### **Introduction**

The sentences comprise 1 John 4:6 "God is love" as in the marriage service and Ps 127:1 "Unless the Lord builds the house"

The Introduction (which is drawn from *Common Worship: Pastoral Offices* but adapted for the Church of Ireland) is a mixture of that from the marriage service - which may be used in an abbreviated form or in full - together with a preliminary paragraph and a conclusion which are specific to the occasion.

.... and .... you stand in the presence of God as husband and wife to dedicate to him your life together, that he may consecrate your marriage and empower you to keep the covenant and promise you have solemnly declared.

You now wish to affirm your desire to live together as followers of Christ, and you have come to him, the fountain of grace, that strengthened by the prayers of the Church, you may be enabled to fulfil your marriage vows in love and faithfulness.

### **The Collect**

The Collect is that of the marriage service.

### **Proclaiming and Receiving the Word**

This takes the same format as the corresponding section in the marriage service including the provision of two readings, of which the final one is the Gospel if there is Holy Communion. A Sermon is included.

### **The Dedication**

This comprises an exposition of the Church's understanding of marriage to which the husband and wife are asked to assent, followed by questions derived from the marriage service - in the form of "will you continue to" addressed first to the husband and then to the wife. The husband and wife may then be asked to join their wedding-ring hands and the symbolism of the rings is expressed. The congregation are asked to affirm their continuing to support the couple in their marriage and the husband and wife say together a prayer of dedication:

Heavenly Father,  
we offer you our souls and bodies,  
our thoughts and words and deeds,  
our love for one another.  
Unite our wills in your will,  
that we may grow together  
in love and peace  
all the days of our life;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A prayer for perseverance follows followed by the Aaronic blessing.

### **Prayers**

The prayers are those from the marriage service without the final one (said by the couple together).

From the Peace to the conclusion of the rite the Holy Communion service is identical to that used in the marriage rite. If there is no celebration of the Holy Communion the service concludes with the Lord's Prayer and the Grace.

Notes to the text indicate that the service is used at the discretion of the minister and it is defined as one in which the couple, already married, wish to dedicate to God their life together. Because it is not a marriage service, no entry is made in the register of marriages and in the course of the service no ring is given or received. All readings must be from Holy Scripture. The minister and the couple together choose the readings, hymns, music and prayers to be used. If there is Holy Communion all communicants should be free to receive.

In *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* it is suggested that at the entrance of the couple Husband and wife should enter the church together without ceremony and sit together at the front of the church. Other prayers may be used, especially when they form part of the particular Christian tradition of the husband or wife. When the service is not led by a priest the Grace is used instead of the blessing. *Common Worship* insists on Prayers of Penitence at the beginning of the rite.

## **A p p e n d i x A**

### **The Remarriage of Divorced Persons in Church**

Canon 31. The Solemnization of marriages.

1. The Church of Ireland affirms, according to our Lord's teaching that marriage is in its purpose a union permanent and lifelong, for better or worse, till death do them part, of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side, for the procreation and nurture of children, for the hallowing and right direction of the natural instincts and affections, and for the mutual society, help and comfort which the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.

2. No clergyman shall agree to solemnize a marriage between parties who are within the degrees expressed in the table set forth in the Book of Common Prayer or any table which may be prescribed.

3. [a] When any clergyman is approached with a view to solemnizing a marriage between parties either of whom has been party to a ceremony of marriage with another person still living he shall, if he is unwilling to perform the ceremony, so inform the parties immediately.

a No clergyman shall agree to solemnize a marriage between parties either of whom has been a party to a ceremony of marriage with another person still living unless he has first sought from the bishop his opinion as to the advisability of solemnizing the marriage of the couple concerned.

b The clergyman shall consider and take into account the opinion of the bishop in exercising the discretion, vested in him by law, as to whether or not he should solemnize the marriage concerned.

4. It shall be the duty of the clergyman to make available to the bishop, in such a form as may be prescribed by regulation, all the information, in so far as he shall obtain it, which shall the bishop shall require to enable him to form an opinion.

5. The bishop shall be entitled to seek and take into account such pastoral or other advice from such persons and in such manner as may think fit. He shall at least consult, and take into account, the advice of the incumbent of the parishes to which either of the parties to the proposed remarriage belongs, and also the incumbent of the parish in which it is proposed to conduct the ceremony of remarriage. The advice of such person or persons shall be confidential to the bishop.

6. The bishop shall as soon as practicable communicate his opinion to the clergyman. In cases where a decree of nullity has been granted on grounds acceptable to the Church of Ireland, he shall declare that the applicant is ipso facto free to marry in church. In other cases, in which he shall give a favourable judgement, he shall prescribe that the clergyman conduct a private service of preparation for remarriage in church with the parties involved (in such a form as may be provided by regulation) before the solemnization of matrimony may take place.

[Statute Chapter 1 of the General Synod of 1996, *Journal of the General Synod of 1996* pp cxxxvii, cxxxviii]

## R E G U L A T I O N S

approved by the General Synod 1996 as required by Canon 31

A. It shall be the duty of every clergyman to whom application is made for a marriage to be solemnized to ascertain the marital status and history of both parties desiring to be married.

B. Nothing in the following Regulations is intended to deprive any clergyman of his freedom to decline to solemnize any marriage for reasons of conscience. In such cases the clergyman shall refer the couple to the archdeacon.

C. Where either of the parties to the intended marriage or the previous marriage is the parent, child, grandchild, brother, sister, nephew or niece of the clergyman who has been approached or of the spouse of that clergyman, he shall inform the bishop of the approach and of the relationship. The bishop shall appoint another clergyman, who is willing to act, to carry out in place of the clergyman who has been approached the duty prescribed in Section 4 of Canon 31.

D. In every case where either of the parties has participated in a ceremony of marriage with a person who is still living, the clergyman shall enquire about the following:

### (1) **Marital Status:**

He shall first enquire as to whether they are legally free to marry by virtue of either a civil annulment or a civil divorce. In the case of divorce he shall require the couple to consult the Registrar General of the jurisdiction in which they intend to be married as to their legal capacity to marry. Save in exceptional circumstances an application after a second divorce shall not be considered.

### (1) **Further Information**

He shall enquire about

- (a) evidence in the parties of an appreciation of the Church of Ireland teaching about the nature of marriage and its lifelong intent;
- (b) the present connection of the applicant(s) with the Church of Ireland;
- (c) the grounds on which the annulment or divorce was granted;
- (d) evidence that adequate and proper provision has been made for any previous partner and for children, if any;
- (e) whether due efforts towards reconciliation were made before separation proceedings began;
- (f) whether the applicants have a firm intention to sustain their proposed union with the help of God and the Church.

### E. **Procedure**

Having ascertained the information listed above, the clergyman shall refer the matter to the bishop. In so doing he shall state whether or not he supports the application, with his reasons, and whether he is satisfied with the couple's understanding of, and commitment to, the Church's teaching on marriage. He shall further state whether he is willing to perform the ceremony himself.

*The Service of Preparation for Remarriage in Church* shall be held in the church in the presence of both parties. It may be extended, or form part of another service (such as

Holy Communion), or, on the advice of the bishop, be amended in such manner as to make it appropriate to particular circumstances.

**The Service of Preparation for Remarriage in Church** consists of

**INTRODUCTION**

Sentence

Questions and commitments

**THE COLLECT**

**THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

Psalm or Te Deum, part 3

Epistle or Gospel (the latter obligatory if here is Holy Communion)

**PENITENCE**

Sentence

Short exhortation

Confession

Absolution

**PRAYERS**

One or more of the three prayers  
given may be said

Lord's Prayer (optional)

The Grace (optional)

## **MINISTRY TO THOSE WHO ARE SICK**

### **The Canonical Position**

Canon 30, “Ministers to visit the people in their cures” says,

(1) The minister or curate shall visit from time to time all those in his cure for such exercise of his ministry as may be found fitting and convenient.

(2) When the minister or curate shall hear that any persons in his cure are dangerously sick, he shall visit them (even though they have not previously resorted to the church) to instruct and comfort them in their distress according to the order of the Book of Common Prayer or otherwise as he shall think suitable.

In practice the pastoral role of the rector or curate assistant in relation to those who are sick is much more extensive than these bare canonical requirements imply. Parishioners should be encouraged to let the clergy know about any sickness in the parish; and those who are in hospital must be visited, if possible.<sup>1</sup> Those who are chronically ill and the elderly should be offered communion, at the very least twice in the year (at Christmas and Easter), perhaps four times if this is practicable; and there may be some who will appreciate the opportunity for a monthly communion.

Notification of clergy by hospital chaplains has been made much more difficult in some cases through the application of EC rules about confidentiality. This makes it all the more important for parishioners to tell the clergy about any relatives who are in hospital.

The canon refers to ministry according to the Book of Common Prayer or “otherwise as he shall think suitable”, giving a wide discretion to the officiating minister who should, however, pay due attention to what is liturgically provided and specifically authorized by authority of the General Synod.

### **The status of "Ministry to those who are sick"**

This part of the 2004 Prayer Book replaces “The Order for the Visitation of the Sick” Prayer Book of 1926 and also the provision in Alternative Occasional Services 1993, itself based on an experimental order of 1985. Some material from the Visitation from the Sick, although formally replaced, is still of value and may be used under Canon 5(d):

It shall be lawful to use in the course of or before or after any public office of the Church

(d) any prayer or hymn not containing substantial variations from the practice of, nor contrary to the doctrine of the Church as the minister may consider to be required by current circumstances; but the provisions of Canon 5(3) and (4) shall apply to all such prayers and hymns

Canon 5(3) and (4) states

All variations in forms of service and all forms of service used or made under the provisions of this canon shall be reverent and seemly and shall be neither contrary to nor indicative of any departure from the doctrine of the Church.

If any question is raised concerning any such variation, or as to whether it is “of substantial importance”, the same shall be referred to the bishop in order that he may give such pastoral guidance, advice or directions as he may think fit, but with prejudice to the right of any person to initiate proceedings in any ecclesiastical tribunal.

### **The theological understanding of ministry to those who are sick**

The restoration of the Church's Ministry of Healing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries together with the role of healing ministry in Charismatic Renewal in the latter part of this period, has had a considerable influence upon the manner in which such ministry is approached and this is reflected in the liturgical provision in the 2004 edition of the Book of Common Prayer. However, even before these developments came to be widely influential some rethinking of the theology embedded in the earliest editions of the Prayer Book was already evident. The Order for the Visitation of the Sick in the 1926 book placed considerably less emphasis upon suffering as a visitation from God<sup>1</sup> although sickness was still seen as a means by which He "corrects" his children.

<sup>1</sup>Exhortation, 1549, 1552, 1662, "Wherefore, whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly, that it is God's visitation" <sup>2</sup>Exhortation, 1926, "Our heavenly Father, in his love for all men uses sickness as a gracious means whereby to *correct* his children."

A positive approach is seen throughout the provision in the 2004 Prayer Book. For example, the pre-Sanctus in the Eucharistic Prayer (p.443-4) lays stress on the goodness of God in creation and redemption,

We give you thanks, our God and Father,  
for you have created us and you sustain us.  
Through your only Son Jesus Christ  
you have revealed your love and your care for all your people; you  
are ready to forgive and to save in time of need; so we proclaim  
your glory...

In the provision for the Laying on of Hands on p.447 it is made clear that the purpose for this is for healing, both in the rubric and in the accompanying prayer, and the example of the healing ministry of Christ is explicitly referred to,

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ  
who laid his hands on the sick  
that they might be healed,  
I lay my hands upon you...  
May almighty God,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
make you whole in body, mind and spirit,  
give you light and peace,  
and keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

Similarly in the form on p.448 for Anointing with Oil, the form of consecration says, "sanctify this oil for the healing of the sick" and prays that those who received this ministry may, "by the power of the Holy Spirit be made whole". The scripture passage chosen is that from the Epistle of James which refers to the elders of the church praying over the sick person, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord; "and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed any sins he will be forgiven."

And the minister says that in continuing this ministry with the laying on of hands and anointing the prayer will be that the Lord "will grant healing and restoration and forgiveness according to his loving and gracious will.

That it is the whole person that is being ministered to is emphasized in the concluding prayer in this section where it says, "As you are outwardly anointed with this oil so may our heavenly Father grant you the inward anointing of the Holy Spirit; of his great mercy release you from suffering, and restore you to wholeness and strength..."

All of the section of Prayers on pp450-453 are positive in tone, including as they do the invocation of Christ in a verse from St Patrick's breastplate and such familiar prayers as "God be in my head...".

The headings in the selection of Readings gives the flavour of their content,

Penitence, Prayer, Thanksgiving, God's Promises, God's Love, the Beatitudes, the Comforter, the True Vine.

The section on Preparation for Death is also positive as in the prayer to Christ "Set your passion, cross and death between your judgement and us as we entrust ... to you. We pray you to free us all from the pains of death and from the wounds of sin; that death may be the gate to life and to unending fellowship with you...

An alternative approach to healing ministry in the magnificent service, "A Celebration of Wholeness and Healing" also emphasizes the positive dimension of healing ministry. For example, in the Prayers of Intercession it says,

Lord, grant your healing grace to all  
who are sick, injured or disabled, that  
they may be made whole.

At the Laying on of Hands and Anointing it refers to Christ as the anointed Son who brings healing to those in weakness and distress:

He broke the power of evil and set us free from sin and death  
that we might become partakers of his glory. His  
apostles anointed the sick in your name bringing  
wholeness and joy to a broken world. By your  
grace renewed each day  
you continue the gifts of healing in your Church  
that your people may praise your name for ever.

At the laying on of hands the following or other suitable words are used:

In the name of God and trusting in his might alone  
receive Christ's healing touch to make you whole.

May Christ bring you wholeness of body, mind and spirit,  
deliver you from every evil,  
and give you his peace. **Amen.**

## COMMENTARY

The first part of the liturgical provision for "Ministry to those who are sick"<sup>1</sup> is an improved version of the 1985 experimental order "Ministry to the Sick" as finalized in 1992 and incorporated into *Alternative Occasional Services* the following year. The remaining part, "A Celebration of Wholeness and Healing" is derived from a service of the same title in the Church of England order *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* pp 13ff but adapted for Church of Ireland use (for example in the eucharistic prayer). In *Common Worship* it is described as "especially suitable for a diocesan or deanery occasion" and it is certainly suitable for diocesan healing services such as those held quarterly in the Diocese of Armagh. However, it is also suitable for healing services in church at parish level.

<sup>1</sup>The title "Ministry to those who are sick" resulted from an amendment put down at the General Synod by Canon John McKegney who felt that "Ministry to the Sick" was too abrupt and negative in character.

The 1985 form suffered from a certain lack of clarity as to whether it was a collection of resources or an actual order of service. If the latter it would have been very difficult to

follow. The contents in the 2004 Prayer Book from pp441-453 are best looked on as resource material to be drawn upon as required by particular pastoral situations. Other material authorized from time to time may be added to what is provided here, especially the form for extended communion approved by the House of Bishops for seven years under the experimental services legislation.

## NOTES

The Notes are very important as setting forth the basic principles embodied in the forms contained in “Ministry to those who are sick” as well as indicating norms and requirements of pastoral practice.

*1. MEANS OF GRACE. The Lord has provided means of grace by which he touches his people with his healing love and power. These include the Scriptures, prayer, Holy Communion, the laying on of hands and anointing with oil. In administering these means of grace, the church works alongside the medical profession in continuing Christ’s healing ministry.*

There is nothing magical or automatic about the means of grace which encompass a wide variety of manners in which the Lord ministers to his people in the totality of their being, body, mind and spirit. The church’s ministry of healing is far removed from what is sometimes called “faith healing” which exalts the individual healer and has been known to blame people for a supposed lack of faith when they are not healed in some immediate and obvious manner. Nor is it supposed that this ministry is in any sense in opposition to the work of doctors, surgeons, psychiatrists and other medical specialists. On the contrary a presupposition of the church’s ministry of healing is that ultimately all healing comes from the one Source. A successful surgical intervention may be an answer to prayer as may be a sense of peace and assurance following the laying on of hands and anointing with oil. Above all, this ministry should be seen as a normal part of church life. “Private” communions with the elderly and infirm should normally include prayer and the laying on of hands for healing by the person’s own clergyman. Although there are undoubtedly “gifts” of healing which may be exercised by lay people as well as those in the ordained ministry these should not be allowed to take the place of or overshadow healing ministry as a component of pastoral care in the parish.

*2. HOLY COMMUNION. Christians unable to receive Communion in their local church because of illness or disability are encouraged to ask for the sacrament.*

This is particularly the case with the chronically ill and housebound and those who are aged and infirm. Healing ministry should be included as a matter of course since all those concerned will have disabilities of one kind or another.

*In case of need Holy Communion may be celebrated in hospital or at home. The full forms of either Holy Communion One or Two may be used or the shorter form provided on pages 442- 445.*

Advanced arrangements need to be made to administer communion in hospital. In some hospitals there is a chapel which mobile patients may be able to attend. In such case other patients may be communicate by “extended communion”, but this needs to be explained carefully to those concerned.

Most patients would probably be slightly confused if simply handed the Prayer Book. Either an official printed-out form may be used or the officiating minister may prepare his own, including suitable variations for seasons or particular circumstances.

*Communion is normally received in both kinds separately, but may be by intinction or in either kind. (See Canon 13[5])*

Canon 13:5 reads,

The bread to be used in the service shall be such as is usually eaten, of the best quality that can conveniently be procured; and the use of wafer bread is prohibited except in cases of illness where it may be desirable to administer the Holy Communion by means of intinction, subject to any conditions which the ordinary may prescribe.

The canon is an illogical compromise between those who disliked wafer bread and those who pointed out its practical necessity, for example in the case of infectious illness when the normal use of the common cup is not safe. Thick wafers need to be used, not the flimsy kind that dissolve as soon as they are put in the mouth or into the chalice. The Notes also envisage a situation where a person is incapable of receiving solids but is able to take a small sip of wine. According to the doctrine of concomitance the whole Christ is received under either species or both although the normal practice of the Church in accordance with its institution at the Last Supper is to communicate in both kinds, and this is specifically referred to in Article 30:

The Cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the Lay-people: for both the parts of the Lord's Sacrament, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be ministered to all Christian men alike.

The canon reluctantly permitting the use of wafer-bread in certain circumstances was approved by the General Synod in 1974 and replaced one which read,

In the administration of the Lord's Supper the elevation of the paten or cup beyond what is necessary for taking the same into the hands of the officiating minister, the use of wine mixed with water, or of wafer bread, and all acts, words, ornaments, and ceremonies other than those that are prescribed by the Order in the Book of Common Prayer, are hereby declared to be unlawful, and are prohibited...

The Select Committee was embarrassed by the realization that it was and is the custom for the wine to be mixed with water at the Passover and that the Church of Ireland had apparently prohibited what Our Lord would have done at the Last Supper, so that restriction was removed. They did not appear to realize that the same consideration applied to wafer bread, which, being unleavened was the kind of bread used at the Last Supper, nor that thick wafer bread (according to research by the late Alan Stracey, a convert to Christianity from Orthodox Judaism) was as near as one was likely to get to the bread used by Jesus himself. This is assuming that the Synoptic Gospels are correct in describing the Last Supper as a Passover, the Johannine dating putting it (possibly to depict Jesus as dying at the same time as the Passover lambs were being slaughtered - on the day before). If the use of ordinary daily bread links the eucharist to everyday life the use of unleavened (wafer) bread links it more specifically to the events of the Last Supper and its institution by Christ himself.

Much of the restrictive legislation of the 1870s was modified or removed in the Canon Law revision of 1974 but some remnants remain.

*PREPARATION Careful devotional preparation before the service is recommended to every communicant. The form provided may be used.*

The form provided seems particularly intended for hospital patients and may need to be modified for use with private communicants in a parish. Some verses from the psalms might have been helpful and also a recommended scripture reading or readings. As the form provided is not mandatory alternatives may be drawn up and used.

*SPIRITUAL COMMUNION Those who are incapable of receiving the sacrament are to be assured that, although not receiving the elements in the mouth, they are by faith partakers of the body and blood of Christ and of the benefits he conveys to us by them.*

Theologically speaking, the sacramental bread and wine are effectual signs of the real presence of Christ - that is they not only stand for but embody and convey that which they represent. But the mutual indwelling of Christ in the believer and the believer in Christ continues to exist spiritually even where the sacrament cannot physically be administered and this is a real communion.

*When Holy Communion is administered at hospital or at home some Ministry of the Word should be included. Holy Communion unites Word and Sacrament and there is a real presence of Christ in both.*

3. *SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE AND COUNSEL. Those with a troubled conscience who may require spiritual guidance and counsel should consult the minister and seek the benefit of absolution through the ministry of God's holy Word.* In a few instances people may have a spiritual director to whom they can bring their problems and difficulties. In most cases this is not so and they may have to rely on the wisdom and discretion of their own clergyperson - who must remain totally discreet about anything disclosed to them in confidence, especially within the seal of the confessional. In the case of possible child abuse they must be warned that the priest may have a duty in law to pass on information to the authorities which may have a bearing on the wellbeing of children.

In general, it is important that people be made aware that the Ministry of Absolution is available in the Church of Ireland, our church's attitude to sacramental confession being, "All may, some should, none must". Those with doubts about the matter may be referred to the wording of the Ordinal in the Ordination of Priests:

#### **Ordination Services One**

Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. *Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.* And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of his holy Sacraments; In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

#### **Ordination Services Two**

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon your servant .... for the office and work of a priest in your Church.

Give to this your servant grace and power  
to fulfil the ministry to which *he or she* is called, to  
proclaim the gospel of your salvation;  
to minister the sacraments of the new covenant;  
to watch over and care for your people;  
*to pronounce absolution; and to bless them in your name.*

To "pronounce absolution" is, technically speaking a *performative* word which accomplishes that which it speaks of (as in a judge "pronouncing" judgement) and is the exact equivalent of "absolve".

The first of the long exhortations in Holy Communion One (which was the work of Cranmer) has this to say in its concluding paragraph:

And because it is requisite, that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore if there be any of you, who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word, he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with spiritual counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.

A form of this ministry is to be found in "Ministry to those who are sick" (p.446 and see below for comment).

4. *The experience of illness can bring a fuller realization of dependence on God. The courage, endurance and comfort which God gives can lead to a more mature Christian life.* There is no hint here of a doctrine that God deliberately "sends" sickness as punishment. Rather there is an indication that by grace even this negative experience can have beneficial results in the Christian life.

5. *In these orders the minister may substitute such singular forms for the plural when ministering to an individual as may be appropriate in the circumstances.* And, vice versa, singulars may be turned into plurals. This is, in any case an understood principle in modern liturgies.

### **Preparation for Communion**

This is said to be for "private personal use before the service", and clearly would be of use in a hospital context. But this is only one possible model and lacks any scripture reading or passage to encourage reflection on the meaning of the Holy Communion.

### **Holy Communion One or Holy Communion Two**

What is provided on pp442-445 may be described as incomplete orders of service. For example there is no printed out version of Holy Communion One. However, the outline of Holy Communion Two is satisfactory enough except that it would be helpful for communicants if the whole service, as it is to be used, in including the reading(s) and whatever option is chosen for the place at which to practice the laying on of hands and/or anointing, were to be printed out in full whether in booklet form or on A4 double columns or whatever. One very good feature is the special version of the Great Thanksgiving in which both pre-Sanctus and post-Sanctus are modified for this ministry (and may also be suitable where any small group is having Holy Communion together). It may be noted, however, that it is non-specific with regard to ministry to the sick and one may wish to compare and contrast it with the provision of *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* in which the Church of England's Prayer E is suggested (pp57-58). It is also regrettable that no mention is made of seasonal material which may well be suitable, for example if Holy Communion is administered at Christmas and Easter.

### **Penitence and Reconciliation**

This discreet form may be used for sacramental confession as indicated above. The "especially..." may lead into a confession to God of quite specific and troubling sins as encouraged by the person in priest's orders and leading to the absolution. Only a priest may pronounce the absolution and a deacon is limited to ministry such as the use of the Comfortable Words and a suitable prayer (or prayers). It may be noticed that the particular prayer of confession is optional not obligatory.

### **The Laying on of Hands**

The form that appears here is optional, not mandatory but has much to be said for it. An alternative is,

Receive Christ's healing power,  
and be renewed in body, mind, and spirit.

I lay my hands on you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
that he may uphold you with his grace,  
and that you may know the healing power of his love.

May the healing power of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
which is the same today as it was yesterday and shall be for ever,  
deliver you from all that hinders you from enjoying his peace and  
wholeness, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the  
Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The concluding rubric indicates that in addition to the positions already mentioned for the laying on of hands, namely, before or after communion, it may take place during prayer, absolution, or blessing. It would seem that the significance of the laying on of hands would shift according to its position since its association with absolution or blessing would highlight these rather than healing (as presupposed above).

### **Anointing with Oil**

That this is a biblical ministry is indicated by the passage from the Epistle of James. Its use has been comparatively infrequent in the Church of Ireland until fairly recently. However, there is a question and answer which refers to it in the Revised Catechism, formerly approved by the House of Bishops for experimental use from 1971 and currently reissued by the Board of Education as a resource for those providing confirmation training or adult education, under the heading "A Catechism - Board of Education of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland."

#### 59. What is the sacramental ministry of *Healing*?

The sacramental ministry of healing is the ministry by which God's grace is given for the healing of spirit, mind and body, in response to faith and prayer, by the laying on of hands, or by anointing with oil.

The form on pp448-9 is derived from that in the booklet *The Ministry to the Sick* (Collins) approved by the House of Bishops and authorized for use under the experimental services legislation in chapter 1 Section 26(3) of the Church Constitution in 1991. It comprises,

- A form to be used if oil is to be consecrated by a bishop or priest,  
Heavenly Father, giver of life and salvation,  
sanctify this oil for the healing of the sick.  
Grant that those who in faith and repentance  
receive this ministry  
may, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be made whole;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
- An introduction referring to the example of the Lord Jesus in going about preaching the Gospel and healing the sick and to command to the disciples to lay hands on the sick that they might be healed. It cites the passage from St James Ch 5 which explicitly commends the use of anointing with oil as part of this ministry in which the prayer of faith "will save

the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed any sins he will be forgiven.

- The present intention is made explicit by reference to the continuation of this ministry in laying hands on a specific person (or persons) anointing *him* with oil, praying that the Lord will grant healing and restoration and forgiveness according to his loving purpose and will.
- The anointing follows the laying on of hands and the priest, having dipped his thumb in the oil, anoints the person on the forehead, saying,

In the faith of Jesus Christ,  
we lay our hands upon you and anoint you,  
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

- Provision is made for others present to lay on hands and anoint the sick person, saying only,

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

- A concluding prayer,

As you are outwardly anointed with this oil so  
may our heavenly Father grant you the  
inward anointing of the Holy Spirit;  
of his great mercy release you from suffering,  
and restore you to wholeness and strength, May  
he deliver you from all evil, preserve you  
in all goodness,  
and keep you in eternal life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A very thorough examination of the history of the liturgical use of oil for the healing of the sick, in Christian initiation (baptism and confirmation) and in ordination rites may be found in *The Oil of Gladness - Anointing in the Christian Tradition* edited by Martin Dudley and Geoffrey Rowell and published by SPCK in 1993. It was reissued in 2008. Regrettably it has not been updated to contain any examination of the provision in the *Common Worship* documents of the Church of England specifically that in *Common Worship: Times and Seasons* in which there is a form for the consecration of oils at the Maundy Thursday liturgy by the bishop for the use of the priests of his diocese. However, as an historical survey which covers the general principle of the sacramental use of material things and takes us from anointing in ancient Mesopotamia through the use of oil in ancient Greece and Rome through the Old and New Testaments and the early and medieval churches and that in Anglicanism and the Churches of the Reformation up to the end of the twentieth century. Particularly relevant here are chapter 11 by Norman Autton “The Sacrament of Anointing Administered in Hospital” and chapter 12 by Maureen Palmer “The Oil of Gladness for Wholeness: Hospice Ministry”.

### **Prayers**

The main focus of this set of prayers is that most of them are in the first person singular and to be used by the sufferer. They are relatively weak in forms to be used by the person ministering and he or she may have to look elsewhere for suitable material. Ex tempore prayer has its place but so does the use of liturgical prayers which may be familiar to the person being prayed with and may help link them to the worshipping community at a time when they are feeling ill and alone.

### **Preparation for Death**

Among the “terms of reference” for priests at their ordination is the declaration, “They are to minister to the sick and to prepare the dying for their death.”

The order here provides a form of commendation which may be led by the priest or by any other Christian person, if possible with the family and friends of the dying person. All or part of the order may be used. It comprises,

Sentences of Scripture

A Reading - either one of those suggested here or from the psalms and New Testament readings on the previous page

The Prayer of Commendation, which may be accompanied by making the sign of the cross on the forehead of the dying person, recalling his or her baptism into Christ.

The Nunc Dimittis

The Lord’s Prayer

The Blessing (when a priest is present)

The Grace.

A much fuller provision may be found in the Church of England’s *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*, “Ministry at the Time of Death” pp216-233. This suggests the structure:

*The minister and the dying person are alone for*

Preparation

Reconciliation

*Others may join the minister and the dying person for*

Opening Prayer

The Word of God

Prayers

Laying on of Hands and Anointing

Holy Communion

Commendation

Prayer when someone has just died.

A Note prefixed to the Order of Service says,

Where possible the minister prepares the dying person in private, using the Preparation and Reconciliation sections. The person should be helped to be aware that the time of death is approaching. Family and friends should join the minister and the dying person at the Opening Prayer if they can be present, and it is appropriate that they should receive Holy Communion with the dying person. The different sections of the service may happen at different times, and the last communion may be received on another occasion, and more than once, as pastoral necessity dictates.

The selection of Scripture Sentences in the Preparation is far more comprehensive than that in 2004 edition of the Book of Common Prayer.

The Reconciliation includes some expression of penitence (alternative forms are suggested) and the laying on of hands on the dying person. A form of absolution for use if the minister is a priest and a prayer if the minister is a deacon or lay person.

The Word of God section not only suggests suitable scriptural readings but also encourages an act of faith or commitment of a very simple nature such as

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom

Lord, I believe, help my unbelief

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

Under the heading of Prayers a short form of the litany or some of the prayers with dying people already provided may be used, or the minister may pray using his or her own words.

With regard to the Laying on of Hands or Anointing forms similar to those in the C of I service are provided.

Under Holy Communion it says that if it is possible the dying person may receive communion. Unless the bread and wine have already been consecrated, an authorized Eucharistic Prayer is used. The Agnus Dei may be used for the giving of communion. After the words of distribution the following may be added,

May the Lord Jesus protect you  
and lead you to eternal life.

The Commendation is similar to the Church of Ireland provision, including “Go forth upon your journey from this world...” However, the Kontakion (not included in the C of I order) appears:

**Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with the saints:  
where sorrow and pain are no more,  
neither sighing, but life everlasting.**

You only are immortal, the creator and maker of all:  
and we are mortal, formed from the dust of the earth,  
and unto earth shall we return.

For so you ordained when you created me, saying:  
“Dust you are and to dust you shall return.”

All of us go down to the dust,  
yet weeping at the grace we make our song;  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

**Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with the saints:  
where sorrow and pain are no more,  
neither sighing, but life everlasting.**

It is helpful that the traditional as well as the modern form of the Nunc Dimittis is provided. A

*Song of St Anselm* appears to be used at or just after death.

Jesus, like a mother you gather your people to you; you  
are gentle with us as a mother with her children.

Often you weep over our sins and our pride, tenderly  
you draw us from hatred and judgement.

You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds,  
in sickness you nurse us, and with pure milk you feed us.

Jesus, by your dying we are born to new life;  
by your anguish and labour we come forth in joy.

Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness;  
through your gentleness we find comfort in fear.

Your warmth gives life to the dead,  
your touch makes sinners righteous.

Lord Jesus, in your mercy heal us;  
in your love and tenderness remake us.

In your compassion bring grace and forgiveness, for  
the beauty of heaven may your love prepare us.

There are two alternative forms of blessing, one of them identical to that in the 2004 Prayer Book, “God grant you to share in the inheritance of the saints in glory...” the other not included in the Church of Ireland book:

May the eternal God  
bless and keep us,  
guard our bodies, save  
our souls  
and bring us safe to the heavenly country,  
our eternal home,  
where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reign,  
one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

A specific form is provided of Prayer when someone has just died. The minister, a family member or a friend may use some or all of the words.

In this moment of sorrow the Lord is in our midst  
and consoles us with his word:

No eye has seen nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived,  
what God has prepared for those who love him.

Blessed are the sorrowful; they shall be comforted.

Into your hands, O Lord,  
we humbly entrust our *brother/sister N*.  
In this life you embraced *him/her* with your tender love,  
and opened to *him/her* the gate of heaven.  
The old order has passed away,  
as you welcome *him/her* into paradise,  
where there will be no sorrow, no weeping nor pain,  
but the fullness of peace and joy  
with your Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Heavenly Father,  
into whose hands Jesus Christ  
commended his spirit at the last hour:  
into those same hands we now commend your servant *N*,  
that death may be for *him/her*  
the gate to life and to eternal fellowship with you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Remember, O Lord,  
this your servant,  
who has gone before us with the sign of faith

and now rests in the sleep of peace.

According to your promises,  
grant to *him/her* and to all who rest in Christ,  
refreshment, light and peace;  
through the same Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Most merciful God,  
whose wisdom is beyond our understanding,  
surround the family of *N* with your love,  
that they may not be overwhelmed by their loss,  
but have confidence in your goodness, and  
strength to meet the days to come. We ask this  
through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Some further **Notes to Ministry at the Time of Death** are also relevant to Church of Ireland ministry.

Where the minister is not a bishop or priest

- anointing is omitted;
- Holy Communion may be given but not celebrated;
- the usual alterations are made at the blessing. The laying

on of hands may be done by more than one person.

Wherever possible, care should be taken to use versions of texts familiar to the dying person.

### **A Celebration of Wholeness and Healing**

A very important contribution to the ministry of healing is the alternative order “A Celebration of Wholeness and Healing” to be found on pp457-464 of the Prayer Book. This, with some adaptation is derived from the order with the same name in *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* pp13-25. It is described in *Pastoral Services* as “especially suitable for a diocesan or deanery service” but these words do not appear in the 2004 Prayer Book, and the writer is aware of a successful use of the order on a regular basis in a parochial context. However, having used it at a Diocesan healing service the writer can affirm its great value in such a setting.

Some of the preliminary notes (relevant to all healing services) in *Pastoral Services* are helpful here:

- Those who come for prayer with Laying on of Hands and/or Anointing should make careful preparation. They may receive the Laying on of Hands on behalf of others who are not present as well as for themselves.
- Where prayer is offered for those who will minister to others, this should be seen as prayer for the grace and discernment of the Holy Spirit, as well as prayer for healing. All who minister to others in need should have careful regard for the duty of confidentiality which this privilege brings. As part of their preparation, those who minister need to be ready to recognize where specialist skills may be required.
- If a need for a more particular ministry of exorcism or deliverance is perceived, then the bishop’s instructions should be followed and his authorized advisor consulted.

This last point is of very great importance as the deliverance ministry, mishandled, can be injurious, even dangerous both to the person being ministered to and to those who are performing the ministry. At present one is not aware of the existence of an authorized advisor

skilled in this ministry in any diocese of the Church of Ireland. In case of necessity, through the bishop, it might be highly advisable to bring in assistance from the Church of England or from another reputable source.

The Structure of the office, as set out on page 457 of the Prayer Book treats the celebration of the Holy Communion as optional. However, the Eucharist, with its emphasis upon “body and soul”, the whole person, is particularly suitable for this ministry and the service as a whole is eucharistic in form and may even be regarded as to some extent incomplete if the Holy Communion is not celebrated. The shape of the service as a whole is:

The Gathering of God’s People

Proclaiming and Receiving the Word

Prayer and Penitence

Laying on of Hands and Anointing

Celebrating at the Lord’s Table

Going Out as God’s People.

### **The Gathering of God’s People**

This consists of an extended greeting and the collect, which links the heavenly Father’s anointing of his Son with the Holy Spirit and with Power to the anointing of the Church with the same Holy Spirit, and those who share in Christ’s suffering and victory may bear witness to the gospel of salvation (the concept of salvation embracing the whole person, body, mind and spirit).

### **Proclaiming and Receiving the Word**

The full form of this comprises first reading, psalm, second reading and the Gospel Reading together with the Sermon.

### **Prayer and Penitence**

An extended and very beautiful section of Prayers of Intercession is provided in Litany form and this is followed by Prayers of Penitence which may take the form of penitential kyries or confession and absolution

### **Laying on of Hands and Anointing.**

The use of oil (which may be brought to the priest to be consecrated) is not obligatory, but the lengthy prayer of blessing loses much of the force of its references to the anointed Son and to the anointing of the sick in apostolic times if an actual anointing is not envisaged. The consecration of the oil is accomplished by the words,

By the power of your Spirit may your blessing rest on those who are anointed with this oil in your name; may they be made whole in body, mind and spirit

The forms used for the actual laying on of hands and the anointing may be used “or other suitable words”.

The Lord’s Prayer is used at the end of this section only if there is no Holy Communion. If the Eucharist is celebrated it comes in the customary place after the Great Thanksgiving.

### **Celebrating at the Lord’s Table**

The prayer on p443 (an adapted form of Eucharistic Prayer One suitable for the healing ministry) is recommended as suitable.

## **Going Out as God's People**

Following a dialogue of priest and people, the Peace and the Dismissal are said. A sign of peace may be exchanged. However, since the outline on p.457 includes the Peace under **Celebrating at the Lord's Table** it should be used here only if there is no Holy Communion. And the blessing is to be used if the Holy Communion is celebrated.

## **Private Communion**

An important part of the total ministry in parishes to those who are sick is the bringing of communion to those who are aged or disabled and unable over a long period, to attend church. This normally takes the form of a celebration of Holy Communion, at the very least at the major festivals of Christmas and Easter, preferably more often. An abbreviated form will normally be used, in an accessible format such as a booklet or on a card. With seasonal adjustments (for example, omission of the Gloria in the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent) a typical format might comprise:

Greeting and scripture sentence(s)

Collect for Purity

Confession and Absolution or Penitential Kyries

Gloria in Excelsis

Collect

[Old Testament Reading or Epistle]

[Psalm]

Gospel

The Peace

The Taking of the Bread and Wine

The Great Thanksgiving

Lord's Prayer

Breaking of the Bread

Communion

The Laying on of Hands for healing

Prayer for family and friends and parish

Post-Communion Prayer

Blessing

## **Holy Communion by Extension**

An alternative is to use the form known as “Holy Communion by Extension” for those unable to be present at the public celebration, according to the use of the Church of Ireland, 2007. This was approved by the House of Bishops under the trial services legislation (Church Constitution Ch 1, section 26:3) and authorized in the Church of Ireland as from 28th February 2007 for a period of seven years.

The general principle involved is set forth in the notes prefixed to the order of service:

While this rite is primarily intended for use with those who are sick, it may on occasion be used with individuals who for a reasonable cause cannot be present at a public celebration of the Holy Communion

When a member of the community cannot be present at the parish Holy Communion but wishes to receive the Sacrament, it is desirable that the priest, deacon or appropriately trained authorized representative of the community bring the consecrated elements to that person immediately upon completion of the celebration in the church. The continuity between communion and community celebration is thus made clear.

If, however, a person is unable to attend a public celebration for an extended period of time, it is appropriate that the Holy Communion be celebrated with them, members of their family, the parish community, and friends, if possible. In these cases it would be appropriate to involve others in the readings and prayers, using the proper of the day and other appropriate material.

### **The Greeting**

This comprises the Dominus vobiscum and the following or similar words:

*Brother/sister* in Christ,  
God calls us to faithful service  
by the proclamation of the word,  
and sustains us with the sacrament  
of the body and blood of Christ.  
Let us now call upon God in prayer  
hear his word proclaimed,  
and receive this holy food from the Lord’s table.

### **The Collect**

This is the collect of the day or a similar prayer.

### **Proclaiming and Receiving the Word**

A passage from the Gospel appropriate to the day or occasion or one of a set of passages provided is read.

### **Penitence**

This includes invitation to confession, absolution (if a priest is present) or prayer for forgiveness (if there is not a priest), and the option of the Prayer of Humble Access.

### **The Lord’s Prayer**

This may be in the traditional or modern form.

An invitation to communion consists of the following words,

The Church of God, of which we are members,  
has taken bread and wine

and given thanks over them  
according to our Lord's command.  
I now bring these holy gifts  
that you may share in the communion of his body and blood.  
**We being many are one body  
for we all share in the one bread.**

Communion is given with the words,

The body of Christ given for you. **Amen.**

The blood of Christ shed for you. **Amen.**

Silence is kept.

### **Prayer after Communion**

It is noted that it may be appropriate to pray for the needs of those present.

The post-communion prayer "Almighty God, we thank you..." is said or another suitable prayer.

### **The Blessing**

The blessing is said if there is a priest present. Otherwise the grace is said.

Any of the consecrated bread and wine remaining after the administration of the communion is to be reverently consumed

Some important guidelines are included:

## **HOLY COMMUNION BY EXTENSION**

### **Guidelines for Clergy and for Lay Eucharistic Ministers**

The provision for Holy Communion by Extension allows people who are unable to attend the parish celebration (either Sunday or weekday), to feel part of the greater community of believers who have gathered at the Lord's Table together. The communion should be administered only by the clergy or by authorized lay Eucharistic ministers.

Any lay person administering the Sacrament by extension shall be authorized by the diocesan bishop to carry out this ministry and shall have undertaken training. The precise nature of the training would be decided by the diocesan bishop in conjunction with the parochial clergy, but it would need to include discussion regarding the nature and understanding of the Sacrament of Holy Communion as the Church of Ireland has received it, without detracting from the mystery of the Sacrament and the diversity of devotional opinion which the faithful may hold. Practical training in the administration of the Sacrament would also be necessary.

In addition, the pastoral implications arising from Holy Communion which has been brought from the parish Eucharist, (as opposed to a 'private' celebration with the priest and person) will need to be addressed. Due preparation of the wider community must ensure that this ministry is understood to be an extension of worship and not a social visit.

### **When the Sacrament should be brought from the Parish Celebration**

It is most appropriate that the Sacrament be administered as soon as is practically possible after the celebration of the Eucharist in the church. The time lapsed between the service in the church and the reception in the home/hospital is to be made as short as possible, so that the connection between the celebration and the administration of the Sacrament is clear. The presiding minister may wish to send out lay Eucharistic ministers to administer Holy Communion by extension during the course of the liturgy. The most appropriate point for this

would be immediately after the Great Silence. In such cases the communicant in the home may have a sense of sharing in the same service as the community worshipping in the church. Arrangements shall be made with the parishioner(s) before-hand so that they may prepare themselves in advance to receive communion, preferably by reading to themselves some of the liturgy actually being used in the church. The exact time of communion by extension should, as far as possible, be consistent week by week or month by month.

*Persons who should receive this ministry*

- Those who are ill, at home.
- Those who are in hospital. This would include patients unable to attend a service in a hospital chapel but who would desire to receive communion in the ward immediately after such a service.
- Those who are housebound or confined to nursing or residential care.

The desire of a communicant to have a 'full' celebration of the Eucharist should always be respected.

*General guidelines*

At the actual celebration of the Eucharist, only sufficient of the consecrated elements as is necessary for communion by extension should remain; otherwise, what is left should be consumed as normal. This will demand some planning before-hand by the presiding minister.

At the time of bringing the Sacrament by extension, the elements should be carried in a dignified and reverent manner, for example in a private communion set or a bread box and a small flagon which should be placed in a small cloth bag or pouch.

At the time of the communion, the elements should be placed on a corporal, on an appropriate surface (i.e. a small table). It may be appropriate also (where custom allows), to place a small cross and/or candle in view of the person(s) to receive communion.

At the conclusion of the rite, the Eucharistic minister must consume all the remaining consecrated elements and cleanse the vessels with water.

Only the Rite of *Holy Communion by Extension* provided by the Church of Ireland should be used.

*Necessary vessels and materials for Holy Communion by Extension*

- Bread box\*
- Small flagon for consecrated wine\*
- Small flagon for water\*
- Small chalice & paten\*
- Corporal & purificator
- Small Cross & candle (where appropriate)
- Bible
- Prayer Book(s) or *Holy Communion by Extension* card(s)
- stole (where customary for the priest or deacon) \*

*From a private communion set.*

## **FUNERAL SERVICES**

### **Funeral Services: The canonical position**

The obligations of the rector of a parish are clearly set forth in Canon 32 The burial of the dead,

(1) Subject to the provisions of this Canon no minister shall, where reasonable notice has been given to him, refuse to read the burial service in the prescribed form at

(a) the burial within his cure of any person who may have died within it,

(b) the burial of any person whose family may possess a burial place within the church or churchyard of his parish, and whose remains have been brought there for interment.

(c) the burial within a reasonable distance outside his cure of a person who died within his cure and is believed by the minister to have been at his death a member of the Church,

or

(d) the burial within his cure of a deceased person who died outside his cure but whose remains have been brought there for interment and who is believed by the minister to have been at his death a member of the Church.

(2) A minister may however in his own discretion refuse to read the burial service in full where the deceased died unbaptised or had committed suicide or had committed some grievous or notorious sin and not repented of it or had been excluded from Holy Communion under Canon 16 and had not been readmitted thereto.

(3) If the minister refuse to to read the full service pursuant to clause (2) hereof he shall read at the burial such parts of the prescribed service or such approved prayers and such psalms or portions of Scripture as to him shall seem fit, or he shall use such alternative or modified form of service as may have been prescribed for the case. Save where the burial is of an unbaptised infant the minister shall also, where it is reasonably practicable to do so, consult with the ordinary before the burial; and where this is not reasonably practicable he shall report the matter to the ordinary thereafter.

It may be seen from the above that there is a general obligation to bury those residing within the cure - that is within the geographical boundaries of the parish. While in practice this will almost always mean members of the Church of Ireland, a rector is, in principle, obliged to bury members of any or no church (subject to the limitations implied in section 3) with an address within the parish when duly requested so to do.

It is not quite clear what are the full implications of (1)b. Strictly speaking those who have "claimed" graves do not own them, but merely have a registered claim to be buried in the designated plots. The only people who actually "possess" a burial place within the church or churchyard are those with family vaults. However, it is best to assume that the obligation extends to apply to any with burial rights in the church or churchyard.

It is best to give people the "benefit of the doubt" as to what constitutes a "reasonable distance" under (1)c. Usually there will be consultation with the Rector of the Church where the interment is to take place, and the service will be shared. It is a customary courtesy when a service is shared for the rector of the deceased person to be invited to perform the committal.

With regard to the circumstances covered by (2) and (3), pastoral considerations should normally prevail over legal rights of the incumbent. Refusal to use the burial service in case of a suicide could add to the hurt of the relatives. Careful choice of readings and prayers, however, could be pastorally helpful. The case of the death of a still-born child or a newly-born child is considered below under "The Funeral Service for a Child".

On occasion, members of the Christian community, or representatives of it, may be called upon to provide a funeral liturgy for a person who did not profess faith in Christ. This might be someone of another faith community, or a non-believer. A loose-leafed folder *Occasional Celebrations*, published by the Anglican Book Centre, 600 Jarvis Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4Y 2J6 provides liturgical material for such an eventuality under the heading, "Liturgies Relating to Death and Burial."

#### **A note on Churchyards and Burial rights**

The law on churchyards and burial rights is complex and needs to be understood not only by the incumbent but by any clergyperson who is liable to be called upon to conduct funerals. A convenient guide is the *Irish Churchwardens Handbook*, A.P.C.K. Dublin 1979 by the Revd James B Leslie as revised and expanded by the Very Revd (later Rt Revd) W.G. Wilson. Parts of this book need further revision in the light of changes in the constitution since 1979 but chapter five - "Churchyards and Burial Rights" and chapter six "The Maintenance of Graveyards" are still highly relevant.

## **Funeral Services One: The Order for the Burial of the Dead.**

This is the traditional language order which is derived from the rite of the same title in previous editions of the Prayer Book. Changes from the 1926 edition relate mainly to the rubrics. These and some other developments from the time of the Reformation onwards are indicated below.

Burial rites in rural areas commonly involve three ceremonies - at the house, in the Church, and at the graveside. If, however, the body is brought to the Church prior to the burial, there is a service of reception attended often by just a few relatives, and this takes the place of the service in the house on the day of burial. In town parishes and in the city, there may be no service in the Church, that in the house acting in place of it together with the ceremony at the graveside. Where the place of interment is distant from the Church it is the custom in some areas for only the relatives and close friends to be present for the actual burial. Where the body is to be cremated, it may be brought from the house (with or without a short service) to the crematorium, where there is a service whose total length is normally restricted to thirty minutes, and a suitable form of the committal is used.

### **At the house**

The 2004 edition of the Book of Common Prayer contains A Form for Use in the Home, Funeral Home or Mortuary - Prior to the Service in Church, but this is designed for use with the modern language liturgy - Funeral Services Two. There is no equivalent for the traditional "Funeral Services One". Essentially what is done in the house is at the discretion of the officiating minister and there is much to be said for keeping it simple, and it may consist of a psalm, a reading, and some suitable prayers. If the body is to be "lifted" at a certain time, for example 2 p.m. the service should begin at around 1.45 p.m. or 1.50 p.m. and be completed before 2 p.m.

No provision is made in the Book of Common Prayer for a service of reception in Church (where the body is to lie until the funeral, perhaps on the next day,) although forms were put forth by authority of the House of Bishops many years ago. A suitable outline might include,  
Sentences (on the way into the Church)

Psalm

Scripture reading

Prayers (The Litany One up to "day of judgement"

followed by two or three collect-type prayers would be appropriate).

The Lord's Prayer

Ascription or the Grace.

Care should be taken not to use material which will occur again at the burial.

### **In the church**

[What was previously the first rubric prohibited the use of the office for any that died unbaptized or excommunicate, or those who have committed suicide. Unbaptized infants of tender age, the offspring of Christian parents, who have not been withheld from baptism wilfully or who were persons known to have been prepared for and desirous of baptism, were entitled to have the sentences read, one of the psalms and lessons or a portion of them, the four sentences at the grave, and the Lord's Prayer and the benediction at the close of the office. This was clearly an obsolete rubric reflecting a rigour of approach unlikely to be found pastorally helpful in present day circumstances. The question of the burial of a person who has committed suicide is regulated now by canon, and is dealt with above. In the 1662 Prayer Book this rubric consisted of a single sentence. A second rubric dealing with the reading of sentences has been modified to produce the current form]

The clergyperson (and any assistant minister or ministers) should be fully robed when meeting the cortege, and remain so while conducting the service in church and performing the committal. Discarding robes prior to the committal introduces an inappropriate casualness into the most solemn part of the funeral rite and its apparent lack of respect can cause offence to mourners who value the Church's liturgical tradition. Appropriate robes are cassock, surplice and stole or, alternatively, cassock, surplice and scarf. With regard to the liturgical colour, white - the colour of the resurrection - is especially appropriate during the Great Fifty Days of Easter, and purple for the remainder of the year. Alternatively, a black stole may be worn although this is now less common.

### **Sentences**

Three sentences are provided for use while the minister is processing in front of the cortege from the entrance to the church and these may be supplemented by those from page 490 (or indeed other suitable sentences, as required).

The first of these processional sentences (which may be sung rather than said) has been traced to the ancient *Inhumatio Defuncti*, and was also a Compline Antiphon "in agenda Mortuorum" in the *Gregorian Antiphonary*. The second was used in the *Vigiliae Mortuorum* or *Dirge* of the Sarum rite. In Merbecke's Common Prayer Noted, they are arranged as Responses and Versicles. The Sarum use was,

Antiphon Ego sum resurrectio et vita: qui credit in me, etiamsi mortuus fuerit, vivet: et omnis qui vivit et credit in me, non morietur in aeternum.

Respond Credo quod Redemptor meus vivit: et in novissimo die de terra surrecturus sum: Et in carne mea videbo Deum Salvatorem meum.

Versicle Quem visurus sum ego ipse et non alius: et oculi mei conspecturi sunt. Et in carne mea videbo Deum Salvatorem meum.

A nineteenth century adaptation of Merbecke for SATB may be found in *A Cathedral Prayer Book* produced by Stainer and Russell.

It may be noticed that the sentence from Job has been shortened by the omission of "though after my skin worms destroy this body" and the second half seems to come from a modern translation.

A hymn is usually sung at the beginning of the service. Care should be taken to ensure that any hymns sung at a funeral are appropriate to the occasion, and are sufficiently well-known for the people to be able to participate.

### **The Psalm**

The psalm may be read by the minister (if the people do not have books) or read by him and the people in half verses (the minister reading to the colon and people the second half of each verse) if there are enough books to go round or if the order of service has been printed out in booklet form. If there is a choir it is appropriate that the psalm be sung. The version here is that from the 1926 Prayer Book which remains (permanently) authorized in the Church of Ireland.

In Sarum a number of psalms were appointed, although it may be doubted whether all of them were used at every burial. These were 114, 25, 118, 42, 132, 139, 148, 149, 150, together with the seven penitential psalms. In the 1549 Prayer Book psalms 116, 139, 146 were appointed to be said in church either before or after the burial of the corpse. At the communion office psalm 42 was used as the introit. From 1552-1662 no psalms appeared at all, nor did the introit appear in the Latin Office for the celebration of the Holy Communion at funerals. In 1662 psalms 32 and 90 were inserted, and the Church of Ireland's office adds

psalms 23 and 103 (which accounts for the order in which these appear). Versified forms of the psalms from the Church Hymn (2000) may be used.

### **The Ministry of the Word**

Only two readings are provided in written out form, from 1 Cor 15:20ff and 1 Thess 4:13ff, the latter a feature of the Irish Prayer Book. These were the only readings in the 1926 Prayer Book, but a rubric in the current edition allows other readings from the list on p484 to be used. A way of abbreviating the 1 Cor 15 reading is indicated by the brackets in the text printed in the Prayer Book.

Previous editions of the Book of Common Prayer service do not provide for an address, This has been remedied by the addition of a rubric, "If there is a Sermon it is preached here." A sermon at a funeral should not be simply a eulogy of the deceased (although a "personal" part is certainly appropriate and particular virtues may be mentioned) but should also expound Scriptural teaching, preferably that already introduced by the reading. The address should be short, ten minutes or so.

In the 1662 Prayer Book no provision was made for prayer in church after the reading. The two prayers in the Irish Prayer Book are helpful, but of themselves are inadequate for this part of the service. On the other hand the portion of the service at the graveside is probably overweighted with prayer although the current rubric permits the prayers after the Committal to be said in the church before the coffin leaves. The best way to order this is to begin the prayers in the Church with the lesser Litany and Lord's Prayer and to continue with a selection of prayers from various sources including one or more of those provided. The Grace should not be said at the conclusion of the office in church if it is to be used after the committal. The service in Church normally concludes with a hymn. If there is a third hymn it may come before or after the sermon.

In the 1549 Prayer Book the lesson was followed by the lesser Litany and the Lord's Prayer, by versicles and responses and by a collect, all closely modelled on the Sarum original, as follows,

Lord have mercy upon us.

Christ have mercy upon us.

Lord have mercy upon us.

Our father which art in heaven...

And lead us not into temptation

Answer, But deliver us from evil. Amen.

Priest, Enter not into judgement with thy servant.

Answer, For in thy sight no living creature shall be justified.

Priest, From the gates of hell,

Answer, Deliver their souls, O Lord.

Priest, I believe to see the goodness of the Lord.

Answer, In the land of the living.

Priest, O Lord, graciously hear my prayer.

Answer, And let my cry come unto thee.

Let us pray.

O Lord, with whom do live the spirits of them that be dead: and in whom the souls of them that be elected, after they be delivered from the burden of the flesh, be in joy and felicity: Grant unto this thy servant, that the sins which he committed in this world be not imputed unto him, but that he, escaping the gates of hell, and pains of eternal darkness, may ever

dwell in the region of light, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the place where is no weeping, sorrow, nor heaviness: and when that dreadful day of the general resurrection shall come, make him to rise also with the just and righteous, and receive this body again to glory, then made pure and incorruptible: set him on the right hand of thy son Jesus Christ, among thy holy and elect, that then he may hear with them these most sweet and comfortable words: come to me ye blessed of my father, possess the kingdom which hath been prepared for you from the beginning of the world: Grant this we beseech thee, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ our mediator and redeemer. Amen.

The collect was substantially modified in 1552 to eliminate prayer for the departed; and it was deftly verbally amended in 1662 (when it became one of the prayers said after the interment). It was shortened in the Irish Prayer Book and altered,

1662 "We give thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world."

1926 "We bless thy holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear."

As the officiating minister proceeds in front of the coffin down the church he or she may wish to read the *Nunc Dimittis* aloud. Alternatively, it may be sung by the choir.

### **At the graveside**

The concluding ceremony comprises the antiphons "Man that is born of a woman", the committal, the sentence, (the prayers after the committal) and the grace.

#### The Committal

"Man that is born of a woman" used to be said while the corpse was made ready to be laid into the earth. The current rubric permits the officiating minister to wait until the coffin has been lowered into the ground. Echoes of around fifteen scripture passages have been found in this anthem, sequence or prose, the first part of which occurred in Sarum in the *Dirge* and the remainder in the Lenten antiphon to the *Nunc Dimittis*. The rubric in 1662 directed, "The priest shall say, or the priest and clerks shall sing:"

In Sarum the 114th psalm "When Israel came out of Egypt" was sung during the procession to the grave; and if the procession was long in going, the 25th psalm also, "Unto Thee, O God, will I lift up my soul". The antiphon to the Psalm was, "May the angels carry thee to Paradise: may the martyrs receive thee into their assembly, and bring thee unto the City of the heavenly Jerusalem."

With regard to the rubric before the act of committal, "While the earth is cast upon the body by some standing by the minister says", historically the earth was cast by the priest himself, and so the rubric directed in 1549; but was ordered to be performed by "some standing by" in 1552. It has been suggested that the reason for this is to suggest what shall be the state of condition of every one, one day. He that casts earth upon the dead body today may have earth cast upon his own body tomorrow. However, the original intention of the office appears to have been, that the Priest should cast in the three symbolical handfuls of earth, saying the words of the commendation, and that then the anthem should be sung while the grave was being filled up by some standing by. Today, the casting of the earth is often performed by the undertaker; but it is better done by the officiating minister (the matter is left open in *Funerals Services Two*).

While performing the interment the clergyman should stand at the head of the grave.

In the 1549 the wording of the committal was,

I commend thy soul to God the Father Almighty, and thy body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

From 1552 this was changed to the familiar,

Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God ... in sure and certain hope of (the) resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ...

The word "mortal" has been put in where "vile" used to be - "who shall change our mortal body" After the word "brother" or "sister" one may wish to use the person's Christian name.

The Anthem "I heard the voice" is from Rev. 14:13. In Sarum it was found in the Vigils of the dead as an antiphon to the Magnificat, and was also apparently read for the Epistle, in the daily Mass for the dead.

### **Prayers after the Committal**

If the Prayers after the Committal have taken place in the church the lesser Litany and Lord's Prayer are omitted.

The Collect may be made more "inclusive" by substituting "those" for "men" in the phrase "men without hope".

The Collect was used in the 1549 Prayer Book for the celebration of the Holy Communion at burials. It originally read,

We meekly beseech thee, (O Father,) to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; that, when we shall depart this life, we may sleep in him, as our hope is this our *brother* doth; and at the general Resurrection in the last day, both we, and this our brother departed, receiving again our bodies, and rising again in thy most gracious favour, may, with all thine elect saints, obtain eternal joy. Grant this..."

A prayer found used after the burial in 1549 has contributed some phrases to the current form of the collect,

We commend into thy hands of mercy (most merciful Father) the soul of this our brother departed, N. And his body we commit to the earth, beseeching thine infinite goodness, to give us grace to live in thy fear and love, and to die in thy favour: that when the judgement shall come which thou hast committed to thy wellbeloved Son, both this our brother, and *we, may be found acceptable in thy sight and receive that blessing which thy well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all that love and fear thee, saying: Come ye blessed children of my Father: Receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. Grant this, merciful Father, for the honour of Jesus Christ our only Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate.*

The service concludes with the Grace (added in 1662 under the influence of Bishop Cosin, who, however, suggested the form, "The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always").

A form is provided to hallow the grave if the burial ground is not consecrated.

A further rubric which gave some instructions where ashes were to be buried after cremation has been omitted in this edition.

Immediately after the burial the custom in many places is for the grave to be covered with a frame on top of which the wreaths are laid, and for it to be filled in only after the mourners have gone. It is customary for the officiating minister to speak quietly to each of the bereaved and to shake hands with them before the rest of the congregation do so. If there is to be a reception in a hall nearby the family should proceed there immediately after the officiating

minister has spoken to them and may stand where those entering the hall may express their sympathy and support.

Details of the burial should be entered in the register immediately after the service.

**A note on The Order for the Burial of the Dead in the 1549 Prayer Book.**

A number of references have been made to the 1549 Prayer book. This, the first edition of the Prayer Book is particularly significant for the Church of Ireland in that this was the version introduced in Ireland on Easter Sunday 1551. The 1552 edition was never authorized in the Church of Ireland although the substance of it came in with the modified version introduced in the reign of Elizabeth 1 (1558-1603). This profoundly beautiful rite had the following structure or shape:

**Sentences**

Committal, consisting of "Man that is born of a woman" etc., "commendation of the soul of the departed to God the Father and of the body to the ground", "I heard a voice", and prayers of commendation and of intercession for the departed.

Office, consisting of the following,

Psalms 116, 146, 139.

Reading from 1 Cor 15

Lesser Litany, Lord's Prayer, Suffrages

Prayer for the departed "O Lord, with whom do live the spirits of them that be dead.."

Provision is made for a celebration of the holy communion when there is a burial of the dead, including psalm 42, and a particular collect, epistle (1 Thess 4) and Gospel (from John 6). The collect read,

O merciful God the Father of our Lord Jesu Christ, who is the resurrection and the life: in whom whosoever believeth shall live though he die: and whosoever liveth and believeth in him, shall not die eternally: who also hath taught us (by his holy Apostle Paul) not to be sorry as men without hope for them that sleep in him: We meekly beseech thee (O Father) to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, that when we shall depart this life, we may sleep in him (as our hope is this our brother doth), and at the general resurrection in the last day, both we and this our brother departed, receiving again our bodies, and rising again in thy most gracious favour: may with all thine elect saints, obtain eternal joy. Grant this, O Lord God, by the means of our advocate Jesus Christ: which with thee and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth one God for ever. **Amen.**

The provision made in the 1549 Prayer Book for the celebration of the Holy Communion when there was "a burial of the dead"; but this was omitted in 1552. However, the Latin office of 1560 (which was fully authoritative) contained provision for it, including an epistle and Gospel.

**An Order for The Burial of Children** may be found in the BCP on pp 476-9. The words "who have been baptized" were removed in 2004. This order comprises,

**In the church**

Sentences

Psalm 23

Reading (1 Thess. 4:13f or Rev. 21:3f) or other readings if preferred.

Sermon (optional)

Prayers, "Grant, O Lord, to all who are bereaved".

Appropriate prayers adapted from those on pp510-13 may be added

**At the graveside**

"Man that is born of a woman"

Committal (with reference to "This dear child here departed").

Scripture sentence (Rev 14:4,5)

Lesser Litany

Lord's Prayer

Special collects (either or both of which may be used).

O Lord Jesu Christ, who didst take little children into thine arms and bless them; Open thou our eyes, we beseech thee, that we may perceive that thou hast taken this child into the arms of thy love, and blessed him with the blessings of thy gracious favour; who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.  
Amen.

[The second collect is a prayer for the parents]

The Grace.

## **Funeral Services Two, entitled "The Funeral Service"**

An experimental form of the burial office in modern English drawn up by the Liturgical Advisory Committee was issued by the House of Bishops in 1977. On the basis of further reflection the General Synod approved a revised edition of this entitled, "Funeral Services" in 1987 and this was later incorporated into *Alternative Occasional Services 1993*, a companion volume to the *Alternative Prayer Book 1984*, which remained fully authorized until it was superseded by *Funeral Services Two* in the 2004 edition of the Book of Common Prayer. In comparing this order with Funeral Services One (the traditional Prayer book version) the following differences may be noted,

1. The use of modern English, including the *Common Worship* psalter
2. A wider choice of Scripture sentences.
3. The inclusion of a preface setting forth the Church's understanding of its own funeral rites.
4. A more comprehensive Ministry of the Word (under the heading "Proclaiming and Receiving the Word", including a wide range of psalms, a comprehensive choice of readings, provision for the normative use of a sermon and an affirmation of faith).
5. A comprehensive selection of prayers, with a suitable ending.
6. A Farewell in Christ
7. A wider choice of material in the Committal.
8. Suitable provision for a Funeral Service with Holy Communion.
9. Liturgical provision for when the Body is brought to church on the eve of a funeral.
10. Provision for a form for use at the Burial of Ashes after Cremation.
11. Provision of a modern form of the Funeral Service for a Child.
12. Provision of a form for use in the home, funeral home or mortuary prior to the service in church.
13. A more positive theology stressing the message of the resurrection and of the communion of saints.

As far back as 1965 the Church of England Liturgical Commission in their report entitled, "The Burial of the Dead" examined the question, "What ought we to be doing at a burial service?" and suggested as a response,

- (a) to secure the reverent disposal of the corpse;
- (b) to commend the deceased to the care of our heavenly Father;
- (c) to proclaim the glory of our risen life in Christ here and hereafter;
- (d) to remind us of the certainty of our own coming death and judgement;
- (e) to make plain the eternal unity of Christian people, living and departed, in the risen and ascended Christ.
- (f) to offer some consolation to the mourners.

These considerations have remained constant in the Church of England revisions (found in the *Alternative Service Book*, 1980, and *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*, 2000) and in their Church of Ireland counterparts, especially the *Funeral Services*, 1987 (AOS 1993), and the current order in the 2004 edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*. It may be seen that in many ways the Church of Ireland rites have followed those of the Church of England although they have also diverged from them in some respects. The concern to include all the principal services in a single Prayer Book with both traditional and modern forms constrained the Church of Ireland in its pastoral provision, any shortfall being catered for over a period of time by the identification of resource material. There is no attempt in the Prayer Book itself to provide for every conceivable set of circumstances. Where supplementary material from

*Common Worship: Pastoral Services* is appropriate for Church of Ireland use this is mentioned in these notes.

## **Notes**

Some general notes are prefixed to the Funeral Service.

### **1. Sentences**

*Sentences of scripture may be used at the entry, after the Introduction, where they lead into prayer, or at other suitable points.*

The sentences are printed after the section entitled, “Receiving the Coffin at the Door” which seems to imply that they are to be used in the Church. However, it is customary in most places to meet the coffin at the Church gate and for sentences to be read in procession to and into the church. The three sentences to be found on p.482 would not be adequate for this purpose and they may need to be supplemented by the selection on p.490 or by other suitable sentences. It may also be helpful for sentences to be said not only at the Committal itself as in the rubric on p.488 but in procession from the Church to the churchyard where this is attached to the Church.

### **2. Psalms and Readings**

*Psalms and readings should normally be drawn from those set out on page 484. A psalm should normally be included, except that a scriptural song may take its place. There must always be one reading from scripture. At Holy Communion there should be two readings, one of which is a gospel reading.*

The list of page 484 has some odd features which seem to presuppose that the normal use will be only one reading. In addition, having commenced with two readings from the epistles, it lists three passages from the Old Testament and four from the epistles and Revelation as “alternative readings”. These “alternative readings” need to be referred back to if a New Testament reading other than from the Gospels is to be read. The Gospel readings are referred to as if it is comparatively unimportant for the Gospels to be read from unless there is Holy Communion. It is very hard to see why the normal arrangement of readings (as for example in Holy Communion Two) is not followed, and why a norm of at least two readings (the psalm appearing after the first reading) is not insisted upon. Given the enormous length of some funerals from the time of ministry in the house to the reception after the interment it shows a strange order of priorities to economize on the reading of God’s Word. However, the priority apparently given to the Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 15 passages is commendable, even if clumsily presented and expressed.

“Scriptural songs” include versified psalms such as “The Lord’s my shepherd” and “The King of love my shepherd is”.

### **3. The Sermon**

There should be a relevant exposition of the Scriptures read. An appropriate place for any “tribute” to the deceased is before the Penitential Kyries.

There is clearly value in indicating that a funeral address should not be merely a eulogy of the deceased. Nor should it consist of a detailed life history of the person who has died. It has been said that the purpose of the sermon at a funeral is “to proclaim the Gospel in the context of the death of this particular person”, *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*, p.291.

A widespread custom of having a friend or relative of the deceased pay a tribute to them must not be allowed to take the place of the sermon. However, this is often incoherently expressed, or contains inappropriate sentiments or is delivered by a grief-stricken person who breaks down in the course of delivering it, and is not necessarily to be encouraged. It also creates a

either a dichotomy between this and the sermon or alternatively an overlap, both of which are equally undesirable. It is best, if possible, to have one address given by the person's own pastor containing both a personal appreciation (with an emphasis upon what is significant from a Christian perspective) and an exposition of the Gospel applying the message of one or more of the readings to the particular circumstances of the bereaved. As part of the pastoral preparation for the funeral it is usually possible to glean from the relatives not only essential information but also their perspective on their loss and this can be worked into the funeral sermon. A discussion on the words they would use to describe the person who has died or would associate with them can be helpful, and notes can sometimes be made out by more articulate relatives which can be drawn on by the preacher, sometimes even verbatim but put into the broader context of the sermon as a whole.

A funeral sermon should not be excessively long and needs to be disciplined in both its content and delivery. The preacher should not abuse his position of having a "captive audience". He or she should be truthful in what is said but leave matters of judgement entirely to God. As part of the pastoral relationship he or she should already normally know the person who has died well, although all members of the clergy from time to time have to bury people (for example when covering for a clerical neighbour) whom they did not know at all. In the latter case they should gather as much information as possible before preparing their sermon but should not pretend to know the person better than those sitting in front of them.

#### **4. Hymns** *Hymns may be sung at suitable places in the service.*

Where there are two hymns one is suitably sung after the prayer "God of all consolation", and the second one after the prayers. A third hymn can be put in before or after the Sermon.

Care should be taken in the selection of hymns, that the sentiments contained in them are Christian and this also applies to non-scriptural passages which mourners may wish to be read either by one or more of them or by the clergy person. The Scott Holland passage about death being merely a passage from one room to another should never be used. In its original context it was intended by Scott Holland as an example of a sub-Christian attitude to death which falls far short of biblical revelation.

#### **5. The Committal**

*The Committal, though printed as the final section of the service, is used at the point at which it is needed: when the body is buried in a cemetery or churchyard, at the end of the service in church when cremation is not to follow immediately or at a crematorium when the interment of ashes is not to follow immediately.*

The committal involves both a "taking leave" of the person and the reverent disposal of the remains and is the final specifically Christian act in the burial process. This is not to say that the person is to be dismissed from the minds of worshippers - apart from the grief of the mourners and the ministry they will continue to require there are specific acts of liturgical ministry that are still possible, ranging according to theological acceptability from a "memorial" service to a requiem eucharist. A note in the Church of England's *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* p.292 covers an additional possibility,

*When the body or the ashes are to be deposited in a vault, mausoleum or brick grave, these words may be used at the committal:*

We have entrusted our *brother/sister N* to God's mercy, and now we commit his/her body to its resting place.

## **The essential structure of the service**

This is given as:

### **The Funeral Service**

Gathering in God's Name  
Prayers of Penitence  
The Collect  
Proclaiming and Receiving the Word  
The Prayers  
The Farewell  
The Committal  
The Dismissal

### **The Funeral Service with Holy Communion**

*After the Prayers*

The Peace  
The Great Thanksgiving  
The Breaking of the Bread  
The Communion

*The Farewell, the Committal and the Dismissal follow*

Apart from its value in indicating the essential "shape" of the funeral rite, it is also possible to discern here a liturgical and theological "norm" however rarely implemented, in which the celebration of the eucharist is an integral part. The relationship between the church on earth and the church in heaven is more fully expressed when the eucharist is celebrated and those present are able to be participants in a manner that is less significant when it is omitted.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **Gathering in God's Name**

#### Receiving the Coffin at the Door

This preliminary ceremony marks a transition from the journey to the church to the funeral liturgy. It is optional. Some helpful notes are included in the Church of England's *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*, p.292 where it says,

- A candle may stand beside the coffin and may be carried in front of the coffin when it is brought into the church.
- The coffin may be sprinkled with water on entry. This may occur at the Commendation, or at the Committal.
- A pall may be placed over the coffin in church by family, friends or other members of the congregation.
- Before or at the start of the service or after the opening prayer and hymn, with the minister's agreement, suitable symbols of the life and faith of the departed person may be placed on or near the coffin.

Forms are provided for the ceremonies described:

### **Sprinkling the coffin with water**

With this water we call to mind *N's* baptism.

As Christ went through the deep waters of death for us, **so may he bring us to the fullness of resurrection life with *N* and all the redeemed.**

or the prayer, "Grant, Lord, that we who are baptized..."

**Covering the coffin with a pall**

We are already God's children,  
but what we shall be has not yet been revealed.  
Yet we know that when Christ appears we shall be like him, for  
we shall see him as he is.

or

On Mount Zion the Lord will remove the pall of sorrow  
hanging over all nations.  
He will destroy death for ever.  
He will wipe away the tears from every face.

**Placing a Bible on the coffin**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
your living and imperishable word brings us to new birth.  
Your eternal promises to us and to *N* are proclaimed in the Bible.

**Placing a cross on the coffin**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
for love of *N* and each one of us  
you bore our sins on the cross.

**Sentences of Scripture**

The positioning of the three sentences seems to presuppose that these will necessarily be said in church. However, it is customary to meet the coffin at the church gate and to proceed in front of it as it is borne into the church saying scripture sentences. These or other scripture sentences are suitable for the purpose. *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* (p.259) has a more logical arrangement of putting the sentences before the reception of the coffin at the door.

Additional sentences are provided on p.490. It would, however, have been more convenient for the officiant if all the sentences had been printed together as in *Alternative Occasional Services 1993* p.75 and in *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* p.259. Apart from those provided the minister may, at his or her discretion, add further sentences considered appropriate to the occasion.

**Greeting**

Strictly, this part of the rite would more accurately be described as "Greeting and Introduction" since it includes an (optional) introduction and introductory prayer. A hymn may be sung at this point.

If there is to be what *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* describes as "a brief tribute" it comes here before the Penitential Kyries (see above).

**Penitential Kyries**

Since these do not constitute a "confession", the form which follows invoking God's forgiveness is precatory rather than declaratory.

**The Collect**

The use described here - invitation to pray, silence, and the collect - is the classic sequence for the use of the collect which, as its name suggests, “collects” the prayer of the people which has been offered in the silence and expresses this as a summary in words.

### **Proclaiming and Receiving the Word**

The manner in which this section is presented has been criticized above. Essentially what is needed is a minimum of two scripture readings with a psalm in between them,

*Either*

Old Testament

Psalm

Gospel *or*

Epistle

Psalm

Gospel

### **The Sermon**

At one time it was unusual for a sermon to be preached at a funeral in most Church of Ireland churches. It is currently the norm, and the exposition and application of the Word is to be regarded as an integral part of funeral ministry.

### **The Apostles' Creed**

The affirmation of faith in the words of the baptismal Creed is a response to the reading and preaching of God’s Word. In it the entire congregation makes explicit its commitment to the basic biblical teaching summarized in the Creed.

The Te Deum, Pt 2, has a creedal content, speaking as it does of Christ who is the “King of glory, the eternal Son” who became incarnate of the Virgin Mary and through his death and resurrection conquered sin and death and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The plea to bring us with all the saints to glory everlasting is particularly relevant at a funeral service.

The Apostles’ Creed, which is the baptismal creed of the Western Church, is a personal affirmation of faith, hence the first person singular, “I believe...” If Holy Communion is celebrated the Nicene Creed is used instead with the emphasis upon the corporate nature of the Church’s faith, “We believe...”

### **The Prayers**

The prayers are not fixed in form although the book provides both a suitable sequence and the resource of a selection of prayers. The sequence consists of

Thanksgiving for the life of the departed.

Prayer for those who mourn

Prayer for readiness to live in the light of eternity.

A concluding prayer is provided which refers to our common faith with particular reference to the third and final section of the Apostles’ Creed. However, this prayer can only be described as “concluding” in a rather qualified way because it is anticipated that the Lord’s Prayer may be said at this point and that another final prayer may be added before the Farewell in Christ. This is less satisfactory than the arrangement in Alternative Occasional

Prayers, 1993, where the prayers begin with the Salutation, “The Lord be with you” and the response, the Lesser Litany and the Lord’s Prayer and continue with particular prayers leading to prayers that can be described as generally “concluding”. This would seem to be a much more satisfactory sequence. A selection of prayers appears on pp491-496. It has to be said that the full range of Anglican spirituality is not represented here since except as perhaps implied in the inclusive language of some of the prayers and the sole explicit formulation of “May God in his infinite love and mercy” on p.486, prayer for the departed is conspicuously lacking even as an option. This may be regarded as a theological impoverishment when compared with what is normative in other Anglican Prayer Books. This is not solely a matter of “churchmanship”. A very sympathetic approach to prayer for the departed may be found in some Evangelical writers, for example Christopher Cocksworth in “*Prayer and the Departed*”, Grove Worship Series 142, Grove Books 1997. The very difficult issue of the “unquiet dead” is tackled in a most courageous fashion by two Evangelical writers in *Requiem Healing - a Christian Understanding of the Dead* by Michael Mitton and Russ Parker, Daybreak, 1991. As indicated in the above, in the commentary on Funeral Services One, prayer for the departed was retained in a biblical format in the 1549 Prayer Book, although later omitted in 1552 and its successors. There is a denunciation of prayer for the departed (part of an attack on the concept of purgatory) in the Second Book of Homilies, “An Homily on Prayer”. However, the text of an early version of one of the Articles of Religion originally prohibiting the practice was altered so that it is not excluded by the “Thirty-nine” (unless it is of such a kind as to suggest “the Romish doctrine of purgatory” - which is prohibited). Modern Church of England service books, including the *Alternative Service Book, 1980* and *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* include it as a matter of course but always among a range of options leaving the matter to the conscience of the individual. There is no reason why, under the provisions of Canon 6 (d) such a form of prayer may not be used in the Church of Ireland. James Usher (1581-1656), Archbishop of Armagh and one of the great luminaries of the Church showed from the fathers and ancient liturgies that the Church made prayer and offering for the dead long before “the discovery of this new found creek of purgatory”, which he had already demonstrated to be an addition to the Catholic faith. He showed to his own satisfaction that the ancient Irish offered the Eucharist for the dead as “a sacrifice of thanksgiving for their salvation rather than of propitiation for their sins, and that none of their prayers or oblations had “any necessary relation to belief in purgatory”. Bishop Jeremy Taylor, explicitly defended the practice as found in the writings of the early Church fathers and said that the Anglican Church “did never condemn by any express article, but left it in the middle, and by her practice declares her faith of the resurrection of the dead, and her interest in the communion of saints, and that the saints departed are a portion of the catholic Church. With Andrewes and Cosin, Bishop Bedell applied to the dead as well as the living the petition in the Anglican Communion Service, that “we and all thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins.” Herbert Thorndike (1598-1672) said that “the practice of the Church in interceding for them [i.e. for the Departed] at the Celebration of the Eucharist is so general and so ancient, that it cannot be thought to have come in upon imposture, but that the same aspersion will seem to take hold of the common Christianity.”

From this perspective there is a serious omission from the very fine series of prayers on p491 of the Prayer Book. An entire paragraph - the second of the series (which originated in *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* and may be found on p.264) has been left out. It reads,

You promised eternal life to those who believe.  
Remember for good this your servant *N* as we  
also remember *him/her*.  
Bring all who rest in Christ

into the fullness of your kingdom  
where sins have been forgiven and  
death is no more.

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

The scriptural character of this prayer - with its strong use of the highly biblical word “remember” and its hint at the supplication of the Penitent Thief, “Jesus, remember me” - makes this particularly suitable as does also its admirable balance between the state of the departed in Paradise (in Jewish thought an intermediate state visualised as a walled garden of peace and repose) and the ultimate fulfilment of all things in Christ makes it appropriate at the time of a funeral service. In the catacombs the departed are pictured as being with Christ in a place of refreshment, light and peace.

Another omission is in the prayer which begins “Eternal Lord God, you hold all souls in life..” (BCP 494) which reads,

Eternal God, you hold all souls in life:  
May the bright beams of your light and heavenly comfort  
shine on your whole Church...

This appears to have been altered from the version in the Church of England’s *Alternative Service Book* 1980 p.335 where the full text is,

Eternal Lord God, you hold all souls in life:  
shed forth, we pray, upon your whole Church *in  
paradise and on earth* the bright beams of your  
light and heavenly comfort...

[The crucial omission is in italics]

Other helpful prayers of this kind are to be found in the *Alternative Service Book* 1980 and elsewhere in *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*.

*The Alternative Service Book 1980*

Merciful Father and Lord of all life, we praise you that we [altered from orig. “men”] are made in your image and reflect your truth and light. We thank you for the gift of your *son N*, for the love and mercy *he* received from you and showed among us. Above all we rejoice at your gracious promise to all your servants, living and departed: that we shall rise again at the coming of Christ. And we ask that in due time we may share with our *brother* that clearer vision, when we shall see your face in the same Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

O God, the maker and redeemer of all humankind: [altered from orig. “mankind”] grant us, with your servant *N* and all the faithful departed, the sure benefits of your Son’s saving passion and glorious resurrection; that in the last day, when you gather up all things in Christ, we may with them enjoy the fullness of your promises, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hear, Lord, the prayers of your people, as we remember before you *N our brother*: and grant that we who confess your name on earth may with *him* be made perfect in the kingdom of your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Remember, O Lord, this your servant, who has gone before us with the sign of faith, and now rests in the sleep of peace. According to your promises, grant to *him* and to all who rest in Christ, refreshment, light, and peace; through the same Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Father of all, by whose mercy and grace your saints remain in everlasting light and peace: we remember with thanksgiving those whom we love but see no longer; and we pray that in them your perfect will may be fulfilled; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Common Worship: Pastoral Services*

The Litanies and Responsive prayers in pp366-372 include such prayers as,

Lord Jesus, gentle shepherd who brings rest to our soul,  
give peace to *N* for ever.

For those who have fallen asleep in the hope of rising again,  
that they may see God face to face.

Lord, we commend all those who have died to your unfailing love,  
that in them your will may be fulfilled;  
and we pray that we may share with them in your eternal kingdom;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Among the prayers of Entrusting and Commending on pp373-377 is a version of the Russian Kontakion.

**Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with the saints:  
where sorrow and pain are no more,  
neither sighing, but life everlasting.**

You only are immortal, the creator and maker of all:  
and we are mortal, formed from the dust of the earth,  
and unto earth shall we return.

For so you ordained when you created me, saying:  
“Dust you are and to dust you shall return.”

All of us go down to the dust,  
yet weeping at the grave, we make our song:  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

**Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with the saints:  
where sorrow and pain are no more,  
neither sighing, but life everlasting.**

Prayer for the departed is part of the practice of the universal church and has existed from the earliest period. It is provided, as a matter of course, in many Anglican Prayer Books and authorized orders of service, for example, in Scotland and Wales as well as England, in the Episcopal Church (USA), in the Anglican Church of Canada, in the Province of New Zealand and in the Province of South Africa.

There are many excellent prayers in the 2004 Prayer Book pp491-497. The thanksgivings to be found on p.496 are taken and adapted from the First Alternative Form of Evening Prayer in the 1926 Book of Common Prayer, p.326.

The “Prayer for the hallowing of a grave” on p.497 is suitable when a person is being buried in unconsecrated ground.

### **The Farewell in Christ**

This form gives expression to the important aspect of “taking leave” of the person who has died and “letting go” which is an essential part of the grieving process. How it is handled (for example with the relatives around the coffin or with the minister standing on his or her own) depends partly on the physical space and partly on local tradition. The versicle and response leads into a time of silence and is followed by the Easter Anthems and a prayer of leave-taking. It is, however, highly regrettable that the Nunc Dimittis is not provided as an

alternative to the Easter Anthems which would seem to be out of place, for example, in the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, whereas the Nunc Dimittis is always suitable. In some churches the Nunc Dimittis is said or sung as the funeral cortege proceeds down the nave.

The prayer of leave-taking has its own distinct merits, but it is regrettable that there is no provision for a more explicit prayer of commendation as an alternative, such as the form in the *Alternative Service Book* 1980, p.315:

Let us commend our *brother N* to the mercy of God our Maker and Redeemer.

Heavenly Father, by your mighty power you gave us life, and in your love you have given us new life in Christ Jesus. We entrust *N* to your merciful keeping, in the faith of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who died and rose again to save us, and is now alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit in glory for ever. **Amen.**

*Common Worship: Pastoral Services* has the original form of the prayer in Funeral Services Two with,

we entrust *N* to your mercy

Funeral Services Two has

we now leave your servant ... in your gracious keeping.

Several other forms may be found in *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* under the heading “Prayers of Entrusting and Commending” pp.373-5.

It is interesting that the inhibitions which have affected the 2004 Prayer Book in relation to both prayer for the departed and commendation do not seem to be reflected in the *Methodist Worship Book* 1999, which has both. For example (p.469),

Father of all, we pray for those whom we love, but see no longer. Grant them your peace; let light perpetual shine upon them; and in your loving wisdom and almighty power work in them the good purpose of your perfect will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The commendation on p.468 reads,

Into your keeping, O merciful God,

Not everyone will identify with the move from the restrained style of the *Alternative Service Book* 1980 to the more flowery language of *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*. The 2004 Prayer is nearer to the former than the latter as is also the *Methodist Worship Book* which has a quite exceptional felicity in its choice of words.

### **The Committal**

The rubric “Sentences of Scripture may be used” is a reminder that there is usually a procession to the graveside (from the Church, or if a distant graveyard is being used, from the entrance to the grave). Some of the sentences not previously utilized are suitable.

The 1 Peter 1:3 text goes well with “The Lord is full of compassion” etc., from Psalm 10:8, 13-17 but does not fit with the wholly different approach of “Man that is born of a woman”. Gordon Giles in Chapter 10 of *A Companion to Common Worship*, Vol. 2 ed. Paul Bradshaw, and published as Alcuin Club Collections, ascribes the anthem “Man that is born of a woman” to a monk at St Gall, Notker, who died c.912. It found its way into the Sarum Rite, being used as the antiphons for the *Nunc Dimittis* at Compline in mid Lent.. It is to be found in Funeral Services One and has been taken over in the 2004 Prayer Book in a modern inclusive form. The opening verse comes from Job 14:1-2. The reference to “Lord most holy, Lord most mighty” is derived from a response that used to be part of the text, and which is reminiscent

of the *Trisagion* still used in litanies. According to Giles the final lines have come to us via a Lutheran addition which Miles Coverdale translated, finding their way into the 1549 Prayer Book.

The Act of Committal is derived from the form in *Funeral Services 1987* (later incorporated into *Alternative Occasional Services 1993*) and is more comprehensive than its Church of England counterpart. Nervousness about commendation seems to be the reason for the cautious wording “in your keeping are all those who have departed in Christ”. The latter part of the prayer clearly has its ultimate origin in the form in *Funeral Services One*. If it is desired to make the sign of the cross over the coffin it is appropriate to do this at the words “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”...

### **The Lord's Prayer**

It is desirable to say the Lord's Prayer prefaced by the Lesser Litany before the prayers in the main part of the service (as in the 1987-1993), although the only place assigned to it there is at the conclusion of the prayers and with the curious restriction “if the committal is not to follow as part of the same service in the same place, the Lord's Prayer is said now”. The rubric shows all the hallmarks of liturgical fussiness and of some kind of “notion”.

### **The Dismissal**

The prayer “God be in my head” is both traditional and beautiful, but one wonders is this really the appropriate place for it? Ministry in the home would seem to be a more appropriate circumstance.

Of the three endings provided the psalm 16:11 sentence seems a little weak for the conclusion of the funeral liturgy, the blessing is admirable, and the grace is a little bit bare on its own. A strong ending can be provided by prefacing the eschatological prayer “May God in his infinite love and mercy...” to the grace, as follows:

May God in his infinite love and mercy bring  
the whole church, living and departed in the  
Lord Jesus, to a joyful resurrection and the  
fulfilment of his eternal kingdom: And the  
grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the  
love of God, and the fellowship  
of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. **Amen.**

This sets the conclusion of the funeral liturgy in the wide context of the eternal purpose of God and the redemption of humanity rather than in limiting consideration to the merely personal as in “God be in my head” etc., admirable though this is for the individual.

### **When the body is brought to Church on the eve of a funeral**

Customs vary widely in current practice in the Church of Ireland. In some places the reception of the body is attended by a large number of people who will not necessarily be present at the funeral, so it is a significant event. In other places the reception of the body will be attended only by two or three family members. And in others the custom is still for the body to be kept at home and for a service to take place there prior to the funeral.

This variety of usage gives rise to the rubric, *This form may also be adapted for use in the home before the funeral service.*

The form used at the door is the same as that used in the burial office except that here it is mandatory.

Sentences of scripture are read as the minister precedes the coffin into the church.

Although a hymn is provided for, this presupposes a reasonable attendance of people who are willing and able to sing.

It is surprising that no alternative is provided to Psalm 139. The *Alternative Service Book* 1980 supplied verses from Psalm 27 as well as verses from Psalm 139.

A reading from scripture is mandated. The Romans 8 reading was recommended in the *ASB* although for no apparent reason it preceded the psalm.

The Nunc Dimittis would seem much better suited to the end of the actual funeral (where it does not appear at all in Funeral Services Two) than to this order, and it is regrettable that the traditional version is not printed as an alternative.

The selection of prayers is helpful but incomplete, the additional prayers in the *ASB* pp334-5 being a more adequate resource. The modern version of “Lighten our darkness” has lost its classic rhythm, and reads better if it is in the form,

Lighten our darkness, we beseech you, O Lord,  
and in your great mercy defend us  
from all perils and dangers of this night;  
for the love of your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

One option not considered here is the use of the Litany (Two) parts 1-3 followed by prayers of simplicity and dignity as in the *ASB* (op. cit).

#### **A Form for use at the Burial of Ashes after Cremation**

This order consists of sentences, prayer, a reading, the act of committal with a further prayer, the Lord’s Prayer and the Grace. The one outstanding feature of this order is the prayer following the act of interment which is worthy of a wider use and could be used as one of the prayers at the reception of the body or in the funeral service itself. Unlike many of the more recent compositions this prayer has a good structure, a strong rhythm, and a positive content. It deserves to be better known.

The Bishops’ guidelines on the committal of ashes on land or at sea were not at hand when these Notes were being prepared.

#### **Funeral service for a child**

This provides liturgically for one of the most difficult acts of ministry that any deacon or priest may be called upon to perform. There is an excellent selection of sentences, a brief and helpful introduction following the greeting, and an initial prayer acknowledging the special grief involved in the loss of a child. The use of the collect is correctly explained and the prayer itself is appropriate. The provision for readings is set forth more rationally than that for the standard burial service, and the choice of psalmody is suitable (23 or 84:1-14). Following the sermon and the Apostles’ Creed or its alternatives the prayers occur, the Litany form on p.510 being drawn from *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*, the other prayers being well-chosen and highly appropriate. That on page 502, already commented on, might well be substituted for the shorter form under the heading “The Communion of Saints”.

#### **A Form for use in the Home, Funeral Home or Mortuary prior to the Service in Church**

It is not obligatory to use any particular form in the home, but this order provides some resources for so doing. It is not clear that the prayers on pp515-6 will “wear” well in actual use, something less prolix being more highly desirable. However, the prayer about the weeping of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus is succinct and helpful, the plural “consolations” being more commonly used when this prayer appears.

At the conclusion of the service, following the Lord's Prayer, it may be helpful to say,

Receive into your safekeeping, O Lord,  
ourselves and those whom we love, and  
teach us, in life and death,  
to put our trust in you,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The "leaving" in God's gracious keeping on p.515 would appear to be likely to anticipate, to some extent, the leave-taking in the act of committal following the service in church leading to a duplication or overlap.

## **GUIDELINES ON THE LITURGICAL USE OF OIL**

**circulated to the clergy of the Church of Ireland**

**drawn up by the Liturgical Advisory Committee**

**March 2011**

*In what follows the intention is not to indicate that the use of oil is in any way being promoted other perhaps than in the context of healing; the intention is simply to ensure that when it is used optionally this is done in a manner that is appropriate and liturgically informed. These guidelines are mainly concerned with public and liturgical worship rather than with what is done more informally*

*There are, traditionally, three oils used at worship.*

*One, the oil of catechumens, has been associated with the making of the sign of the cross on the heads of those to be baptized.*

*Another, the oil of chrism, has been used after baptism as a sign of our incorporation through that sacrament into the prophetic, royal and priestly life of Jesus himself. The third, the oil for the anointing of the sick, is a biblical sign both of healing and forgiveness. Where any or all of these are used, these guidelines may be found to be helpful*

God often chooses the everyday things of life to use as symbols of his grace for all people. By them he makes his presence felt in the world. Oil reminds us of God's endless generosity to us, and the eternal nature of his love. The richness of this symbol of blessing is associated in the New Testament with Jesus Christ, the anointed one, and with the anointing of Christians in the Holy Spirit. As with all symbolic actions, the liturgical use of oil if carried out at all must be performed strongly and abundantly so that the nature of God's action is made known more clearly. It is customary that the oil of chrism – olive oil perfumed with balsam - is always blessed by a bishop. A resource for a chrism Eucharist, where all three oils are often prayerfully prepared, as well as for receiving oils into a parish, is provided in *Common Worship: Times and Seasons*. (p 278) These oils are a reminder of the priestly and royal character of the ministry of *all* the baptised (1 Peter 2.9) and hence the provision for all the people of God to receive anointing as part of the prayer for personal renewal at the Pentecost Eucharist has much to commend it (*Times and Seasons*, p. 493).

**HEALING** – The use of oil in the ministry of healing and laying on of hands is rooted in the most ancient practices of the church. When Jesus sent out the Twelve to share in his mission, they anointed the sick with oil (Mark 6.13) and it was the practice of the first Christians (James 5.14). The 2004 *Book of Common Prayer* provides a framework for anointing with oil (p. 448/9). The sensitive use of this ministry is greatly to be encouraged. The oil used at this service, which should be pure olive oil, may be consecrated – if this has not previously been done for example at the chrism Eucharist – by the bishop or priest who presides. The prayer for sanctifying the oil provided in the Prayer Book can provide a focus of prayerful thanksgiving before the actual anointing.

**BAPTISM** - If (and it is very much an option) the candidate is to be anointed before the act of baptism takes place, pure olive oil should be used, reflecting the practice of athletes preparing for a contest (the oil of catechumens). It is appropriately used at the time of the making of the sign of the cross on the forehead of the candidate.

If anointing takes place after the act of baptism, the oil of chrism should be used as a sign of the

richness of the Holy Spirit (which is referred to in terms of anointing in the New Testament – 1 John 2. 20-27 and II Corinthians 1. 21-22), to echo the scriptural anointing of kings (1 Samuel 16.13), our royal priesthood (1 Peter 2.9) and the seal of the saints (Revelation 7.3). Its relationship with the name 'Christ', the anointed one, is a reminder that each baptism is related to the baptism of Jesus. Anointing with oil should however not obscure the central act of baptism being the dipping of the candidates in water or the pouring of water over them in the name of the Trinity. The anointing is an option which may be helpful to make the meaning of baptism clear –but it adds nothing to the baptism itself. Thus a helpful place to do it may be after the congregation have received and welcomed the new member; the anointing then becomes a further demonstration of the meaning of incorporation into the royal priesthood of the church.

**CONFIRMATION** - If oil is to be used at services of Confirmation (an option the use of which is entirely at the discretion of the bishop with sensitivity to the local situation), it should again be the oil of chrism, used to indicate the sealing of the Holy Spirit and the strengthening of the candidate for service. Here too it should not detract from the central action of prayer with the laying on of hands. The anointing might take place after the Confirmation and before the Commission, but never in such a way as to imply that without it either baptism or confirmation is in any way incomplete.

**ORDINATION** – The Berkeley Consultation on Ordination Liturgy, which was held by the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation and which considerably informed the contents of the revised ordinal in the Irish Prayer Book of 2004, was inclined to the view that anointing at ordination needed very careful consideration and could bring an element of confusion to the rite. Indeed there is a danger that anointing in this context could create an unhelpful sense of separation between the ordained and the other Christians whose ministry derives from their baptism. If a bishop agrees with an ordinand that anointing around the time of ordination may have some particular value, it is suggested that this be done in a devotional context perhaps separate from the ordination service itself. In such a situation, the bishop might consider anointing either the head or the palms of the hands of those to be ordained as priests with chrism. However, these guidelines should not be seen as recommending this practice, or indeed a further anointing of the head of a person being ordained to the episcopate.

It may also be appropriate to consider the use of oil at the Celebration of a New Ministry, as opposed to an actual ordination.