

Church of Scotland

The Presbytery of the South West

Welcome to this Introductory Course on **Becoming a Worship Team Member**

The six modules will cover a range of issues which might arise in your role as a Worship Team Member.

The course is designed for you if, as part of a team, you wish to:

- Deliver prayers in a church service
- Read scripture in church
- Combine elements of worship
- Lead worship
- Explore the leadership role
- any combination of the above

The modules will include:

- Questions for consideration
- Points for discussion
- Guidelines
- Scriptural reflections
- Practical exercises
- Assignments

It is very much a participative and practical course – learning by asking, listening, sharing and doing!

When you have completed the course, we will set aside a date on which you will try out what you have learned in a church building or hall.

Additional Resources

1. The Church of Scotland's website includes some very helpful pages on Worship www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/weekly-worship which include a range of supporting materials for leading worship. Topics include:

- Weekly Worship
- Our books for worship
- Prayer
- Music
- Worship in Scots
- Conversations in Worship
- Ritual and remembrance
- Gaelic Worship Guide

2. The internet contains a wide range of materials for those leading which can be explored – with due caution!

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Module 1

In Module 1 we will think about the following:

- **Reasons for becoming a worship team member**
- **Skills required for the role of worship team member**
- **Some practicalities**
- **Opening words**
- **Closing words**
- **Mind what you say**

Reasons for becoming a worship team member

Deciding to become a worship team member requires:

Reflection

Giving time to reflect on your desire to serve the Church will clarify your motives and identify your skill base for such a role.

Prayer

Prayer is essential. Put to God your thoughts, positive and negative, without reservation. Sharing your hopes and also your doubts will help you to put your ideas into perspective. Listening to God's voice and His calling is a critical step in the process.

Guidance

It may be helpful to discuss your thoughts with friends and family. Your Minister/Interim Moderator is a key point of contact, and their support is essential to participate in this course.

Commitment to serve

The role of the worship team member is one of service – giving your time and talents to the advancement of the Kingdom, which should be our focus.

What reasons might there be for deciding to become a worship team member?

Think about and discuss some reasons given below:

REASONS	POINTS TO CONSIDER
1. My church is in guardianship	<i>How good a reason is this?</i>
2. I believe I have a calling to lead worship	<i>How might this calling be recognised?</i>
3. My aunt is a minister in the Church of Scotland	<i>Should this be an influence on a potential worship team member? If so, in what way?</i>
4. I have time on my hands	<i>Is this a sufficient reason?</i>
5. I am a talented communicator	<i>What does this mean in practice?</i>
6. I relate well to children	<i>How do we know this is the case?</i>
7. I'm retired	<i>Are there advantages or disadvantages in being retired?</i>
8. People in the congregation have encouraged me to take this calling on board.	<i>Is this a valid reason?</i>
9. Theology is a particular interest of mine	<i>How might this help?</i>
10. I like the sound of my own voice	<i>!!!!</i>

Skills required for the role of worship team member
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The Bible speaks about having gifts and talents. It is important to recognise what gifts we have and how they relate to the role of worship team member. In the left column are listed 7 skills which could be associated with leading worship. Share your thoughts on the value of these skills.

SKILLS	POINTS TO CONSIDER
1. An ability to speak clearly and audibly	<i>This may seem to be rather obvious; reflect on the congregation's experience when the sound system fails.</i>
2. Relating well to members of the congregation	<i>What does this mean in practice?</i>
3. Knowledge of the Christian message and Scriptures	<i>How do worship team members seek to be faithful to the Word of God?</i>
4. Confidence to share the Gospel	<i>Does this skill come naturally to us? What challenges might we experience when sharing the Gospel?</i>
5. Awareness of community issues	<i>Give examples of issues of which team members would best be aware</i>
6. Awareness of events	<i>This is about being sensitive to local circumstances, such as bereavements, forthcoming events, seasonal worship etc.</i>
7. An understanding of our contemporary society's post-Christian context	<i>Reflect on the opportunities and challenges facing the Church in being faithful in communicating and living the Gospel</i>

Scriptural reflection – Mark 6:4-6 and Luke 10:1 – 3

Jesus said:

A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home. He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

(Mark 6:4-6)

What do you think that Jesus meant by this saying?.....

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How does it apply to our own roles as worship team members?

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Does it raise any concerns?.....

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In Luke's gospel we read the following:

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves."

(Luke 10:1-3)

In what ways do these verses apply to our contemporary experience?

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In today's world how might we understand 'lambs among wolves'?

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Together we fulfil the commission of Jesus who has promised to be with us:

Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

(Matthew 28:18-20)

Some practicalities

Although we may be very familiar with the space in which worship takes place (church building, hall, primary school etc) it is always important to check a few practical details. Better safe than sorry! Why is each point worthy of consideration? What might go wrong?

1. Audio Visual challenges	<i>This is one of the most common problems for preachers - no batteries, crackling on the speakers, presentations not displaying, audio in video not being heard, key people not present, etc. What do you do?</i>
2. Inadequate heating	<i>Cold worshippers are inattentive worshippers.</i>
3. Opening up	<i>This task is usually carried out by the church officer but if he or she is absent for some reason - who is responsible?</i>
4. Order of service	<i>Who receives the order of service and why?</i>
5. Children present	<i>Perhaps or perhaps not. Do you prepare an address just in case? Can it still be used with an adult-only congregation? What about noisy children during the service?</i>
6. Visitors	<i>How do we acknowledge the presence of visitors?</i>
7. Lighting	<i>Poor lighting can be very frustrating for anyone reading at the front of the church</i>
8. Weather	<i>Bad wintry weather might mean cancellation of the service especially if access to the building is problematic.</i>
9. Blessing	<i>Does the worship team member say 'Amen' or will the musician play a congregational Amen – or will there be an awkward silence after the blessing?!</i>

Opening words

Your opening words – welcome, call to worship, possibly intimations – are important. They set the tone of the service - formal or friendly, scripted or ad-lib; long or short?

Read over the four different openings to morning worship on page 9. Remember that such openings can be very formal or very informal. In the samples given there is a bereavement to announce, a forthcoming Guild meeting, teas and coffees at the end of the service and children in the congregation. How do you respond to each opening?

Do they help to establish a relationship between worship team member and congregation? Are they welcoming? Do they set the right tone?

For each speaker, fill in brief answers in the relevant boxes and discuss.

	Speaker 1	Speaker 2	Speaker 3	Speaker 4
Is there a general welcome and a call to worship?				
How casual or formal is the opening?				
Is the language used accessible?				
Would any visitors feel welcomed?				
Would any children feel welcomed?				
Finally, what impression do you get from the overall delivery?				

Speaker 1:

Good morning, everyone, and a very warm welcome to you all - locals and visitors alike. We are here to worship God in the beauty of holiness and to give to our Lord and Saviour all glory and honour. Before we sing our opening hymn can I share with you the sad news of Meg Thornlie's death on Friday. Meg was a staunch and loyal member of our church for many years and she will be a great loss to us all.

Next Thursday the Guild meeting in the hall is on the subject of origami - with demonstrations! Let us now open our worship by singing together the uplifting hymn 'Thine be the Glory, risen conquering Son'.

Speaker 2:

Hi folks.... good to be with you this morning...glad I made it on time...couldn't clear the windscreen...typical...forgot to buy defrosting spray and had to scrape away thick frost. Anyway....got here at last...so...what next.... oh, yes ...have to let you know of the sad passing of Meg Thornlie...very sad.... thoughts with the family etc... don't forget Guild meeting on Tuesday....all about origami.... whatever that is.... right, let's get going...first hymn is "Thine be the Glory, risen conquering Son." Great hymn.... number 689 in Mission Praise...oh forgot to say...hi kids...good to see you!

Speaker 3:

Morning everyone...I'm afraid it's me taking the service today so please don't walk out! Relax - the minister will be back next week which will be a relief to us all – especially me! I'm sure you've heard of the death of one of our oldest members, Meg Thornlie. Please remember her husband and the whole family in your prayers. No idea about the funeral but will let you know. There's only one intimation this week and that is the Guild meeting on Tuesday at 7.30 in the hall. The subject is 'The Art of Origami' which sounds interesting. And now, the first hymn – 'Thine be the Glory' ...should be coming up on the screen...oops bit of a technical hitch... err... what do we do now?

Speaker 4:

Hi guys! A warm welcome to this act of worship when we meet together to worship God and give him the honour and glory. We give an especially warm welcome to any visitors with us this morning. I can see a new face lurking behind the pillar – don't be shy – we don't bite – at least not often! Please wait behind to share tea or coffee with us in the hall after the service. I think I mentioned the Guild meeting last week. Sorry...I've forgotten the subject. I think that's all I've got to say so let's kick off with our opening hymn - 'Thine be the Glory', 688 in Mission Praise.

Closing words

Church services usually end with a blessing. In many services the blessing is led by the person leading worship. Examples of this can be found on the Church of Scotland Weekly Worship pages. There may be a spoken congregation-led 'grace'. For example:

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

There may also be a sung blessing, see CH4 785-789 as examples. The worship team member may pronounce a blessing with or without a congregationally sung 'Amen/blessing'. There are plenty of examples available on internet sites, however, it is a beneficial experience to reflect on and write your own.

Mind what you say!

This module has highlighted the importance of preparation and saying the right thing. The church service is a 'live' event and does not allow for 're-takes'. We pray and trust that despite our shortcomings God is still able to communicate, and that the congregation be generously understanding, but that is no excuse for inadequate preparation. Read the following statements and decide whether they are acceptable, require some alteration, or are totally out of order!

1. The watchnight service is at 11.15 on Christmas Eve in the church – or is it 11.30?
Can someone help me?
2. I'm sure, like me, most of you were shocked by last Thursday's election results.
3. Frankly, I believe that hyper-Calvinism is a stumbling block for most Christians.
4. Well, children, can anyone tell me which book in the Bible contains the story of David and Goliath?
5. The Bible study group will recommence in the manse. Newcomers are welcome.
6. Paul speaks of the gifts of the Spirit in Galatians chapter 5 verses 22-23.
7. Personally, I'm not too sure how to take the feeding of the 5000.
8. I've never been too keen on the AV – prefer either the RSV or the NIV myself.
9. Let's be honest – we're all getting on a bit. Raise your hand if you're over 70.
10. I don't know if I should say this, but collections have gone down during the last few weeks. Come on, folks, cough up!
11. Children, please don't slam the door on your way out of the church
12. Happy birthday to John who won't see 50 again!
13. Can I say a big thank you to whoever arranged these beautiful flowers.
14. ...and, of course, we all know what young people are like nowadays!

Assignment

Take some time to write out your opening words to a service, inventing any events you wish.

At the next session you will be asked to read out or, if possible, deliver without notes both the opening words and the closing blessing.

Consider:

Pace of delivery

Rattling through does not make for easy listening. This applies to all aspects of the service. Cultivate a steady pace – not too fast but not so slow that your delivery drags. Pauses between sentences will help to separate different items in your welcome. Write out your opening words and note where full stops and commas are placed. They help us to ‘pace’ the delivery and avoid bunching items together.

Tone of voice

This aspect of communicating with worshippers can be overlooked yet it forms a key part of our overall presentation. Reflect on the difference in tone when announcing, for example, a bereavement as opposed to a forthcoming carol service.

Dynamics

Projection and pitch of the voice aid the transmission of our words. For an elderly congregation this can make the difference between hearing every word or missing most of the service. Whilst sound systems are a great help, they can let us down on occasions for one reason or another. If you are unaccustomed to public speaking having a go in the worship venue would be advantageous.

Body language

Body language helps us to communicate. Excessive moving about and hand gestures can be distracting but, used well, they can equally add emphasis to points being made. Facial expressions – e.g., smiling – can convey a message. Avoid habitual movements which are often quite unconscious.

As an initial practice in reading, let us return to the first example on page 9. Read out loud this script paying attention to punctuation, intonation and volume.

Module 2

In Module 2 we will discuss the following:

- **Order of Service**
- **Reading the Bible in Public Worship**

Order of service

There are a number of points worth considering when selecting elements to include in the service. Discuss the following:

Tradition or innovation

What are the advantages of maintaining an order of service with which the congregation are familiar?

Is there value in changing the order of service and/or incorporating new ideas? What might such ideas look like?

Christian Festivals and Significant Dates

How might observance of the Christian festivals - e.g., Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, Advent, Remembrance Sunday - change the order of service? (Holy Communion is conducted by an ordained minister.)

Congregation

How might the age range of the congregation shape the order of service? How might your order of service change if there are young people present?

Length of service

This can be a difficult call. Sometimes elderly folk (as well as younger children – for different reasons) can find a long service a bit tiring. Being sensitive to worshippers' needs demonstrates a thoughtful approach to the management of the service. A related point is estimating the length of hymns, prayers, talk, etc.

Order of Service sheet

Worship leaders can mistakenly miss out an element of a service – which is why it is important to work from an 'aide-memoire'. Some churches share an order of service sheet with the congregation.

Look over the items often included in an act of worship below. Would you change anything after reflecting on the above points? What might you remove, add or change? Devise an order of service and write it out in the boxes below. Be prepared to explain your thoughts. (Fewer or more boxes may be used)

Scriptural Reflection – Mark 4:33

*“With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them,
as much as they could understand.”*

Christ spoke to the people in such a way as they would understand his message – very often through illustrations. The content of a sermon is important, but it depends on effective communication to make an impact. Christ did not use theological language and did not spend a long time in delivering his message.

What can we learn from Christ’s talks to the crowds?

Reflect on and **discuss** the following questions:

- How big were the crowds?
- In what locations did Christ preach? What does this say about our venues and where we seek to meet people today?
- How long did he speak for?
- What kind of language did he use?
- What imagery and illustrations did he use?
- How many points did he put across?

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Reading the Bible in Public Worship

Reading the Bible in public worship is a significant responsibility that requires careful preparation and thoughtful execution. This guide will help you approach this with reverence, clarity, and effectiveness.

Understand the Importance

Spiritual Responsibility: As a reader, you are conveying God's Word to the congregation. It's not just about reading aloud; it's about enabling others to hear and understand the Scripture.

Impact: Your reading can inspire, comfort, challenge, and uplift the congregation. A well-prepared and thoughtful reading helps bring the text to life.

Preparation

Pronunciation: Ensure you can pronounce all words and names correctly. Look up any unfamiliar words or consult your Minister/Interim Moderator, if unsure.

Pacing: Practice reading slowly and clearly. Don't rush through the passage; allow the words to sink in.

Emphasis: Identify key phrases or words that carry significant meaning and practice emphasising them appropriately.

Pauses: Learn where to pause for effect, especially after important statements or transitions between ideas.

Physical Preparation

Check the Setting: Familiarise yourself with the pulpit or lectern. Know where the microphone is and how to adjust it if necessary.

Positioning: Stand comfortably with a good posture. Hold the Bible or script at a comfortable reading distance, ensuring it does not block your face.

Projection: Speak from your diaphragm to project your voice clearly, even if you have a microphone. Ensure your voice reaches the entire congregation.

Spiritual Preparation

Pray: Spend time in prayer before reading. Ask God to guide your reading, to use you as a vessel for God's Word, and to prepare the hearts of the listeners.

Meditate: Reflect on the significance of what you are about to do, but do not fear, God is with you.

Execution

Introduction: Depending on the tradition of your church, you may need to introduce the passage. For example, “Our reading today comes from the Gospel of John, chapter 3, verses 16-18.”

Read with Expression: Convey the emotion and intent of the passage. If the text is comforting, let your tone reflect that. If it’s a warning, let the gravity come through in your voice.

Engage the Congregation: Make eye contact periodically. This helps maintain a connection with your listeners and underscores the importance of the message.

Respect the Sacredness: Handle the Bible with reverence. Treat the moment of reading as a sacred act, aware that you are handling the Word of God.

Post-Reading

Pause Briefly: After finishing, allow a moment of silence before returning to your seat. This gives the congregation time to reflect on the reading.

Close with a Statement (if applicable): In some congregations it is customary to conclude with a statement like, “This is the Word of the Lord,” to which the congregation may respond, “Thanks be to God.”

Ongoing Improvement

Seek Feedback: After the service, ask for feedback from the Minister/Locum or congregation members. They may offer valuable insights that can help you improve.

Reflect: Take time to reflect on the reading experience. What went well? What could be improved? Use these reflections to enhance your future readings.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Monotone Delivery: Avoid reading in a flat, monotonous voice. Scripture is dynamic and full of life; your reading should reflect that.

Rushing: Don’t hurry through the passage. Take your time to ensure clarity and comprehension.

Over-Dramatization: While expression is important, avoid turning the reading into a performance. The goal is to convey the message, not to draw attention to yourself.

Adapting to Different Contexts

Traditional Worship: In this setting the reading might be more formal. Follow the specific protocols and traditions of the congregation.

Contemporary Worship: In contemporary settings, the reading might be more conversational. Adjust your tone and approach accordingly.

Special Services: Weddings, funerals, etc. may require a different tone or emphasis. Be mindful of the occasion's mood and purpose.

Conclusion

With proper preparation and a respectful delivery, you can ensure that the Scripture is honouring to God and communicated effectively and meaningfully to those who hear it.

Take some time to reflect on, discuss, and practice elements of this module.

Notes

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Module 3

In Module 3 we will discuss the following:

- **Talks/Homilies/Sermons**

Talks/Homilies/Sermons

We will use most of our time in this module talking about talks/homilies/sermons which you might deliver. You may find this part of the service the most daunting (excluding the all-age talk!).

Reflect on the following and be willing to share your thoughts:

- What makes a good sermon, and what makes a poor sermon?
- Why do we do this, what is the outcome that is hoped for?

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The difference between the three preaching categories relates mainly to length.

A homily is a short delivery relating to an aspect of the Christian life and is intended to be inspirational in nature. It might last around 5 -10 minutes. (A good example of a homily is Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day'.)

A talk could be longer – but it would still focus on an issue relating to the Christian faith or a contemporary issue.

Sermons should be well prepared and relate to a Biblical passage, having a clear spiritual focus which also relates to the real life of the listeners. A good sermon will form a bridge between the Bible and contemporary life, enabling listeners to grow as disciples of Jesus. A sermon would normally last from 10 – 20 minutes.

The above descriptions are generalisations as, clearly, they share common features. Note that in the modules which follow the word 'sermon' will be used as shorthand for sermon, talk and homily unless there is a need for a distinction to be made.

If the thought of standing up before a congregation to deliver a message for the first time is a little daunting, then the following tips on the following page will be useful.

Speaking on topics – Some suggestions to get us thinking!

12 TIPS	REFLECTIONS FOR DISCUSSION
1. Read the Bible passage several times over. Pause, reflect, and pray.	<i>What is God saying to you in this? How does this relate to the situation and congregation that you are speaking in, and to?</i>
2. If you have access to online or written commentaries on this passage, then refer to this.	<i>What resources do you have? Where can you find trusted resources?</i>
3. Write out your thoughts.	<i>Especially if you are new to this kind of public speaking</i>
4. Decide on length.	<i>The length of your sermon will determine the number of words. This requires preparation!</i>
5. Focus on one simple point – especially in a short homily.	<i>One clear message as part of a short homily will go down well. What kind of message might that be?</i>
6. Practice in advance.	<i>This is essential if you are at all concerned about your timing or delivery. Think about pace and pausing.</i>
7. Speak at a steady pace - audibly but not shouting.	<i>Clarity is key! Remember the hard of hearing.</i>
8. Try it out with a friendly audience.	<i>This can be a family member or a good friend. Ideally, a practice in the actual venue would be best.</i>
9. Share your text with someone experienced in preaching.	<i>This could be your Minister/Interim Moderator/Locum. It does no harm to get a second opinion.</i>
10. Don't expect your experience of preaching to be totally perfect the first time.	<i>In other words – don't engage in self-criticism but recognise your strengths.</i>
11. Ask someone you know for their honest appraisal.	<i>A friendly reaction will boost your confidence</i>
12. Recognise just how well you did and head for a coffee!	<i>Good advice!</i>

If **GREEN** is OK and **RED** is not acceptable and **AMBER** is borderline, how would you label the themes below and for what reasons? Not always easy!!

SUGGESTED SUBJECTS	R G A		R G A
Confidence in the Lord as displayed by David in his confrontation with Goliath.		The value of the NHS.	
The importance of Fair Trade using the feeding of the 5000 as a reference.		The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.	
The scandal of nuclear weapons on our soil.		Supporting a local appeal for an early years learning centre.	
The apostles performed miracles – why not us?		The Bible as the Word of God.	
Christmas has become an excuse for indulgence.		Seeking God's guidance and reflection using Gideon's experience.	
The Biblical message of respect for the environment.		The power of prayer.	
The parable of the Good Samaritan		Why the Church should support the Green Movement.	
The fruit of the Spirit.		Our need to be bold in our faith like the prophets of old.	
The need to support the political party closest to our Christian faith.		My spiritual pilgrimage.	
The existence of angels.		Are there aliens somewhere in the universe?	
What we learn from Jonah's experience.		Our Church has lost its way.	

Sources of inspiration!

Ideas for leading worship don't always come easily but reflecting on a range of possibilities will hopefully lead to inspiration. Below is a list of possible sources to spark off ideas for your sermon:

- The Revised Common Lectionary (RCL)
- The Narrative Lectionary (NL)

Both these resources lead congregations through the Bible. The Revised Common Lectionary is used by many who lead worship in the Church of Scotland and is three-year cycle leading congregations through the liturgical year. The NL is a four-year cycle of Bible readings that follow the biblical story from the beginning through to the early Christian church.

If you are leading worship in a congregation that has different worship leaders every week then it can be helpful for the congregation to follow one of these lectionaries as it brings structure and avoids repetition. For more information on the lectionaries visit the Vanderbilt Divinity Library at <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/> (for RCL) and the Lutheran Seminary at www.workingpreacher.org (for RCL and NL)

Other sources:

- Personal experience
- A biblical text that has particularly been speaking to you and you want to share
- A Christian festival
- Issue of social concern
- A Christian doctrine
- A worship series focusing on
 - The fruit of the Spirit
 - The gifts of the Spirit
 - The beatitudes
 - The parables of Jesus
 - The witness of the Church
 - A character from Scriptures
 - Prayer

There are, of course, many other possibilities. Once you have decided on the Bible passage/subject of your sermon your next task is to do a bit of thinking – backed by prayer.

- Where is God leading you?
- What ideas spring to your mind?
- What Scripture readings do you think would be relevant?
- Where is your church in their witness to the community?
- Are there national issues which need to be addressed?
- How will the good news be presented in your sermon?

You might wish to jot down a few thoughts well in advance of the service. Ideas can develop or be replaced as time passes but don't leave this planning process too late. However, we all think in different ways and the following is offered as a possible pattern, on the understanding that it will not work best for everyone.

Suggestion for shaping a homily/talk/sermon

- Starting with the Bible passage, can you identify a main theme? This is the Big Idea that you seek to convey. *Try putting this into one line so that it is memorable and provides focus for your preparation/delivery*
- What problem(s) can you identify in the text that God is seeking to address?
- Where is the grace of God at work in the text?
- What and where are there similar problem(s) today?
- Where is the grace of God at work today?
- Communicate this in a way that is faithful and resonates with the congregation.

Do you have another preferred way to explore a Bible passage/theme? Please reflect on this and be willing to share.

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EXEMPLAR 1 – The Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37

Let us think of the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example of sermon planning. Read the passage over several times, reflect on the passage, pray about the passage listening for God. Where is God nudging/moving? What might God seek to convey in and through you today? Contemplate and take notes which shall help you find the Big Idea to convey in your homily/talk/sermon.

Bible Reading

The Bible version you use is likely to be the version with which your congregation is familiar. However, you may wish to branch out and choose a version which you feel is more accessible in terms of language and expression. For example, you may feel that ‘The Message’ conveys the meaning more vividly than other versions; or if your congregation includes Scots speakers then you may opt for the parable in Scots. Different Bible versions can also assist in revealing meanings and nuances in the text that are not so prevalent in others.

Ideas

Once you have decided on the “Big Idea” of your sermon, allow your mind to run free with relevant thoughts and ideas which might form the content of your sermon. You might wish to jot down ideas which arise and which, in due course, will come together to form your sermon.

Imagine that you take ‘our neighbours’ as the focus of your sermon. Questions and ideas which might occur to you could include:

Neighbours?...our actual neighbours...those in need...family members...fellow church members...those we don't get on with...asylum seekers...young people.... elderly people...those with a different ethnic identity ... foreigners...homeless people ... drug addicts ... alcoholics ... those with a different sexual identity ... prisoners, etc.

How do we express neighbourliness? Praying...giving visiting... phoning...writing...chatting...working for a charity...gardening...baby-sitting...shopping...etc

What should motivate neighbourly actions?

Following Christ's instruction...filling our spare time...financial reward... compassion towards others...responding to our social conscience...hearing God's voice in our lives...etc

Illustrations...personal experiences...events...

Biblical references and examples...Good Samaritan...Old Testament examples of neighbourliness...Ruth and others

Once you have given thought and prayer to your Big Idea and come up with a host of possible ways to develop this, it's time to put your ideas into some sort of shape and structure. Key points to consider:

- Length of sermon
- Additional Biblical references
- Illustrations

EXEMPLAR 2

Now try some inspired thinking of your own. Let's think of another parable – The Prodigal Son. Write down or share ideas that could arise from this parable. A few are given as starters

ambitious son...gracious father...resentful brother... loving God...
repentance...reconciliation... and others

Let's reflect on the direction you might take. What is the Big Idea you wish to put across? Given the fact that there are probably millions of sermons devoted to Jesus' parables, it is unlikely that we will come up with new ideas – but that is of no consequence given the fact that our intention is to put across age-old truths which bear repetition. And while the truth remains the same, the time and place of the sharing of it changes, and so we seek ways to engage people where they are in the everyday reality of their lives.

What might be a Big Idea to put across in a sermon centring on the Parable of the Prodigal Son?

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What problem(s) can you identify in the text that Jesus was seeking to address?

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Where is the grace of God at work in the text?

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What and where are there similar problem(s) today?

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Where is the grace of God at work today?

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Are there illustrations that come to mind that help you introduce your Big Idea? Express our current situation, problems, and the grace of God today?

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This is a practical and straightforward exercise for those putting together sermons for the first time. **Alternative models can be adopted** but initially you may find it helpful to formulate sermons around this basic structure.

EXEMPLAR 3

We are all familiar with the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) but how might they feature in a sermon?

Once again, we could bring together ideas sparked off by the commandments. We could begin by asking ourselves a few basic questions.

- Would it be better to focus on a limited number of commandments or to address them as a whole?
- What was the purpose of the commandments?
- How do they fit into the early history of Israel?
- Are they relevant to today's world?
- How did Christ transform our thinking about Old Testament laws and regulations?

This is where commentaries and internet searches can provide the worship team member with ideas and insights – though caution is required with some sites. Once again, there needs to be a structure to the sermon. For example:

Problem then: Israel was not living in accordance with God's ways.

God's grace then: God gave the 10 commandments to guide Israel into how to live lives that were wholesome and holy; to bind Israel together as one; to enable Israel to reflect God's glory and draw others to know and worship the one true God through their witness.

Problem now: We live in a post-Christian context where many people (including in our congregations) do whatever makes them feel happy, good etc. However, this is often not wholesome and holy and tends to damage us, and tears at the fabric of society through individualism, putting selfishness before God and others.

God's grace now: Jesus summed up the commandments in "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind". He then adds, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these". God writes these commandments on our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit enabling us to live and grow as disciples of Jesus and be distinctive lights to and for our neighbours.

EXEMPLAR 4

A common subject for sermons is the miraculous acts of Jesus. Choose a miracle and reflect on its impact on: the crowds, the cured person, and the religious authorities.

Consider, for example, the curing of the blind man in John 9. This is a rich source for sermon messages: e.g. physical and spiritual blindness, revelation, responses, fear of rejection, and encountering God. We could reflect on modern attitudes towards Jesus and opposition to his Word. We could ask whether we would have felt intimidated by the Pharisees if we had been a member of the blind man's family. We could speculate on the reasons behind the hostility of the religious leaders. An important point to note is that less is more – in other words identify the content and direction of your sermon and limit them to a few key points.

How would you wish to convey the powerful message inherent in this account of a miraculous event?

Problem then

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God's grace then

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Problem now

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God's grace now

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The purpose of offering 4 exemplars above is to help you to focus on the important elements of content and structure. However you develop the direction of your sermon, it is essential that the worshippers are able to follow your thinking; a logical framework can only support this intention.

A Final Checklist

Remember to ask yourself:

- What is God seeking to convey then and now in this Bible passage?
- What is the Big Idea? Put this into memorable words.
- How do I weave this into my sermon?
- Where is the problem then and now?
- Where is the grace of God then and now?
- Have I enhanced my sermon with appropriate illustrations?
- Is this the right sermon for this group of people at this time and place?
- Is my language understandable?
- How long will it last? Have I timed myself?
- Will I type it out word for word?
- Are there any visual images that particularly assist in communicating your point?
- Will I use headings and bullet points?
- How will I gain the congregation's attention at the start?
- How do I end my sermon?

Finally, there is nothing better than doing a practice run – in front of a sympathetic but positively critical audience.

Assignment

For our next get together

Plan a five-minute talk on a theme/Bible passage of your choosing that you would use in worship in your own congregation and come ready to share:

- Explain why you chose that theme/Bible passage
- What's the Big Idea
- Where are the problems in the text
- Where is the grace of God evident in the text
- Where are the problems today
- Where is the grace of God operating today
- How you prepared for creating it and delivering it
- Why it speaks to the community you are addressing
- What resources you used

Module 4

Before we start – be prepared to share from your assignment from the last module.

In Module 4 we will discuss the following:

- **Children and Young People**

Children and Young People

We are living through changing times and the days of large numbers of children attending Sunday worship are, in general, past. However, that perhaps makes it more incumbent upon us to develop ways in which to enhance children's experience of Church. Reflect on and discuss the following considerations:

Age range

It is all too easy to slip into words and even concepts beyond the understanding of some youngsters. This is a particular concern when ages range from three to the teenage years.

- At what level should a talk be pitched? How might we bridge the gap between the ages?

Message

It is important to be clear about what we are endeavouring to share with our younger worshippers – a parable, a word of encouragement, an activity, Christian action?

- Think of a simple message which might be suitable for all ages – including adults!
- Internet sites such as www.sermons4kids.com can be a helpful starting place – but please make sure it is contextually relevant to your congregation.

Participation

Involving children and young people in the all-age talk can be both fruitful and problematic. The younger the age group, the more keen they are to become involved. Question and answers are the most common practice but acting out a part is always an attractive option. The danger is that the participation can sometimes mask the message. Balance is required! Above all, the experience must be enjoyable and engaging.

- Give an example of how a child/children might be actively involved in your address.

Visual aids

Displaying an object can often spark an interest amongst youngsters when words may fail.

Length

It is all too easy to over-run. It is best, especially the first few times, to rehearse your presentation at home. Children's responses are unpredictable and can lengthen the time unexpectedly!

- If the average length of your church service is around 60 minutes, how long might you devote to an all age talk?
- Consider other ways of making children and young people part of morning worship - apart from the traditional all age talk.

Health and Safety

This may not, at first sight, appear to be a matter of critical importance. However, if any physical activity is involved then the possibility of bumping, tripping or slipping should be assessed. Also, allergic reactions to edibles may be a matter of concern.

Exemplar

Read the following transcript of an all age talk and reflect on what you might want to change or retain or improve.

Good morning children

How are you all this morning? I've got something here in my pocket to show you – a packet of chocolate buttons. Who likes chocolate? Yes, we all like chocolate, but do you know where chocolate comes from?It comes from places which are much warmer than Scotland, for example, Africa. Cocoa comes from the cocoa pod. Does anyone know how big a cocoa pod is?.....It's about the size and shape of a rugby ball and inside the pod, are stored the cocoa beans which are used in the manufacture of cocoa. Cocoa gives us the chocolate bars which we enjoy.

So, who is responsible for getting chocolate to our shops? Anyone got any ideas?... The growers, the harvesters, the transporters the producers. the packers and the shopkeepers. Can anyone think of someone else without whom we could not have chocolate What about the wonderful world created by God. God gave us the soil, the water and the sun to allow plants to grow, including cocoa trees. So, the next time you munch into a chocolate bar, remember all those involved in bringing it to you – including the creator of planet earth.

Now, who would like a chocolate button?

How would you assess this talk using the categories listed above and in question form below? Consider positives and negatives.

Age range

Would children of any age benefit from the talk?

Message:

Was the message clear?

Participation

Was there productive participation by the youngsters?

Visual aids

Was there a helpful use of visual aids?

Length

Was the talk the right length?

Health and Safety

Were there any health and safety issues?

Singing

A great way to brighten up an all-age talk is through leading a song/chorus (maybe one with actions), which frequently goes down well with people across the ages. Some hymnaries include a section of children and young people's hymns or praise songs. It may, however, be necessary to research a broader range of resources to fill any gaps in your own hymnary. The key aim is to engage children in the act of worship.

Discuss: Would low numbers of children be a problem in relation to children singing in church?

Praying with children

Praying will be more successful if an age-appropriate prayer is prepared. Such prayers should be:

- i) not too long
 - ii) relevant to children's daily lives and needs
 - iii) bereft of 'churchy' language
 - iv) easy to follow
- and, where possible,
- v) incorporate responses and participation

Above all, we should endeavour to keep children and young people engaged with the act of prayer and not put off by what is a core element of communal worship. Whilst prayer is not an entertainment it should be accessible and comprehensible.

Scriptural reflection – Matthew 19:13-15

Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

What does this powerful message tell us about how we should understand our obligations towards children? What does Jesus mean by ‘*the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these*’. Note the request for prayer.

Assignment

For the next session:

Prepare a short children’s address lasting no longer than 10 minutes. Be as imaginative as you wish, but bear in mind key points as listed above. Be prepared to present to your colleagues!

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Module 5

Before we start – be prepared to share from your assignment from the last module.

In Module 5 we will discuss the following:

- **Hymns and Praise Songs**
- **Prayers**
- **Choice of Readings**

Scriptural reflection – Ephesians 5:19

Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,

Traditionally singing hymns, psalms and praise songs form a key part of Christian worship. They are encouraged in both testaments of Scriptures and represent a vibrant expression of worship. How important is music in our Christian experience?

Hymns and Praise Songs

Points to consider in your choice of hymns:

Hymn Book

You will probably wish to use the hymn book most familiar to your church, though the introduction of new praise songs is perfectly acceptable and would be well received – especially if you have musical skills yourself. Otherwise, engaging the services of someone who could introduce new melodies would be beneficial.

Discuss:

How easy is it to introduce new hymns/songs to your congregation?

Are there any challenges?

Number of Verses

Generally, this is not a problem though it is important to factor the length of each hymn into the length of the service as a whole. Another point to remember is the standing time required for longer hymns; this is a consideration for an elderly congregation who may find standing for a long period quite stressful. Some may prefer to be seated for longer hymns. The option of reducing the number of verses of longer hymns is one solution though you will find worshippers who like to sing all verses. Alternatively, making sure that people are aware that it is OK to remain seated during singing, is another way of addressing this.

Discuss:

Can some hymns last too long? Is it OK to sit to sing?

Relation to sermon

Ideally, your choice of hymns should reflect to some extent the content of your sermon BUT this is not a golden rule. To attach certain hymns to sermon themes may be partially achieved but it is unlikely there will be a 'perfect fit'. The music edition of CH4 provides helpful appendices making suggestions for hymns according to theme and Bible passage. The Church of Scotland Weekly Worship also offers suggestions (usually based on the Revised Common Lectionary readings for that week). The alternative – a broad selection of hymns – is quite acceptable.

Discuss: How easy or difficult would you find relating hymns to sermon content?

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Seasonal music

In many ways choosing seasonal hymns is relatively straightforward. Again, some hymnaries (e.g., CH4) include seasonal hymns in the contents page. It is worthwhile listening to preferences from the congregation on such occasions. If you have a number of people leading worship over a month, try where possible to choose different hymns each week to avoid congregational repetition.

Discuss: Christmas carols are obvious choices in December but what about harvest thanksgiving hymns, hymns for Pentecost, Advent, Easter and Remembrance Sunday?

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Emotional content

This may not immediately appear to be a significant aspect of hymn-singing; however, hymns and praise songs can convey emotional overtones. For example, 'rejoicing' (Praise my soul the King of heaven); reflection (The day thou gavest Lord is ended); 'enthusiasm' (Make way, make way for the King of Kings); encouragement (We are marching in the light of God); victory (Thine be the glory).

It is worthwhile reflecting on the balance of hymns in terms of their emotional tenor.

Discuss: How important do you think 'joyful' hymns are in a service?.....

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Musical pitch

The range of some hymns can be quite daunting. We cannot assume that our congregations are all familiar with 4-part harmonies! They may find higher or lower pitched notes difficult to reach. Be aware of hymns which hit very high or very low notes.

Discuss: Does this problem affect the pleasure of singing?.....

Trinitarian focus

Hymns may focus on God the Creator, the Son and the Holy Spirit - all three - or individually. Choices may be relevant to the content of your sermon.

Discuss: How important do you think this theological observation is?.....

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In conclusion:

- Don't be afraid of introducing hymns and songs outwith the congregation's previous experience. This will go down well with younger folks. Be bold!
- Remember the verse quoted above (Ephesians 5.19) and reflect on the phrase 'from your heart'. Hymn singing can raise our spirits in a way which is different from doctrinal statements. It can energise us, motivate us and bring us closer to an understanding of the glory of God

Prayers

Before we consider the subject of prayer, we should think about how we call congregations to prayer. In essence, this requires only a simple invitation. For example:

Let us worship God through our opening prayer of adoration and confession

or

Let us offer to God our prayer of intercession, our prayer for ourselves and others.

What is important is that the congregation is fully aware of the fact that you are about to pray. Worshippers need to be guided through the service in an orderly manner.

Traditionally, there are two main prayers within the Church of Scotland service: adoration/confession and intercession.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

The acronym ACTS is often used to ensure that key elements of the opening prayer are covered.

A stands for Adoration.

The opening part of the initial prayer acknowledges the nature of God – the One to whom all our petitions are directed. For example:

Lord God, we approach you as the source of all truth and wisdom, who guides and guards us through the daily challenges of life. You are the Lord of all creation and it is to you that we draw our spiritual strength.

or

Lord God, you sent your Son to lighten up our pathways of life. He is the way, truth and life and saves us from our faults and failings. Help us to follow His way and to act as positive witnesses to the gospel.

or *Lord God, our Father and Friend – to whom we submit all our requests and with whom we share all our concerns. Help us to hear your voice and to enter into dialogue with you in order to respond to the urgings of the Spirit,*

These opening statements do not need to be long and wordy. It is best to avoid language which is incomprehensible to the worshipper in the pew. The important point is to make it clear that we, as Christians, are addressing God as revealed in the scriptures and not some 'universal impersonal force' detached from our daily lives. There are plenty of internet resources for worship (see Weekly Worship - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/weekly-worship>) which include ideas relating to each part of the opening prayer.

C stands for Confession

In this part of the prayer, we open our hearts to God in confession. Clearly, this is not related to any personal shortcomings but rather to ways in which we, corporately - as a Church, a community, a nation – have fallen short of the standards of behaviour sanctioned by the teachings of Jesus. This may include failure to respond to the needs of those in poverty, loneliness, ill health or emotional distress. It may include admission of our despoiling of God's creation. It may include ways in which we have turned a blind eye to unacceptable living conditions. It may include our failure to witness to the Faith amongst our friends, colleagues and friends.

T stands for Thanksgiving

We have much to thank God for. We should remember the blessing of God's revelation in the life of Jesus. The values we endeavour to live by have their source in God's Word – the Scriptures. We thank God for the beauties of creation and the wonders of science; we remember the service of men and women who have worked tirelessly to improve the living conditions of those in straitened circumstances; we can thank God for His servants who preach the gospel and bring hope to the lives of those living in darkness. The list is endless. Can you identify other areas for thanksgiving?

S stands for Supplication

It may seem that supplication and intercession are virtually the same type of prayer. They certainly overlap in the sense that they are both requests to God for help and support. One could make the distinction that supplication leans towards requests for ourselves whilst intercessory prayers focus on the needs of others. For example, we might pray, in supplication:

Lord God, help us to hear your voice in the midst of many voices. Give us the wisdom to make good decisions in our dealings with others. Show us the right paths to take and give us the courage to stand up for the truth of the gospel.

In this example of supplication, the emphasis is on our own spiritual needs. An intercessory prayer, as we shall see below, focusses on the needs of others.

The Intercessory Prayer

This prayer, delivered at a separate point in the service, has a clear focus on the needs of others, locally, nationally and further afield. It is, of course, impossible to include all needs of all people in a single prayer.

The Wider world

Refugees
Health and medical care
Education
Protection from danger
Freedom from hunger
Security

Our own country

Local and national government
The royal family
The media
Arts and sciences
Our community
NHS
Schools
Social services
Armed services

Those in need

Unemployed
Lonely
Bereaved
Homeless
Sick and suffering
Children and young people
Elderly
Asylum seekers
Substance and alcohol users

Church – local and national

Minister
Ministry Team
Mission Pioneers
New Worshiping Communities
Kirk Session and boards
Parish
Presbytery
General Assembly
Christian outreach
The Guild

These suggestions are, of course, not exhaustive but are offered as pointers to concerns regarding the welfare of others. It would be near impossible (and undesirable) to include all the above items. Your intercessory prayer will be shaped by local circumstances and concerns, and your own personal insights. Can you think of other needs which could be added to the lists above?

At the very heart of our faith is the injunction from Christ to 'love our neighbour'. There are many 'neighbours' across the world and locally and it is incumbent upon us to focus our intercessory prayers on them.

Remember, in the intercessory prayer:

- Don't deliver a long prayer listing everything (Matthew 6 verse 7)
- Avoid overly 'churchy' language
- Focus on one area of need in each section – e.g., the poorest, international issues etc
- Avoid personal references, unless specifically requested by individuals concerned
- No party-politics
- Pray for the Minister/Locum/OLM and her/his family

Prayers with responses

Prayers can include responses. These are prayers in which the speaker delivers a statement – one-liner or longer – and the congregation 'responds' with a simple line. For example:

Speaker: *Lord God, we approach you as our guide and guardian in all we do.*

Response: *Lord God, hear our prayer.*

Speaker: *Protect us from evil and strengthen our spirit in times of trouble.*

Response: *Lord God, hear our prayer, etc...*

Such prayers are more common in Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions. They have the merit of encouraging worshippers to be engaged in prayer.

Some General Observations On Praying In Church

Reading or Ex-tempore

This applies to all forms of prayer. If you are new to public speaking it is by far the best policy to prepare a written text in advance. In this way, you will ensure the inclusion of key points in your delivery. Experienced preachers are often able to speak without (or with minimal) notes. For the novice this would be a high wire act!

Pace and Pausing

As with readings, pay attention to 'pace and pausing' in your delivery. In other words, don't rattle through the prayer but rather be sensitive to the content, allowing time for the listeners to absorb what is being said. This may call for short pauses to give some stress to key points. Punctuation always acts as an essential guide.

Intonation

Reading in a monotonous tone does not help the congregation to concentrate on the content of prayers.

Lord's Prayer

At some point in the service, it will be necessary to announce the Lord's Prayer. It usually occurs at the end of either of the two main prayers. Churches vary in this practice. What is important is that worshippers know when to join you in reciting the Lord's Prayer. A simple introduction should suffice. For example:

"...and in the words of our Lord Jesus we will say together the Lord's Prayer. Our Father ..."

- Although we are all familiar with the words of the Lord's Prayer, it would be advisable to have the words written out in front of you. It is surprising how easily a line can be 'missed out when not read.
- Practise reading the prayer out loud, noting where you might pause. The Lord's Prayer has its own rhythm which should be respected.
- Whilst you are reading the prayer, take care to listen to the congregation and the pace of their delivery. Although you might expect the congregation to echo your own delivery, you may find that they will slow up slightly! Avoid going ahead too quickly.
- The version used will probably be the one with which your church is most familiar. Until recently, the traditional AV version was the only version used.

Many congregations rather like this familiar form, but would these words be comprehensible to the average man and woman in the street? Could you think of ways to simplify the language of this traditional version? What would you change?

Read the sample version of an intercessory prayer given on the following page.

- Would you change anything in this prayer?
- Is the language readily comprehensible?
- Are there doctrinal expressions which might not be understood?
- A balance has to be struck between length and content. Has this been achieved or are there issues which should have been included?
- The prayer is clearly divided into sections, each of which encapsulates a different focus. How would you reflect this in your reading?

Lord God,

We bring before you our prayers for ourselves and others both here and further afield. The victory of the resurrection gives us hope for change and renewal. The power of the gospel is the source of all change and transformation in our lives. Help us to focus on a vision of a world renewed and redeemed through the self-sacrifice of Jesus and the bringing of new life into our lives.

We remember in our prayers those people who are caught up in violent conflicts and disputes which are unresolved. Where there is disharmony, Lord, we seek peace and reconciliation. Where there are discord and resentment, we seek understanding and respect

We remember in our prayers those close to home who need our special care. We pray for our children and young people as they grow up in a challenging and demanding world.

We remember those who are unwell at this time, and we pray for healing and recovery

Be with, Lord, those who are suffering from psychological and emotional distress, and who seek comfort and restoration to mental health.

Lord God, we think especially of those who have recently lost a loved one and whose lives are filled with a sense of loneliness and isolation. May they be comforted, supported and strengthened at this distressing time.

We ask for your blessing on the King and the Royal Family. We pray for the leaders of our nations that they may reach decisions of your will.

We pray for the church here in and give thanks for those who commit themselves to its spiritual growth and welfare. We ask you to be with the minister as he/she shares fellowship with your people in this place. We pray for our national church and ask that you will guide those charged with renewal of its structures.

May we hold fast to the good news of the resurrection with its promise of hope for the future in the face of the challenges of today.

Lord God, guide us, guard us and protect us as we go about our daily lives, today and in the coming week till we meet again.

*We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray saying:
Our Father...*

Your comments

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Dedication of the offering

This would normally be done as the offering is brought forward to the communion table though different churches have different practices and it may be more appropriate to incorporate thanks for the collection into one of the main prayers. Wherever it occurs, the wording is always that of gratitude and blessing. For example:

We thank you, Lord God, for these offerings dedicated to the work of the Church. May they be blessed for both practical and spiritual purposes, to further the work of your Kingdom here on earth.

Whatever form of wording you choose, avoid the danger of rushing through what can become an all too familiar set of words. Note, for example, the commas and full stop in the dedication above which will control the pace of the delivery. Could it be simplified by using more accessible language and phrasing?

Language in prayers and sermons

This is a thorny issue for some members of our congregations. There are some people who rather like the Elizabethan language of Shakespeare as reflected in the Authorised Version of the Bible. It is fair to say, that most preachers today use more modern versions of scriptures such as the New International Version. However, we often resort to theological language which is out of the reach of the average member – not to mention the public at large!

Consider the following words: thou, thine, thy, grant, bestow, redeem, sin, repentance, saviour - and many others.

What about expressions which are sometimes used in prayers and sermons? Could the following be expressed differently and more clearly?

- *Thy mercies abound*
- *Grant us the wisdom to discern Thy will for our lives*
- *Thou hast redeemed us from our sins*
- *May we rejoice in songs of praise*
- *We have been washed in the blood of the Lamb*
- *We acknowledge our shortcomings at the foot of Thy throne*
- *Hallowed be Thy name*
- *Jesus saves*
- *We lift up our hearts to worship the King*

Scriptural Reflection

Think about the teachings of Jesus. How difficult are they to understand? Did Jesus use language beyond the understanding of his listeners?

Read Matthew 6 verses 5-13. What can we learn about prayer from these verses?

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Readings

The choice of reading(s) will, clearly relate to the themes of your sermon. Services often include a reading from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament though this is not compulsory. It is up to you to choose passages which will act as the main source for your sermon.

Guidelines for reading out loud have already been discussed but particular care should be taken with Scripture readings. You may want to consider carefully the version to be used as some versions are closer to modern English than others; such as the Good News Bible, New International Version, the Message, or the poetic older English which can be found in the Authorised Version.

In conclusion:

Assignment for Module 5

How would you feel about presenting elements of a service - challenging? exciting? daunting?

Now is your chance to try out one or more elements of the service. Choose from the list below what you would prefer to do. In other words, whilst you may not feel able at this stage to deliver a sermon, you might feel confident about choosing some other elements as given below.

Discuss your preferences with your tutor. Allow yourself to be challenged and moved from your comfort zone!

- welcome
- prayer(s)
- sermon/short talk
- scriptural reading(s)
- blessing

