



Episcopal Diocese of Ohio

Worship Leader

Training Guide

Book of Common Prayer

The Ministry (BCP The Catechism page 855)

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.

Q. What is the ministry of the laity?

A. The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

Q. What is the duty of all Christians?

A. The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God.

Prayer and Worship (BCP The Catechism page 856ff.)

Q. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words.

Q. What is Christian Prayer?

A. Christian prayer is response to God the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Q. What prayer did Christ teach us?

A. Our Lord gave us the example of prayer known as the Lord's Prayer.

Q. What are the principal kinds of prayer?

A. The principal kinds of prayer are adoration, praise, thanksgiving, penitence, oblation, intercession, and petition.

Q. What is adoration?

A. Adoration is the lifting up of the heart and mind to God, asking nothing but to enjoy God's presence.

Q. Why do we praise God?

A. We praise God, not to obtain anything, but because God's Being draws praise from us.

Q. For what do we offer thanksgiving?

A. Thanksgiving is offered to God for all the blessings of this life, for our redemption, and for whatever draws us closer to God.

Q. What is penitence?

A. In penitence, we confess our sins and make restitution where possible, with the intention to amend our lives.

Q. What is prayer of oblation?

A. Oblation is an offering of ourselves, our lives and labors, in union with Christ, for the purposes of God.

Q. What are intercession and petition?

A. Intercession brings before God the needs of others; in petition, we present our own needs, that God's will may be done.

Q. What is corporate worship?

A. In corporate worship, we unite ourselves with others to acknowledge the holiness of God, to hear God's Word, to offer prayer, and to celebrate the sacraments.

*"Come, let us sing to the LORD; Let us shout
for joy to the Rock of our salvation. Let us
come before his presence with thanksgiving
And raise a loud shout to him with psalms."*

PSALM 95



Constitution and Canons

Adopted in General Conventions 1789–2024.

Revised by the 81st General Convention 2024

Title III: Ministry

Canon 1: Of the Ministry of All Baptized Persons

Sec. 1.

Responsibility of Diocese

Each Diocese shall make provision for the affirmation and development of the ministry of all baptized persons, including:

- a. Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to minister in Christ's name, to identify their gifts with the help of the Church and to serve Christ's mission at all times and in all places.
- b. Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to sustain their ministries through commitment to life-long Christian formation.

Canon 4: Of Licensed Ministries

Sec. 1.

Selection and license

- a. A confirmed communicant in good standing or, in extraordinary circumstances, subject to guidelines established by the Bishop, a communicant in good standing, may be licensed by the Ecclesiastical Authority to serve as Pastoral Leader, Worship Leader, Preacher, Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor, Evangelist, or Catechist. Requirements and guidelines for the selection, training, continuing education, and deployment of such persons, and the duration of licenses shall be established by the Bishop in consultation with the Commission on Ministry.

Sec. 2.

Terms

- a. The Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith may request the Ecclesiastical Authority with jurisdiction to license persons within that congregation or other community of faith to exercise such ministries. The license shall be issued for a period of time to be determined under [Canon III.4.1.a](#) and may be renewed. The license may be revoked by the Ecclesiastical Authority upon request of or upon notice to the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

Renewal

- b. In renewing the license, the Ecclesiastical Authority shall consider the performance of the ministry by the person licensed, continuing education in the licensed area, and the endorsement of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith in which the person is serving.
- c. A person licensed in any Diocese under the provisions of this Canon may serve in another congregation or other community of faith in the same or another diocese only at the invitation of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight, and with the consent of the Ecclesiastical authority in whose jurisdiction the service will occur.

Sec. 4.

Worship Leader

A Worship Leader is a lay person who regularly leads public worship under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

Diocese of Ohio Requirements for Worship Leader

A Worship Leader is a member of the faith community (parish) who has been licensed by the Diocesan Bishop to officiate at public services in his or her community, which do not require clergy to celebrate/officiate (i.e., services which do not include a sacrament which only ordained people may celebrate). A Worship Leader may lead: regularly scheduled daily offices (Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline), an emergency daily office in place of a planned Eucharist, a daily office when it precedes a Eucharist, and in extreme cases, the burial office. The ministry of a Worship Leader is primarily liturgical, though the development of pastoral sensibilities enhance this role.

The responsibilities of the Worship Leader will vary according to local custom. In most cases, the Worship Leader is responsible for planning the service, conducting the service, and reporting the service. It is the responsibility of the Worship Leader to work closely with others involved in the service, e.g., musicians, readers, ushers, and to make sure that the worship space is in proper order.

Requirements:

- ✓ Confirmed or Received Communicant in good standing in The Episcopal Church
- ✓ Currently an active member of their faith community
- ✓ Approval by the parish clergy
- ✓ Have met and completed the required training as set forth by the Diocese of Ohio (renewal every three years)
- ✓ Safe Church Certified (renewal every three years)
- ✓ Received Anti-Racism Training (if available)
- ✓ A license signed by the Diocesan Bishop, allowing the Worship Leader to serve only in their own congregation for which the license was granted

Are you being called to be a Worship Leader?

At the core of serving as a Worship Leader is your own relationship with God and how you live out that relationship on a daily basis, and how this relationship is made evident through your interactions with other people with whom you come into contact. Below are some important points to consider while discerning a call to this ministry:

- Spiritual disciplines that feed your life
- Participation in weekly worship
- Personal prayer routine
- Seeing Christ in others

Review “Commissioning for Lay Ministries in the Church” beginning on pages 179-181, and 189-191, in *The Book of Occasional Services*, 2003.

1. What draws you to this ministry?

2. What are the gifts you bring to this ministry? What might challenge you?

Gifts

Challenges

History of the Daily Office

With respect to the worship of the church, the term *office* traces its meaning to the Latin *officium* meaning “duty.” It was the Christian’s daily, even hourly, duty to pray. The earliest offices trace their origin to ancient Judaism where the day “was marked in the temple at Jerusalem with morning and evening sacrifices and with services of psalms and prayers at 9 A.M. and 3 P.M. Devout Jews also marked the times of the day with private prayers, ‘in the evening, in the morning, and at noonday’ (Ps. 55:18).” (Commentary on the American Prayer Book, Marion J. Hatchett, p. 89.)

By the second century some Christian communities marked the day liturgically with public services of morning and evening prayer. Both clergy and laity were expected to attend, and if not, to mark these times at home with personal prayer and scripture study. In addition to these public services or private devotions, the third, sixth, and ninth hours (9 A.M., 12 Noon, and 3 P.M.) were marked by private prayer. They marked the divisions of the Roman day, and “these times were linked to the events of the Passion. The third hour was also associated with the descent of the Spirit. Two other times were added to these, midnight and cockcrow. Midnight celebrated the praise of God by all creation and the expectation of Christ’s return. Cockcrow was associated with the denial of Christ and the hope of resurrection.” (Hatchett, p. 90.)

Over time, the offices became more formalized and removed from the laity. By the time of the Middle Ages, it was the duty of clergy and monastics to observe the daily offices and few, if any, laity participated. Offices were said “in choir,” by the monastics in their chapel: Matins (midnight or cockcrow devotions), Lauds (morning prayer when laity could attend), Terce (the third hour), Sext (the sixth hour), None (the ninth hour), and Vespers (an evening service that the laity could attend). Two other services were added to the monastic’s daily prayers: Prime (the first hour), said in the chapter house at the commencement of daily duties, and Compline, said in the dormitories at bedtime. (Hatchett, p. 90.) This eight-fold office was observed chiefly by monastics and by some clergy until the time of the Reformation.

With the first English Book of Common Prayer, Thomas Cranmer simplified the daily offices and returned them to public use by the laity as well as by the clergy. Drawing on the earlier offices, he created a service of Matins and Evensong. Their titles were changed to Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer in the 1552 revision of the Prayer Book. Further additions, embellishments, and options occurred in each revision, and the American Book of Common Prayer continued the tradition of adding options to the daily offices throughout its revisions. In every instance, it was a two-fold office for morning and evening use.

The 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* expanded the Daily Office to include Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Noonday Prayer, and Compline, with Morning and Evening Prayer offered in both Rite I and Rite II forms. Some churches use Morning Prayer on Sundays as the Liturgy of the Word before the Eucharist, or on clergy-free Sundays. Others offer Morning or Evening Prayer, or Choral Evensong, as regular or seasonal weekday services. In all cases, it's desirable for a Worship Leader to conduct the service.

1. What does the Daily Office mean to you personally?

2. St. Paul encouraged the Christians in Thessaloniki to “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thess. 5:16-18) How does this mandate shape your prayer life in public and in private?

3. Read & reflect on Isaiah 1:1-8. How does this passage speak to you as you prepare for this ministry?

4. In John 4:23-24, Jesus says, “But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” What does it mean to lead worship in “spirit and truth”?

Logistics

PLANNING THE SERVICE

The most important part of preparing to lead worship is knowing the **order and rubrics** of the service. A well-prepared bulletin—usually created under the direction of local clergy—can help, but every Worship Leader should be comfortable leading with or without one.

When planning **Morning or Evening Prayer**, consider:

- **When:** Date and liturgical season
- **Where:** Worship space
- **Why:** The purpose or context of the service

These factors help determine the **Rite (I or II)**, **readings**, and **setup**. Begin by locating the service date on the liturgical calendar, then read through the rite in the *Book of Common Prayer* to identify seasonal or contextual options.

Lectionaries

- **Daily Lectionary** (BCP p. 934): A two-year cycle (Year One & Year Two), organized by week or date.
- **Sunday Lectionary** (BCP p. 888): A three-year cycle (Years A, B, and C).

Propers

The Eucharistic preface, the readings, and the collect of the day are commonly called the propers of the day. The readings are listed in the lectionaries, but the collects of the day are found elsewhere in The Book of Common Prayer. The collects are prayers that go with an appointed lectionary; they are “co-lects.” There is a collect for every Sunday and Holy Day of the year, but unlike the lectionaries, it is a one-year cycle. Thus the Collect of the Day for the First Sunday of Advent or Ash Wednesday will be the same every year.

Collects are found in:

- **Traditional (Rite I):** BCP p. 159
- **Contemporary (Rite II):** BCP p. 211

Rubrics

Rubrics are the **italicized instructions** in the Prayer Book. They clarify what **may** or **shall** be done and often appear before a section (e.g., “Additional Directions” on p. 141). Worship Leaders must follow rubrics carefully, especially where they affect lay leadership (e.g., modifying the absolution on p. 80).

Derived from the Latin word *ruber*, meaning “red,” rubrics were originally printed in red ink. Though now typically printed in black, they remain just as important. Rubrics serve to clarify liturgical actions and often indicate permissible options. Especially noteworthy are rubrics that distinguish between what *may* be said or done and what *shall* be said or done. For example, silence *may* be kept before the general confession, while a layperson *shall* substitute first

person pronouns for second person pronouns in the declaration of forgiveness which follows the confession.

Can a Worship Leader Preach a Sermon?

The Episcopal Church distinguishes between lay licensing for Leading Worship (Canon III.4.4) and Preaching a Sermon (Canon III.4.5). If you are not a licensed Lay Preacher through the Diocese of Ohio Lay Preacher College, you **may not** compose or deliver your own sermon. However, you still have options:

- Read a written sermon prepared by a clergy member, either aloud during the service or by including it in the bulletin. You may also use sermon resources from *Sermons That Work* (episcopalchurch.org/sermons-that-work) provided by The Episcopal Church. If you wish to use a sermon from a source outside of official Episcopal resources, it must first be approved by the clergy in charge.
- Conduct a Bible Study on the day's readings – this can be done during the office, following the closing hymn, or during coffee hour. *Lesson Plans that Work* are designed to follow the Revised Common Lectionary and published by the Episcopal Church (<https://lessonplans.episcopalchurch.org/>). Additional resources are listed on page 14.
- Offer a moment of silence.

Double-Check the Bulletin

Ensure that the service is accurately reproduced in the bulletin. Tools like **lectionarypage.net** (for readings) and **venite.app** (for liturgy) are useful, but always cross-reference with a printed *Book of Common Prayer* (post-2006 RCL edition) and the Bible translation used in your faith community. That said, these websites do occasionally have mistakes, and the best way to confirm all is correct is to consult a certified, printed copy of the Book of Common Prayer printed after our church's adoption of the Revised Common Lectionary in 2006 and a Bible in the translation used in your own faith community.

Note that since you will be leading an office, not celebrating a Eucharist, the bulletin should label the Worship Leader as an "Officiant", not "Celebrant".

TRAINING ACTIVITY: PLANNING IN PAIRS

Divide participants into pairs. Give each a sample scenario (e.g., "Second Sunday after Pentecost," or "Wednesday in Lent with no musician"). Provide them with lectionary resources and BCPs.

Ask each pair to:

- Select readings and canticles
- Identify where to include silence
- Choose collects and prayers
- Plan how they will announce or invite participation

Have 1–2 groups present a brief outline of their planned service.

Trainer Note: Provide guidance and answer questions about where to find things in the BCP or lectionary materials. Reinforce that planning is an act of prayerful preparation.

OFFICIATING THE SERVICE

Prior to the service, set aside some time for personal prayer and silence alone before officiating. Grounding oneself in quiet and openness before God is a critical part of leading worship.

Arrive early to confirm all is prepared for the Office and that bulletins, prayerbooks, readings and anything else needed are in their proper places. Vest in whatever way your community's tradition dictates—traditionally this is cassock and surplice, but cassock-albs have become common in some places and officiating in street clothes is not unheard of. If there is to be a procession, take your place at its end.

Take care to read the service slowly and distinctly. One often discovers that one is “speed-reading” without realizing, and it is always safer to be a bit slower than you think is natural at first. Give appropriate, unobtrusive direction regarding page numbers and postures as needed. Try to maintain a degree of reverence and decorum when doing so—there is a fine line between being friendly and helpful on the one hand and being pretentiously folksy on the other.

If you have a tendency to go on “liturgical autopilot” be particularly careful. The order of some elements—such as the sermon and the collection of offerings—are variable and may take place at an entirely different point than is found in the less-variable shape of the Eucharistic liturgy.

You may wish to ask for constructive criticism after the service while it is still fresh on everyone's minds, particularly when you are just starting out. You may also receive unsolicited criticism, constructive and otherwise. Try to take this with grace, and when in doubt ask your local clergy-person what he or she thinks might be improved or not based on that feedback.

Practical Tips

Developing a more general liturgical sensibility is more art than science, and while many elements may be taught, others become more natural with practice. Pay attention to:

- **Pacing and volume** when reading
- **Offering guidance** (e.g., posture, page numbers) gently and clearly
- **Silence and reverence** in appropriate moments

Practice in the worship space beforehand is especially helpful for newer leaders.

TRAINING ACTIVITIES --

1. PUBLIC SPEAKING

Invite two volunteers to lead a brief version of Morning Prayer together (up to the Creed)
Trainer offers gentle feedback on pacing, posture, clarity, and transitions

Ask participants:

- *What makes someone engaging to listen to during worship?*
- *How can we embody reverence without drawing attention to ourselves?*

2. LEADING WITH SILENCE

The quote “Silence is God’s first language” is attributed to St. John of the Cross, suggesting that true understanding of God comes through quiet contemplation and introspection, rather than words or language. Silence prepares the heart and creates space for God’s presence. Use silence after readings, during confession, or after a collect.

To lead silence: pause intentionally, maintain presence, count 5–10 seconds.

1. Ask a volunteer to lead the group into silence.
2. Group raises hands when the silence feels “too long.”
3. Debrief — *How long was it? What did it feel like?*

What If?

CHANGING A PLANNED EUCHARIST TO A DAILY OFFICE IN AN EMERGENCY

When a last minute emergency prevents a priest from being present at a regularly scheduled Eucharist (such as on a Sunday morning), the planned Eucharist can be converted to a daily office (usually Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer, depending on the time of day the regular service was scheduled).

Following is a description of how to change a planned Sunday morning Eucharist into a service of Morning Prayer. The same guidelines can be used for Evening Prayer in the event of a planned Saturday or Sunday evening Eucharist.

1. Use the rite of Morning Prayer that corresponds with the planned Eucharist (Rite I, Rite II, or EOW).
2. Keep the propers (collect and lessons) that would have been used in the Eucharist.
3. Make sure the church musician knows of the change as soon as possible. Keep all planned music unless there was to be an anthem with a specifically Eucharistic text. If so, omit it or substitute something else.
4. Notify Eucharistic ministers of change; they should not vest and should sit in the congregation. If they were to read one of the lessons, they should come up from the congregation to do so.
5. Notify altar guild so that they can take down the set up for Eucharist.
6. Notify ushers so they will know when the offering will be collected and so they can help latecomers.
7. Notify acolytes/crucifer so they know what to expect. If your church has two sets of candles (those on the altar, the Eucharistic lights; and those on the wall or freestanding, the office lights), light only the office lights.
8. Decide where to place announcements (one of three choices, below).

At the service:

(Announcements may go here)

After the processional hymn, announce the change and direct the people to the appropriate page in the prayer book.

Follow with the confession if it had been included in the planned Eucharist. If not, continue with the Invitatory.

Use appropriate invitatory for the season.

Follow with the psalm from the planned Eucharist.

First lesson

follow by a canticle

Second lesson

follow by Gospel hymn from planned Eucharist

Gospel

no Gospel procession; read from same place as other two lessons and omit the customary responses used at a Eucharist; instead use "A reading from ..." and "The Word of the Lord." The people should remain seated for the reading of the Gospel.

The sermon may be omitted or a prepared piece may be read.

Apostles' Creed

Prayers

Use the collect from the planned Eucharist

May include Collect for Sundays

At end of collects use Prayers of the People as planned in the Eucharist

(Announcements may go here)

If anthem had been planned by choir it can go here or the congregation can sing an offertory hymn as the collection is taken

Additional prayers from back of book if appropriate

General Thanksgiving

Concluding words

Final hymn

(Announcements may go here)

Helpful Resources

Bible: <https://www.biblegateway.com/> - Also have an audio Bible available that you may download onto a smartphone or tablet.

Biblical Pronunciations: <http://www.netministries.org/resources/resource-pronunciation-guide>

Book of Common Prayer:

<http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/index.html>

eCP (electronic Common Prayer) – <https://www.churchpublishing.org/ecpapp> The eCP app is a complete, digital Book of Common Prayer. Ideal for personal devotion and liturgical use. Available on Amazon, Apple, Android.

Daily Offices:

<http://www.missionstclare.com/english/>

Venite.app -- <https://www.venite.app> A tool that assembles the Daily Office readings for the correct date and can generate a printable bulletin. Excellent for planning and leading services with confidence.

The Episcopal Church: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/>

Lectionary: <http://www.lectionarypage.net/>

Sermon/Formation: (Reminder: Worship Leaders are not licensed to preach)

Forward Day by Day: forwardmovement.org/forward-day-by-day/ A booklet of daily inspirational meditations reflecting on a specific Bible passage, chosen from the daily lectionary readings as listed in the Revised Common Lectionary or the Daily Office from the Episcopal Church's Book of Common Prayer.

Lesson Plans that Work: <https://lessonplans.episcopalchurch.org/>

Sermons that Work: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/sermons-that-work/>

Next Steps

Please visit the Diocese of Ohio webpage to fill-out the online “Lay License Application”.

You will need the following materials to upload:

1. A letter of recommendation from your rector, priest, or senior warden confirming that you completed this training and that you are confirmed communicant in good standing.
2. Proof of current Safe Church training certificates for the following:
 - a. Safe Church Universal Training “Healthy Boundaries”
 - b. Safe Church Universal Training “Inclusion”
 - c. Safe Church Universal Training “Power and Relationships”
 - d. Safe Church Universal Training “Bullying”
 - e. Safe Church Universal Training “Abuse & Neglect”

Access and information relating to Safe Church should be directed to safechurch@dohio.org.

*“Let the words of my mouth and
the meditation of my heart be
acceptable in your sight, O Lord.”*

PSALM 19:14

Thank you for participating in this training and your willingness to serve as a Worship Leader. Please contact Canon for Leadership Development, Mr. Russ Tripi, with any questions relating to this vital ministry.