

Delivering non-Eucharistic Services

Advice for OCAC clergy

This module is to advise how to deliver services of Prime, Mattins, Compline and Vespers as well as School or General Assemblies, prayer meetings and similar services. It is intended for those in Minor Orders, but is equally useful for all clergy.

Plan Ahead

The key to all service delivery is planning. Try to understand what the context and intent of the services is going to be. Just as one would have some idea about what a service should 'do' if it was to be a funeral, or a baptism; we can ascertain context of services in Lent being less exuberant than say, at the triumph of Easter.

The service orders give a framework - a starting point for your service, but Christ is calling you through prayer to vary and tailor the service to the circumstances.

It is fine to follow the service order exactly as is, but adding relevant prayers, or items of poetry as well as scripture can make it more meaningful to the congregation.

However, it is important to follow the pattern of the service order otherwise the charism of the service will become lost, and Prime would not 'feel' like a morning prayer and Compline would not 'feel' like Evening Prayer. Prayer meetings or fellowship meetings can be informal and more fluid, however: it is valuable to always have a simple 'running order' so that the service has form. A young preacher may find value in rehearsing a service at home before the day, not so young preachers may find it equally valuable!

Room Layout

In a dedicated/consecrated chapel such as in a hospital, or a small church, fit in respectfully to the arrangements that are there. If the room layout can be chosen, arrange the chairs to suit the situation, circular pattern is more inclusive and less formal. Some preachers carry a small case with a desk-standing cross to place on a small table in the room.

Additional Material

When adding prayers, a lectionary or set prayers can be read which would give the correct intent for the liturgical season. Collects taken from a lectionary can deliver the appropriate Collect for the day. Persons wishing to contribute with testimony and small items of interest should be encouraged to share this at a suitable point in the service. Information such as local notices of church news can be added either in the first part of the service (any time after the Introit or call to prayer), or at the end of the service before the dismissal.

Diction

It is important to project your voice without it being forceful or in a raised voice. See tips for public speaking on our website polity module. In essence, aim to be addressing the furthest person away, raise your head and make eye contact with them, but then look around as you speak at all present. Speak slowly and clearly, but naturally - we have Christ in us and so be confident that the congregation want to hear you - they will be

disappointed if you mumble, or look down at your notes continually. The BBC used to teach their radio presenters to smile while broadcasting, and the listeners will sense your happiness. So speak with the joy of Christ in your heart, and your service will be bright, positive and enjoyable.

Vestments

For assemblies, and prayer meetings either formal or informal secular wear is acceptable. For services in 'religious' settings, such as crematoria chapels, as a visitor to a church or chapel, wear cassock and surplice or alb and cincture. If preferred a 'Geneva' gown may be worn over a suit.

- **At the venue** -

Introit or Call to Worship

When the service is to commence, enter the room slowly, quietly and in a dignified manner. Move to the place where you will deliver the service from, stand upright and look at the gathered congregation. Smile. You may ask the congregation to stand, or not as circumstances dictate. Open the worship with a sentence of scripture, or a phrase from a prayer book. Sometimes a friendly 'Good Morning, thank you for joining us for Praise today' is fine. Then move on to the first item.

Prayers

Extempore prayer - that is: free flowing prayer from the heart that is not read from a script is acceptable and indeed is to be preferred for the Prayers of Intercession. If members of the congregation wish to pray aloud, this should be encouraged. There is nothing wrong with reading set prayers from any one of the books of prayer for worship.

Scripture Readings

Read from any version of the Bible that you wish to use, but try to deliver God's Word in a form appropriate to the congregation: old fashioned versions full of thee's and thou's are unlikely to speak into the hearts of today's Christians. Offers from congregation members to read the scripture are to be welcomed.

Hymns, Songs or Musical items

Choice of hymns is important. It is likely that the congregations will be small - perhaps a half dozen maybe more. It will be unhelpful to choose hymns that are complicated and it is best to choose short, simple to sing and very well known hymns or songs otherwise the congregation will feel uncomfortable at the singing and the result will be unpleasing. If piano or musical accompaniment is not available your choice of simple, easy to sing, well-known hymns will be most beneficial.

Using recorded music or YouTube video with music and lyrics is fine, but be aware of internet connectivity and check that adverts don't appear during the service! Bluetooth speakers can play music from a smartphone and this is good; but the choice will need to be a well-known and easy to sing hymn. If the service leader (or member of the congregation)

can play an instrument like a guitar that is fine, but always be prepared that the singing may have to happen unaccompanied.

Act of Penitence

Unless a priest is present or taking this service, confession and absolution is not possible. However, it is beneficial to prayerfully acknowledge our sinfulness and fallen state, and that we are saved by the Grace of God through his Son Jesus. Penitence can be handled in general terms, and prayers for any specific short-falling can be said. Avoid directly implying that the sin is forgiven except that Christ will forgive those who seek His mercy.

Homily or Sermon

Planning ahead will reduce or remove any concerns that you might have in delivering a sermon. If the subject matter is familiar to you, you may be able to speak without notes. Even so, a short list of 'bullet points' will serve as an *aide memoire* or prompt. Use the advice from the Diction section above. Aim to keep any homily or sermon short, relevant and time-disciplined. Longer does not mean better! Invite others to deliver a homily if they want to or are experts in some area (like being a teacher, or professional) or if anyone has interesting life experience.

Blessing or Dismissal

Care should be taken to avoid any blessing which could be misinterpreted as an absolution. For example; Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.: this is meaningful yet simple and cannot be confused with a statement of absolution. Only Priests may use an absolution as a Benediction.

Concluding

It is valuable to greet all who attended as they leave with a handshake and general conversation. Even if time is tight, avoid the display of hurrying out of the building. A procession of clergy out of the building is unlikely to be required at services like this. If this is a regular service, tea and coffee may be served afterwards depending on the situation. This is an important pastoral element of it (so enjoy some refreshment with the people!) and an opportunity to listen to their needs and worries or discuss Christian topics of interest.

Please offer to pray for people who attended this service if they ask or if you feel the offer will encourage them. Please also pray for the Old Catholic Apostolic Church.