

The Daily Offices

Morning Prayer

INTRODUCTION

- 1 In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Amen

- 2 The Minister may say

We have come together as the family of God
in our Father's presence
to offer him praise and thanksgiving
to hear and receive his holy word
to bring before him the needs of the world
to ask his forgiveness of our sins
and to seek his grace
that through his Son Jesus Christ
we may give ourselves to his service.

PRAISE

appropriate Sentence (section 86), and the

praise him (*Alleluia* during Eastertide)

glorify and praise your Name

er, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
the beginning, is now, and will be for

1. *Alleluia*
(is omitted.)

Evening Prayer

INTRODUCTION

- 42 In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Amen

- 43 The Minister may say

We have come together as the family of God
in our Father's presence
to offer him praise and thanksgiving
to hear and receive his holy word
to bring before him the needs of the world
to ask his forgiveness of our sins
and to seek his grace
that through his Son Jesus Christ
we may give ourselves to his service.

PRAISE

- 44 The Minister may read the appropriate Sentence (section 86),
and the people respond

Let us worship and praise him (*Alleluia* during Eastertide).

- 45 Lord, open our lips
That we may glorify and praise your Name
Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for
ever. **Amen**
Praise the Lord. *Alleluia*
(In Lent '*Alleluia*' is omitted.)

Guide 1: The Daily Offices

Adapted from a booklet produced by the Diocese of Pretoria in 1990

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The daily offices

This booklet is one of a series of guides designed for the training of Anglican deacons, and tries to explain the origins of the practice of saying a daily Office, as well as discussing the role that this it should play in the life of an ordained minister.

What are the “Offices”?

The English word “Office” comes from the Latin word “officium” meaning “duty”.

As applied to the services in the *Anglican Prayer Book*, they are the daily corporate prayer of the Church (apart from the Eucharist) that ordained ministers have a duty to say.

In the Anglican Church they take the form of daily Morning and Evening Prayer, also known as Matins and Evensong.

How were these “Offices” developed?

The practice of reading Scripture aloud and using the Psalms for prayer and praise goes right back to the Jewish synagogue service. Prayers were recited at set times of the day. (Psalm 119:164 states: “Seven times a day I praise you because of your righteous judgements”. Also, in the Jewish Temple, sacrifices were offered at dawn and in the afternoon. Those times were when the worshippers congregated at the Temple in Jerusalem for prayer (Luke 1:10; Acts 3:1).

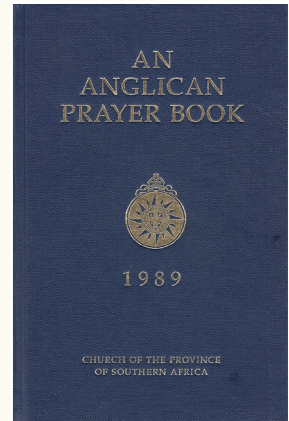
The early Christians prayed in the morning and in the evening in their homes; some also prayed at the main divisions of the Roman day (9 a.m., noon and 3 p.m.).

Gradually a pattern of seven fixed prayer times developed – on awakening, at the third, sixth and ninth hours of the day, at the lighting of the evening lamp, at bedtime, and at midnight. In the fourth century, when persecution of Christians ended and worship became more public, morning and evening services were held in the church buildings.

In later centuries, when monasteries were started, monks and nuns saw it as part of their vocation to meet together several times during the day and night to offer prayer and praise on behalf of the whole Church. The principle behind distributing the prayer times throughout the day was that this allowed the whole day to be offered to God. During these services they recited the whole Psalter, usually completing it in a week, and read long portions of Scripture, particularly at the night Office.

What was the monastic day like?

St Benedict, who lived in Italy in the 5th century, wrote a Rule for monks and nuns which was very widely adopted. He planned a balanced day of prayer, manual work and the meditative reading of scripture.



The day went like this in summer:

Matins (nighttime - 3 a.m.)

Lauds (dawn - 5 a.m.)

Prime (sunrise - 6 a.m.)

Terce (third hour - 9 a.m.)

Sext (noon)

None (ninth hour - 3 p.m.)

Vespers (sunset - 6 p.m.)

Compline (end of the day - 7 p.m.)

After waking they would gather to do the Offices of Matins and Lauds and read scriptures until Prime. Then they would meet to plan the day, with short workbreaks and prayers at Terce, Sext and None (these were short Offices and those working in the fields said them where they were). Dinner and rest would take place in the late afternoon. The schedule was adjusted in Winter.

The Middle Ages in Europe

There is an interval of a thousand years between the time of St Benedict and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. During that time, Latin ceased to be the spoken language of the people, although it was still used in church services. Thus, while the laity valued the prayers which monks and nuns said on their behalf, they could not follow what was being said when they went to services.

During St. Benedict's lifetime Mass was only celebrated on Sundays and festivals. Later on the solemn "Conventual Mass" (the mass of a monastic community) became the focal point of the day in monasteries. The Offices themselves became much longer, so that "choir monks" spent a large part of the day in church. There was a separate class of "lay brothers" who said shorter Offices and did most of the manual work.

Difficulties, mostly of time and convenience, arose when the Monastic Offices spread to the cathedrals and was later made compulsory for all clergy. Active religious orders such as the friars found the monastic service books too heavy to transport when travelling. So the "breviary" was produced, which contained all seven Offices in a shortened form. Parish priests also found it very difficult to fit seven Offices into their day.

Also, as the number of feast days increased, the rules for saying Office became more and more complicated. By the sixteenth century Christians were complaining that it took longer to find out what had to be said than actually to say it. The need for reform was recognised by both Catholics and the new Protestant denominations.

Reform of the Offices in the Roman Catholic Church

The Roman breviary was simplified and shortened by two Popes - Pius V in 1570 and Pius X in 1911. However, the sevenfold Office remained until the much more drastic revision which followed the second Vatican Council in the 1960s. The modern Roman Catholic Offices are said, not in Latin but in the vernacular. Lauds and Vespers, renamed Morning and Evening Prayer, have been restored to their proper place as the two principal Offices.

Of the churches that broke away from Rome, only Anglicans and Lutherans retained the daily Offices. Both reduced the number of Offices to two, to be said in the language of the people.

Reform of the Offices in the Church of England

Archbishop Cranmer, who drew up the first two version of the *Book of Common Prayer* in English (in 1549 and 1552), adapted the monastic Matins, Lauds and Prime to form Morning Prayer and Vespers and Compline to form Evening Prayer. These two Offices were to be said as a duty by the clergy. They were expected to say them in church, having first rung a bell to summon the congregation. Very few people were free to attend on weekdays, but on Sundays Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer became congregational services. As a result of saying the psalms and hearing the lessons read in church, Anglican congregations came to know the Bible well.

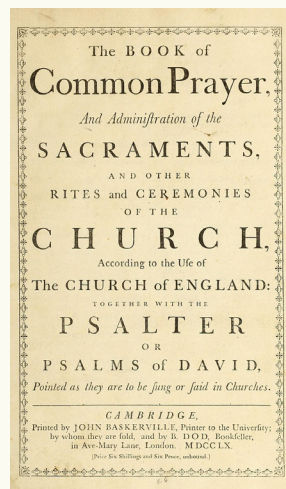
Until the mid-1900s they were the normal Sunday services in nearly all Anglican churches, as the Eucharist was not celebrated weekly. However in modern times the Eucharist has displaced Morning prayer as the central Sunday service. At the same time Evensong congregations on Sundays have become smaller (from the dual impact of television watching in the evening and, in some countries, fear of nighttime crime). Because the Eucharist is now the main service, an Old Testament reading, psalm and canticle have been incorporated into the Eucharist so that the congregation do not miss out on these.

After the monasteries were shut down by Henry VII, there were no religious communities in the Church of England until the middle of the 1800s. Since then, a number have been founded, both for men and women. These communities quickly felt the need for more times of corporate prayer than the *Book of Common Prayer* provides. Some say four or five Offices a day, some as many as seven, and their daily timetable is arranged around this. Visitors to religious houses often appreciate being able to participate in the these Offices.

The value of the Office

Although it is the clergy who have a duty to say the Office, one of its merits is that it is not exclusively clerical. Any lay person may lead it. So the more isolated congregations, who may only have monthly visits from a priest, have a form of service which they can use every Sunday.

The South African *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* in the Preface to the Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer (pages 37 to 39) states that it is “the joyful obligation” of the clergy “to pray with these Offices twice a day; for some of them the Eucharist takes the place of one of the Offices.”



The Book of Common Prayer of 1662, the final official version in the Church of England, though there have been many subsequent revisions in England and other countries.

The South African **An Anglican Prayer Book 1989** is a revision of this as was the **A Book of Common Prayer South Africa** of 1954

The Preface suggests that the Office has a very positive value, not only for clergy but for anyone. In saying it one is nourished by scripture and one learns to pray with and on behalf of the whole Church. Those preparing for ordination would do well to become accustomed to saying the Offices before they become an obligation. Lay ministers also need to become familiar with them as they may be asked to lead Morning or Evening Prayer. If it is not possible to say them in church with others of the parish, one or both Offices can be incorporated into one's personal rule of prayer. For many people this provides an element of discipline which is needed in the spiritual life.

The structure of morning and evening prayer

Both Morning and Evening Prayer have a similar structure:

Morning Prayer	Evening Prayer	Notes
Introduction (1& 2)	Introduction (42 & 43)	Identical wording
Praise (3 & 4) + (86 pages 64-67)	Praise (44 & 45) + (86 on pages 64-67)	Identical wording
Praise continued (5) with three options - O Come let us sing (6) or O Shout to the Lord in triumph (7) or the Easter Anthems (Canticle 9 page 349)		Praise continued (6) with two options - Com bless the Lord (47) or Hail gladdening light (48)
Penitence (8 to 11)	Penitence (49 to 52)	May be omitted if made at the Eucharist or another Office on the same day
The Word of God: Psalm or psalms (13) First scripture reading (14-15) The Song of Zechariah (17) Second scripture reading (18-19) The Song of the Church (20-21) or a Canticle or hymn	The Word of God Psalm or psalms First scripture reading (55-56) The Song of Mary (58) Second scripture reading (59-60) The Song of Simeon (61-62) or a Canticle or hymn	If this is the main service the readings are those in the lectionary for the Eucharist and the Old Testament reading come before the psalm.
The Apostles' Creed (22)	The Apostles' Creed (64)	If the Creed has been used at the Eucharist or Morning Prayer the Baptismal Creed (65) may be used instead
Prayers (23-27)	Prayers (66-70)	
Collects (28-31)	Collects (71-73)	The service may end here
Blessing (32)	Blessing (74)	Omit here if Sermon and Second part of prayers follow
Sermon (34)	Sermon (77)	
Prayers second part (36-41)	Prayers second part (78-84))	
Blessing (42)	Blessing (85)	

The readings and collects to be used in these services are to be found in the annual lectionary published by the Anglican Church



Lectionary

Advent 2025 – December 2026

Year A

The Anglican Church of Southern Africa

The Daily Office: Self test questions

Choose the correct statement out of options (a), (b) or (c) and mark it (✓).

1. The Latin word “officium” means
 - (a) duty
 - (b) rule
 - (c) officer.
2. The basic structure of the Office (psalms and scripture readings) goes back as far as
 - (a) the Jewish synagogue services.
 - (b) the Reformation.
 - (c) St. Benedict
3. During the Middle Ages church services in England were said in
 - (a) Greek
 - (b) Latin
 - (c) English
4. A Breviary is
 - (a) a shorter bible
 - (b) a hymn book
 - (c) a book containing the Offices.
5. The old name of the evening office is
 - (a) Lauds
 - (b) None
 - (c) Vespers
6. The Anglican Prayer Book Offices were first drawn up by
 - (a) King James I
 - (b) Archbishop Cranmer
 - (c) the CPSA Liturgical Commission
7. In the Anglican Church, the people who are obliged to say the daily offices are:
 - (a) priests
 - (b) lay ministers
 - (c) bishops, priests and deacons
8. An ordained minister may omit one of the two daily offices if he or she
 - (a) oversleeps
 - (b) has to take a funeral
 - (c) is present at the Eucharist on that day.

