

Worship



Guide 2: Worship

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Cover picture: a woman praying depicted in a fresco in the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome

Worship

Introduction

This booklet is one of a series of guides designed for the training of Anglican deacons, and is designed to give an introduction to the purpose behind the acts of worship that are set out in the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*. It aims at answering the question “Why worship at all?” rather than “How is it done?”. Other booklets in this series are more practical on the “How it is done?” - they have titles like *The Daily Offices*, *Leading Prayers* and *The Christian year - Calendar and Lectionary*. This booklet is concerned with the underlying principles of worship. There are two main sections.

The first is entitled “General Considerations”. The second, “Past and Present”, gives some historical background to the present situation in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

Readers will need a Bible and a copy of the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*, in order to profit most from the booklet. Though any translation of the Bible is usable, we recommend the *New Revised Standard Version* as the most suitable modern English translation.

General considerations

1. What is worship?

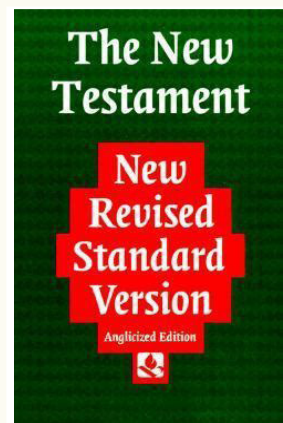
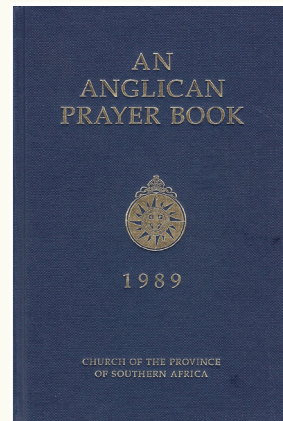
The English word “worship” comes from “worthship”, the recognition of someone’s worth. To worship God is to acknowledge that he is worthy of all possible praise and honour. In some languages the word used in equivalent circumstances has the meaning of “bowing down” to show respect.

In the history of humanity, when human beings have felt their dependence on a Power greater than themselves, they have tended to bow down in wonder, often mixed with fear. Nearly always they have recognised this Power as in some sense personal and have given it the name of “God”.

2. Holiness and goodness

To call God “holy” is to speak of that which sets him apart from human beings and other creatures. God is greater and more powerful than anything we can imagine. God is also perfectly good. An encounter with God may make the worshipper feel unworthy, as did the prophet Isaiah in his vision in the temple (Isaiah 6:1-8):

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:



'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.'

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!'

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: 'Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'

Confronted with the holiness of God, Isaiah was overwhelmed by the sense of his own and his people's sin. He had to be assured of forgiveness before he could stand before God and respond to his call.

Generally speaking, the stress on the utter holiness of God has been accompanied by the need to approach him through intermediaries. The Christian message offers a new dimension to our relationship with the holy God. Through Jesus the Christ, God has drawn near to humanity. Jesus Christ, who is both God and Man, is the one Mediator. Through him we can approach God with confidence and address him as "Father".

3. Some characteristics of Christian worship

a. Worship as response

Jews and Christians believe that God has revealed himself in history. God is made known by what he does. He revealed himself as Deliverer when he led the people of Israel out of slavery into the promised land. He declared his will through the prophets and spoke fully and finally in Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate. Worship is the Church's response to God's self-disclosure.

It is God who takes the initiative and we are asked to respond to that love. 1 John 4:9-11 says::

God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.

A similar message is found in Jesus' story of the Shepherd going out to look for the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7). It is not a question of our having to search for God but of his coming to find us where we are. Worship is the human response to that love shown by God.

b. Worship as proclamation

To proclaim is to make known. Christians have good news to share - not only with those outside the Church but with each other. It is news which Christians need to hear again and again, until the truths sink in and influence and transform their lives.

Proclamation is often associated with preaching. However, the gospel is also proclaimed in the public reading of scripture, so anyone who reads a lesson in church is proclaiming the good news of Christ's death and resurrection. Deacons are specifically charged with this duty of proclamation through the reading of the gospel.

The Church's festivals are another means of proclamation. Each time Christ's Birth, Baptism, Transfiguration, Crucifixion and Resurrection are commemorated, the worshippers should be able to enter more deeply into their meaning. Visual ritual (such as the Palm Sunday procession) can often help to dramatise the meaning of what is being affirmed.

Above all, at every Eucharist we, in the words of 1 Corinthians 11:26 we proclaim:

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The taking, blessing, breaking and sharing of the bread and wine are "acted signs" by which the "**mystery**" of Christ's death and resurrection is made present. The risen Lord meets us in communion and feeds us with his own life as he fed the disciples at the lakeside (John 21:13).

c. Worship as a relationship

Human beings are made for relationship - with each other, with the natural world and with God. Many African languages have the saying "A person is a person through other people."

Genesis 1:27 affirms that God created human beings in the divine image. Christians further believe that God has revealed himself as Trinity: three "Persons", Father, Son and Holy Spirit, wholly united in love. In the same way it is God's desire that the human community be united in love and reflect the image of the Trinity. That image has been defaced by sin, which separates human beings from one another and from God. Jesus lived and died to restore that image and the Holy Spirit was sent to re-create community. In his overflowing love God plans to make us, created beings, "sharers of the divine nature" and of the inner life of the Holy Trinity.

It follows, firstly, that Christian worship is Trinitarian. Our relationship with the Father is achieved through the Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, worship on earth is a preparation for the worship of heaven. It is an opportunity to begin to learn the new song which the redeemed sing around God's throne (Revelation 5:9-13). So in spite of sin and suffering in the world and in ourselves, there is always a joyful element in worship, which begins and ends with praise.

d. Worship is a corporate activity

The English word "corporate" is derived from the Latin word for "body". Paul's favourite image for the Church is that of a body - the body of Christ.

Christ is like a single body which has many parts. It is still one body, even though made up of different parts. In the same way, all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

mystery: a hidden or secret reality that is revealed in gospel and scripture that human beings cannot discover except from revelation and that, even after revelation, exceeds their comprehension.

Paul goes on to speak of the interdependence of all the members of the Body; If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share its happiness (verse 26).

Because of this, any Christian praying “alone” is linked invisibly with all the others. In what may seem our most personal and private prayers, we are joined to the praying Church.

To worship God is to enter into a relationship with him and that should be continuous. When Paul told his readers to “pray at all times” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), he was not saying they must be consciously thinking of God all the time. We can live in the spirit of prayer by offering each day to God with the intention of pleasing him in all we think, do or say. We have to renew that intention whenever we are conscious of having failed.

But although prayer should not be limited to set periods, it is right for Christians to set aside times for personal prayer and bible reading as well as for praying with others. The quality of worship in a congregation depends on the depth of the spiritual life of each of its members. Good worship leaders are those who are sincerely trying to follow Jesus in daily life. That sincerity will come across as they lead prayers.

When Christians assemble for worship, they meet as a family. The prayer Jesus gave us begins “Our Father.” In the Old Testament the function of a priest was to offer sacrifice. The New Testament calls the whole People of God “a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). The Church’s function is to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually and to offer it on behalf of all humanity, including all those who do not or cannot pray themselves.

One often hears a person ask, “Is there any need for me to church if I don’t find the service helpful?”. That person needs to be led into a right understanding of what it means to belong to the Church. We attend corporate worship in order to take part in the Church’s offering of praise to God, irrespective of what we feel we are getting out of it.

It is also helpful to remember that just as no Christian ever really prays alone, neither does any congregation pray unsupported. We believe in the communion of saints, which means that the Church on earth and the Church in heaven is one. Every local congregation is joined in worship not only with Christians all round the world but “with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven”.

e. Worship and Mission

“Mission” means “sending”. The risen Jesus sent his disciples out into all the world to proclaim the good news and the Church continues to fulfil that commission. At the end of the Eucharist the congregation prays (*An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*, page 129, paragraph 88):

[Send us out into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.](#)

We worship God for his own sake, not as a means to something else. But at the same time worship is a preparation for mission. What is important is not whether worship makes us feel good and happy, though it may do that, but whether it

gradually transforms us into the likeness of Christ, so that others will come to know that we have “been with Jesus” (Acts 4: 13).

4. The meaning and value of Liturgy

“Liturgy” comes from a Greek word which originally meant a public duty, not necessarily a religious one. The word “service” has a similar meaning, but “liturgy” is a name given to a service of corporate worship which follows a fixed form and is differentiated from worship that is not in a set form but is free or extempore.

a. Fixed or free?

The early Christians probably took over a structured form of service from the Jewish synagogue, but early Christian worship also included prophecy, ecstatic utterances, and other forms of free prayer. This became so uncontrolled in Corinth that St Paul had to insist on all things being done “decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Since then in different denominations and at different times there has been movement towards either fixed or free forms of worship. But neither of these need exclude the other altogether. The form worship takes must depend partly on the place and the occasion - for instance a small group meeting for a house communion should be able to worship with much less formality than a large congregation meeting for the Sunday service.

The formal services to which Anglicans are accustomed include the Eucharist, Morning and Evening Prayer, and what are known collectively as “the occasional offices” (e.g. baptisms, weddings and funerals). Liturgies for these have all been included in the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*.

b. How much choice does the *Anglican Prayer Book* provide?

When used properly, the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* allows for lay leadership and for spontaneous prayer, even if this is only to a limited extent. For instance, though it reserves certain of the prayers of the Eucharist for priests, others can be said by deacons and lay ministers. It also offers different forms of intercession. Of these, Form D (p. 115) provides for free prayer, either by the leader or the congregation. Again, there is a degree of freedom in the choice of prayers for Morning and Evening Prayer.

A parish liturgical team planning the services can be creative within the boundaries defined by the prayer book. For small groups or special occasions there is an Alternative Order for the Eucharist (pp. 131-133) which requires careful preparation and planning as well as the bishop’s permission to use it. A wide choice of prayers and readings is offered for funerals; and those who pray with the sick or bereaved are free to use the printed prayers or their own words.

It is important that all ordained and lay ministers, as well as those in training, study the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* carefully so that they can take advantage of its various options.

c. What is the value of fixed forms?

A few of the arguments in favour of a fixed liturgy are given below:

- Everyone can know and share in what is happening. All can join in if they have books or know the prayers by heart. And if one knows the main outline and the content of prayers, it is possible to attend the same service in another language and find it meaningful.
- We draw on the skills and heritage of the Church, using some of the great prayers of the past as well as new ones, composed by those who skilled in such writing and with a firm grasp of the theology behind the prayers. Our personal prayer is extended and deepened by the experience of praying with the Church all down the ages.
- Fixed forms free us to concentrate on God. Once we know the pattern we can worship God without straining to hear what new thing the service leader will say next. In that way the congregation is freed from over-dependence on the leader. If we are open to the Holy Spirit it will often breathe fresh life into the most familiar words.
- Jesus gave his disciples a form of prayer, the Lord's Prayer, or "Our Father". Part of its value is that it is common to all Christians. It can be spoilt by insensitive use - for instance, when it is gabbled at a school assembly. This can be overcome by giving great care to the spirit in which it is prayed. This is true of all fixed forms of worship.

5. The Sacraments

Any Anglican communicant should be able to give the catechism definition of a sacrament: "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." But why does the church have sacraments at all?

When Jesus spoke about worshipping God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23) he was not saying that God wants people to worship him only with their minds and not with their bodies. The Bible does not make those distinctions. Worship must involve the whole person.

The material world is God's good creation and Jesus affirmed its goodness by becoming part of it. Think of the ways in which he used his hands - to work with wood, to touch and heal the sick and to break the bread in which he gave himself symbolically before he stretched out those same hands to be nailed to the cross. All life is sacramental. An invitation to a meal is an outward sign of fellowship. When a mother holds her baby she is conveying the inward gifts of love and security through the outward sense of touch. Jesus has been called the greatest of all sacraments, because the divine love which was in him flowed out through his bodily actions and words.

The Church, as Christ's Body, continues to use words and actions as well as material things like oil and water, bread and wine, as "means of grace" through which God imparts his blessing, strength, and healing. The *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* Catechism names two "sacraments of the gospel" - Baptism and the Eucharist, and five other "sacramental rites" (confirmation, confession and absolution, marriage, anointing of the sick, and ordination). In addition, holy

water, blessed candles, ashes, palm crosses, etc. are “sacramentals”. They have no magical power, but they are the material means through which we receive God’s gifts. All the externals of worship which appeal to the senses, such as music, gesture and movement, lights and incense, have a sacramental aspect in that they are means to enable us to worship God with our whole being.

Baptism

Baptism marks the beginning of the Christian life and is the means by which a person is “born again” into God’s family, the Church. It the birth of “water and the Spirit” of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus (John 3:5). Water is a symbol not only of life and growth and cleansing from sin, but also of death. The candidate must be symbolically drowned before rising to new life in Christ. In the early Church baptism was by immersion and normally took place during the Easter Vigil, so that the association with Jesus’ death and resurrection was made clear. Today, the baptism of an adult should be a turning point in that person’s life, involving renunciation of all that was wrong in the past and a real commitment to following Christ.

Baptism is a public act. Children should be baptized in the main Sunday service when the congregation can welcome them as new members of the family. This needs to be explained to those parents who say they would prefer a private ceremony. It is important for the parents to be instructed because they have the main responsibility for bringing up the child in the Christian faith. So parents and godparents together make the promises on behalf of the child, and in so doing renew their own commitment.

The Eucharist

The Eucharist is the distinctive act of Christian worship and should be celebrated every Sunday if a priest is available. The word Eucharist means thanksgiving. In the service we give God thanks for all his blessings, for his love in creating us and in redeeming us through Jesus his Son. We offer the gifts of the bread and wine, and ourselves with them, to be blessed and transformed. The Father accepts our offering because he sees it as united to Christ’s perfect sacrifice, made once for all on the cross, but recalled and made present at every celebration of the Eucharist. As we receive communion, our union is strengthened both with Christ and with one another. Refreshed and renewed, we are ready to be sent out into the world to love and serve him there.

6. In conclusion

Finally, to conclude this whole section, here is a definition of worship from Archbishop William Temple:

To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God and all this gathered up in adoration, the most unselfish emotion of which our nature is capable.

Past and Present

1. Why does worship change?

The ways in which people worship has changed over time and will continue to change for a variety of reasons. Of course, sometimes changes in the pattern of corporate worship may make people feel threatened or unhappy. This is a sensitive area in which changes can be seen as affecting each one's intimate relationship with God. So it is important that there is a sound reason for changes and that people are enabled to understand the need for them.

A good example of a good process in making changes in the liturgy was that which preceded the production of the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*. Some fourteen years earlier the *Liturgy 75* was introduced as an experiment and helped people to get used to the new shape of the Eucharist (that itself was based on new scholarship on the earliest liturgies of the Church). The new form of the services were different enough from those in the existing *A Book of Common Prayer – South Africa* of 1954 that some explanation of the changes was needed.

To understand the thinking behind the changes, we need to take a look at the history of the Church and particularly the history of the Church's eucharistic worship.

2. The Biblical background

The story begins with the Old Testament. The sacrificial worship of the Temple provided the Jewish people with the means to make a thankful response to God's goodness and also to lay before him their concerns, guilts and fears. There was only one Temple (in Jerusalem), but every town where there were ten or more Jewish men there was collective worship in a synagogue. Here there were meetings every Sabbath for prayer, praise and the hearing of God's Word. Jesus himself attended those services. Eventually the Christian Church took over the main features of synagogue worship. We find them in the Ministry of the Word which forms the first part of the Eucharist.

Central to Jewish life, and celebrated at home, was the annual Passover ceremony that recalled the escape of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. . We find it difficult to appreciate the sense in which the Hebrews spoke of it as "a memorial" of the escape from slavery in Egypt, meaning that it was recalled into the present in full power. It became present again for each new generation. It made God's saving power available to them in their new situation. It also provided a foretaste of the joy and fellowship of the Age to come. Such were the ideas Jesus stressed when he gave the Christians a new Passover celebration as "a memorial" of him. This new rite became the means through which his victorious power and presence could flow into the lives of each generation of Christians.

It is no wonder that from the beginning the distinctive act of Christian worship was the Eucharist – called in Acts "the breaking of the bread" (Acts 2:42) and by St Paul, "the Lord's Supper" (1 Corinthians 11:20). At this meal Christians commemorated the Last Supper, the meals Jesus shared with his disciples after the resurrection, and anticipated the Messianic banquet at the end of time. At first Christians met on Saturday evenings, since by Jewish reckoning the new day

(Sunday) began at sunset. While they had supper together, bread was broken and bread and wine shared. To make sure they understood the meaning of it, Paul wrote to the Corinthian church reminding them how Jesus had said, “This is my body... This is my blood.... do this in remembrance of me.” He also warned them against unworthy reception, “not discerning the Body” (1 Corinthians 11 11 :23-26).

These Eucharistic meals would have been presided over by a visiting Apostle or Prophet and then in time a group of elders lead by an overseer (a bishop) and assisted by deacons. Hymns and Psalms would have been sung and passages read from the Greek translation of the Old Testament and, as time went on, passages from the new writings – the Gospels and letters of Paul and other apostles.

3. The Patristic Period

After the period written about in the New Testament ended the Church gradually grew and expanded though it also experienced persecution. This is the period of the Patriarchs (fathers) of the Church. The Patristic writers were the leaders and teachers of the Christian Church between the 1st and 8th Centuries. Well known ones include Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Origen, Tertullian, Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius, Augustine of Hippo, and Gregory the Great.

During this time a number of matters were decided which were of very great importance for the future of the Church.

A leadership structure was worked out, based on the three orders of bishop (overseer), presbyters (elders), and deacons. Bishops were seen as a focus of unity and as guardians of the Church’s teaching. The deacons were assistants to the bishop. The presbyters were originally the elder advisors of the bishop but as the Church congregations grew in number they became local stand-ins for the bishop.

The “Canon” of scripture was established when it was decided which books should be understood to have special authority.

After the Emperor Constantine became Christian and persecution of Christians for their religious beliefs ceased, several important Church Councils met to define more exactly what the Church believed and correct false teaching and enshrined these statements in what we today call creeds. All these developments were supported and inspired by the faithful worship of the Church, which went on Sunday by Sunday.

In times of persecution Christians risked their lives to worship together on Sundays. Perhaps to avoid detection, it became the custom to celebrate the Eucharist very early in the morning and not as part of a full meal. The essentials of the rite were retained: the use of bread and wine, the prayer of thanksgiving, the breaking of the bread and “communion” or sharing the sacred elements.

All these developments are of importance to Anglicans: as a church we hold steady to those things which the early Church believed to be essential, the scriptures, holy orders, the sacraments and the creeds. The form of worship in early times is of great interest and importance, as it helps us understand present-day forms of worship. However, some of the key documents describing the worship of the early Church have only been rediscovered in the last hundred years. These documents

The Greek words used in the New Testament for Church leaders are: *diakonos* (minister), *presbuteros* (elder) and *episkopos* (overseer).

The English word ‘priest’ is a corruption of the Greek word *presbuteros*.

were not available to the people who drew up our earlier prayer books. The work that scholars have done on them has inspired the recent revisions of our services. It is not a question of simply putting the clock back, for a twenty-first century liturgy must meet modern needs. But at the same time we need to recover the early Church's understanding of worship, particularly of the Eucharist.

For example, here are descriptions in a document written by the Christian teacher called Justin about 150 A.D.

And on the day which is called the day of the sun there is an assembly of all who live in the towns or in the country; and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then the reader ceases, and the president speaks, admonishing us and exhorting us to imitate these excellent examples. Then we arise all together and offer prayers; and ... when we have concluded our prayer, bread is brought and wine and water, and the president in like manner offers us prayers and thanksgivings with all his might; and the people assent with AMEN; and there is the distribution and partaking by all of the Eucharistic elements; and to them that are not present they are sent by the hand of the deacons. And they that are prosperous and wish to do so give what they will... What is collected is deposited with the president, who gives aid to the orphans and widows and all who are in want by reason of sickness or other causes and to those also that are in prison and to strangers from abroad, in fact to all that are in need he is a protector.

We hold our common assembly the day of the sun, because it is the first day, on which God-put to flight darkness and chaos and made the world, and on the same day Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead...

After thus baptizing him who has been persuaded and has given assent, we bring him to those that are called the brethren ... to offer prayers in common, both for ourselves and for him who has been illuminated and for all everywhere. We salute one another with a kiss when have ended the prayers. Then is brought to the president bread and a cup of water and wine. And he takes them and offers up praise and glory to the Father of all things, through the name of his Son and of the Holy Spirit.

.... When the president has given thanks and all the people have assented, those who are called deacons give to those present a portion of the Eucharist bread and wine and water, and carry it away to those who are absent.

The food is called with us the Eucharist, and of it none is allowed to partake but he that believes that our teachings are true, and has been washed with the washing for the remission of sins ... and so lives as Christ directed. For we do not receive them as ordinary food and drink ... but the food blessed by the prayer of the word which we received from him ... this food is the flesh and blood of Jesus who was made flesh. ...

In reading Justin's account of the Eucharist we can all recognise things that are still part of our worship today. It is clear that there are three aspects to the service.

A service of the Word

This was a synagogue service like element, involving the use of scripture - the Old Testament and the "memoirs of the Apostles" (our Gospels), a sermon and

intercessions. The leader who presided and preached the sermon was the bishop, From other sources we know that those who were not yet baptised were blessed and dismissed after this part of the service.

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's supper, requiring four actions, all based on what Jesus did at the Last Supper:

- Taking of bread and wine
- Giving thanks and thereby setting aside or consecrating the elements for a special use
- Breaking the bread for distribution.
- Sharing the consecrated bread and wine - communion.

The going-out element

This is highlighted by the deacons taking communion to those who were absent (which would include the sick and those in prison for their faith). Also by the taking of a collection, not for church expenses or clergy stipends but for the relief of those in need. The early Christians were known for their generosity, which was extended also to those outside their fellowship.

It is not difficult to see the same shape of the liturgy in all the various versions of the Book of Common Prayer though that shape is particularly clear in the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*.

Why do we have four Eucharistic prayers in the 1989 Prayer Book?

In the earliest days of the Church there was no here was no fixed form for the Eucharistic prayer so the bishop who presided prayed in his own words.

The earliest full eucharistic prayer known today comes from Hippolytus, who also lived in Rome and wrote about 50 years after Justin. Hippolytus wanted to provide guidelines as to what should be included in the prayer so he wrote one to serve as a model. Because of its early date, Hippolytus's prayer has received a great deal of attention from scholars. They noted that the thanksgiving covered all the great acts of God from creation to the resurrection and ascension of our Lord; that it included the narrative of what Jesus did at the last Supper and also a prayer for the Holy Spirit to come upon the gifts and the worshippers. All these things, they decided, should be included in modern Eucharistic prayers.

Both the third and fourth Eucharistic prayers in the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* are based on the prayer of Hippolytus. The third is almost identical with the one of the then new Roman Catholic prayers and the fourth has been taken over from the Anglican Church in Canada. In using them we are reminded of our links with the whole Church past and present.

5. Change and Development

When Christian worship became public in the fourth century many large churches were built and the services were conducted with more ceremony than before. Even so, the whole congregation still participated in the Eucharist. Churches were usually built with a semi-circular apse at one end, and there the bishop and presbyters had their seats. When he presided at the Eucharist, the bishop stood behind the altar facing the people. One of the deacons read the gospel, other deacons led the people's intercessions, received the offerings and helped administer communion. The unbaptised were blessed and sent away halfway through the service while the baptized stayed to receive communion.

By the end of the 300s the whole Roman Empire was officially Christian. As a result of its official status, many people joined the Church without a deep commitment to it. The Church's teaching stressed the holiness of the Eucharist and the importance of careful preparation for communion. Many people began to abstain from communion, feeling they were unworthy to receive it. Gradually lay communion became very infrequent. Shortly after this the western part of the Roman Empire collapsed and was invaded by tribes from the north who created their own kingdoms. In time they were all converted to Christianity but very often the kings and nobles remained illiterate and the only educated people were the clergy. In the absence of strong political leadership, the authority of the Pope or Bishop of Rome grew stronger in the west. Gradually the eastern and western parts of the Church drifted apart theologically and politically and finally separated.

In the west, church services were still in Latin, although most people could no longer understand the language. Increasingly the priests saw themselves as offering worship on behalf of the congregation without their active participation. In the end priests were ordered to say the great Eucharistic Prayer of Thanksgiving silently so that the congregation should not hear the holy words. That practice came as an enormous departure from the earlier practice of the church. Church architecture also reflected this change, and many churches were built that had screens separating the areas where priests could go from those of the congregation. The altar was placed close to the east wall, far away from the congregation, and the priest celebrated with his back to them. The emphasis was no longer on the joy of present communion with the risen Christ, but rather on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross renewed in the act of sacrificial worship. Moreover people came to Mass to adore Christ present in the sacrament, not to receive communion – in fact most of them only communicated at Easter. Much of the Church's worship was beautiful and there was a great deal of individual devotion, but an understanding of the corporate nature of worship had been much reduced.

This period, which historians call the late "Middle Ages" is of much interest to Anglicans, partly because their parent church in England has inherited much from it. In the 1800s, Anglicans who were trying to add beauty and dignity to worship looked on the Middle Ages as the golden age of English religion. When they restored churches they tried to produce the pre-Reformation fittings and furnishings in every detail. This "back to the Middle Ages" movement even affected the building of churches in Africa. Today we realise that some of the enthusiasm was misplaced and led to the repetition of mistaken forms of worship, ritual and ceremonial that had little to do with the worship of the first Christians.

6. The Reformation

The sixteenth-century Reformers worked to make the Christian religion intelligible and alive for all the people of their time. Our own predecessors in the Church of England made the decision to retain all that they thought was good from their past while reforming everything in the light of both scripture and what their scholars could discover about the life of the early church.

The main author of the *Book of Common Prayer*, who died as a martyr, was Archbishop Cranmer. He was convinced of the need to make it possible for all Christians in the land to worship together in their own language in services that offered full participation. The Bible was once again to be heard clearly and in its wholeness. The psalms were restored to the congregation as a vehicle for their praise and prayers. Cranmer wanted to keep as much as he could of the existing worship, which was to some extent familiar to the people, while pruning and improving it wherever he could. One of his strengths was his willingness to borrow and use good features of other people's liturgies, Protestant, Catholic and even Eastern Orthodox.

Cranmer also had a gift for writing clear and dignified English, which he used both to translate the old Latin prayers and to compose his own. That is one reason why his work has lasted for so long; The *Book of Common Prayer* of 1662 reproduces Cranmer's second Prayer Book of 1552 with only slight revisions. The *A book of Common Prayer – South Africa* of 1954 was based on the 1662 book and still used Cranmer's English (though with modernised spelling). The *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* has changed much of this but retains several of Cranmer's prayers, e.g., the Collect for Purity and the Prayer of Humble Access in the Eucharist.

Although the Reformers took the early Church as their model, they were handicapped by having very few of the ancient documents. Some of these have only come to light in the 1900s. Cranmer's "Prayer of Consecration" which concentrates wholly on the death of Christ, reflects late Middle Ages devotion to the Passion. Ancient Eucharistic prayers concentrate more on to the Resurrection and Ascension and look forward to Christ's coming in glory. That is also true of modern ones.

Cranmer and the other Reformers wanted to restore frequent communion, but failed to persuade the people to change their old habits. The *Book of Common Prayer* laid down that there must be at least three people to communicate with the priest. Instead of encouraging people to come to communion more often, this rule had the effect of making the normal Sunday service Matins (Morning Prayer) and "Ante-communion" (that is the Eucharist service stopped short after the Prayer for the Church). This was a serious departure from primitive practice. It meant that a revival of the ancient weekly Eucharist did not become the norm in Anglican parish churches for a very long time.

7. The Roman Catholic Church old and new

As part of its reaction to the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church decided to make some reforms in its liturgy and to enforce uniformity. In 1570 Pope Pius 5 issued a new Missal or Mass book. The Latin language was retained and the details of ritual and ceremonial laid down exactly. The liturgy remained in that form for four centuries. Mass was the centre of worship and devotion, but it was celebrated by the priest without the active participation of the congregation.

With the spread of literacy a demand arose for vernacular translations of the Missal, so that the people could follow the priest's prayer silently. This was only allowed at the beginning of the 1900s. About the same time Pius 10 gave permission for the congregation to sing some parts of the Mass, such as the Gloria and Creed in Latin. He also encouraged frequent communion.

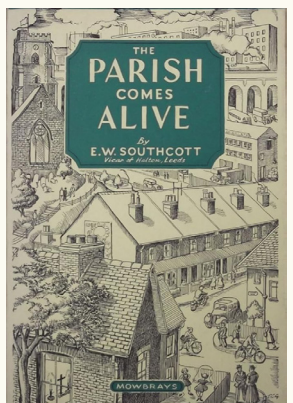
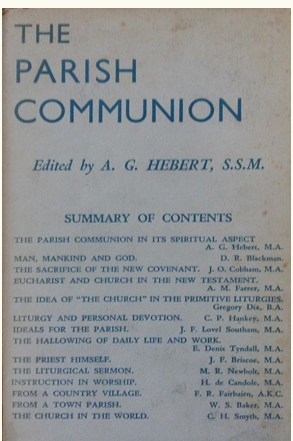
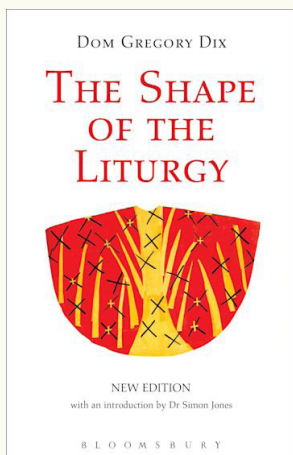
Meanwhile certain scholarly priests had begun to study ancient liturgies, not with an academic but with a pastoral concern. That was the beginning of the Liturgical Movement, which had the aim of "giving the Mass back to the people". The movement began in a few centres in Belgium and Germany and later spread to France. Despite the interruption of two world wars an increasing number of parishes became involved. By taking an active and intelligent part in the Eucharist, communicants were helped to discover themselves as part of the whole People of God, commissioned as God's agents for change in the world.

[Anglicans as well as Roman Catholics were affected by the Liturgical Movement. A very influential book, *The Shape of the Liturgy* was written by an Anglican scholar, Gregory Dix, who had made a thorough study of ancient texts. Another important Anglican book was a symposium on *The Parish Communion*, edited by A.G. Herbert (1954) and popular works such as *The Parish comes alive* by E.W. Southcott (1956). Gradually, a Sunday morning parish communion became the main service and replaced Morning Prayer.]

All this preparatory work made it possible for the Second Vatican Council (1962 to 1965) to accept a revolutionary document, "The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy". In it worship was presented as the corporate act of the People of God. It called for a revision of all the existing liturgical services to ensure the full and active participation of the whole congregation. The changes this entailed were embodied in "The Restored Roman Missal" promulgated by Paul 6 in 1969.

Perhaps the biggest change was the translation of all services into the vernacular. The new order for the Mass was much more simple and direct. The congregation joined in the prayers and participated in other ways, such as taking up the offertory, giving the Peace and reading some of the lessons. The prayers reserved for the priest had to be said "audibly and clearly". A wide selection of scripture was read and there had to be a sermon at least on Sundays and Festivals. Good communication between priest and congregation was stressed. Instead of having every movement controlled by the **rubrics**, the priest was encouraged to develop a more relaxed style in leading worship and does not have to suppress his own personality.

These changes came as a shock to some high church or Anglo-Catholic Anglicans linked to the movement from the 1800s to get back to what was good in pre-Reformation worship. One way they had done this was to take over current Roman Catholic practice. So an Anglican High Mass became almost identical



with a Roman one except for the words. Anglicans trained in that way have naturally found the post Vatican Two changes confusing. The Roman Catholics seemed to have become more Protestant than they were! They have needed time to adjust to new ways.

However, we as Anglicans should welcome those changes. After four hundred years Roman Catholics had accepted many of the things the Reformers fought for, such as the use of the vernacular and the restoration of scripture to its rightful place in worship. But they have done this chiefly by going behind the old controversies and taking advantage of modern scholarship to discover what worship was actually like in the early undivided Church.

8. Changes in the modern Anglican Church

Anglicans, like Roman Catholics, had a frozen liturgy for a great many years. Proposals to modify the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* were made early in the 1900s. In the Church of England they led to bitter argument between opposing groups. The proposed 1928 Prayer Book was an unsatisfactory compromise. To become legal it had to receive the assent of the British Parliament and the House of Commons threw it out. This did not prevent other Anglican provinces embarking on liturgical revision and various modifications were made to the Book of Common Prayer. However, the Anglican Communion was still linked by the use of a common Prayer Book, even though in slightly different versions.

After much discussion, in the South Africa “An Alternative Form of the Order of the Administration of Holy Communion” was allowed for in 1929 and was incorporated with little change into the *A Book of Common Prayer South Africa* of 1954. Parishes were allowed to continue with the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* if they preferred, but the new prayer book was increasingly accepted.

The Church of South India was formed in 1947 out of four denominations active in that area - including Anglicans. The need was soon felt for a common form of worship and as a first stage a Liturgy for the Lord's Supper was produced in 1951. The compilers drew on a variety of sources, including the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and the liturgy of the ancient Syrian Church in South India. By this time the new liturgical ideas were influencing not only Anglicans but various Protestant denominations, so this new Liturgy attracted widespread attention. Bishop Leslie Brown, who moved from India to become archbishop of Uganda, embodied some of the new ideas in *A Liturgy for Africa* published in 1964.

In South Africa, the Society of the Sacred Mission, working in Bloemfontein diocese, saw the liturgy as being at the heart of their pastoral and evangelistic work. With the encouragement of their bishop, they recast the prayer book service in a form known as the “Modderpoort Rite”. Another enthusiastic group, who called themselves “Faith in Action”, also helped to prepare the whole Province to accept changes in liturgy. Experimental alternative forms were authorised in 1969 and they prepared the way for “Liturgy 1975” as the first stage in the production of a whole new Prayer Book.

To do this work the Province has a Liturgical Committee as well as translation committees for all the various languages. However a new service only becomes official when it has been passed by Provincial Synod. Some of the new material came out first in a number of small booklets, e.g. Christian Initiation, the

Marriage Service, Funeral Services. The work was completed with the publication of *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* which soon became the main one in Sunday use.

The Church of England went through a similar period of experiment before publishing the *Alternative Service Book* in 1980. There is a strong family likeness between that book and the South African *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*, but our own services are fully geared to the Southern African situation. For example, in the section on funerals, services of prayer in the home of the deceased and another for the raising of a tombstone meet cultural needs which might not be experienced outside Africa. If one studied all the new Prayer books produced in the Anglican Communion in recent years, one would find that as well as providing for local pastoral needs they have certain features in common: continuity with the *Book of Common Prayer* together with acceptance of the liturgical insights of the present day.

None of these prayer books represent the last word in liturgical revision. Currently work is being finalised on a revision of the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*.

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Worship: Self test questions

For multiple-choice questions choose the correct statement out of options (a), (b) or (c) and mark it (✓).

1. What words would you associate with the concept of worship?
2. Name some words or phrases that characterise Christian worship.
3. What does the word "mystery" mean in the liturgy?
 - (a) a ghostly appearance
 - (b) a puzzle
 - (c) a hidden or secret reality
4. How would you answer a person who says they do not attend Sunday worship as they do not get anything out of it?
5. What does the term liturgy mean?
 - (a) services in which there are hymns
 - (b) free extempore prayers
 - (c) a fixed format for a religious service
6. Define a sacrament.
7. List these prayer books in their correct chronological order (*Liturgy XX; An Anglican Prayer Book XXXX; Book of Common Prayer: South Africa; Book of Common Prayer; A liturgy for Africa*):
1662 _____
1954 _____
1964 _____
1975 _____
1989 _____
8. What meals that are recorded in the New Testament are linked to the Eucharist?
9. What are the four elements or actions of the Eucharist that copy what Jesus did at the Last Supper?

Answers to self-test exercises

1. What words would you associate with the concept of worship?

Words used in this booklet include holiness, praise, worthiness, goodness, and glorify.

2. Name some words or phrases that characterise Christian worship.

Some used in this text are response to God, revelation, proclamation, relationship, corporate, and mission.

3. What does the word “mystery” mean in the liturgy?

(c) a hidden or secret reality

4. How would you answer a person who says they do not attend Sunday worship as they do not get anything out of it.

To belong to the Church. includes attending corporate worship in order to take part in the Church's offering of praise to God, irrespective of what we feel we are getting out of it.

5. What does the term liturgy mean?

(c) a fixed format for a religious service

6. Define a sacrament.

An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

7. List these prayer books in their correct chronological order (*Liturgy XX; An Anglican Prayer Book XXXX; Book of Common Prayer: South Africa; Book of Common Prayer; A liturgy for Africa*):

1662 *Book of Common Prayer*:

1954 *Book of Common Prayer: South Africa*

1964 *A liturgy for Africa*

1975 *Liturgy 75*

1989 *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*

8. What meals that are recorded in the New Testament are linked to the Eucharist?

The Last Supper, the meals Hesus shared with his disciples after his resurrection, and the looked Messianic Banquet at the end of time.

9. What are the four elements or actions of the Eucharist that copy what Jesus did at the Last Supper?

He took (taking the bread and wine)

He blessed (gave thanks and thereby set aside or consecrating the elements for a special use)

He broke (the bread for distribution)

He gave (shared the consecrated bread and wine - communion)

