



## Stories from the four churches

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**St Ann's** sent three lay leaders on a diocesan course on preparing worship. As a result they came back wanting to set up a planning group for worship. They brought back with them draft terms of reference for such a group, which were discussed and amended by the PCC (see section opposite). The PCC recognized that this was a move away from the previous pattern, where a different house group had planned and led the worship each week. This had resulted in some inconsistency in the worship, though one good thing about it was that a very wide range of people had been involved, so the new planning group had a long list of people in the church who had worship gifts.

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At **St Bartholomew's** the vicar recognizes the difficulty of planning worship for several different country churches. At St Bartholomew's itself the monthly all-age service is planned and led by a group of young parents, two of whom teach in the small Sunday school, so that there is some link between the two. They plan the themes with the vicar six months at a time. This involves deciding on how to handle the theme in terms of teaching, readings, music, prayers and activities. In one village two people have been on a diocesan course on leading worship and can plan a communion service and lead the first part of it until the vicar arrives. In another village the PCC is small enough to discuss worship easily and the vicar has been training some of them to lead the intercessions.

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Planning at **St Christopher's** is in the hands of the staff. The vicar uses a blank form (specimen opposite) which gradually gets filled in, from his initial ideas a couple of months ahead, through discussion with the staff and regular meetings with Sunday school leaders, organist and head server. Copies of the form, duly typed, give all concerned a complete menu for each service.

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The vicar of **St Dodo's** returned from a (compulsory) diocesan clergy conference, at which worship had been on the agenda, keen to put into practice some of the things he had learnt others were doing. The next Sunday's worship had a different structure, with a new confession, creed and Eucharistic Prayer (and no time for the congregation to be taught about them or even to read quietly through them before having to join in). There were also new songs – which the choir hadn't seen before – in the order of service badly duplicated on dark pink paper. The clearest liturgical refrain in the service was 'You'll find it on your pink slip', which amused everyone but the colour-blind. An angry PCC the next week invoked the provisions of the Worship and Doctrine Measure and insisted on a return to the traditional services. Everyone was hurt and the

worship was fossilized.



**Worship Planning Group: terms of reference**

- 1 To review and evaluate all aspects of worship at St Ann’s, including
  - \* structures and patterns of worship on Sunday;
  - \* the relationship between worship and the rest of the life of the church;
  - \* the teaching and preaching programme and the use of music and drama;
  - \* the place of children and other groups.
- 2 To be responsible for the planning and preparation of Sunday worship, including working through other groups such as house groups, choir, music groups, drama group.
- 3 To ensure that the varied gifts of the congregation are being used in worship.
- 4 To plan developments in worship and to prepare for regular PCC discussion of worship.



**St Christopher’s service form: 10.30 a.m. Parish Eucharist**

Season/mood:

President:

Assistants:

Standard service:

Setting:

Introit / introductory music / sentence:

Hymn:

Old Testament:

Psalm:

New Testament:

Canticle/song:

Gospel:

Sermon:

Any special requirements e.g. tapes, visuals:

Intercessions: (who? add items...)

Hymn:

Variable items for Liturgy of the Sacrament:

(words/music for peace, preface, before and during distribution)

Hymn:

Post-communion prayer:

Notices (list...)

Blessing/dismissal

## Discussion starter/Away Day agenda: our worship

- 1 Share in twos or threes: what is really good about our worship?
- 2 Talk or Bible study or discussion:
  - \* What is worship? Look at the section below, which could be reproduced as a handout.
  - \* Would we say more, or less, than this? What is our experience?

\* What should our Sunday worship include? What are the basic ingredients for our worship?

3 From this, in twos and threes, list two or three principles which should govern our worship. Share these with the whole group, and see how much agreement there is. Sometimes we disagree on practical decisions about worship because we don't agree on the principles.

4 Next, consider in small groups practical questions such as:

\* How does the worship meet the needs of the elderly, children of different ages, the disabled, those who find reading difficult, those who need to be stretched intellectually?

\* Should there be more freedom (or less?) in our worship?

\* How should we expect to know the presence of God?

\* How could the intercessions be improved?

\* Then decide which two items should come top of the group's agenda.

5 With everyone together, list the suggested agenda items, see how much overlap there is, and start with the one with most 'votes'. There will not be time to discuss everything. Some items will need further research: two people could be briefed to bring items back to the PCC.

6 For each item, consider four questions.

\* What resources do we need?

\* What barriers or problems are there in the way of taking action on this?

\* What is the timetable for action?

\* Who is responsible for action?



### **Discussion handout:**

### **What is worship?**

A worship planning group, a PCC or church leaders' group would do well to have some discussion in general terms about worship. Are we agreed

about what is worship and what is not, what the ingredients are, what kind of movement, physical, emotional and spiritual, we should expect in worship?

Try completing the sentence, 'Worship is...' Yes, it is giving God his worth, or what he deserves, or glory. 'The true end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever', as Christians said in the seventeenth century. But explore the mechanics of that a bit more: do any of the following paragraphs get near our experience?

Worship is a door open in heaven. We lift up our hearts, listen in to what God is saying, join the angels and archangels and all the saints in heaven in praising God's eternal holiness. We are there and he is here.

Worship is a door open to the inner depths of life. Suddenly, as we worship, there is wholeness, *shalom*, peace, as all the fragmented bits of our being are put into God's perspective. Things make sense, and there is something to hold on to which has hitherto seemed just beyond the grasp of our mind.

Worship is a door open to the rhythms of life. Through festivals, simple rituals, a weekly rhythm, worship marking morning and evening, the whole of life, time and space is claimed for God and given back to him. In the worship he gives it to us again, to use for him, and we know he is concerned with our hopes and fears, politics and problems, families and finance.

Worship is a door to our hearts open in obedience to God. He commands us to worship in spirit and in truth. We respond to the overwhelming majesty of his beauty revealed in creation, to his overwhelming love and grace revealed in his word and in his Son. And as we worship, we are changed...

Now, this is in no sense an agreed definition of worship. Rather, it is intended to stimulate local parish groups and worship leaders to arrive at some agreement on what they expect, or are longing for, in their worship.

Would we say more than this, or less? What is our own experience?

What should our Sunday worship include? What are the basic ingredients for our worship?



**Discussion handout:**

**Service structures – some historical background**

A glance at history shows us the pedigree of the different strands of non-eucharistic worship which we find today in the all-age or 'family' service, Morning and Evening Prayer, and the first half of Holy Communion. In the early centuries of the Church's life there are three strands of non-eucharistic worship:

- \* The Word Service (first part of Holy Communion)
- \* Daily Prayer (Morning and Evening Prayer)
- \* Services of Teaching or Instruction.

The evidence here is from the writings of Justin Martyr (who wrote in the middle of the second century) and the *Apostolic Tradition* (written in the early third century, and traditionally ascribed to Hippolytus), but it is also to be found in other places.

Justin's description of The Word Service consists of readings from the prophets or memoirs of the Apostles, read for as long as time allowed. This is followed by a discourse, and common prayer. This core of material is still recognizable in all major traditions, even though other elements were added in the intervening centuries. Usually there is an approach, with prayer and praise, and possibly penitence; then the readings, the last of which is a Gospel reading, followed in turn by a sermon, the creed and intercessions. What sort of 'shape' does this give us? It would be possible to see the climax of such a service either in the reading of the Gospel (even though this is a later addition), or in the intercessions, as the response of faith – the living sacrifice of the Church responding to the Word proclaimed and preached.

The content of daily prayer in the *Apostolic Tradition* is less precise. It is prayer in the heart, with a few people, or many. The emphasis is on the *times* of daily prayer. The later evidence of East and West suggests that the main times were morning and evening, and the service consisted of praise, using fixed psalms, hymns and songs, together with intercession. Later developments included:

- \* many introductory prayers;
- \* the continuous recitation of the Psalter;
- \* readings from Scripture of ever increasing length, along with other Christian writings.

The original core of daily prayer, praise to God at certain times of the day, eventually became obscured, and its structure distorted, by lengthy psalm-singing and readings.

The 'Teaching' type of service centring on instruction in the Word of God is referred to in the *Apostolic Tradition* and may be a direct offspring of the corresponding synagogue service, a Bible study with no particular liturgical shape.

As history proceeds, these three types of service, which major respectively on reading the Word, on prayer and praise, and on teaching, do not remain distinct. At the Reformation, Cranmer reduced the seven medieval ‘hours’ into Morning and Evening Prayer, combining prayer and praise with an emphasis on reading and teaching the Word.

Before we draw some conclusions from this, a further glance at history suggests that Christians in the early Church were not divided up according to *age*, but rather according to *stage*, so that catechumens (those preparing for baptism, however old they were) were excluded from the Eucharist. Their formal departure at the end of the Word Service would have been a dramatic feature of the liturgy in a large building, probably involving some upheaval in the congregation as a whole. Perhaps we might make similar structural provision today. As they did in the early Church, we are again providing not only for individuals but for whole families to move from a non-Christian to a Christian lifestyle. Should we still be organizing our church life and worship on the assumption that people grow from being less Christian to more Christian in parallel with their age (and so older people but not children are admitted to communion ...)?

## Additions and insertions

### Stories from the four churches

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At **St Ann’s** there is usually some kind of ‘spot’ which is particularly suitable for the children before they go out. Sometimes it is a fairly riotous action chorus which (depending on the mood of the service) usually fits best among the introductory choruses. Today there is a brief quiz (with scoring on the projection equipment) on the Old Testament story which is read in church and forms the basis of the teaching when they leave. This naturally comes straight after it is read. Sometimes there is an interview with a member of the congregation, or a visitor or past member of the church (always done with a microphone). Some interviews are lively enough to be done when the children are present, or of particular interest to them, and may come before or after one of the readings; others fit much better as part of the sermon or, more usually, just before the intercessions so that prayer follows naturally from them. Today there is a missionary couple who are returning overseas after home leave, and the farewell prayer and commissioning takes place after communion, immediately before the blessing. Apart from the notices (before the intercessions today) the only other ‘insertion’ is the laying on of hands for healing, which happens in a non-intrusive way as people come forward to receive communion.

□

Today is Rogation Sunday at **St Bartholomew’s** and the archdeacon is there for Evensong in the afternoon. The congregation have saved up for



a new electric organ to replace the old harmonium, and it is dedicated after the second lesson, before the small choir sing an anthem. After the sermon, everyone goes out in a haphazard kind of procession to the lych gate, where a pair of new gates, given in memory of a young farmer killed last year, are blessed. There is prayer for the family, and conversation with them as the procession moves off to the highest point at the top of the churchyard for the Rogationtide blessing of fields, crops, sheep and sea. The blessing of the people, present at the service and in the surrounding village, ends the service. Sometimes an insertion on this scale becomes the focus and climax towards which the worship moves.

□

The vicar at **St Christopher's** has studied Note 7 of *Common Worship* Holy Communion (*Common Worship* page 331), so silences are inserted at the appropriate points, and the service moves along with a clear and dignified rhythm of music, words and space for reflection. Today, ministers of the Eucharist are being commissioned to take communion to the sick, and this is most appropriately done immediately before the Peace, with some words of explanation, questions to them and a prayer of commissioning. This is the point in the service where the annual commissioning of the PCC and church leaders takes place in April, using some of the Words for Dedication from Resource Section I of *New Patterns*, but other points are used when appropriate. A couple of weeks ago a new head chorister was installed after one of the readings before the choir led the singing of the psalms.

□

At **St Dodo's** the vicar knows he has a number of different things to get into the service, but has failed to sort out on paper where they should come. It is a Parade Service, and there is a baptism. He announces the first hymn and goes to the sanctuary to collect the assorted Scout and Guide flags which don't begin their slow procession from the back of the church until during the last verse. He gets impatient and flustered, and doesn't get back to his reading desk until after the Reader, trying to be helpful, has said 'Let us pray.' Oh dear! He had meant to welcome the baptismal party and give a few notices. Never mind: there is plenty of time to do this after the second reading because the churchwardens (despite his frantic signalling during the psalm) have failed to come forward with the stand, portable glass sugar-bowl font and water for the baptism. So, having begun the baptism part of the service, he realizes people can't insert the child's name into the prayer (their usual custom) as he has neither welcomed the baptismal party nor presented the child. He invites the parents and godparents to the front and introduces them while the wardens get things ready. To fill in time, he asks them a couple of impromptu questions (he has heard that other churches sometimes do this), but they don't seem very prepared for it, and get embarrassed. To give himself time to think, he puts an extra hymn after the baptism, but forgets that the third hymn is always the one when the collection is taken and so is faced unexpectedly with an approaching column of plate-bearers. In the confusion, he forgets that he had promised one of the Guide leaders that they could present a gift to one of their leaders who is moving away. He remembers just as the flag party are half way down the aisle to collect their flags in the last hymn and – rightly – judges it to be

too late.



## Interviews

Interviews have some advantages over inviting someone to talk for five minutes:

- \* the interviewer is in control of the time taken;
- \* the interviewer can direct the conversation to those things the congregation will be most interested in, and interrupt and curtail boring bits;
- \* the variety in voices makes them easier to listen to.

## How to prepare

- \* Don't meet to 'talk it over' hours or days beforehand. It will taste like left-overs and be like trying to recapture a spontaneous joke when the circumstances are different. Meeting the victim three or four minutes before is plenty.
- \* Do some reading and thinking around the background to the interview. Decide on an 'angle'. Be selective in what you want to ask. The informed interviewer can select what is most interesting or relevant to the congregation.
- \* Have a simple outline you can hold in your mind, perhaps three or four basic questions that can be elaborated. Make sure there is a progression so that they lead on from one to the next.

## How to do it

- \* Use a microphone if one is available.
- \* Be mobile: face the victim and also turn to the congregation.
- \* Above all, be interested. If the interviewer is not interested in the answers to the questions, no one else will be. If the interviewer yawns, so will everyone else.



## Notices

## When in the service?

Sometimes it is tempting to see the notices as nothing more than an annoyance and an intrusion into worship. Perhaps the first thing to do is to recognize their value as part of the shared life of the worshipping community. Only then can questions about the best place for them be addressed, in the context of the structure and flow of the whole service.

*Common Worship* Holy Communion Note 9 suggests three possible places:

At the beginning:

- \* Notices can be used to give the congregation some sense of unity, of being part of the same family, as family news and forthcoming events are shared. They can also help to set the atmosphere for worship.
- \* Some people might miss them by arriving late, saying, 'It's only the notices'; on the other hand the notices may be so attractive and important that people get there in time for them.
- \* People who go out to the children's groups or the creche can leave for their activities having heard the notices.
- \* If not well done, they can get the service off to a bad start.
- \* If at the beginning, they could be done before the president enters (in which case they should be done by someone else) or after the opening greeting (possibly by the president). This might be seen as marking them out as part of the worship, and spiritually important.

Before the intercessions:

- \* They can be used to prepare and give information for the intercessions, so that people can pray for items of news or events to come.
- \* It may help to provide a break in the middle of the service.
- \* Notices here can disrupt the flow of the worship.

At the end:

- \* Everyone has arrived by then.
- \* The notices are seen as part of the Christian community going out to serve God in the world: things to fix our eyes on, to pray for, and times to meet again during the week.

- \* It is too late to pray for these things in this service.
- \* It may seem disruptive to those who want to go on quietly praying: notices are a community-centred activity, not easily mixed with private prayer. Which is most important at this point in this particular service?

### How to do them

- \* A printed weekly bulletin or notice sheet; if there are spoken notices as well, these should be used to highlight important items, not to add another long collection of details.
- \* Vary the person who gives the notices: why should it be the function of the person leading the worship?
- \* Try two people sharing the task as 'presenters', with media-style headlines.
- \* Use visuals, such as a projector or some drama.
- \* Be enthusiastic; look at the congregation; remember there is a spiritual purpose to the notices.
- \* Evaluate and review both the place in the service and the method. Do they outweigh the sermon in length and importance? Do they contribute spiritually to the growth of the church at worship?



### Questions to ask when putting something different into the service

- \* Is this something covered by the Notes in *Common Worship*, or by the examples here?
- \* Is it such a large item that it will change the feel of the whole service? If so, would it be better to construct a special service?
- \* What is the effect of this item likely to be on the parts of the service around it? Where will it fit most naturally so that it contributes to and does not halt the flow of the worship? For example, if it is giving information, would this lead into prayer? If it is a special musical contribution, can it replace or be part of a Godward part of the worship? If a procession, can it happen at the beginning or end, or when there is movement anyway in the service?
- \* Is it going to help or hinder the congregation's sense of God's presence and his purpose for them? If it is likely to hinder, is it really necessary?

## Structures and 'specials'

## Stories from the four churches

It's the fifth Sunday in the month, and each church is having a special 'family' service, exploring how to use A Service of the Word to help them produce something a bit different from the regular worship.

□

There are a large number of children and young families present in **St Ann's** for another in their series of thematic services. They have been trying to involve people of all ages in the action of the worship. As the service begins, everyone learns an acclamation:

**God has set his rainbow in the clouds:**

**he will remember his covenant for ever.**

Using the suggestion in Resource Section G, this is used as a 'shout' at intervals during the service, a reminder of the theme as the service moves from one section to the next. The drama group have some small pieces of drama, one for each section, based on the Bible story, but the main thrust of the action is to involve the whole congregation. The first section, considering God's problem of confronting sin in the world, leads into the responsive confession for creation (B42). The children in the drama saw and hammer to music, building the ark, and round up the animals into the ark, as the story is read. There is no sermon – the whole service is full of the Word, but there is time for two well-prepared testimonies to God's rescue operation before the service ends with a responsive thanksgiving for creation (G66) and the sharing of the Peace.

□

At **St Bartholomew's** the planning group have been looking at Example 2 – the conversation structure – in the section above on planning and preparing a Service of the Word ([here](#)). They have been struck by the idea that Morning Prayer is like a conversation, with God speaking and then the congregation replying, and have decided to use this to help people understand and benefit more from the regular services. Their service outline uses 'Hello', 'Sorry', 'Thank you', 'Please' as the headings for the main sections, held up on large visual aid cards as the service proceeds.

□

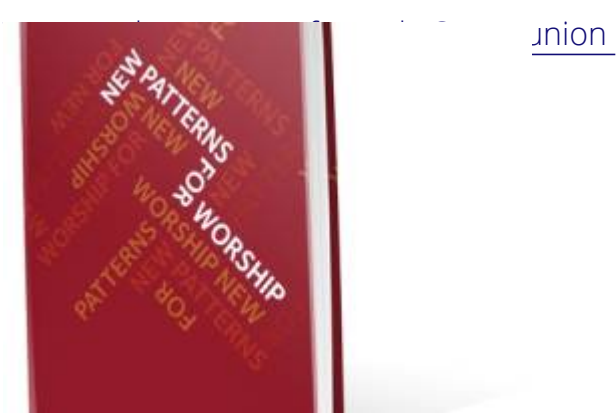
There are two children being baptized at **St Christopher's**, so that provides the overall theme for the worship. The clergy have looked at the *Common Worship* Baptism service, and decided to have a service which is not eucharistic, and which involves people as much as possible. They take as their basis the Holy Communion with Baptism Sample Service in *New Patterns*, ending with the Peace. One of the readings is dramatized, and a procession of children brings in the water, ceremonially poured from a large jug.

The vicar at **St Dodo’s** called a meeting of his worship planning group, which has representatives from every organization in the church, many of them enthusiastic to take over the running of worship from the vicar. In generous mood, he said yes to all their ideas for the fifth Sunday all-age service, but didn’t think it possible to get them to agree on a common theme and also forgot to make a note of what each was offering. He thinks it’s just a matter of adding a few things in to Morning Prayer, but as the service unfolds we are treated to a disorganized concert-like jostling for position between the Guides parading to the front with their flags, the women’s meeting (they used to be ‘Young Wives’) anthem for St Cecilia’s Day, a rogue drummer from the youth group who tries to get in on every hymn, three dramatized versions of the Good Samaritan, one in full costume with trip-over lighting effects... All agree it is a very special service.

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