
**THE ROLE OF A LAY READER IN REGULAR CORPORATE WORSHIP
IN THE ABSENCE OF AN ORDAINED PASTOR**

Adopted by the Commission on Worship, September 1991. The Department of Liturgics prepared this statement in response to the Council of Presidents' request for guidelines for lay readers in leading worship. The statement was redrafted by the Department in 1999 for consistency with guidelines recently drawn up for the liturgical responsibility of the presiding minister.

Edited and formatted: September 1999

- 1 The lay reader functions as worship leader in the absence of the pastor.
- 2 Lay readers are
 - appointed by the congregation
 - prepared for their role by the pastor
 - installed as recommended in *Church Rites*, p 169.
- 3 Lay reading services are normally led from the lectern.
- 4 The lay reader may be assisted by cantors, lectors, and intercessors. The cantor could chant the sung parts of the service along with the psalm of the day; the lector could take Scripture readings; and the intercessor could lead the prayers. These would normally be done from the reading desk.
- 5 Lay readers do not need to wear vestments, but, where it is customary in congregations to do so, an alb (without stole) or cassock and surplice (also without stole) may be worn.
- 6 The emphasis in a lay reading service is on prayer, praise, and Scripture readings. A sermon is not always necessary. Where a sermon is read, however, the pastor either writes or approves it.
- 7 A service with holy communion is not used in the absence of the pastor, since it is the pastor who presides at the Lord's supper.
- 8 Lay readers may use one of the following orders:
 - Matins (morning) (*Supplement*, 36)
 - Morning Praise—Revised Modern Matins from *Worship Today*
 - Vespers (afternoon or evening) (*Supplement*, 47)
 - Evening Praise—A Modern Vespers (*Worship Today*, 35)
 - Responsive Prayer—Morning (*Supplement*, 55)
 - Responsive Prayer—Evening (*Supplement*, 56)
 - Service without Holy Communion (*Supplement*, 23)
 - Service of the Word (*Approved Worship Services*, DO2).
- 9 Adjustments will need to be made in those parts of the service that have a special connection with the office of the holy ministry.

- The confession of sins (which is optional in a reading service) will be followed by the declaration of grace (*Supplement*, 23), or the words, ‘The almighty and merciful Lord grant us pardon and forgiveness of all our sins.’
- The final blessing will be in ‘us’ rather than ‘you’ form:
‘The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all.’
OR
‘The blessing of almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with us always.’