

# St. Paul's Cathedral - Leading Intercessions

The following is intended as a guideline for leading intercessions at Sung Eucharist or at Contemporary Eucharist.

In most churches today laypeople are invited to lead the intercessions during the Eucharist. Here are a few suggestions to aid the intercessor: ten points worth addressing for this solemn but most joyful ministry.

1. Read the scripture passage for the day. They can usually be found on the pew sheet for the preceding Sunday. If not, then do ask any of the clergy who will have a copy of the lectionary. We follow the Common Worship Three Year Cycle Lectionary. The year runs from Advent and we are currently in Year B. The lectionary is available at the top of the Roster. Pray for guidance as you prepare for this act of worship.
2. Write down what you want to say, fully or in notes according to your confidence in your own memory. I usually find that it helps me to have the "text" complete, though sometimes you have to be flexible to include the most recent, or to address requests which are sometimes made as you enter the church on the Sunday in question.
3. Make your intercessions particular by supplementing the suggested forms with specific immediate matters, local or from the wider world. If you are in doubt about any topic then do consult with one of the clergy. Respect confidentiality: individual people rarely problems mentioned in public. Avoid too lists of requests from the morning newspaper.
4. Do not make your intercessions *too* particular. This is not the time for giving out notices. Pray for the "next meeting of the Council" rather than the "next meeting of the Council is on Thursday at 5:30".
5. Avoid voicing personal opinions. By all means pray for causes or groups which you have at heart, but do not extol their virtues or the wickedness of their opponents. We are all sinners and all children of God who loves us, and the oppressors need our prayers as much as the oppressed.
6. As well as a careful reading of the scripture passages, have a word with the preacher to see if there is anything he/she would like picked up in the intercessions.
7. Do not take too long. Very long intercessions can lose the devout attention of the congregation and upset the balance of the service. The intercessions are not a further sermon, but rather a focusing of the church in prayer for the church, the world, others and ourselves. Rarely do people comment that intercessions are too short: Between 3 and 5 minutes is a good guide that is about 250-300 words.

8. Be sure that your speech is clear and audible. Success comes from clarity and good projection. Before you lead intercessions for the first time rehearse using the microphone at the Lectern. Please ask any of the clergy for help with this. There is nothing worse than not being heard because the sound system is not tuned to your voice.
9. Use your natural voice, adapted only as necessary for being heard by more people.
10. Despite all these injunctions, accept the duty with confidence and joy. Be reverent but not anxious. You are offering prayer to a loving Father, in the presence of other Christians.

I hope the above is helpful. There is any number of books of prayers in the Cathedral and in the Bookstore. We will be very willing to lend you some if you would like to supplement your own words with those of others. I also hope to have some in the Library.

There is some sample 'framework' prayers in Common Worship. They are available online at <http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/principal-services/holy-communion/supplementaryfront/intercessions.aspx>

#### **SOME HELPFUL BOOKS**

1. The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer
2. Glimpses of Glory [Year B]\* David Adam available to be borrowed from the Dean
3. LivingStones –Prayers of Intercession\* – Susan Sayers

#### **Outline Prayer**

The Church: Our Archbishop is Peter  
Government: President and Chief Executive  
Families & Friends  
All who suffer in body, mind or spirit  
The Departed  
Fellowship of the Communion of Saints

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