

**LITURGICAL MINISTRIES PROFILES:
A CUSTOMARY FOR
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF VERMONT**

**Compiled and developed by
the Christian Formation Committee
of the Diocesan Commission on Ministry**

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Introduction

What is this handbook?

This handbook is meant to serve as a resource for all parishes in the Diocese of Vermont. We hope it will help inform about commonly accepted Episcopal liturgical practices and their meaning, as well as the correct titles, terms and expectations for each liturgical ministry – but please keep in mind that it is ***not a rule book, but a resource.***

It is also both a work in progress and the first step in what will eventually become a diocesan training program for liturgical ministers. We are currently working with a diocesan consultant to create a “train the trainers” workshop that will help those training liturgical ministers in their own parishes. The workshops will be offered at several locations throughout the diocese, and their content will be sent to parishes so it can be added to this handbook.

How to use it:

Each liturgical ministry profile stands alone, with a separate page for notes you may want to add. While some parishes may have all the ministries that we have profiled, many will not. We have tried to cover every one we could think of. Some parishes may want to open themselves up to providing opportunities for new ministries, and we hope this will be a useful guide for doing so. Others may find it useful for updating liturgical practices. ***Please use this handbook as it works best for your parish, and your individual parish customs and needs.***

You will notice (we hope!) that some words in each profile have an * next to them. This means that you will find the definition in the glossary at the beginning of the handbook.

We have also included many of our favorite resources at the end of the handbook, and the names and contact information for the members of the Liturgical Ministries sub-group who are available as resources as well.

Please feel free to send comments, suggestions, and questions our way. We will be revisiting the handbook after it has been in use for a year, and will no doubt be making changes then, based on the input we receive.

Blessings,

The Christian Formation Committee of the Diocesan Commission on Ministry
Pentecost 2006

Glossary

So THAT'S What That Means!

- ablutions The cleansing of the chalice(s), paten, and other vessels after the administration of Communion. This may be done at the altar or at the credence, or after the dismissal. The ritual of the presider washing his/her hands or fingers before the Eucharistic Prayer is also called "ablutions." See also "lavabo."
- alb The white vestment worn by the ministers presiding at a Eucharist - "Alb" comes from the Latin "alba", meaning white.
- aumbry A receptacle to hold the Reserved Sacrament, that is affixed to a wall, or sits on a shelf apart from an altar. An aumbry may also be used as a place where chrism and oil are kept; this aumbry is separate from the one used for the Sacrament, and is not identified by the burning of a Sanctuary Lamp.
- boat A small container, with a lid and spoon, in which incense is kept before it is placed in the thurible.
- burse A pocket or envelope of stiff board covered with material of the same liturgical color as the vestments, in which the corporal is kept when not in use on the altar.
- cassock The vestment (usually black, although sometimes participants wear red or blue) worn plain or with a surplice for non-Eucharistic services. (Cottas, very short surplices, are being replaced by surplices and are generally recommended now only for young children.)

catechumen	A person being taught the principles of Christianity - for instance, person(s) being prepared for Baptism.
cense	To perfume with incense.
chalice	A metal or ceramic cup into which the wine (and a little water) for the Eucharist is poured.
chrism	A consecrated mixture of olive oil and balsam used for anointing in sacraments such as baptism. (The oil used for anointing the sick does not contain balsam.)
corporal	The white linen square, usually folded in thirds both ways, that is used to cover the altar cloth (fair linen) to catch crumbs, and on which the chalice and paten are placed.
credence	A shelf or table on which the vessels and other items for celebration of the Eucharist are kept.
crucifer	A person in a religious procession who bears the cross and who leads the procession into the church.
customary	The ceremonial, usually written, of a parish's liturgy – how it is done.
Daily Office	An ancient way to pray - originally “office” simply meant service, not the place where a service is performed or business is conducted. “Daily office” means the service of the day (Morning and Evening Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Compline, and Devotions for Individuals and Families).

diocese	The district or churches under the jurisdiction of a Bishop.
intinction	Administration of the consecrated bread and wine of the eucharist at the same time, typically by dipping the bread in the wine and placing the moistened host in the mouth.
lavabo	Technically, the washing of the celebrant's fingers after the Offertory at the Eucharist or at other times such as when oil or chrism is used or after the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday, lavabo usually refers to the metal or ceramic dish into which the water is poured by the server at the lavabo. See also "ablutions."
lectionary	The appointed lessons and psalms for use at the Eucharist and Daily Offices (see <i>BCP, 888ff</i>).
pall	A stiffened square of linen (or other) white cloth that is placed over the chalice to keep objects from falling into the wine. The term may refer also to the cloth covering the casket or urn during the Burial of the Dead.
paten	The plate for the Eucharistic bread.
presbyter	From the Greek presbyteros, "elder" or "old man." In the NT, "presbyter" indicates a leader of the church. The English word "priest" is derived from "presbyter," and used as a synonym for presbyter. The 1979 BCP uses both terms.
purificator	The small white linen, usually folded in thirds, that is placed over the chalice and used during the administration of the wine to wipe the rim after each person receives.

reverence	To bow or genuflect to the altar (the symbol of God in our midst) - either a simple bow (bowing the head while pausing to face the altar) or profound (facing the altar and bowing from the waist) - one reverences the altar whenever crossing in front of or behind it, but never when carrying items used in the liturgy (a cross, torch, vessels, etc.).
sacristy	A room or rooms where the vessels, vestments, and other liturgical objects are kept, and where the celebrant, officiants, and assistants vest before the liturgy.
stack	The assembly of vessels and covers used in the Eucharist - to vest the stack is to place, in order, over the chalice: a purificator; a paten; a pall; the veil; and a burse containing the corporal and an extra purificator.
surplice	An ample white vestment worn over a cassock or other vestments. It has full sleeves, a round or square yoke (neck), and is at least midcalf in length; somewhat longer and fuller than a cotta.
thurible	The container in which incense is burned.
veil	A covering - a square piece of material (of the same liturgical color as the vestments) used to cover the chalice and paten when they are not in use. The burse (with the corporal inside) rests on top of the veiled chalice.
verger	A committed minister within the Church who assists the clergy in the conduct of public worship, especially in the marshalling of processions.
vest	To dress for leading or participating in a liturgical service.
virge	A mace or ceremonial staff carried by a Verger.

within the
verse

Usually referring to a method of reading or chanting a Psalm, where a reader or cantor reads to the asterisk and the congregation responds from the asterisk to the end of the verse. Other methods include “verse by verse” (where the leader and the congregation alternate verses) and “antiphonally” (where the congregation is divided – usually in half – and each part reads alternate verses).

Acolyte

Acolytes are called to serve at the altar, to actively assist in the worship of God. Their service helps to keep the liturgy flowing smoothly, thus opening the way for worshipers to participate without distraction.

Description:

An Acolyte serves as an attendant at the altar. This is an ancient ministry. In the early church, acolytes were assistants to the deacon in the world, and somewhat later on their liturgical functions were added. Acolytes may also serve as torchbearers and/or crucifers* in procession.

Requirements:

This ministry does not require a license. Although it is often a ministry for children and adolescents, adults sometimes participate, especially in larger churches and cathedrals. This was the practice in the early centuries of the church. Acolytes serve under the direction of a deacon, if any, sometimes in consultation with the vergers*, or otherwise under the supervising presbyter*.

Summary of Responsibilities:

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before the service begins. If there are any special instructions about the service, the supervising ministers will instruct the acolyte(s). If there is a Eucharist, and if it is the custom of the parish, vesting in an alb* is appropriate; cassock and surplice are appropriate for other liturgies such as the Daily Offices. Before the service begins, one's bulletin/service leaflet and Prayer Book and Hymnal should be prepared and readied in place. It is helpful at this time to check the length of the final hymn in order to plan the best time to leave the chancel/sanctuary at the end of the service.
- Light the candles (usually about ten minutes before the service begins). If there is a Eucharist, light all the candles, including the Eucharistic candles on the altar. (The traditional order of lighting is to light the right, or what used to be called – and sometimes still is – the Epistle, side first and then the left, or Gospel, side. An easy way to remember the order is to follow the adage that the Gospel candle does not stand lighted alone.) If there is no Eucharist, follow the custom of the parish. This may include using candles elsewhere (torches, pavement candles, sconces, Advent wreath candles, the Paschal candle); in this case light only these.
- As assigned carry a torch (or candle) or the cross in procession. As the procession follows the Acolyte to the chancel or sanctuary, wait until the others are in their respective places and then place the torches and/or cross in the appropriate places.

- If it is the custom of the parish to have a Gospel procession, the usual procession includes a thurifer* if incense is being used, and two torches, plus the Deacon and a person to hold the book. Although a cross is not generally included, if the parish custom is to include one, the crucifer* leads the deacon/presbyter into the nave and the acolyte(s) follow(s) with torches and stand(s) on either side during the reading of the Gospel. At the conclusion, the deacon/presbyter stands aside as the crucifer leads the procession back and the Acolyte(s) goes before the deacon/presbyter. The cross and torches are replaced quietly.
- During the Offertory, the Acolyte and deacon/presbyter work together to prepare the Table (altar) and receive the people's gifts. Following the custom of the parish, the Acolyte may receive the alms basins first and hand them to the deacon/presbyter or the deacon/presbyter receives them directly and then hands them to the Acolyte to place them on the credence* table/shelf. If a food basket is presented, the same process is repeated; if not, the eucharistic vessels of the wine and the bread are received the same way and placed on the altar. In some parishes the oblationers* place all offerings directly on the altar. In some parishes, the order is reversed and/or the monetary offering is placed and remains on the altar. It is important to follow the customs of the congregation where one serves, and the presiding ministers will be able to instruct the Acolyte.
- Before the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer, assist the presider in washing his/her hands, if such is the custom, using the lavabo* and towel provided.
- The Acolyte may sometimes stand to the left of the presider and turn the pages of the altar book as needed, if requested.
- Stand (or kneel, if it is the custom of the parish) in place during the Eucharistic Prayer until it is time to receive communion. After receiving, the Acolyte may sit in place or stand. In many congregations, the Acolyte joins the ministers at the altar and stands at the post-communion prayer; if it is the custom of the local parish, however, the Acolyte may kneel at this time and then rise at the beginning of the closing hymn.
- As the music for the procession out begins (or recessional), extinguish the candles at the beginning of the final hymn. Again, the custom in some congregations is different in that the practice is to extinguish the candles after the dismissal.
- Depending, then, on the custom of timing in the parish, extinguish the candles in the opposite order from which they were lighted. When all candles are extinguished – with the exception of the Paschal candle in its season, which stays lighted until the church is empty – take the torches and/or cross from their places when it is time to start the recessional. By arrangement, the crucifer leads the procession from the chancel.
- Special liturgies, such as Festival Eucharists, the Great Vigil of Easter, and Bishops' visitations, may require several Acolytes. The deacon and/or vergers will assign duties

and give special instructions, under the supervision of the presbyter. On such special occasions, it helps all participants if the Acolyte(s) arrive(s) 20-30 minutes before the service.

- The Acolyte should expect to serve as a model of attentive and dignified worship during the Ministry of the Word and at all times during liturgies.
- Finally, remember there is absolutely no “right” or “wrong” way to serve. The best rule is to remember that all should be done with dignity and care in the simplest way possible, so as not to distract the congregation. Consistent action aids this and helps prevent sloppy carelessness on the one hand, and fussiness on the other. (Paraphrased from *A Manual for Acolytes* by Dennis G. Michno. See Bibliography in Appendix.)

Notes

Altar Guild

Altar Guild members are called to a nearly invisible servant ministry of setting the scene for corporate worship. They ensure that the things needful to worship are in place and that God is honored in the setting.

Description:

The members of the Altar Guild prepare and care for the vessels, linens, vestments, articles and supplies for the Eucharist, as well as for weddings, burials and other special services. Guild members work on a rotating schedule, singly or in pairs in accordance with local custom. In many parishes, the Altar Guild is also responsible for the flowers when they are present for services. Some parishes have guilds that are few in number and where members serve individually. Members are scheduled, taught and overseen by the Directress/Director of the Altar Guild, who also sees to the supplies and articles needed for worship. The Altar Guild functions with the guidance of a deacon, if there is one, and under the direction of the supervising presbyter.

Requirements:

This ministry does not require a license. Men and women who wish to be responsible “behind the scenes” for much of the smooth flow of the liturgy indicate such a desire to the Directress/Director and/or the clergy, and are included in training and the rotation of duties. In addition to training in the local parish, diocesan-wide training and meetings are sometimes provided.

Summary of Responsibilities:

- Set up the credence shelf with the Eucharistic vessels of chalice and paten (or “stack”*) and appropriate linens and seasonal fabrics, cruet(s), lavabo bowl and towel, alms basin(s), and Altar Book according to the needs and customs of the particular parish and the particular liturgies.
- Set out the bread and wine for the oblationers* to take forward at the Offertory. It is the custom in some parishes for Altar Guild members also to set out bulletins and instructions for the greeters/ushers.
- Vest the altar with the appropriate seasonal frontal, if used, and the Fair Linen (white cloth), and the Eucharistic candles. Pulpit and lectern falls, as well as banners, may be added according to the season.
- After the service, take all vessels and supplies to the sacristy*. Wash and polish all vessels, and see that any consecrated elements are disposed of correctly and reverently (if there is no aumbry* for reserved sacrament). Put everything away.

- Launder the linens as necessary. Check vestments to see that they are clean and in good repair.

Notes

Catechist (formerly Lay Catechist)

Catechists are called by God to carry out the baptismal mandate to teach the Gospel. The word “catechist” comes from the Greek word for “echo.” Catechists are people who echo the Word of God. A catechist is a teacher, a faith companion, and a storyteller.

Description:

A Catechist is authorized to prepare persons for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows. This ministry involves creating a preparation program for the catechumen* and sponsoring adults, with the approval of the supervising presbyter. S/he conducts that program, and serves as a sponsor or presenter for the catechumen. Some parishes utilize an outline that specifies the functions and services of the Catechist in a written contract.

Requirements:

This ministry does not require ordination, but it does require a license, which is issued by the Diocesan* Bishop, following a request from the supervising presbyter, under whose authority the catechist serves. Once issued, the license is for a period of three (3) years, and may be renewed. The Catechist may serve in another congregation only if invited by the clergyperson of that congregation. Selection and preparation for this ministry follows guidelines and educational requirements established by the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry’s Committee on Christian Formation.

Summary of Responsibilities:

- Design a preparation program and obtain approval from the clergy supervisor.
- Meet with and teach catechumens and/or sponsoring adults, following the outline of the preparation program.
- Conduct a walk-through of the liturgy with the catechumens and/or sponsors.
- During the service itself, stand with and present the catechumens to the Bishop as appropriate.
- Serve as a continuing resource to the parish and the catechumens concerning baptism, confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation of baptismal vows.

Notes

Eucharistic Minister (formerly Chalice Bearer)

Eucharistic Ministers embody the ministry of all the baptized as they offer the hospitality of God's Table, where the people of God share the benefits of the Paschal sacrifice and renew the new covenant made with us once and for all. In giving food and drink, they symbolize the bond of charity in which Christ calls us as his friends to the banquet of heaven.

Description:

A Eucharistic Minister is authorized to administer the Consecrated Elements at a celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

Requirements:

Eucharistic Ministers are licensed by the bishop to the supervising presbyter. They function under the direction of a deacon, if any, or the supervising presbyter. Eucharistic Ministers must be confirmed adult (age 16 or over) communicants in good standing, meaning they must worship at regularly-scheduled and special services, have an identifiable ministry in the church and/or in the world, and they should be known to the treasurer of the congregation as one who makes a responsible pledge.

Summary of Responsibilities:

- If it is the custom of the parish for Eucharistic Ministers to vest, an alb is appropriate for this ministry. The alb should be as clean and wrinkle-free as possible and neatly fastened, and the hem should fall at the person's instep.
- If the Eucharistic Minister is in the chancel/sanctuary during the whole liturgy, s/he should stand when the presbyter (and deacon, if there is one) stands, during the procession of the gifts to the altar, and during the Eucharistic Prayer. Posture should copy that of the presider, as well, and, if one's piety so dictates, gestures such as crossing oneself. This does not include the hand gestures during the Prayer of Consecration. Throughout the liturgy, the posture and gestures of the Eucharistic Minister should not be a distraction to the congregation.
- At the time of communion, receive the chalice and purificator* or the bread (if assigned), and administer to the individuals in the congregation as they kneel or stand in front of the ministers. Guide the chalice to the mouth of the communicant, which is easiest if they take hold of the base or the cup itself. Rotate the chalice $\frac{1}{4}$ turn between each communicant, while wiping the rim. While it is best never to let go of the chalice in most cases, allow the communicant to control the flow of wine. Provide for intinction* according to the custom of the parish. If the communicant

indicates a wish to not receive wine, administer the words only. If wine starts to run low, or there are any problems, the deacon and/or presbyter is available to help.

- When administering, recite one of the phrases found in the *Book of Common Prayer* (pages 365 – Rite II, and 338 – Rite I). For continuity, it is best if the Eucharistic Minister's words of administration are from the same rite and the same format as that used by the presider.
- Follow the custom of the congregation for reverent disposal of unused wine and/or bread. These may be either consumed at the table, in the sacristy following the liturgy, or placed gently onto or into the ground.
- If it is the custom of the parish, the Eucharistic Minister may help with the closing ablutions and “vest the stack”* at the credence table/shelf. If the Minister has come up from the congregation at the time of communion, s/he returns to the pew at this time. If s/he remains in the sanctuary, s/he remains standing for the post-communion prayer.

Notes

Eucharistic Visitor (formerly Lay Eucharistic Minister, or LEM)

Eucharistic Visitors fulfill their baptismal promises by taking and representing the welcome of the love of our Savior Jesus Christ to members of the congregation unable to attend the regular service. Through the elements of the Eucharist, as well as their own presence, the ministry of the Eucharistic Visitor is to serve as a bridge between the congregation and the absent member.

Description:

A Eucharistic Visitor is authorized to take the Consecrated Elements in a timely manner following a celebration of Holy Communion to members of the congregation who, by reason of illness or infirmity or other good reason, are unable to be present at the communal celebration.

Requirements:

Eucharistic Visitors exercise a one-to-one ministry on behalf of the congregation they serve and are licensed by the Bishop. Therefore, all persons who are licensed to function in this way must meet the following requirements:

- 1) Satisfactorily complete a background review, which will be carried out by the Bishop's Office in accordance with Diocesan Policies.
- 2) Complete education on prevention of sexual harassment and exploitation in pastoral relationships, and training in prevention of child sexual abuse in church settings in accordance with the standards set by the Diocese of Vermont and Province One.
- 3) Read the Diocese of Vermont Policies and Procedures Relating to Sexual Misconduct, and sign a Compliance Assurance Statement that testifies they have received and read the document.

Eucharistic Visitors must be confirmed communicants in good standing, meaning they must worship at regularly-scheduled and special services, have an identifiable ministry in the church and/or in the world, and be known to the treasurer of the congregation as one who makes a responsible pledge. Eucharistic Visitors normally act under the direction of a deacon, if any, or otherwise under the supervising presbyter. They shall demonstrate an understanding of the Episcopal Church and its teachings as set forth in the *Book of Common Prayer*, in the Creeds, and in An Outline of the Faith (commonly called The Catechism), and be familiar with a variety of liturgical services.

Summary of Responsibilities:

(The following is considered to be ideal. The Eucharistic Visitor should follow the guidance of the presiding presbyter, if changes are made.)

- If scheduled or assigned to take the eucharistic elements to a parishioner, tell the deacon or presbyter (unless s/he already knows) before the service, so that wine and/or bread can be set aside.
- Before the service, check the communion kit to be sure everything is in place and take it into the church. Include the service bulletin, one or more *Books of Common Prayer*, and the printed service available for this ministry.
- If it is the custom of the parish, during the announcements tell the congregation whom you will be visiting, and invite their prayers and one or two other parishioners to join you.
- If the Eucharistic Visitor is to be sent forth formally, then after the congregation has received communion but before the post-communion prayer, all who are exercising this ministry will go to the Table. The deacon or presbyter fills the kit(s)' vessels with bread and/or wine and hands the kit(s) to the Visitor(s). The deacon, priest and congregation send the Visitor forth. Leave the church at this point and go to the parishioner(s) as soon as possible. (Circumstances may require that such visits be planned ahead of time according to the needs of the parishioner(s).)
- Conduct the service as taught. A sample "Distribution of Holy Communion" service can be found in the *Book of Occasional Services*. The key elements of the service are the greeting, the confession and prayer for forgiveness, the Lord's Prayer, the actual administration of the elements, the closing prayer, and the dismissal. Be sure to consume or reverently dispose of all wine and bread, and clean the containers in the kit. If it is not your personal kit, it may be left in the sacristy. If linens have been used, arrangements should be made to have them cleaned.

Note: Given the nature of this particular ministry, it is likely that Eucharistic Visitors will face a variety of pastoral situations as they carry out their calling. Though the scope of this profile does not address specific pastoral concerns (such as what to do when a communicant chokes on the eucharistic bread, for instance, or when not to sit on a person's bed, how long to stay, and many others), we are currently in the process of developing an addendum that will serve as something of an awareness and training document. As soon as that is ready, we will make it available to congregations.

Notes

Hospitality Minister/Greeter (or Usher)

One of Jesus' most public ministries was that of hospitality to others, particularly those on the margins of society. The hospitality minister welcomes newcomers and visitors to God's Table, encourages others to participate in putting them at ease in what may be a strange place, and provides a ministry of comfortable presence.

Description:

Greeters and Ushers minister through welcoming, greeting and seating members and visitors to the church. If there is no verger*, Greeters also serve sometimes through managing the flow of the service around the liturgy. If there is no verger, the Greeters should arrive 15-20 minutes before the service begins (or 30 minutes before a Festival Eucharist) to review the setup with the clergy.

Requirements:

This ministry does not require a license. The first person a visitor meets upon entering a church is usually the Greeter/Usher. For members of a church family, it is reassuring to see a familiar and friendly face. For newcomers and visitors, a smile and a word of welcome can help a stranger feel at home and more comfortable.

Summary of Responsibilities:

- Place bulletins, large print material, and other liturgical resources in a convenient place near the entrance. Also just inside the door should be a guest book and a pen that works, name tags (if used), plus any other materials the congregation uses for visitors. Greeters should wear their own name tags, if customary, and encourage other parishioners to wear theirs.
- Get to know the active members of the parish community. If possible, greet them by name. If the Greeter is unsure of names, s/he should introduce him/herself anyway.
- When visitors arrive, the Greeter should introduce him/herself. Write their names down after seating them so you will be able to recall them after worship. Greet both parents and children.
- Offer visitors the option of signing the guest book.
- Hand them the service bulletin and anything else they will need for the service (special hymnals, UTO boxes, etc.), being careful not to overwhelm them. Explain if

anything unusual is going to happen at the service, for example a baptism or commissioning of officers or ministries.

- If they are accompanied by children, give them the details about church school (if any), nursery, and the nearest rest rooms. Be careful, however, that such information is not given in such a way as to indicate that children are not welcome during the liturgy.
- Accompany visitors to a pew and introduce them to parishioners who are seated nearby. Invite the parishioners to be aware of times the visitors might need help navigating the various liturgical books.
- Count the entire congregation, including all participants and any children and/or teachers elsewhere who will be present at Communion.
- At the start of the Offertory, go to the chancel/altar to receive the alms basin(s) and proceed to collect the offerings.
- If oblationers are not already assigned, enlist two other people to assist in taking the gifts to the Table according to the custom of the parish. This may include taking a food basket to the altar, or special offerings, as well as the eucharistic elements of the bread and the wine.
- Place the gifts on the altar or hand them to the deacon and/or acolyte in this order: alms, (food basket), bread, and wine. Tell the deacon/acolyte the count.
- Guide the people to the table for communion if necessary and according to the parish customs.
- Invite newcomers/visitors to coffee hour, and/or introduce them to one or two other parishioners who can accompany them. At coffee hour make it a point to talk to all strangers. Offer to introduce them to the priest. Whenever a visitor is seen standing alone, make it a point to fill the void and make conversation.
- Pass on all the information you have gathered to the Newcomers Committee, if there is one, the presbyter(s), or a member of the vestry.
- After the service, collect and recycle stray papers, restore kneelers, replace prayer books and hymnals in racks, and generally pick up the church.

Notes

Intercessor

The prayer of the Body of Christ is our response to what we have heard and received from God. Intercessions are made on behalf of ourselves and others, and are most appropriately led by a person who exercises this diaconal ministry.

Description:

The Intercessor (in some parishes there may be more than one in the service) leads the congregation in offering prayer for themselves as individuals and as a community and for the world, particularly in response to what has been proclaimed in the sermon. Intercessions used in public worship, either in eucharistic or Daily Office* liturgies, should be according to a format found in the *Book of Common Prayer*, the various supplemental texts that are available, and/or other resources. If printed intercessions are not used, extemporaneous prayers should be offered according to the pattern that includes prayers for the mission and ministry in the world, the local community and the parish, and for ourselves.

Requirements:

Some congregations require that a person be approved by the supervising presbyter to serve in this ministry. Other customs include assigning people who have expressed interest in participating in this ministry, or rotating the various parts of the intercessory prayers among the members of the congregation during each liturgy. As with all liturgical procedures, however, the presbyter is the final canonical authority in liturgical procedures appropriate to the congregation.

Summary of Responsibilities:

- The Intercessor should have a clear, audible voice, and be comfortable praying aloud during the service. S/he needs to be familiar with the forms of intercession in the prayer book. If the custom of the parish allows, the Intercessor should be able to work into these outlines the day's concerns, or even write a prayer following the prayer book outline mentioned above.
- If it is the custom of the parish, the Intercessor should be comfortable with, and encouraged to leave, some silence after the biddings so members of the congregation has time to add their responses aloud or silently. If the congregation includes the Diocesan and/or Anglican cycles of prayer in their worship, the Intercessor should practice, and get help with, if necessary, unfamiliar or difficult pronunciations.
- Because congregational customs differ, follow the usual pattern of the parish regarding the place(s) from which to lead the intercessions. Options include the Intercessor remaining in his/her pew or standing in the middle of the nave or aisle

facing the altar. Some congregations, too, have intercession books in which the intercessions, petitions and thanksgivings of the community are recorded. In this case, it is suitable for the Intercessor to stand at or with the book, to include these prayer requests.

Notes

Lector

The reading of Scripture in worship is a ministry of speaking the lessons in a way that allows the assembled congregation to hear together the lessons for the day.

Description:

The Lector reads the lections (lessons) from the Hebrew Covenant (Old Testament) and/or the New Covenant (New Testament) at weekly and/or special liturgies. The Lector is responsible for reading the Word of God at public worship in such a way that the people can hear and comprehend each passage of Scripture, preparing for the Gospel and the sermon to follow. While not a performance, all care should be taken to ensure effective communication.

Requirements:

Persons volunteering or invited to take on this ministry and responsibility do not require a license, but it is expected that Lectors make certain preparations for faithful and effective conduct of this ministry. The Lector should have a clear voice, good enunciation, and an understanding that the focus is on the Word and not the reader. Lectors are under the supervision of the verger and/or deacon (who may also schedule the lectors), and, ultimately the supervising presbyter.

Summary of Responsibilities:

- Prepare ahead of time by reading aloud the appointed lessons. (It is helpful to know how to use the Lectionary* from the *Book of Common Prayer* or the Revised Common Lessons; if that is not possible, arrange to receive notice of the appropriate readings.) Such preparation avoids stumbling over unfamiliar names; in addition, the more familiar one is with the scripture passages, the better one will read it.
- Most congregations prefer that introductory remarks are not made or read before reading the passage(s) *unless* a passage is particularly obscure or starts at a place with no explanation. In such instances, the introduction should be brief and express no opinions.
- Begin the readings by saying “A reading (lesson) from the Book of Genesis,” or “A reading (lesson) from the Acts of the Apostles.” If in doubt, go to the beginning of the respective books and use that wording. Do not use “Our first lesson is from ...” Citing chapter and verse is optional according to the rubrics* of the *Book of Common Prayer*.
- At the conclusion of the reading, pause for a brief moment and then say “The Word of the Lord,” or “Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.” Wait for the

congregational response of “Thanks be to God” before moving away from the lectern. (It is permissible to end with “Here ends the reading,” but this takes the focus off the Word of God. The important thing is that the readers are consistent, so the congregation knows what to expect and how to respond.)

- The Lector must project his/her voice to the rear of the nave or church, and s/he must speak slowly and clearly. This may feel stilted at first, but people *hear* more slowly than most of us speak, so a slower speech pattern when reading will help others hear *and* comprehend the passage(s). If available, microphones may be helpful with volume. Keep in mind, however, that some systems cause voices to bounce around and echo, so it is doubly important to slow down while reading when such systems are in place.
- Look up at, but avoid making direct eye contact with the congregation while reading, while keeping your place with a finger or small piece of paper (another reason to practice beforehand).
- In congregations where the Lector also leads the Psalms, psalms may be read, sung, read responsively by verse or within the verse*, read in unison or read antiphonally*, as is the custom of the parish.
- In a parish where there are hearing impaired or deaf persons, the lessons should be signed as well as read aloud.
- Follow the pattern of the congregation regarding vesting and participating in the procession or moving forward from a seat in the pews. If coming from the congregation, it helps to sit near the lectern so the “travel time” is limited. If not vested, the lector may sit (or stand) in a nearby pew during the psalm that comes between the readings and then return to his/her own pew when the readings are finished. If walking in front of the altar at any time, whether vested or not, the Lector should be sure to bow or reverence the altar.

Notes

Preacher (formerly Lay Preacher)

Preaching is the interpretation and proclamation of the Word of God. Preaching is a pastoral ministry, displaying a sensitive and concerned understanding of the struggles, doubts, concerns, and joys of the faith community.

Description:

The Preacher is the person who incorporates and distills the lections of the day into a sermon or homily to proclaim the Word of God to the People of God at public worship services of Holy Eucharist or the Daily Offices.

Requirements:

In the Diocese of Vermont, the Preacher may be ordained by baptism or by the laying on of hands by a bishop, but congregational members must be recommended by one's vestry and the supervising presbyter for licensure by the bishop. Licenses typically span three (3) years, and they may be renewed. If the Preacher is not the supervising presbyter of the congregation, s/he is under that person's supervision.

Summary of Responsibilities:

- In order to be considered for licensure, persons must be regular in attendance at worship services, participate regularly in worship and congregational life, and should be a pledging member.
- The Preacher should be known to be a person of regular prayer and spiritual reading, both individually and with one's faith community.
- Regular continuing education in matters of the church, theology, current affairs of the local community, regional, state and world, homiletics, etc., should be part of the Preacher's ongoing spiritual life.
- In preparing for a sermon, start as far in advance as possible by such things as repeated reading of the day's scripture passages and frequent prayers.
- At least one week ahead of the scheduled preaching date, jot down thoughts, phrases and ideas that emerge as highlights in continued readings of the passages. Incorporate the Collect of the Day if appropriate.
- Always in the context of "not my words, but yours O God," start drafting the sermon, keeping in mind the congregation's traditions and needs, as well as the needs and concerns of the world and community.

- Practice speech pacing and voice volume as often as possible before “ascending the pulpit.” Remembering that people hear more slowly than we can speak, it is important to time the sermon when practicing.
- Every Preacher develops habits and regular practices over time, which can be helpful for such things as knowing how many pages are equivalent to ten minutes. Some preachers begin and/or end with prayer: some find seasonally- or liturgically-appropriate prayers in the prayer book or from other sources; others always begin with a traditional prayer such as “Let the words of my mouth ...” from Psalm 19:14; and some wait for the Holy Spirit to guide their prayer at the time.
- Like with the lectors, follow the habits and patterns of the congregation regarding vesting and processing, or coming up from the pews to the pulpit or lectern. If the latter, it is helpful to be near the lectern or pulpit so that the Preacher can move into place at the conclusion of the Gospel with little or no elapsed time or excess noise.
- At the conclusion of the service, be sure to sign the Parish Registry in the space provided for “Preacher,” or make sure someone else does.

Notes

Thurifer

The use of incense in worship dates back to antiquity (“Let your prayers rise as incense ...”, BCP pg. 141). Today it is common to carry incense in processions and to cense the Gospel book, altar, officiants and congregation. The thurifer’s ministry is to handle the thurible and participate in censng as appropriate and customary.

Description:

The ministry of Thurifer is unique and is separate from the ministry of acolyte, although acolytes may also serve as thurifers. The thurifer manages the use of incense in a celebration of the Eucharist, carrying the incense and censer (or thurible*), and s/he may cense* the ministers in the chancel or sanctuary, at the Gospel, and the congregation itself.

Requirements:

This ministry does not require a license. It does, however, require specific training by an experienced Thurifer. Handling a thurible (censer) correctly and well cannot be learned from books! The Thurifer functions under the direction of a deacon and the supervising presbyter.

Summary of Responsibilities:

- Before the service, determine with the deacon and priest when censng will be done and by whom.
- Carry the (thurible) censer and incense boat in the procession (some parishes have a Boat Bearer, too), as well as the Gospel procession if customary. Censng at the Gospel requires some further training and experience.
- At the appropriate time(s), hand the boat to the deacon, presiding presbyter or bishop, and hold the censer (censer) open at a convenient height.
- Close the (thurible) censer after the incense has been spooned into it (and blessed, if this is desired).
- Hold the censer (thurible) with one hand and take the boat back with the other.
- Keep the charcoal and a small amount of incense burning throughout the service. It may be necessary to remove the thurible (censer) from the nave until it is time to cense.

- Hand the censer (thurible) to the deacon, priest or bishop when they are doing the censuring.
- If assigned, cense the ministers at the altar before the Eucharist with three swings, bowing to them before and after doing so. (They should respond in kind.) Likewise, if assigned or in accordance with custom of the congregation, cense the congregation. Bowing to the congregation before and after is a matter of personal or congregational habit and custom.
- It should be noted that non-allergenic charcoal is readily available from church supply stores. People's allergies and sensitivities should be considered in the use of incense—and with seasonal flowers at Easter and Christmas – and such charcoal will make it easier for people to tolerate.

Notes

Verger

Liturgy means “the work of the people.” A steward of liturgical responsibilities, the verger regularly works with leaders to ensure that worshipers are at ease throughout the liturgical process. The more comfortable the people are, the more easily God breaks in and can be heard and known in our corporate worship.

Description:

The Verger oversees the smooth flow of regular and special liturgies so the congregants can focus on worship. The Verger may be vested and participate in procession, or s/he may remain unvested and sit in the congregation. In order to ensure that the drama and celebration of corporate worship are well integrated, the Verger must be fully informed about and aware of all aspects of the worship experience.

Requirements:

One does not need to be licensed for this role; however a Verger is expected to know the traditional and emerging liturgical processes and practices, why they are used, and where and when they are appropriate. The Verger is in regular communication with all liturgical assistants (and may exercise supervision of some), the Altar Guild, the presbyter(s), and the deacon(s), if any, and acts as a liaison among liturgical assistants and ministers and the clergy.

Summary of Responsibilities:

- Schedule liturgical assistants and ministers: acolytes, eucharistic ministers and visitors, lectors and intercessors, greeters and ushers, oblationers.
- Meet and work with priest(s), liturgical assistants and worship team or committee for regular continuing education and planning.
- Help design and schedule special services such as Pentecost, the Great Vigil of Easter and other seasonal liturgies, funerals and weddings, bishops’ visitations, etc.
- Know where all physical accoutrements and supplies necessary for liturgical worship are kept, and know how to maintain them or arrange for regular upkeep.
- Ensure that everything is in place for each liturgy: hymn boards are updated, bulletins are in a convenient place, eucharistic elements are ready, alms basins are available, lighting tapers have wicks in them, etc.

- Ensure that scheduled liturgical participants are present and prepared, or be prepared to step in if necessary.
- Direct, when necessary and appropriate, the congregation in their parts or participation in the liturgy.
- Ensure that attendance numbers and participants are entered into the Register of Services.
- It is frequently helpful for the vergers to compile the order of service(s) into a customary* to distribute among participants. This helps familiarize liturgical ministers beforehand, and it is a helpful tool when training.
- Some congregations, especially cathedral parishes, have a more prominent and formal role for the vergers: accompanying liturgical participants to and from their places, vesting in cassock and carrying the virge (or mace) in procession.

Notes

Worship Leader

Our chief corporate act is the public proclamation of relationship with God and each other in Christ. The worship leader facilitates a smooth and reverent liturgy so our personal relationships with God in Christ are enhanced and deepened, sending us forth into the world nourished and strengthened for service in God's name.

Description:

This person serves to lead congregational worship in the absence of or along with ordained clergy. Services that might be led by the worship leader include the Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, the Burial of the Dead, and liturgies for healing.

Requirements:

By canon*, this ministry requires the approval of the presbyter and licensing by the bishop. In order to be recommended and then licensed, the person must be a communicant in good standing, have a clear voice, and an awareness of and participation in the liturgical forms of Episcopal worship.

Summary of Responsibilities:

- The Worship Leader normally vests in cassock* and surplice*, especially for public worship and the Burial office.
- Prepare the lessons/lections of the day, and the Collect, and look for prayers that are appropriate for the service and pertinent to the lessons and the needs and concerns of the congregation and the world.
- Prepare the worship materials necessary for leading the liturgy: prayer and hymn books in the appropriate place(s), bulletin, hymn numbers, and ensure that scheduled participants are present and prepared.
- In some congregations, the Worship Leader consults and works with the church musician to choose hymns.
- Consults such resources as the *Book of Common Prayer*, Leonel Mitchell's *Praying Shapes Believing*, and *A Lay Minister's Guide to the Book of Common Prayer* by Clifford Atkinson.

Notes

Bibliography and Resources

The Ceremonies of the Eucharist – A Guide to Celebration. Howard Galley. Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1989 (currently being reprinted)

Lent, Holy Week, Easter and the Great Fifty Days: A Ceremonial Guide. Leonel L. Mitchell. Cambridge: Cowley, 1996. (There are different books written for each of the seasons and special occasions.)

A Priest's Handbook: The Ceremonies of the Church. Dennis G. Michno. Morehouse Publishing (3rd edition), 1998

The Book of Occasional Services 2003. Church Publishing Inc., April 2004
Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2003. Ibid

Welcome! Tools and Techniques for New Member Ministry. Andrew Weeks

Worship Without Words. Patricia Klein

A Manual for Acolyte; The Duties of the Server at Liturgical Celebrations. Dennis G. Michno. Morehouse Publishing, June 1981

Acolyte Leader's Resource Guide. Donna H. Barthle. Morehouse Publishing, July 2003
Parish Acolyte's Guide Ibid

Acolyte Handbook. Ralph R. Van Loon. Augsburg Fortress Publishers, September 1987

How to Motivate, Train and Nurture Acolytes. Robert Eaton & Rhoda R. Votaw. Morehouse Publishing, October 2001

Words of our Worship: A Liturgical Dictionary compiled by Charles Mortimer Guilbert. Church Publishing, June 1988

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The New Altar Guild Book. Barbara Gent and Betty Sturges. Morehouse Publishing (revised edition), June 1996

A Working Manual for Altar Guilds. Dorothy C. Diggs. Morehouse Publishing 3rd edition, January 1988

A Manual for Eucharistic Visitors. Beth W. Ely. Morehouse Publishing, 2005

Broken and Poured Out: A Spirituality for Eucharistic Ministers. Richard R. Gaillardetz. Liguori Publications, July 2002

The Joy of Being a Eucharistic Minister. Mitch Finley. Resurrection Press, September 1998

Guide for Lectors (Basics of Ministry Series). Aelred R. Rosser. Liturgy Training Publications, July 1998

A Well-Trained Tongue: Formation in the Ministry of Reader. Ibid 1996

Lector's Guide to Biblical Pronunciations. Joseph M. Studacher. Our Sunday Visitor, September 2001

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, Oxford University Press. There are several editions

A New Zealand Prayer Book/He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa. The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zeland and Polynesia. HarperSan Franciso, 1989

The Hopkins Bookshop
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Diocesan Resource Center

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Websites

Verger's Guild of the Episcopal Church: www.vergers.org

Lectionary and Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) resources and texts:
www.textweek.com

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Preaching Resources

We Preach Christ Crucified. Kenneth Leech. Boston: Cowley, 1994.

“...The meaning of the cross is examined in relation to pain and suffering, social justice, non-violence, the darkness of faith, and preaching and ministry. Drawing on hymns, poems and real-life situations, Leech explores and exposes the pain and paradox of Christian experience. He helps us to understand Jesus’ supreme act of self-sacrifice and, in so doing, to make better sense of our own lives.” (Back cover) Also good as a pastoral care resource.

How To Preach Without Notes. Charles W. Koller. Grand Rapids: Booker Book House Co., 1964.

A thorough look at homiletical process and procedure, good ideas and practices for all preachers, expository or not. Heavily sourced. Very dated in the author’s use of masculine gender language only, this is nonetheless a valuable addition to every preacher’s library.

Your Way with God’s Word: Discovering Your Distinctive Preaching Voice. David J. Schlafer. Boston: Cowley, 1995.

A refreshing, insightful approach in methods of homiletics that serve to make the “sacred conversation” of sermons more authentic. Exercises, meditations, and suggestions for collegial reflections included.

The Preaching Life. Barbara Brown Taylor. Boston: Cowley, 1993.

Personal essays on her life in the church, the Bible, worshiping, vocation and call, and sermons. Not a how-to text, but a memorable example of what one gifted voice sounds like, and where it emerged from. The chapters on “call” and “vocation” are particularly good for gifts discovery work.

With Ears to Hear: Preaching as Self-Persuasion. Robin R. Meyers. Pilgrim Press.

This comes highly recommended. Apparently the focus is on the preacher as midwife.

Taddled (and paraphrased) from *The Anglican Digest*, Advent 1994:

“The primary task of the Christian preacher ... ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus’ (John 12).” Found on some pulpits where only the preacher sees it, as a reminder and a prompt.

Suggested reading: *Consolations of God*, collected sermons by Phillips Brooks.

Suggested supplemental reading

I Have Called You Friends: An Invitation to Ministry. Kevin Thew Forrester. NY: Church Publishing, 2003.

“Jesus’ words to his disciples tell us that leadership, community, the very essence of the Christian life, are all about *friendship* ...”. Forrester writes that “We can go so far as to say that to be a member of the community entails being a minister. To be baptized is to become one who accepts the call to serve others. Baptism and ministry are two sides of the same coin.” (Back cover)

Discerning Your Spiritual Gifts. Lloyd Edwards. Boston: Cowley, 1988.

Helps to find one’s spiritual gifts through exercises and self-evaluations. Similar in scope to workshop process, but more left-brain and linear. Not very exciting, IMHO.

Spiritual Friend: Reclaiming the Gift of Spiritual Direction. Tilden Edwards. NY: Paulist Press, 1980.

While the whys and wherefores of finding a spiritual director are addressed here, this is more about individuals being soul friends to and with one another. Edwards is the founder and director of The Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Washington, DC.

Ministry in Daily Life: A Guide to Living the Baptismal Covenant. Episcopal Church Center, 1996.

An impressive compilation of essays, articles, liturgical resources, stories, and congregational and personal resources on a wide variety of ministry, discipleship, discernment, priesthood of all believers, and vocation perspectives. The editors have added reflection questions at the end of each offering. Highly recommended.

Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All. William Countryman. Morehouse Publishing, 1999.

Some very good and progressive ideas in this groundbreaking book, although some of them may be very thought-provoking. Great for discussions!

Creative Ministry. Henri Nouwen. NY: Image Books, 1978.

Considers “the primary responsibilities of the [ordained] priest and minister: teaching, preaching, counseling, organizing, and celebrating [presiding]”, but appropriate for all baptized ministers. One of Nouwen’s many classics, this is a good companion to his *Reaching Out* (an outstanding treatise on the ministry of hospitality and welcoming others, in the church and in our lives), *The Wounded Healer*, and *With Burning Hearts: Living the Eucharistic Life*. These and most of his others come from and speak to our communal search for “a new experience of God in our lives.” You can never go wrong with Nouwen.

Windows on the Cross. Tom Smail. Boston: Cowley, 1996.

Good for Lenten (especially) discussion, looks at reconciliation, sacrifice, justice, freedom, suffering, victory, participation and glory. Short, thought-provoking, with reflection questions.

Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time and *The God We Never Knew.* Marcus Borg. San Francisco: Harper SF, 1994 and 1997, respectively.

Excellent explorations for contemporary faith and spirituality. “Fresh, imaginative, liberating,” these and all of Borg’s books either make you very mad or very glad you’ve finally found someone who understands.

Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation. Parker J. Palmer. NY: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

“Vocation comes from listening,” Palmer writes. This is a great little book, reminiscent of the “still, small voice,” including the shadow side of depression and how we meet God there. Gentle and inspiring.

The Anglican Spirit. Michael Ramsey. Boston: Cowley, 1991.

A classic from the late Archbishop of Canterbury. Good history (but not dusty academics). Makes Anglican theology and spirituality understandable. Good companion to/with ...

The Spirit of Anglicanism. Urban T. Holmes. (One of the church’s Teaching Series)

Outstanding is not nearly a good-enough word for this book. This should be a must-have for all Anglicans, especially if they want to be full participants in the church. Very soul-satisfying.

Reshaping Ministry: Essays in Memory of Wesley Frensdorff. Borgeson and Wilson, eds. Jethro Pubs., 1990.

A compilation of essays by Frensdorff, the late bishop of Nevada, who was one of the visionaries and pioneers in baptismal ministry development, and others.

Soul Making: The Desert Way of Spirituality. Alan Jones. NY: Harper & Row, 1985.

“The word ‘soul’ is a metaphor for this process of transformation” of how human beings are made in love for love. Helps with our questions of “what am I to do? How am I to be?” *Superlative.* Should be required reading for all Christians who are serious about ministry and fulfilling their baptismal covenant.

Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith. Anne LaMott. NY: Pantheon Books, 1999.

Memoir that is, in turns, funny, sad, wise, deep, and always vulnerable, “honest.” More than these: hopeful.

My Soul in Silence Waits: Meditations on Psalm 62. Margaret Guenther. Boston: Cowley, 2000.

Small book of reflections on themes of “waiting on God’s presence with patience, trust, and expectation.” Very good, easy to read.

The Practice of Prayer. Margaret Guenther. Boston: Cowley, 1998. Vol. 4 in the New Church's Teaching Series.

Very readable, encouraging immersion on all the many elements and components of prayer and a life of prayer. Practical, reassuring, inspiring.

Note: other books by Guenther, especially Holy Listening (meant for spiritual directors, but anyone will benefit from reading it), are very rewarding and highly recommended.

Turning to Christ: A Theology of Evangelization and Renewal. Urban T. Holmes. Boston: Cowley, 1981.

The date does not reflect the timelessness of this book on the theology of mission. Much more than “learning how to do evangelism,” this is about conversion and growth of the individual *and then* the church. Reflection questions for group study are included at the end.

Pastoral Care Resources

Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories That Heal and My Grandfather's Blessings. Rachel Naomi Remen, MD.

She has lived with serious chronic illness all her life, and worked with chronically ill and terminally ill patients in her medical practice. Her stories and experiences are magnificent: wise, gentle, loving. In a book review I wrote, I recommended that these books be a part of every pastoral care training program, with a cautionary note: plan to go through a whole box of tissues for each book.

Wounded Healer and Compassion. Henri Nouwen and Nouwen, et al.

His classic is another must, and the second really opens one's eyes to the needs in the world – political, spiritual, physical, medical. Both should be standard reading for anyone involved in pastoral ministry.