

# A Liturgy for Today's Church

prepared by John G. Mason in consultation with others

## Acknowledgments

Liturgies are never the work of one person alone. The following order has its origins in *A Modern Liturgy (AML)*, an experimental service that was a precursor to *An Australian Prayer Book (AAPB)*: 1978. Bishop D.W.B. Robinson was one of the architects of *AML*. I want to record my thanks to him for his invaluable liturgical insights and suggestions. In preparing this liturgy I have also welcomed comments from others, especially (the late) Dr Alan Cole and my former colleagues at St Clement's Mosman, New South Wales, Australia. Suggestions from Drs David Peterson and Peter O'Brien of Moore College and Don Carson (at Tyndale House, Cambridge, England) were also helpful. Constructive comments from members of the Archbishop Harry Goodhew's Liturgical Panel, Sydney, Australia, were also included. Brian and Margaret Rumbold have also assisted with comments on language. More recently I am grateful for the helpful suggestions provided by Chelsea Miller, my Research and Communication Associate at Christ Church New York City, with respect to language and format for the North American setting. My thanks are also due to my wife, Judy, for her ongoing interest and support, encouragement and advice. Any weaknesses or faults that remain are my responsibility.

With the permission of Archbishop Harry Goodhew, the experimental services were first used in the 1990s at St Clement's Mosman, Sydney; I am grateful to church members who took a lively interest in and supported the development of this service. With the formation of Christ Church New York City in 2004, the form of The Lord's Supper has been regularly used, with the permission of various Episcopal Visitors (the Right Rev's Terrence Kelshaw, Jeffrey Steenson and Martyn Minns).

John G. Mason  
Founding Rector  
Christ Church New York City  
September, 2010  
*Soli Deo Gloria*

## Acknowledgments – 1997 Draft Edition

Liturgies are never the work of one person alone. The following order has its origins in *A Modern Liturgy (AML)*, an experimental service that was a precursor to *An Australian Prayer Book (AAPB)*. Bishop D.W.B. Robinson was one of the architects of *AML*. I want to record my thanks to him for his invaluable liturgical insights and suggestions. Over the months I have appreciated comments from others, especially Dr Alan Cole and colleagues at St Clement's Mosman: the Reverends Denis Ryan, Fergus Semler, and Perry Wiles. Suggestions from Drs David Peterson and Peter O'Brien of Moore College have also been helpful.

It was useful as well, to participate in a liturgical discussion group organized by the English Liturgical Commission at All Souls Langham Place, London, in November, 1995. During a brief time at Tyndale House, Cambridge, that same year, an important theological point was refined in discussion with Dr Don Carson. Some broader liturgical issues were raised in conversations with Dr Peter Walker and Reverend Mark Ashton.

More recently, helpful comments from Canons Robert Forsyth and Raymond Heselhurst and other members of the Archbishop of Sydney's Liturgical Panel have been incorporated. I wish to record my thanks also to members of St Clement's Mosman who have taken an interest in and shown support for the development of this service. Thanks are also due to Brian and Margaret Rumbold for comments on language and format and to Vicki King for her work on the final presentation of the service forms. Above all I want to express my gratitude to my wife, Judy, for her patience, support and encouragement. Any weaknesses or faults that remain are my responsibility.

John G. Mason  
St Clement's Mosman  
*Soli Deo Gloria*

# A Liturgy for Today's Church

MORNING or EVENING PRAYER

THE LORD'S SUPPER OR THE HOLY COMMUNION

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

## 1. Call to Worship

*The leader welcomes everyone with a Bible-based call to worship, introducing the theme for the gathering around God's Word.*

## 2. Hymn –

*An appropriate song (or songs) of praise is sung.*

*Everyone is seated and a Prayer of Preparation is said by all.*

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, so that we may perfectly love you, and worthily glorify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## 3. Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness

*The minister reads the following or the Ten Commandments.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. *(Matthew 22:37-40)*

**Lord, have mercy upon us and write your law in our hearts by your Holy Spirit.**

*After a brief silence for reflection, all join in a general confession.*

*Alternatively, the confession with the assurance of forgiveness may be said after the exhortation at #10.*

**Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

**maker of all things, judge of all,**

**we acknowledge with shame the sins we have committed,**

**by thought, word, and deed, against your divine majesty,**

**provoking most justly your wrath and indignation against us.**

**We earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for all our misdoings.**

**Have mercy upon us most merciful Father.**

**For your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ's sake forgive us all that is past,**

**and grant that from this time forward**

**we may serve and please you in newness of life,**

**to the honor and glory of your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*The minister declares God's forgiveness.*

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ promises to pardon and deliver all who truly repent and sincerely believe his holy gospel. May God grant you true repentance and his Holy Spirit, so that forgiven and cleansed from your sins, your lives may be holy, shielded by God's power until Christ comes. **Amen.**

## Prayer

*The Collet for the Day*

## Praise –

*A hymn of thanks to God for his mercy is sung.*

*(Appropriate announcements may be made.)*

HEARING GOD'S WORD

#### 4. Bible Readings

*A prayer for the hearing of God's word may be said.*

Lord, you have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Help us so to read, understand, and truly receive them, that encouraged and supported by your holy word, we may embrace and always hold fast to the joyful hope of eternal life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

#### Psalm

*A psalm is read or sung (or a song based on a psalm is sung).*

#### Readings from the Old and New Testament

*After each reading the reader may say,*

**This is the Word of the Lord.**

*(All) Thanks be to God.*

*After the reading of the Gospel the reader may say,*

**This is the gospel of the Lord.**

*(All) Praise to you, Lord Christ.*

#### Songs –

*(Bible readings may be interspersed, or concluded, with a song.)*

#### The Nicene Creed

*(Everyone remains standing and says together either this or another orthodox Creed.)*

**We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God,**

**Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son  
is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic\* and apostolic Church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

*\*'catholic church' is the totality of God's people through the ages who hold firm to the classic teachings of Christ's apostles*

#### THE PRAYERS

#### 5. Prayers

*The minister, or those appointed, prays for the nations, the church and for people in need, concluding with The Lord's Prayer (see Appendix 1).*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

**Sermon –**

**Song –**

*(If the Lord's Supper is to follow, sufficient bread and wine is placed on the table.)*

**BENEDICTION**

*Morning or Evening Prayer may be concluded here with a dismissal from the minister. The following, or a seasonal benediction, or appropriate words from Scripture may be used.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

*When the Lord's Supper follows, the following order is used.*

**PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER**

**6. Introduction to The Lord's Supper**

*All standing, the minister may give the greeting of Peace saying,*

We are the body of Christ.

**His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

*Everyone may greet one another.*

*The minister says one of the following.*

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body... and we were all given one Spirit to drink. *(1 Corinthians 12:12)*

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. *(Ephesians 4:4-6)*

*The minister may say one of the following or give a similar exhortation.*

The Holy Communion is an occasion for remembrance and thanksgiving, for penitence and joy. Through his death on the cross, our Savior Christ reconciled us to God and to one another. Before coming to the Lord's Table to eat the bread and drink from the cup, each of us must consider not only our commitment to God but also to one another. We must love and care for one another as fellow members of Christ's body, the church; otherwise we bring God's condemnation upon us. You who trust in Christ and intend to follow his commands, draw near, and feed on Christ by faith. Take this bread and this cup with thanksgiving, in remembrance that he died for you.

*Or:*

As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink, without considering the meaning of the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. *(1 Corinthians 11:26-29)*

*The minister may read one or more of the following sentences.*

Hear the words of assurance for those who truly turn to Christ:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." *(John 3:16)*

The Apostle Peter said, "Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." *(1 Peter 2:24)*

## COMMUNION

### 7. Greeting and Reflection

*All remain standing and the minister says,*

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**He is worthy to be praised.**

*The minister says,*

You are indeed worthy, Lord God, to receive all glory and honor and power; for you created all things and by your will they existed and were created.

But especially we praise you, heavenly Father, for our Savior Jesus Christ, bright image of your glory, and your eternal Word, who took the form of a servant, was born in our likeness, and died for us on the cross.

By his death he has offered the one perfect sacrifice, all that was needed to take away the sins of the world. There he met in full all the demands of your righteousness.

By his rising to life, he has restored us to life eternal, and has given us your promised Holy Spirit, the guarantee of our inheritance:

Therefore with your whole creation and with all your people since time began, we honor and glorify you, with words of never ending praise,

*All saying or singing,*

**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

*Everyone is seated and may say,*

**We dare not come to your table, merciful Lord, depending on our own goodness.**

**In your grace alone we trust, for we are not worthy even to gather up the crumbs under your table; but you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy.**

**Gracious Father, grant that we who now receive these gifts of bread and wine, according to our Savior's word, may share in his body and blood, so that we may always live in him, and he in us.  
Amen.**

### CONSECRATION PRAYER

*The minister stands and says,*

On the night he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup saying, "This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me."

*The minister turning to the Lord's Table takes the bread and gives thanks.*

Almighty God, we thank you for this bread, and for all you provide to sustain us. Above all, merciful Father, we thank you for Christ your Son, given for the life of the world. **Amen.**

*Breaking the bread in the sight of all, the minister says,*

This bread we break is a participation in the body of Christ.

**Thank you, Father, for making us one with Christ.**

*The minister takes the cup and gives thanks.*

Almighty God, we thank you for this fruit of the vine, and for every good gift that gives us joy.

We thank you above all for Christ our Lord, by whose blood you have bought us and bound us to be your people in an everlasting covenant. **Amen.**

*Indicating the cup, the minister says,*

This cup for which we give thanks is a participation in the blood of Christ.

**Thank you, Father, for making us yours forever.**

Come, let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

### **8. The Lord's Supper**

*The minister first partakes of the bread and the wine and serves any who are assisting with the distribution of the elements and the musicians. (During The Lord's Supper appropriate songs and hymns of praise may be sung.)*

*Those who distribute the bread say,*

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which is given for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life; take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving. **Amen.**

*And those who deliver the cup say,*

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which is shed for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life; drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful. **Amen.**

### **GOING OUT TO SERVE**

### **9. Thanksgiving and Commitment**

*The minister says,*

We have shared at the table of the Lord.

*All say,*

**Heavenly Father, we who trust in Jesus  
and have received these pledges of his love,  
thank you for assuring us of your love and forgiveness.  
Thank you that we, together with all your faithful people,  
are true members of his body and of each other in him.  
Thank you for the assurance that we shall eat and drink with Christ  
when he comes in the glory of his kingdom.**

*The minister says,*

Remember, Father, your church bought by the blood of your Son, and gather it in holiness into the kingdom you have prepared for it. Direct each one of us now by your Spirit in all our ways. Stir us to live lives to your glory. Make us faithful witnesses to Jesus and his resurrection, eager for the joy of his coming, and made worthy to worship you with all your saints forever.

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!**

**Hymn** – *Glory to God in the Highest (Gloria in Excelsis Deo, or another trinitarian hymn of praise) is sung.*

**Glory to God in the highest  
and peace to his people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world:  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One; you alone are the Lord;  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

**14. Benediction or Prayer of Dismissal**

*The minister dismisses the people, saying the following, or a seasonal benediction, or appropriate words from Scripture.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

- - -

NOTE: *A Liturgy for Today's Church* is drawn from the theological and liturgical principles of *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662); it was prepared by John G. Mason in consultation with Archbishop Donald W. B. Robinson and with Archbishop Harry Goodhew's Liturgical Panel; it is authorized for use by Archbishop Peter F. Jensen; it was subsequently authorized for use at Christ Church New York City by Episcopal 'Visitors', Bishops Terrence Kelshaw, Jeffrey Steenson and Martyn Minns.



## Appendix 1 - Suggested Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray for God's people everywhere, and for the needs and the peace of the world.

Almighty God and Father, sustainer and savior of your creation, hear our prayers for all people, especially for all Christian people throughout the world.

Lord, we thank you for all your kindness to us, the material blessings we enjoy in this country and the freedoms we tend to take for granted. We thank you for the gift of family and friends. Most of all, we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, who died so that we might be forgiven and enjoy new life with you, now and forever.

Sovereign Lord, direct and govern the leaders of the nations. Give them the will and the wisdom to resolve tension and conflict so that all people may live in harmony and peace. We pray especially for the leaders of our nation; give wisdom, grace, and integrity to the President and his Administration, and to all members of Congress. Strengthen all judges and magistrates to uphold justice and truth. Help our nation to share the resources you have given us, so that people everywhere may enjoy with gratitude the fruits of your creation.

Father, hear our prayer,  
**through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

We thank you Lord of all, for the gifts of Christ our ascended king: for apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Send out your light and truth through those who proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. Fill with compassion and spiritual understanding the pastors of your church (and in particular *N* our Bishop, and *N* our Minister). May their lives and their teaching commend the truth of your word. Give your heavenly grace Lord, to all your people, and especially to this congregation. Renew us and make us a people who truly honor you. Help us to live in the unity of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, enabling us to persevere together in the hope of glory, living in peace with one another.

Father, hear our prayer,  
**through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

We commend to your fatherly care, merciful God, all those who in this passing world are in any kind of trouble, sorrow, sickness, anxiety or need (especially we pray for...). Give them patience and confidence in your goodness, and in your mercy provide their every need.

Father, hear our prayer,  
**through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

We praise your name for all your servants in whose life and death Christ has been honored. Grant that, encouraged by the good examples of their lives, we may run the race that is set before us, and with them share the fullness of joy at your right hand; through Christ who is the pioneer and perfecter of faith.  
**Amen.**

*The Prayers may conclude with the Lord's Prayer, said by all, or another prayer.*

## Appendix 2 – Why Bother with Liturgy?

To many church leaders today the idea of liturgy seems irrelevant. This is even true of many in the so-called liturgical churches—churches where a prayer book has determined the shape of the meeting of God’s people. Certainly, liturgy is a strange, archaic word. It evokes thoughts of formality, ritual and other-worldliness.

Some younger evangelicals today say that liturgy constrains rather than enhances the meeting of God’s people. In particular they insist that there is no biblical warrant for it. On the other hand, there are many whose spiritual lives have been formed in a non-liturgical Protestantism and who welcome the richness of theology and language that a formal liturgy offers. Interestingly, while there is little specific reference which suggests that liturgy in a formal or developed sense was found in the New Testament churches, it is evident that there were certain features present in the New Testament gatherings.

This can be seen by piecing together various elements scattered throughout the New Testament—for example *Acts* 2:42-47; *Ephesians* 5:15-20; *Colossians* 3:15-17; and the Pastoral Letters. Relevant sections in *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *1 Corinthians* provide material on the subject of the Lord’s Supper. Such an exercise shows that the reading of the Scriptures and the ministry of the Word (preaching, teaching, evangelising) all occurred when the church met, together with prayer, confession of sin, profession of faith and the ‘breaking of bread’. Good liturgy ensures that these elements are maintained when God’s people meet, as well as providing form and shape to Christian gatherings over a certain size.

Good liturgy brings biblical truth to bear on the lives of men and women. For example, the *Book of Common Prayer (BCP)* constantly confronted and challenged men and women with the unchanging nature of God, his holiness, his justice, his love. In clear, unambiguous language it conveyed the reality and the significance of the death of Jesus Christ. It also called men and women to respond to God’s gospel. Liturgy for today’s church must confront and challenge us in the same way.

The *BCP* expressed these truths using all the rich resources of the English language. However, Thomas Cranmer understood that language is living and constantly changing. In his Preface to the *BCP* he anticipated that for the theology to remain the same, a time would come when his written expression of God’s truth would need to be changed.

Good liturgy always needs to change in order to remain the same; for good liturgy changes to maintain its relevance to the changing social and cultural environment but stays the same by always expressing the unchanging character of God.

Here is the framework for change today. Because of the way the Anglican Church in Australia is constituted, its liturgy will express the theology of Scripture found in the *BCP* and the Thirty-Nine Articles—but it will address our world in our language. Without this framework we may change, or fail to change, liturgy for all the wrong reasons. Formal liturgy protects churches from shallow theology, weak teaching and vain repetition. In churches where there is no sermon or a poor sermon, liturgy becomes the sermon.

Good liturgy not only provides sound theology but a tightness and simplicity of expression that enhances the gathering of God’s people. Like a well-written drama that portrays the encounter between the various players, liturgy scripts the encounter between God’s people and their God as well as their interaction with one another. Liturgy does not mean that the minister and congregation have to have their heads in a book. As in a good play, the minister should learn his words and the congregation need only have before them the words that they say, together with any cues that are needed for them. The larger the group the more important is a well-ordered form for the gathering of God’s people.

John G. Mason  
September, 2010, updated Easter 2020