

THE HISTORY OF THE LECTOR

The office of reader, or lector, is among the oldest, if not the oldest of liturgical lay ministries. In the early church, lectors were frequently appointed on a permanent basis. They were selected on the evidence of their ability to **read well**, and it was expected that they **show forth in their lives the truth of the lessons they read**. The normal expectation was that one or more lectors would exercise their ministry at every celebration of the Eucharist.

In the Middle Ages, however, the office declined in importance as, increasingly, it became customary for the lessons to be read by persons in “major orders” (deacon, priest, bishop).

Our present Prayer Book has restored this ancient function to the laity, but not as a permanent office.

According to the traditional rubric the reader or readers are to be **appointed by the celebrant/presiding priest**. In actual practice, however, the readers are frequently assigned on a rota basis, and this is clearly the better way, since it gives them opportunity to study and rehearse the passages to be read.

In order to underscore the dignity and importance of the ministry of the lector, it is desirable that those assigned to read at a particular service not function as acolytes or ministers of communion at the same service.

THE MINISTRY OF THE LECTOR

It is important, of course, that lectors are spiritually mature, active in the life of the congregation they serve, faithful attendees at worship, and supportive of their parish both financially and otherwise. All lectors should have knowledge of the structure and content of Holy Scripture and understand the origins of the scriptures. They should know how to find books of the Bible, locating chapter and verse, particularly half-verses. The lector should be well acquainted with the contents and organization of the Anglican Church's Prayer Books (BCP and/or BAS). They should be familiar with the order of worship and where and when they will be reading; they should also be familiar with the geography and acoustics of the church building, how the microphones work and what to do to prepare adequately – practically and spiritually.

Helping the congregation hear the scriptures in a meaningful way is the primary ministry of the Lector. So it is important that the lector keep some key points in mind:

- if you need to check the readings in advance (a requirement!), visit: <https://www.lectionarypage.net/>
- **Eye contact with the congregation** is important before beginning the reading, so the reader can be assured that the congregation is seated and ready to listen. Continue to use eye contact with the congregation only if you are comfortable doing so. If you are not it can be distracting to the congregation.
- A “dramatic” reading of the text is not appropriate. Trying to make your voice sound “better” or more “worshipful” will only lead to artificiality.
- Project your voice, remembering that *projection is not the same as shouting*.
- Speak more **slowly** than your habitual speech, remembering to enunciate carefully.
- Practice out loud. Good speaking is a muscular activity, it needs practice.
- If you need help with pronunciation, visit: <https://www.netministries.org/resources/resource-pronunciation-guide>

PREPARATION PRIOR TO YOUR ASSIGNED SERVICE

(THIS IS IMPORTANT And it is obvious to everyone if you have not prepared!)

The Lector needs to study and practice before reading at the service. To be an effective Lector, it's more important to be a good listener than a good reader. You must listen to and understand what the Bible is saying.

To help you understand the Bible, study your passage in a good New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Annotated Bible.

Suggested are:

- The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha (NRSV)
- The Harper Collins Study Bible with Apocrypha (NRSV)

Read the introduction to the book/books you are reading, the footnotes and the comments at the bottom of the page. To read well, you have to have a good understanding of what your passage means.

When was it written, why, to whom, by whom?

Who are the characters and where are the places?

What kind of literature is it? (Eg Poetry-Psalm 23, Narrative-Genesis 1, Letter-Romans 1:7-12, Sayings-Proverbs 25:1).

What happens before and after your passage?

You might also use a Bible Dictionary, a Bible Commentary, and/or a regular Dictionary to help you.

A useful resource is:

- A Lector's Guide and Commentary to the Revised Common Lectionary

Read the passage aloud to yourself to hear what God is saying. Remember, the way you listen and understand the words you are saying directly affects the way the person in the pew understands and makes sense of it.

WHAT TO AVOID

- Not preparing
- Reading in a 'flat' voice
- rushing through commas, periods, and paragraphs.
- Rushing over an unusually difficult Old Testament word
- Picking up speed, coming to the end suddenly and then not pausing before the closing words

So Remember...

- **Pace:** Read at the "rate of comprehension" Give the holy words a chance to sink in.
- **Use your Conversational Voice:** Read as if you were telling the congregation something they were hearing for the first time. You are reading the Holy Word, not a list of specifications.
- **Punctuate:** Commas are put in place to help clarify the passage. So pause. A period calls for an even longer pause. And a paragraph calls for enough time to allow the congregation to assimilate the content of what you have just said.
- **Rest:** The Bible is full of good dramatic happenings and profound ideas. When you read on, wait. Give it a chance to sink in.

PREPARATION IMMEDIATELY BEFORE YOUR ASSIGNED SERVICE

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before your assigned service and check in with the Presiding Priest or assisting minister.
- Make sure you have picked up the correct Bulletin for the day
- Prior to the service please check the service bulletin to double check your readings.
- check the Lectionary book on the lectern to ensure the readings appointed for the day are marked and match the bulletin

AT THE LECTERN

- Please be in place during the preceding item in the liturgy – it avoids drawing attention to you and alleviates the anxiety that a Lector might be absent!

Getting to and from the lectern should be as unobtrusive as possible!

- Please remember to acknowledge the altar when approaching / returning
- Adjust and Use the microphone. Please resist the temptation to ‘tap’ on the microphone and say, “Is it on?? / Can you hear me?”
- Breathe deeply.
- Project your voice, articulate so people can physically hear you – but remember, you are not an actor!
- Don’t rush through the reading, it’s important.
- Practice in the church; bring someone with you to help and provide feedback.

The Readings

- The Scripture introduction is part of the reading (Eg A reading from the letter of Paul to the Church in Rome). It is not usually necessary to include the verse numbers in the announcing of the reading; resist greeting people with ‘good morning’ or ‘the readings for today are.....’ or some other formula!
- A distinct pause needs to be made between the end of the reading and the closing acclamation. Pause and count to 3 before saying “The Word of the Lord”

The Psalm (if said rather than sung)

- Please announce the Psalm, saying, “The Psalm for today is Palm #, verses a through b; it can be found on page # of the Book of Common Prayer (if it is not printed in the Bulletin). We will say the psalm:

- Responsively, by half verse (marked by the asterisk)
OR
- Responsively, by whole verse
OR
- All together

- The Psalm (at the Eucharist) does not normally finish with the Gloria

COMPETENCIES

Competency 1

Employ the basics of good public speaking (effective communication).

Participants can identify and define the elements of good public speaking and analyze a proclamation using the elements.

- Breathing
- word colour
- pitch
- animation and warmth
- rate-speed-rhythm and pausing
- volume-pitch-projection
- articulation (forming the sounds) vs. pronunciation (the right way to say something)
- emphasis-stress

Competency 2

Demonstrate appropriate liturgical understanding

- Participants articulate their role as leaders in the liturgical setting.
- Participants demonstrate a working knowledge of how the lectionary is arranged.
- Participants demonstrate facility with the sound / PA system

Competency 3

Demonstrate effective proclamation skills.

- Observe others proclaiming a selection from Scripture
- Provide appropriate feedback to other Lectors
- Receive feedback from other Lectors and leaders

LECTOR'S PRAYER

Loving God,
I praise you and thank you for calling me
to proclaim your Holy Word to your people gathered in worship.
Open the hearts of all who gather for worship here,
so that they may hear your voice when I read.
Let nothing in my life or manner disturb your people
or close their hearts to the action of your Spirit.
Cleanse my heart and mind,
that what I say with my lips I may believe in my heart,
and what I believe in my heart I may show clearly in the life I lead;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

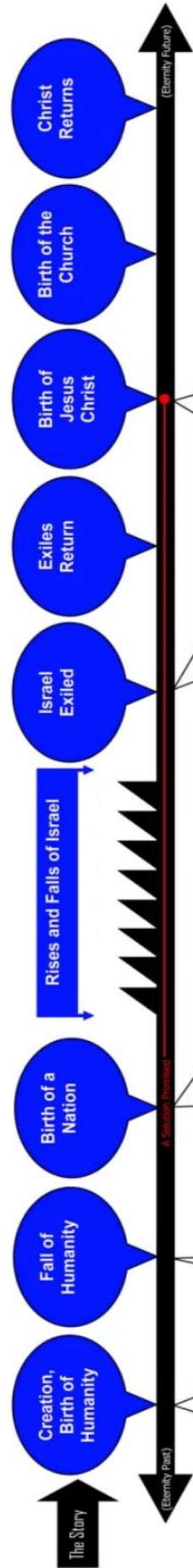


Where the other books fall chronologically...

Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
 Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Daniel, Ezekiel
 Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
 Job
 Lev. Num.
 Ruth
 New Testament Letters
 Revelation

History Books

Genesis
 Exodus, Deut.
 Joshua
 Judges
 1 & 2 Samuel
 1 & 2 Kings
 1 & 2 Chronicles
 Ezra
 Nehemiah
 Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
 Acts
 Revelation



New Creation
Consummation

Creation of the World
Adam & Eve Created
God forbids eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

- Adam & Eve eat forbidden fruit.
- God curses mankind (introduction of pain & suffering, exile, loss of God's presence)

God promises Abraham he will become a great nation that will enjoy God's favor again, and Abraham's seed will bless the nations.
God tells Israel through Moses that if they will obey Him, He will bless them. He will be with them, he will give them a home again, etc. If not, He will curse them. He will cast them out again, just like the garden of Eden.

Israel has a series of failures. They drift in and out of idolatry and disobedience. They never can seem to find that promised seed that will bless the nations. Each leader fails in one way or another (Saul, David, Solomon, etc.).
The nation of Israel divides: North & South. It doesn't look good. God's curses are looming on the horizon.

God brings punishment on his people. He kicks them out of the land. In 722 B.C., the Northern Kingdom falls. In 586 B.C., the Southern Kingdom falls. This is the lowest point in Israel's history.

At last! We find the final solution in Christ Jesus. He is the Seed that blesses the nations. He is the perfect prophet, priest, and king. He is able to turn the people from their sin. He sends the Holy Spirit. God's presence with his people forevermore. Jesus is who we've been waiting for this whole time!