

# Volunteer roles - corporate worship

## “Doing our bit”

Having lived through a turbulent time together where we restricted the numbers of individuals involved in public ministry in our worship times it is now time for us to take stock and widen our team again. This is a reflection of the reopening of wider society and will hopefully involve a willingness on the part of church members to undertake previously held and new roles within the life of the church family.

The focus of this particular paper is to help you to reflect upon which role you may wish to offer yourself for as we move into new patterns of worship particularly in terms of our public worship. Each role has some information about what is involved by way of expectations and commitment and in some cases some practical guidance about how you can carry out any new job you undertake.



## Welcoming (Sides people)

### What are we doing?

This role is primarily about making people feel welcome as they arrive for a service. It might involve some practical task such as giving out a hymn book or order of service but that isn't really the point. It is much more about being a warm welcoming presence especially for those who are new to public worship but equally to those who regularly attend. It is a part of offering hospitality which is at the heart of our understanding of God's nature so it's a theological function too! Your job is to embody the welcome of God and of his Church. No pressure then!

### How do we do it?

Please forgive us if this seems like teaching people some obvious stuff but if we've covered the basics then at least we all know what's expected of us and we are on the same page. Don't worry too much about the suggested phrases, they are just there as an idea of the sorts of things we may want to say.

1. **Offer a warm welcome.** It probably goes without saying that a warm smile with words of greeting are a great starting point for any encounter. We don't need to be swamping people with cheesy words (we are not Americans after all!) but equally we do want people to know that we are pleased to see them. So body language as well as the words we use are vitally important.
2. **Be prepared to offer help.** For newcomers it may be worth some words of explanation and guidance. This might include some information about the service “You've come to our more traditional style of service this morning which normally lasts about an hour. All the words you will need are in the order of service here.” Perhaps include some information about where they can find facilities “The toilets are through the door there if you need them” etc. Let them know you are available to help any time during the service if they want to ask a question. “Just let me know if you need anything during the service and I'll be glad to help.”
3. **Don't be afraid to ask for information.** Once you have made people feel welcome don't be afraid to ask about them. “Now forgive me but remind me if I will have seen you before?” Something like this acts as an opening for them to be able to share if they are newcomers, their name etc. You can then use this information to pass on to the Clergy person who is on duty at the end of the service so they can introduce themselves too.
4. **Regulars need care too.** Of course welcoming is not all about newcomers. We need to be equally as mindful of those who are regular participants in services. So it's important to keep our eyes open for those who are not attending as regularly as usual or who perhaps don't quite seem themselves when we do greet them. Your feedback to the Pastoral team and Clergy may be the important indicator that someone is in need of some love and care from the rest of the family.



## Intercessory prayer

### What are we doing?

Scripture tells us that the ongoing ministry of Jesus towards us his creation, is that he intercedes for us before his Father's throne. "Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." (Rom 8:34) Moreover when writing to Timothy Paul says "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people" (1 Tim 2:1). Indeed the bible is littered with references to the intercessory ministry of God's people in their prayer life. So when we gather together for worship it is entirely appropriate that we lift before God those whom he lays upon our hearts.

### How do we do it?

So we turn then to the practicalities of how we might lead God's people in intercessory prayer in the context of corporate worship. There are no right or wrong ways so we may relax about that. But perhaps there are some more and less helpful things we can remember when preparing to lead a time of prayer.

1. **Remember, this is not about you!** When we serve God in any role up front in the context of worship it is not about us. This means you don't have to worry about "getting it right" or "will I do a good enough job?" It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the words to say. So don't worry!
2. **Don't be over prescriptive.** As we are leading people in prayer it is good to leave some space for people to add their own prayers as well as saying "Amen" to those which you express. Don't be afraid of leaving/creating space for silence. Using "we" rather than I so prayers are inclusive is also good.
3. **Looking outwards.** It seems to me that our intercessions are the time we can focus on others rather than ourselves. Therefore incorporating a wide range of situations and people over a period of time (weeks) can be a great way of ensuring that we pray for a good variety of situations. (I tend to glance through the BBC News website to remind myself of situations across the world.)
4. **Patterns can be helpful.** One idea for structuring our prayers is to group prayers into themes. This might be The Church, The World, The Sick and The Grieving as an example. Another might be Children, Young People, Young Families, Those in Middle Age and the Elderly. Such groupings can help us organise our thoughts and prayers.
5. **Practical considerations.** Some practical things you may like to bear in mind are as follows.
  - Watch your timing - not too short, not too long! Perhaps consider a response sentence - Lord in your mercy is a well known call to encourage the response "hear our prayer" but feel free to use your own simple phrases if you would like.
  - Watch your pace - try not to rush through your prayer time but keep a gentle and calm pace.
  - Speak clearly - this maybe goes without saying but do ensure you speak clearly so that people can understand you well and also ensure that you speak into the microphone if you are using one



## Public scripture reading

### What are we doing?

As a Christian family who value the bible as the source of authority as we read it together illumined by the Holy Spirit the public reading of our scriptures is of vital importance. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness," (2 Tim 3:16). The preacher will always base their sermon on the scriptures being read so in some ways there is a partnership between the reader and the preacher when they share in this task.



## How do we do it?

The importance of the task means that it is when it is read aloud this is done with clarity so that we can soak in God's word. Whilst such reading is not a performance when we read we are doing so in order to communicate with those who are listening. It is therefore a task which should be undertaken with some reflection on technique and delivery.

1. **Prepare in advance.** Whilst most people reading will already be competent at reading aloud it is nonetheless important to familiarise ourselves with a passage before embarking upon a public reading. This will allow you to consider how to pronounce any tricky words, such as names and places, as well as getting a feel for the shape of the passage. If you get the opportunity to practice out loud in advance then don't be embarrassed to do so.
2. **Be mindful of pace and delivery.** The pace we choose should be between rushing through the words at a garble and dragging it out for too long. A speed which makes it easy to take in the details and be heard clearly is ideal. You may wish to change the tone of your voice for any spoken words in a text in order to differentiate the speakers. Don't be afraid to use emphasis, pacing, inflection, and pauses.
3. **Projection.** Although within our building we do have a good sound system it is still important to ensure that delivery is clear as though speaking to a room rather than holding a conversation. We must also ensure that we speak into the microphone so that our voices may be clearly picked up. If we are not using amplification then projection is even more important. Imagining you are speaking to the person at the back of the room often helps.
4. **Nerves.** Unless you are someone who is very used to speaking in public you may well experience some nerves. Before you come up to read take deep breaths. Breathe deeply and slowly – count to six on the inhale and twelve on the exhale. This has a calming effect on your central nervous system.



## Serving at Communion

### What are we doing?

The tradition of St George's is very mixed when it comes to the view of Holy Communion held by members of the church. The same will also be true of visitors who may rarely attend public worship other than at special services such as Christmas and Easter. So whatever our own view of the Eucharist we must ensure that when we are entrusted with serving people with the elements we do so in a way that ensures respect for the possible views people hold.

## How do we do it?

Whatever our beliefs about the bread and the wine we approach our task with respect and dignity for the sacrament recognising that for all, whatever our own understanding of what is happening, scripture makes it clear that in eating and drinking we are following the command of Jesus.

1. **Remember, this is not about you!** There is nothing intrinsically special about anyone who plays a role in any sacramental act. That includes the Priest who is presiding at the table and those tasked in assisting with serving the people. Some might view the wearing of robes as an indication of specialness but this could not be further from the truth. Robes (if we wear them) are there to remind us that it is not us who are special. Rather these cover up our personal expressions of taste or fashion and present a blank canvas where the scriptural words we use and the gifts of God we share among the people are the focus of attention.
2. **Serving unobtrusively.** The key here is to carry out our role respectfully and as unobtrusively as possible. We offer the cup with words which remind the recipient that this is for them the blood of Christ which is the seal and guarantee of eternal life. The words we use should be agreed with any others distributing the bread and wine.
3. **Formal words.** For a Book of Common Prayer (BCP) service the words "The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ" may be used as shorthand for the full text "The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's



Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful.” Similarly the person distributing the bread (usually the priest) will use the words “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.” This in turn is shorthand for “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Eat this in remembrance that Christ’s Body was broken for thee, and be thankful.”

4. **Informal words.** For contemporary style worship services with Communion words at distribution will be much simpler. Again for continuity these should be agreed between those distributing the elements. Something such as “The body/blood of Christ keep you in eternal life.” or even simply “The body/of Christ” are perfectly adequate.

### **Other ways to serve**

There are a number of other areas of ministry during public worship which require some more in depth training and authorisation which are not outlined in this guidance but for which specific documentation is available. This includes Children’s and Youth work, Authorised Prayer ministry and Preaching. Should you wish to offer yourself for service in one of these more specialised areas please be aware that this will involve both a DBS background check and potentially authorisation from the Bishop of Bradwell.

There may well also be other tasks needing to be undertaken which, though vital, need less in the way of guidance (such as joining the Refreshments team or Transport team for those unable to travel to church in any other way than by car). We welcome offers of help in all areas of church life all of which are the way in which we “do our bit” to contribute to the life of the Body of Christ at St George’s.

### **Request and expectations**

Ideally we’d love people to volunteer to undertake their role across both services on a Sunday morning. This has the benefit of simplifying our rotas, minimising the frequency with which you will be asked to work and producing a lovely interaction of church members across our Sunday service.

We would also ask that, if you are unable to undertake your role on a given Sunday, you organise your own replacement rather than pass that task back to the ministry team.

### **Finally a thank you!**

As we mentioned earlier intercessory prayer is a ministry of all God’s people. It is wonderful that at St George’s we see such a variety of input from different people across the family of the church. We enjoy a mix of different ages, cultural backgrounds, gender and stages of our faith journey. This only adds to the richness of our experience as God’s family and is a small reflection of the diversity we find in God’s creativity and expression. So thank you for playing your part and perhaps showing courage in doing something you don’t find easy. In doing so please know that you are blessing the family of God.

Ever yours

Pete

Revd Peter Hillman, Associate Minister.