

An overview of Daily Prayers in the *Book of Common Prayer*
(all page references are from that book)

One of the strengths of the Episcopal Church is the diversity of daily prayer services contained within the *Book of Common Prayer (BCP)*. Taken from the monastic pattern of “praying the hours” or offering a prayer service periodically throughout the day and night, these prayers are each designed for a particular time of the day. All of these prayer services are appropriately conducted by lay persons, either as individuals or as a group, without any clergy involvement. They are described below in the order of increasing complexity and length.

Forward Day by Day

Though not part of the *BCP*, *Forward Day by Day* is a collection of short daily meditations produced by Forward Movement, a non-profit agency of the Episcopal Church. Many find them to be a useful and thought-provoking part of their day, either independently or perhaps as a “homily” to go with one of the following standard prayer services. They are produced quarterly in paper form in both small pocket-sized and large-print editions which can be found in the narthex in the back of our church, as well as each day’s meditation being online at <http://forwardmovement.org/forward-day-by-day/>.

Daily Devotions

These very brief one-page prayer services on pages 136-140 are completely self-contained short prayer services. As the titles imply, these short liturgies are designed to be offered in the Morning, Noon, Early Evening, and at the Close of the Day. While various readings can be added to any of them (see page 136), they are each designed to be a complete service. Some individuals choose to use all of them each day as a way to periodically regroup themselves in prayer throughout the day. Others simply choose to use one or more as part of their daily prayer regimen.

Noonday Prayer

Like the “Daily Devotions,” the Order of Service for Noonday, which begins on page 103, is a self-contained service which does not generally use added daily Scripture readings. While it is nominally designed for the noon hour, and many DO offer it during their lunch break in a work day for example, it is appropriate for any time during middle of the day.

Compline

Like the above services, An Order for Compline starting on page 127 is self-contained, not requiring added Scripture passages. It is intended to be the last worship service of the day, and to be offered shortly before retiring for the night. Its restful, peaceful tone provides a quiet end to a long day, centering those praying the office in the peace of Christ before sleep.

An Order of Worship for the Evening

As indicated in the directions for the service on page 108, this Order is designed for use in the late afternoon or evening. It is not designed to end the day, but rather at the end of a workday and perhaps before an evening meal. Short verses of Scripture, either one of the standard passages or

one selected by the season of the Church year as shown on page 108, are used. A psalm and/or other passage from Scripture, perhaps - but not necessarily - taken from the Daily Office Lectionary (see below), is added as is a Canticle (see pages 47-52 & 85-95) as a prayer of praise. This is followed by a litany or some other form of devotional prayer, a blessing and dismissal. This service is obviously more complicated than the previous services in that it provides clear spaces for additional Scriptural readings and prayers. However, it is still shorter and less complicated than either of the two follow major Daily Offices; Morning and Evening Prayer.

The Daily Office Lectionary or *How do I know which readings are set for any given day?*

For use with both Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer (or just as a schedule for reading the Scriptures), there is a two-year cycle of Bible readings which are assigned for use on every day of the year. This set of readings, called the Daily Office Lectionary, is on pages 934-1001 in the *BCP*. Directions for how to use it are found on pages 934-5. Briefly, Year ONE readings begin the First Sunday in Advent in EVEN-numbered years (so that MOST of the readings of the ODD-numbered year ONE are in ODD years since Advent usually begins in late November). Year TWO reading therefore begin in Advent of ODD-numbered years.

Morning Prayer - Rite I & II

Like the Holy Eucharist, there are two separate versions of Morning Prayer, Rite I & II. They are very similar in structure and usage; they differ in language. Rite I uses the more traditional language, including “thee” and “thou,” while Rite II uses more modern language of “you.” For the sake of this discussion, the page numbers will refer to Rite II (pages 75-102), but comparable prayers are found in Rite I (pages 37-60). For years this was the primary weekly liturgy every Sunday morning in the Episcopal Church. In many parishes, this is the Sunday worship service when there is no priest available to celebrate the Eucharist. It is the most complete morning prayer service, with many portions of it available for chanting. As indicated in the rubrics, there are many portions of the service which are seasonal, sentences or portions of Scripture which are designated to be read during specific times of the church year. The readings used on a given day are taken from the Daily Office Lectionary as described above.

For an online version of TODAY’s Morning Prayer, with readings and optional musical accompaniment, go to <https://www.missionstclare.com/english>. (*This will bring the viewer directly to the Mission St. Clare page*)

Evening Prayer - Rite I & I

The late day counterpart to Morning Prayer is called, appropriately enough, Evening Prayer. It, too, has two different versions; the more traditional language of Rite I (pp. 61-73) and the contemporary Rite II (115-126). It’s structure and flow very much parallels that of Morning Prayer and it is designed for use to end the day much like one might use Morning Prayer to begin it.