

Leading Intercessions

Preparation

- pray, when preparing, to allow God to guide you
- consider whether you will work better with a defined script or speaking freely from an outline

Content

- most orders of service offer, at the very least, a framework within which to develop the prayers
- be aware of
 - readings & prayers for the day/season
 - any special constraints: is there a special order of service with set text or framework for the intercessions?
 - the general news (TV, radio, newspapers)
 - any community news – and is there a Church prayer board from which specific names or situations should be included?
 - listen to the sermon and other changing content of the service – could a verse of a hymn or psalm be a useful thread?
- what Intercessions are *not*:
 - The Notices
 - a lecture
- you can't pray about every person and every individual situation in one session – focus on particular matters, and consider omitting a section if it feels right to do so
- the “oppressor” and the “evildoer” are also in need of our prayers - desperately
- remember to include thanksgiving
- consider the use of silence

Use of silence

- use silence to allow others to add their own special intercessions
 - consider whether the occasion would warrant those contributions being aloud or silent
 - make sure the congregation knows whether they are expected to contribute aloud or in silence
- give an idea of length of silence so the members of the congregation can use it confidently

Technique

- volume – be audible to the furthest member of the congregation, but avoid shouting
- diction – speak clearly, remembering that regional accents add richness to our language but, at full strength, might exclude any visitors from other regions
- speed – it is safer to err on the slow side than risk being too fast to be understood
- expression – allow your voice to vary in expression – and avoid caricature “church-voice”

Whether and where to stand

- leading the intercessions from the body of the congregation taps into the symbolism of being a voice on behalf of the congregation rather than speaking to them
- you may choose to do this standing, sitting or kneeling

BUT

- *if you don't have a loop system, or don't make use of it*, you may be excluding sections of the congregation from taking part unless you are reading from a fixed text which they, also, can read
- if you stand where your mouth can be seen, anyone with any degree of hearing impediment can enhance their ability to participate by lip-reading – if they can see your mouth and you are speaking clearly but normally

AND

- be prepared to adjust the height of a lectern (and microphone) if that facility is available to you

Intercessions

Why pray?

- Part of Jesus' rhythm of life was prayer - both alone and with others, both quiet contemplation and practical action. To follow in his footsteps is to pray.
- The act of intercession is to pray for others and for ourselves. There is a long and well-documented tradition of God's people praying for each other: from Moses through to St. Paul.
- The Christian community of faithful loving people develops its faithfulness and love of God and of each other through praying. We are called to build each other up in prayer.
- As we pray we both give thanks to God and ask for his help; we ask to feel his presence within every situation, even when it seems as though things are hopeless. So we orientate our hearts in God's direction, remembering his presence with us.
- We are also called to pray for those we do not know, for situations, places, problems ... and as we intercede for ourselves and for others we share in the intercessory work of our Lord, who prayed for others whilst he hung on the cross, and who lives in heaven now interceding for the whole creation.

What is intercession?

- Prayer is a distinctive ministry which is offered by all people of faith.
- Intercession is upholding a person, or place or situation in Jesus' presence. It is helpful to remember the gospel story of the paralysed man (Mark 2: 1-12, Luke 5: 17-26) and how his friends bring him to Jesus, and because of the crowds, lower him through the roof to lay him at Jesus' feet. So too we can lay at Jesus' feet the people and events in the world which need our loving concern.
- When we pray we are seeking God's will on earth as it is in heaven, and He may use each of us to answer that prayer - in ways in which we may be completely unaware of, or in ways which we do not understand at the time.

Quotations

"Prayer for the world and for the people round us, whether Christians or not, is a duty laid on all Christians and on the church as a whole ... Without this outward-looking care and sympathy, Christians and the Church become inward-looking and sterile."

Dom Petitpierre, *Meeting for Prayer*.

"The way of intercession is threefold:

1. Offer your own faith and love and readiness to God, come what may.
2. Offer your own faith that God is present in the world and in the life of the people to be prayed for.
3. Offer yourself as an instrument of God."

Colin Semper, *Intercessions at Worship*.

Achieving a good technique

Get together all those who take on the responsibility of reading lessons or leading intercessions.

- Get them to scatter around the worship building and take it in turns to read a passage. They will need to be prepared to give & receive constructive criticism about whether they can be heard and understood.
- Invite a visiting speaker, with known technical skill, to explain how they achieve the desired effect. It may be worth inviting someone specifically *not* from a famously church arena: an actor or politician? Or, perhaps, a voice-over artist.

Resources

The other side of this sheet has been designed to be photocopied to be used as a handout.

Additional resources may be obtained from the Diocesan Education Centre, e.g.

- *Leading Intercessions (Common Worship edition)* by Raymond Chapman - Canterbury Press ISBN 1-85311-377-8

The Diocesan web-site www.stalbans.anglican.org includes material for special occasions.