

The Book of Common Prayer 2019

O V E R V I E W

Week Two: August 21—The Daily Office and Psalter

The Daily Office

- Above all, the Church is meant to be a people of prayer, a family who shares in the life of God. The Daily Office is an invitation to join the Church in her daily prayers; it is a reminder that prayer is meant to be a *daily* practice, because life with God is a daily reality.
- The Daily Office is a way of praying and reading the Bible at set points throughout the day: morning, midday, evening, and before bed (Compline).
- Read the second paragraph on page 6.
- The Daily Office offers a structure of prayer for you, your family, and corporate gatherings.
 - Opening Sentences
 - Confession
 - Psalms
 - Scripture Readings
 - Canticles
 - Prayers
- The Daily Office helps to center you in the morning before you begin your busy day, and it helps to calm you as you prepare for the hours of the night.
- The Daily Office gives you words to praise the Lord, even when you don't feel like it, priming the pump for your relationship with God.
- The Daily Office reminds us of the holiness of every moment by sanctifying the natural patterns of the day.
- The Daily Office is a tool to establish a healthy pattern of prayer. We are creatures of habit; the small choices we make form habits that will have long-lasting results in the kind of person we become. One of the great gifts of the Daily Office is that it offers patterns of prayer that anyone can use. If you adopt this habit of praying throughout the day, you will discover the powerful benefits of such a rhythm.

The Origins of the Daily Office

- The Daily Office originated from the Jewish practice of daily prayer as seen in the Old Testament.
 - God commanded the Israelite priests to offer sacrifices of animals in the morning and evening (Exod 29:38–39).
 - Jews recited the Shema two or three times a day (Deut 6:4–7).
 - The Psalms speak of praying in the morning (5:3), the early hours (130:6), the evening (141:2), and day and night (92:2). Psalm 119:164 even says, “Seven times a day I praise you.”
 - Daniel would stop for prayer three times a day (Dan 6:10).
- The practice of daily prayer continues into the New Testament.
 - Jesus models for us regular daily prayer (Mark 1:35).
 - Shared daily prayer appears as early as Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1.
 - Paul urges and models regular prayer (Eph 6:18; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:17).
- The early church continued the Jewish practice of praying throughout the day.
 - The Didache instructs the Lord’s Prayer to be prayed three times a day.
 - Clement of Alexandria (150–215) and Origen (185–254) mention praying three times a day, and Tertullian, Cyprian, and Hippolytus (all 3rd century) refer to even more times of daily prayer.
- As monastic communities developed, they formed their entire common lives upon the rhythm of daily prayer work, praying up to seven offices a day.
 - The most influential rule was established by St. Benedict in the 6th century.
 - Pope Gregory the Great learned of Benedict’s simple rule of prayer and adopted it for the larger Roman church.
 - These hours continued through the Middle Ages and into the Reformation.
- Thomas Cranmer believed daily prayer should be available to all people, not just priests and monks (“the monkhood of all believers”).
 - Cranmer simplified and condensed the seven hours of prayer into Morning and Evening Prayer.
 - Cranmer also revised the Daily Office around the importance of regular recitation of the Psalms and reading through the whole Bible, which gives the Anglican Office its distinctive character.
- The 1979 prayer book restored Noonday Prayer and Compline as optional offices, and included a shortened version of the four offices called “Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families.” These changes are retained in the ACNA’s 2019 edition.

The Daily Office in the BCP 2019

- Broad Difference with the BCP 1979
 - As with the entire prayer book, the format for both Morning and Evening Prayer closely follows the 1662 prayer book.
 - The BCP 2019 does not offer Daily Office services in what the 1979 prayer book calls “Rite I” and “Rite II,” the former containing traditional language, and the latter contemporary language. Everything in the BCP 2019 uses contemporary language, though a supplemental book with traditional language should be released sometime next year.
 - Easy to follow. Seasonal opening sentences, antiphons, and supplemental canticles are moved to the end of the offices instead of within them.
 - The *Gloria Patri* returned to the more traditional form.
- Changes to Morning and Evening Prayer
 - Only three opening sentences listed for Morning and Evening Prayer (11, seasonal ones on pp. 27–29; 41, seasonal ones on pp. 54–56).
 - The confession in Morning and Evening Prayer follow more closely the 1662 prayer book than the BCP 1979 (12, 42).
 - Two absolutions listed instead of one, with an option for a deacon or layperson to pray on behalf of the people if no priest is present (13, 43).
 - Longer Invitatory for both Morning and Evening Prayer (13, 43).
 - Only three antiphons listed for Morning Prayer (14, seasonal ones on pp. 29–30).
 - For Morning Prayer, the Venite includes the last verses of Psalm 95 for penitential seasons (15).
 - Only three canticles listed for Morning Prayer (17–20, supplemental ones on pp. 79–88).
 - Deletion in the Apostles’ Creed: “He was conceived by ~~the power of~~ the Holy Spirit” (20, 46).
 - The *Kyrie* is added in Morning and Evening Prayer immediately before the Lord’s Prayer (21, 47).
 - Only one suffrage offered instead of two for Morning Prayer (21–22).
 - The Collects in Morning and Evening Prayer are marked for a weekly rotation, if so desired (22–24, 49–50).

- Minor Changes to Midday Prayer
 - Additional Psalm added as an option to read, Psalm 124 (35).
 - One of the three Scripture passages changed from Romans 5:5 to John 12:31–32 (36).
 - A versicle/response added before the *Kyrie* (37).
 - The last line of the Lord’s Prayer is included (37).
 - Some of the closing collects revised (38).
 - A concluding sentence is added (39).
- Minor Changes to Compline
 - Confession bulked up (57).
 - The last line of the Lord’s Prayer is included (62).
 - Order of closing collects slightly changed (63).

The Daily Office Lectionary

- The Daily Office Lectionary provides the Scripture readings for Morning and Evening Prayer (734–63), and should not to be confused with the Sunday Lectionary (716–33), which provides Scripture readings for Sundays, Holy Days, and Commemoration.
- The major change in the Daily Office Lectionary of the BCP 2019 is that it is based on the calendar year rather than the liturgical cycle.
 - The daily lectionaries in the older prayer books were all based on the calendar year, including the 1549 and 1662 prayer books.
 - It wasn’t until the 20th century that prayer books departed from this model and shifted to the liturgical cycle.
 - The bulk of Cranmer’s 1549 preface focuses on the recovery of reading through the whole of Scripture, and the daily lectionary was a crucial component of this vision. Read first and third paragraphs on pages 794–95.
- Some Pros of the Calendar-Year Model
 - You don’t have to be a liturgical expert to use the lectionary; it is much more user-friendly. It doesn’t take longer to figure out what to read than to read the passage.
 - In general, readings move continuously through books of the Bible, interrupted only by select Holy Days. Each day you pick up where you left off the day before instead of too often jumping around from place to place.

- This model allows for more exposure to Scripture. Most of the Old Testament is read once each year. The Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles are read in their entirety twice each year. Revelation once a year.
- It still retains the appropriate number of readings for various Holy Days.
- You might be hesitant, but try it for a year, and you'll be a convert!
- Using the Daily Office Lectionary
 - Simply look up the day's date, and read the assigned readings for either Morning or Evening Prayer (this is based on a one-year cycle).
 - The Daily Office Lectionary may also be adapted for use in a two-year cycle. Read the last paragraph on page 737.
 - Note the "Date" column includes key Holy Days. For more information on those days, see "The Calendar of the Christian Year" (687–712).
 - The dagger symbol indicates how to abbreviate a longer chapter if desired.
 - Note on pages 744–45 the readings of Holy Week, Easter Day, Ascension, and Pentecost (since these are moveable days).

The Psalter

- The New Coverdale Psalter
 - Thomas Cranmer incorporated the Psalter that was most familiar with English speakers, which was the Great Bible of 1539, the first authorized English Bible. Bishop Myles Coverdale, the great poet and Hebrew scholar, was the translator of this Bible, which included the Psalms.
 - The Coverdale Psalter has been utilized by every prayer book since until the mid-20th century. For the 1979 prayer book, a whole new translation of the Psalter was included, which departed greatly from Coverdale. It is not a bad translation, but
 - it is not as memorable poetically (consider the degree to which Coverdale's phrasing has become a part of everyday speech);
 - gender neutral pronouns cover up allusions to Jesus (e.g., Ps 1);
 - a pride in the 1960s that Coverdale didn't know Hebrew very well, which Hebrew scholarship today now refutes
 - The Liturgical Task Force chose to revise and renew the Coverdale Psalter for the BPC 2019. Though one can argue that certain phrases from other translations are more accurate, the driving aim for the phrasing of the New Coverdale Psalter was to be more memorable and singable.

- Using the Psalter with the Daily Office
 - See page 734 for instructions on how to use and integrate the Psalter into Morning and Evening Prayer.
 - The one-month cycle is indicated within the Psalter itself and on page 735.
 - The sixty-day cycle is alongside the lectionary readings on pages 734–63.

Suggestions for Adapting the Daily Office

- If you want to practice each of the four offices on a given day, I recommend that Morning Prayer be said before breakfast; Midday Prayer before, during, or after lunch; Evening Prayer around dinnertime; and Compline before going to bed.
- Or simply aim to practice one office every day of the week, e.g., just do Morning Prayer.
- Use one of these liturgies with other people.
 - Morning Prayer with your spouse.
 - Midday Prayer with a co-worker.
 - Evening Prayer around the dinner table.
 - Compline when you put your children to bed.
- Attend Morning Prayer at All Saints on Thursdays at 8:10.
- Start small: pray the Lord’s Prayer and have a moment of silence each day.
- Use a shortened version of one of the four offices called Family Prayers (66–75). These are a great introduction to the Daily Office, and readings from the Daily Office lectionary can be included at one’s discretion.
- Because the human brain is designed for patterns, the best thing is to find one pattern you like and do your best to stick with it.