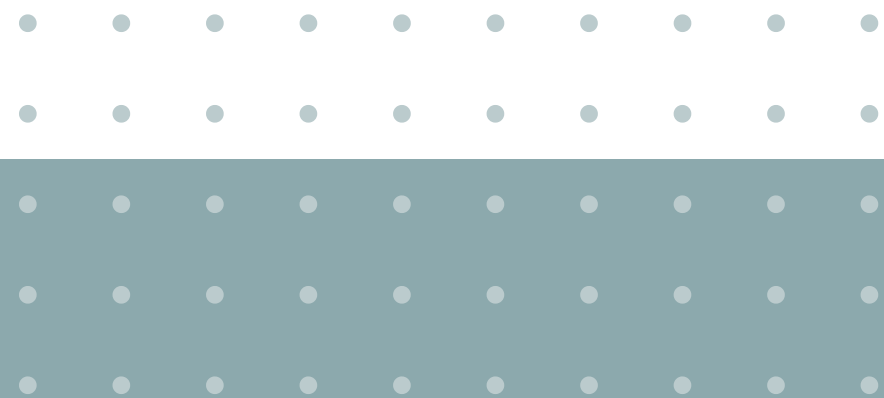


*ALMIGHTY AND ETERNAL GOD, RULER OF ALL THINGS IN HEAVEN
AND EARTH: MERCIFULLY ACCEPT THE PRAYERS OF YOUR PEOPLE,
AND STRENGTHEN US TO DO YOUR WILL; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST
OUR LORD. AMEN. (394)*





THE DAILY OFFICE
AND
DAILY PRAYER



CONSTANT PRAYER

- Prayer was a fundamentally important part of Jesus' life and ministry.
 - Jesus began his earthly ministry by heading into the desert to fast and pray (Luke 4:1-13).
 - Jesus spent his last night on earth praying in the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32).
 - Throughout his ministry Jesus would take time to go off "by himself to pray." (Matthew 14:23).
- Prayer wasn't just something that Jesus did himself; he also encouraged his followers to pray.
 - Jesus tells his listeners stories about "their need to pray always" (Luke 18:1).
 - He even spends time teaching his followers how to pray (Matthew 6:5-15).
- Following the example and words of Jesus, Paul instructs Christians to "pray without ceasing."
 - The early Christians took these words to heart, continuing the Jewish practice of regular prayer at certain hours of the day and night.
 - From this practice of regular prayer arose the tradition of the Divine Office, or Liturgy of the Hours, a set of seven liturgies spaced through the day so that prayers were being offered throughout the day and night.
 - By the fifth century, communities of monks and nuns set themselves aside so that they could dedicate their lives to praying the Divine Office.
 - This tradition of prayer continues today, with religious communities offering nearly constant prayer.
- At every moment of every day, people of faith are praying with and for you and me.
 - Thanks be to God for these monks and nuns around the world committed to a life of prayer.
 - The continual prayer that Paul describes is not just an unattainable ideal; it is a reality of prayer through the centuries, and an incredible example of lived faithfulness.

- But what about the rest of us?
 - Not all of us are called to a life set apart exclusively for prayer (though if you think you might be, please pick up the phone and call your nearest monastery, because you are a gift and sign to the world).
 - But is continual (or even daily) prayer the exclusive purview of the “professionally religious”?
- Thomas Cranmer believed that daily prayer should be available to all people, not just priests or those who lived in monasteries.
- In fact, that’s why The Book of Common Prayer is called “common,” not because it is ordinary, but because it is a way of prayer available to all people—it is prayer held in common.
- Cranmer wanted to make daily prayer accessible to everyone, so he simplified the monks’ prayer cycle into the Daily Offices.
- Instead of the full Divine Office—prayers every three hours throughout the day—the Daily Office offers a simplified version of four set services of prayer: Morning Prayer; Noonday Prayer; Evening Prayer; and Compline.
- By simplifying the hours of prayer into these four offices, Cranmer did something radical.
 - He tried to take “continual prayer” and make it something that wasn’t just for religious “professionals” but for everyone.
 - One of the great gifts of the ***Book of Common Prayer*** is that it offers patterns of prayer that anyone, priest or laity, monk or mechanic, nun or nurse, can use.
- This idea is so central to the Anglican and Episcopal ethos that all of our successive Books of Common Prayer have included the Daily Offices.
- These liturgies are intended for private and public prayer:
 - People can gather in churches or in homes to say them as a group
 - Families can pray them together in homes
 - Individuals can read the offices on their own, as part of their personal prayer discipline.

THE DAILY OFFICE

- The Daily Office is found on pages 35–146.
- There are two rites, Rite I (pages 36–73) or Rite II (pages 74–146).
 - With only a few small differences, the Rite I and Rite II versions of Morning and Evening Prayer are the same services, just in different language.
 - Rite I is the more traditional and formal language of “thee” and “thy.” The prayers use words like “vouchsafe” and “inestimable.” The Rite I liturgy reads more like Shakespeare than a New York Times bestseller.
 - Rite II translates some of the language into words that are more contemporary and easier to understand. Rite II retains much of the imagery and poetry of the older language but sounds more like the way that you might speak in regular conversation.
 - The choice of whether to use Rite I or Rite II is a personal one.
 - Some people find the language of Rite I difficult to understand, awkward, and off-putting. They find Rite I hard to pray and connect to God more easily through Rite II language.
 - Other people find that the poetic beauty of this language, different from everyday speech, to connect them more deeply with the mystery of God. Rite I feels like prayer to them.
 - When you are just starting out with the Daily Office, you should use whichever form feels right to you.
- There are four different offices within the Daily Office: Morning Prayer; Noonday Prayer; Evening Prayer (and An Order of Worship for Evening); Compline.
- As their names suggest, these offices are spaced throughout the day so that, if you pray all of them, you could be praying throughout the day: in the morning, at noon, in the evening, and at night (close of day).
- But even if you don’t pray all of them, the different offices give you an opportunity to find a practice that works in your context; the prayers are suited to whatever time of day you are able to make the space for daily prayer.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE LITURGY

- All of the offices (Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline) follow a similar structure, though each of them have unique prayers and features suited to their time of day. Every office includes:
 - *Opening sentences:*
 - These might include a seasonal sentence of scripture, an opening versicle and response between the leader and the congregation, or both.
 - The opening sentences set the tone of worship, helping us focus our attention on God and reminding us of key themes in the seasons of the church year.
 - *Psalms:*
 - The psalms, the prayer book of the Bible, are the heart of the offices. If you pray the offices daily, using the appointed psalms, you will go through the entire psalter (the book of Psalms) in a month.
 - Some of the offices have introductory sentences or an invitatory (invitational) psalm that is said or sung before the psalms appointed for the day.
 - In saying the psalms, we engage in a tradition of prayer that stretches back to the beginnings of the Bible, and our voices join with the faithful through the centuries.
 - The psalms give expression to the full range of human emotion— joy and sadness, fear and celebration— and put those emotions in the context of God’s action in the world and in our lives.

- **Readings:**
 - All of the offices have readings from the Bible. Each day has a schedule of psalms, an Old Testament reading, an Epistle reading, and a gospel reading.
 - The lectionary (or schedule of readings) for the Daily Office is found on pages 934-1001 of *The Book of Common Prayer*.
 - The Daily Office lectionary is a two-year cycle; if you read the lessons every day then you will read most (though not all) of the Bible over the course of two years.
 - The appointed lessons are designed to be divided up among the day, so that you have readings for every office.
 - For example, if you say Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer daily, you might read the Old Testament and Epistle readings during Morning Prayer and save the gospel lesson to read during Evening Prayer
- ***Canticles:***
 - All of the offices have canticles that are to be sung or said after each reading. Canticles are hymns, poems, or songs of praise taken directly from the Bible.
 - In saying or singing the canticles, we enter into the biblical story, joining our voices and prayers with Miriam and Moses as they cross the Red Sea, with Isaiah as he proclaims the prophecies of God’s comfort and salvation, with Mary as she receives the good news of Jesus’ birth from Gabriel.
 - In praying the canticles, we hear echoes between the events of the Bible and events in our own time and learn of God’s constant presence in both.
- ***Prayers:***
 - All of the offices include the Lord’s Prayer.
 - They also include a series of additional prayers.
 - There are suffrages (verse-and-response prayers)
 - Collects (thematic prayers) specific to the time of day or appointed for certain days
 - Closing prayers
 - There are also times for people to offer their own prayers of intercession and thanksgiving.
 - The inclusion of both traditional suffrages and collects alongside times for unscripted prayer allows us to join our own thoughts and conversations with God together with the prayers that have been prayed by faithful Christians through the ages.
 - This time of prayer is a time both to talk with God and listen to God, in holy conversation.
- ***Dismissal:***
 - The offices close with a dismissal, and often with an optional concluding sentence of scripture.
 - The dismissal reminds us that we are grounded in prayer and then sent out into the world to both worship and serve God in all that we say and do.

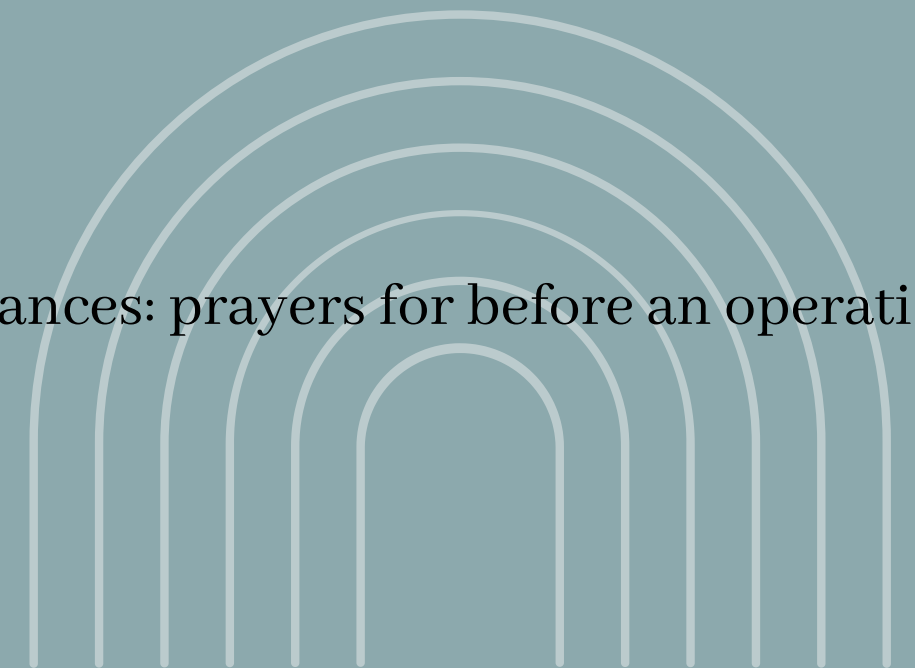
HOW TO PRAY THE DAILY OFFICE

- Morning and Evening Prayer are the two main pillars of the office.
 - They are the longest services and the ones most widely used by individuals and communities.
 - In addition to the core pieces described above, Morning and Evening Prayer includes the Apostles' Creed and an option for including the Confession of Sin.
- As you'll see in the text, there are numerous options within the prayer services.
 - You can select the opening sentences from a variety of options chosen for each season
 - You can choose which canticles to say in response to each reading
 - You select the collects you'd like from an array of choices
 - You choose whether to include or omit the optional parts.
- The different options presented within each office can be overwhelming at first.
 - Praying the Daily Office is like any new skill—it takes time to learn, yet eventually, it becomes second nature.
 - The key to the Daily Office, like any discipline, is practice.
 - The more you pray it, the more you learn the rhythm offered by these prayers, appreciating the variety while finding comfort in the things you pray again and again.
- If you want to pray the Daily Office, start by familiarizing yourself with the service.
- Sit down and take time to read about the Daily Office in *The Book of Common Prayer*.
- Read the words in italics (called the rubrics).The rubrics give instructions, from which parts are optional to what actions to take at various points in the liturgy.
- To pray the Daily Office, all you need is *The Book of Common Prayer* and a Bible, but you may want to mark the readings, psalms, and canticles for each day to make the process easier.
- If you struggle to understand the Daily Office, there are websites and books that help make it easier!

OTHER WAYS TO PRAY

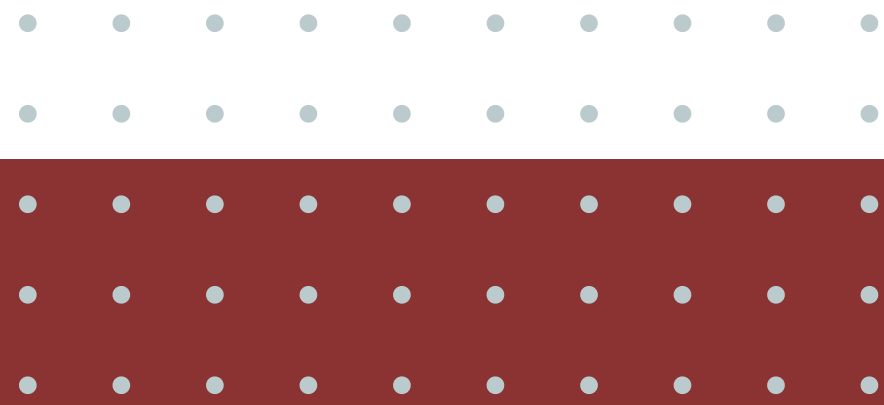


- The Daily Office is a wonderfully Anglican way to pray.
- But the Daily Office is not the only way to pray using *The Book of Common Prayer*.
- The prayer book offers hundreds of different, wonderful resources for prayer. They include:
 - *Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families:*
 - Found on pages 136-140 in The Book of Common Prayer
 - These devotions follow the basic structure of the Daily Office but in a much shortened form.
 - Praying these simple devotions only takes a few minutes each day and can be a way for families or individuals to root themselves in the tradition of prayer.
 - *Grace at meals:*
 - Saying a prayer before eating is one of the easiest ways to begin a prayer practice.
 - If you do it every time, all of the sudden you are praying three times a day!
 - Simply begin by making a commitment to pray at every meal, every time—whether you are eating at home or in a restaurant, whether your meal is a long sit-down dinner or a quick muffin as you race out the door.
 - The Book of Common Prayer includes options for graces on page 835, or you can use a family grace or other prayer of thanks.
 - *Prayers for the sick:*
 - We often find ourselves in need of prayer when someone we love is sick.
 - In those circumstances, it can be hard to know what to say—or what to pray.
 - On pages 458-461, *The Book of Common Prayer* has a variety of options for different circumstances: prayers for before an operation, for a sick child, for sleep, and many more.
 -



- *Prayers and Thanksgivings:*
 - In the back of *The Book of Common Prayer*, from pages 809-841, there is a section of prayers and thanksgivings.
 - These pages are a little “library” of prayers for all different situations and circumstances.
 - They include: Prayers for a birthday; For an election; For the poor and neglected; For rain; And dozens of other times and seasons!
- *The Collects for the Church Year:*
 - The collects are the prayers that are appointed for each Sunday of the church year
 - They usually connect to the readings for the day or for the theme of the church season.
 - Many of the collects are good, not only for the Sunday that they are written for but also for other times and circumstances as well.
 - You can find the collects in traditional, Rite I language on pages 159-210, and in contemporary, Rite II language on pages 211-261.
- And of course, the forms and prayers from *The Book of Common Prayer* are by no means the only way to pray!
- Prayers can come from many sources:
 - You can use scripted prayers from other books or traditions
 - Prayers you’ve written on your own
 - Or ones you think of in the moment (this is often called “extemporaneous prayer”).
- In fact, the catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer* says that, “Prayer is responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words.” (856).
 - That definition covers a lot of ground! You can pray using a set form like the Daily Office or a collect, or you can pray by simply talking to God in an informal way.
 - You can pray with words or without words. You can pray by thought or by deeds.

- There is no correct or certain posture for prayer. In the Bible people prayed:
 - On their knees (1 Kings 8:54)
 - Bowing (Exodus 4:31)
 - On their faces before God (2 Chronicles 20:18; Matthew 26:39)
 - Standing (1 Kings 8:22)
- You may pray with your eyes opened or closed, quietly or out loud—however you are most comfortable and least distracted. You can pray in a church or you can pray in your bed before you begin the day.
- The important thing is not how you pray, but that you pray, and that you strive to make it a part of your daily life.
- God receives the same amount of joy from any prayers, whether they are offered by a monk who prays for hours on end or by a desperate person who wakes up in the morning and just says “help.”
- Prayer is not a once-a-week action, something we do only when we gather in church on Sundays. Prayer is meant to be a daily discipline, something we do frequently and regularly.
- It is also something that gets easier, more instinctive and more ingrained, the more often that you practice.
- Whether you use the Daily Office, Daily Devotions, extemporaneous prayer time, prayer walks, or any other kind of prayer, the form that your prayers take is less important than the frequency. God wants to be engaged with us on a regular, daily basis.
- A key way to deepen our relationship with God is by committing to some form of daily prayer. And there’s no time like the present—give it a try!



THE CHURCH CALENDAR AND LITURGICAL YEAR



THE CALENDAR OF THE CHURCH YEAR

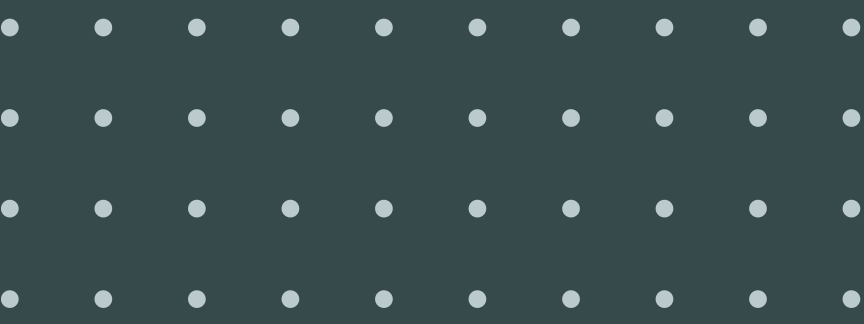

- The Calendar of the Church Year appears near the very beginning of *The Book of Common Prayer* (15-33).
- Before we learn about how to become a Christian through baptism or how to worship in our weekly celebrations of Holy Eucharist or how to pray on a daily basis, we are told about how Christians measure time.
- In the Christian life, we measure our time not by things we achieve or things we need to do, but rather we measure all our time by what God has already done for us in the birth and resurrection of Christ Jesus.
- Our church year is oriented around two special days:
 - Easter, the Sunday of the Resurrection
 - Christmas, the Feast of our Lord's Nativity
 - Now, that probably makes sense. Most people know that the two big holy days of Christianity are Christmas and Easter, right? But what you may not know is that we orient all of our time in relation to them.
- Now, that probably makes sense. Most people know that the two big holy days of Christianity are Christmas and Easter, right? But what you may not know is that we orient all of our time in relation to them.
- The church's new year doesn't begin on January 1.
 - Our new year begins on the First Sunday of Advent, which is always four Sundays before Christmas Day.
 - This start of the Christian year calls us to orient our days and our years around the birth of Jesus.
 - As Christians, our year begins as we wait, with expectation and excitement, for the birth of Jesus.

- The other critical date of the Christian year is Easter, the day we celebrate the resurrection of Christ.
 - Unlike Christmas, which always falls on December 25, Easter doesn't have a set date.
 - It is determined by ancient fashion, based on when the first full moon occurs after the spring equinox on March 21.
 - Thus the actual date of Easter changes from year to year, ranging anywhere from March 22- April 25.
 - The prayer book actually includes a table listing the date of Easter for every year between 1900-2089, (882-883.)
- From Easter Day, the Feast of the Resurrection, all the rest of our time is then measured out and counted.
 - Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, is always 46 days before Easter Day.
 - The Feast of Pentecost, which marks the end of Easter season, is always 50 days after Easter Day.
 - And “the sequence of all the Sundays of the Church Year depends upon the date of Easter Day” (15).
 - Everything about our time as Christians hinges on the Resurrection of Jesus, and together with Christmas, these two primary dates are the linchpins of a rich cycle of feasts and holy days that flesh out our church year.

SEASONS

- Christmas and Easter are only the beginning.
- The fullness of the Christian faith is felt when we live into all the cycles and seasons of the church's calendar and discover the riches that they hold.
- In addition to holy days, the church year also has seasons.
 - Just like our secular seasons of winter, spring, summer, and fall, each church season is distinct.
 - Each year we return to these seasons, offering us both comfort in familiarity and opportunity for deeper and richer spiritual growth.
- The church has seven seasons: Advent; Christmas; Epiphany; Lent; Holy Week; Easter; The Season After Pentecost
- While oriented around the compass points of Christmas and Easter, each season has a different emphasis that helps focus our spiritual life.
 - There are times for waiting and times for celebrating
 - Times of darkness and times of light
 - Times of pain and times of deep joy
- Being a Christian is not about being happy all of the time, and it is not always easy. The changing seasons of the church year remind us that there is room for all of our experiences in the Christian journey.

- *Advent* is the beginning of the new year of the church.
 - Advent is a time of waiting, preparation, and expectation.
 - Like the winter season, it is a time of deepening darkness, when we contemplate shadows and silence, even as we wait for the dawning of the light from on high, Jesus.
 - Many churches use an Advent wreath as a visible symbol of this idea, lighting an additional candle each week of Advent, culminating in the Christ candle on Christmas Day.
 - The Old Testament readings of Advent are from the prophet Isaiah, who prophesies about the coming of the Messiah, and the gospel readings are typically those from the story of John the Baptist, the cousin and forerunner of Jesus who tells us to prepare the way for Christ's coming into the world.
- The *Christmas Season* begins with the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord (Christmas Day), but Christmas is not simply one day.
 - The season of Christmas is twelve days (remember the famous song!) and concludes on January 5.
 - Christmas is a time to worship at the manger throne, to celebrate the newborn Jesus and to give thanks for the Word made flesh.
- The Season of *Epiphany* begins on the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6).
 - On the Feast of Epiphany, we remember the arrival of the magi or wise men who followed a star to worship Jesus.
 - The season of Epiphany continues until Ash Wednesday.
 - Epiphany is the season when we remember the revelation of Jesus to the world and to individuals.
 - During this season, we hear stories of the way that the Light of Christ spreads to the ends of the earth.

- 
- The Season of **Lent** is a time of discipline and self-denial that begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts until Holy Saturday.
 - Lent lasts a total of forty days, not including Sundays.
 - The forty days of Lent remind us of the forty years the Israelites spent wandering in the wilderness and the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness tempted by Satan.
 - The devotion of Lent is meant to be a time of preparation, not punishment.
 - We follow the example of Jesus, who prepared for his earthly ministry with a time of prayer and fasting.
 - During Lent, Christians engage in disciplines and devotions that draw us closer to him, so that we are ready to walk with him toward Jerusalem and the cross.
 - During Lent, we often pray the Great Litany or read the Decalogue (Ten Commandments).
 - For forty days we refrain from saying “Alleluia” in our worship as a sign of our seriousness and solemnity.
- 

- **Holy Week**, the week from Palm Sunday to Easter Day, is both the conclusion of the season of Lent and a special time in its own right.
 - During this week, our liturgies help us to walk with Jesus through his final days on earth, from his entry into Jerusalem to his last meal with his friends, through the cross and the grave.
 - Holy Week includes: Palm Sunday; Holy Monday; Holy Tuesday; Holy Wednesday (sometimes called Spy Wednesday); Maundy Thursday; Good Friday; and Holy Saturday.
 - The **Season of Easter** begins with the Great Vigil of Easter.
 - The Great Vigil of Easter takes place sometime between sunset on Holy Saturday (the night before Easter Day) and sunrise on Easter morning.
 - But Easter is too large a celebration to be contained in one day.
 - Instead we celebrate Easter for the great fifty days, lasting from Easter Day to the Day of Pentecost.
 - It is a time when we rejoice extravagantly.
 - In our liturgy, we add extra “Alleluias” to express our deep joy in the resurrection of our Lord.
 - Easter lasts until the Feast of Pentecost.
 - The **Season after Pentecost** encompasses all the Sundays from the Day of Pentecost until the end of the church year.
 - The Feast of Pentecost, which falls fifty days after Easter, is when we remember the coming of the Holy Spirit among the apostles, described in Acts 2.
 - On the day of Pentecost, we celebrate the Holy Spirit, which inspired and empowered the followers of Jesus to do the work of Christ in the world after Jesus had ascended into heaven.
 - This long season after Pentecost is also sometimes referred to as Ordinary Time, not because it is mundane, but because we count the Sundays using ordinal numbers— Second Sunday after Pentecost, Third Sunday after Pentecost, etc.
 - This is a season for growth, a reminder that the long walk of faith isn’t always highs and lows but is made up of the stuff of everyday life.
 - The Last Sunday after Pentecost brings us to the end of the church year, then we head into Advent to begin the cycle again.

OBSERVING THE SEASONS

- There are a variety of ways that we can observe the different seasons in our church year through our worship.
- The Book of Common Prayer offers specific suggestions of prayers that are particularly suited to a certain season.
- There are certain words or phrases that help set seasons apart.
 - We refrain from saying Alleluia during the season of Lent.
 - We add extra Alleluia's in Easter.
- In addition, churches often use certain liturgical colors to decorate the sanctuary for particular seasons.
- These colors are not enumerated in The Book of Common Prayer but instead come through tradition (some ancient, some more recent). For this reason, different churches may use different colors.

- Some of the colors people use in worship are:
 - **Purple**
 - It is used to designate both penance and preparation
 - It is often used during Lent and Advent, times of repentance and preparation ;
 - **Blue**
 - Symbolizes preparation and hope
 - Sometimes used for Advent, in order to differentiate the time from Lent as a time of both preparation and hope
 - **Red**
 - Is the color associated with sacrifice and with the Holy Spirit
 - Red is typically used for: Palm Sunday; Pentecost; the feasts of apostles and martyrs; and ordinations
 - **White and gold**
 - Are used to indicate great joy and celebration
 - White and gold are used for: Easter; Christmas; Baptisms; Funerals; the feasts of saints who were not martyrs
 - **Green**
 - Is associated with our growth in faith
 - Green is used for : the Season after Pentecost, the longest part of the church year and dny other time in which another color is not appointed
 - **Lenten array**
 - A kind of simple burlap
 - It's used in some places for Lent, in order to set the season apart as a time of simplicity

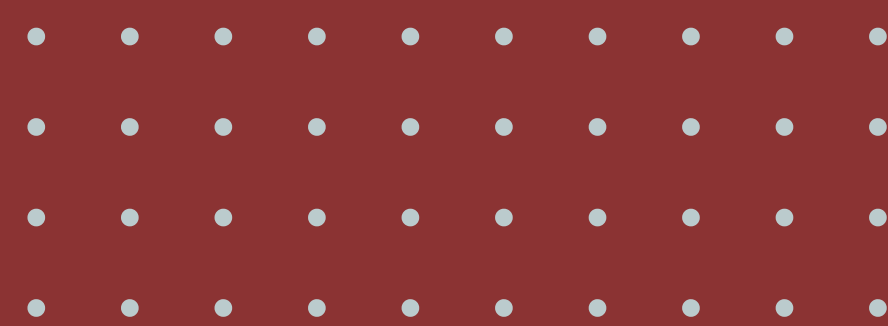
YEAR IN, YEAR OUT

- The calendar of the church year is a cycle.
- Every year we move from the waiting and anticipation of Advent, to the celebration of Christmas, to the spreading of light at Epiphany, to the contemplation and repentance of Lent, into the extraordinary joy of Easter, and through the long season after Pentecost, the ordinary time of our church year.
- In all of these seasons we are focused, not on ourselves, but on the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- These different seasons keep us from getting stuck in one image of God.
 - In the church year, sometimes we remember, worship, and celebrate the baby Jesus born in the manger, and sometimes we remember, worship, and celebrate the broken Jesus, hanging on the cross.
 - We don't get to pick which Jesus we like best; we don't get to re-make Jesus in our image or package Jesus in the way that is simple and safe for us.
 - Instead, the church year invites us to walk with Jesus through all the moments and seasons of his life—and all the moments and seasons of ours.

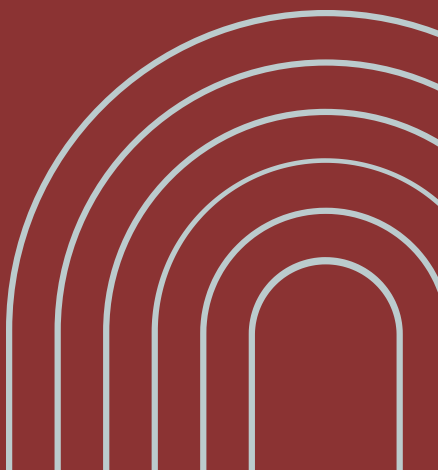
FEASTS, FASTS, & HOLY DAYS

- While the seasons give us a general rhythm to our year, within these seasons are specific feasts and fasts, holy days that Christians are called to observe in order to learn more about our faith and ourselves.
- The church calendar provides five kinds of special days to observe and celebrate:
 - Principal Feasts
 - Sundays
 - Holy Days
 - Days of Special Devotion
 - Days of Optional Observance
- ***Principal Feasts***
 - There are seven principal feasts in the church year:
 - Easter
 - Christmas
 - Epiphany
 - Pentecost
 - Ascension Day
 - Forty days after Easter Day
 - Marks the conclusion of Jesus’ earthly life and ascension into heaven.
 - Trinity Sunday
 - Observed the Sunday following the Day of Pentecost
 - Celebrates the gift of God’s threefold nature: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 - All Saints’ Day
 - November 1
 - The day we remember the multitude of saints whose holiness inspires and encourages us in faith
 - The seven principal feasts of the church are the most important days of the year.
 - The church has declared that these days have highest importance, and all Christians should strive to observe them.

SUNDAYS



- The second most important category in the church calendar is Sundays.
- That's right! Every single Sunday is a major holiday in the Christian church.
- The prayer book explains that "All Sundays of the year are feasts of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- So it doesn't matter whether it's Easter Day or the middle of Lent, whether it's the First Sunday of Advent or the Twenty-Sixth Sunday After Pentecost, every Sunday is an important holiday, a feast of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- In particular, a few moments from Jesus' life are especially important when they fall on a Sunday.
 - The Holy Name, observed on January 1, commemorates the day when Jesus would have been circumcised and named.
 - The Presentation, observed on February 2, forty days after Jesus' birth, which Luke 2:22-40 tells us was when Jesus was presented in the temple.
 - The Transfiguration, August 6, which observes the day on which Jesus was transfigured on the mountaintop (Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-8, and Luke 9:28-36).
- The fact that Sundays are the second most important holy day (after the Principal Feasts), reminds us that Christianity is a faith that is lived every day, week in and week out, year round, not only on the big days like Christmas and Easter.



HOLY DAYS

- The third category of time in the calendar is holy days.
- These include:
 - Feasts of our Lord (days that we remember certain important things in Jesus' life)
 - Other Major Feasts
 - Days when we remember the apostles, evangelists, other important saints from Jesus' lifetime
 - The national feasts of Independence Day and Thanksgiving Day
 - Fasts
 - Ash Wednesday □ Good Friday
- These holy days are often called red letter days, because early calendars in The Book of Common Prayer were printed with those days in red type.
- In today's Book of Common Prayer, these holy days are printed in bold type.
- For all of these holy days, The Book of Common Prayer provides a collect, or prayer (pages 185–194, 237–246) and lessons (pages 1038–1043) so that we, as individuals and as a community, can remember these important days in our prayers and readings.

DAYS OF SPECIAL DEVOTION

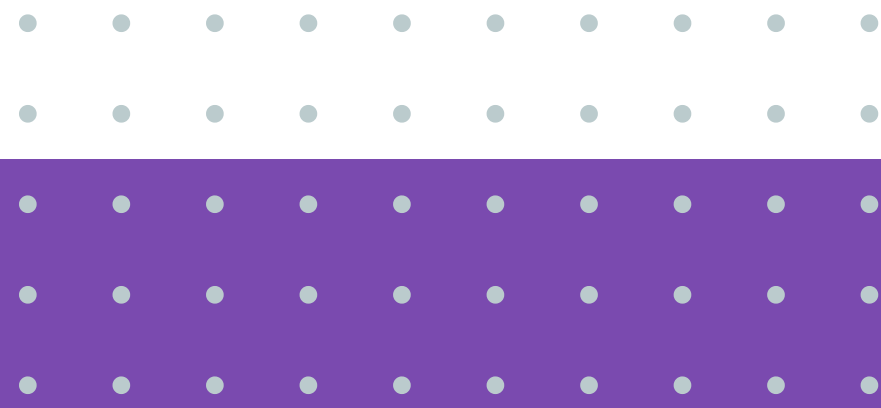
- Days of special devotion are different from the rest of the calendar.
 - The days of special devotion are not a single date but instead a series of days.
 - Christians are called to observe the days of special devotion “by special acts of discipline and self-denial.”
 - Most of our calendar is marked by feasts or days of celebration.
 - Days of special devotion, together with Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, give us the other end of the spectrum of time: fasts, or days of discipline and self-denial.
 - Our calendar sets aside all the weekdays of Lent and Holy Week, as well as Good Friday and all the Fridays of the year as days of special devotion.
- As Christians, we understand that these days are important for our spiritual formation.
 - They are days of discipline, not in the sense of beating ourselves up but instead in the true meaning of the word: Discipline is related to the word “disciple” and means to learn or to follow.
 - When we observe the fasts of our church, stepping away from rejoicing to embrace solemnity, we learn something about ourselves and the world.
 - Observing fasts helps us to celebrate our feasts even more deeply.
 - Just as every Sunday is a feast of the Lord’s Resurrection, an echo of Easter Day, so too every Friday is a day of special discipline, an echo of Good Friday.
- Our calendar is clear: Celebration and resurrection are of primary importance.
 - The feasts of great joy are those listed first in our calendar, and we should orient our time and our lives around them.
 - But our celebration must leave room for discipline and self-denial, for contemplation and solemnity, for the recognition that there is sorrow as well as joy, struggle as well as celebration in the story of Jesus and in the Christian life. The days of special devotion root our time in that awareness.

DAYS OF OPTIONAL OBSERVANCE

- The final category in the church's calendar is days of optional observance, found on pages 19–30 of ***The Book of Common Prayer***.
 - These days commemorate the lives of saints, including early martyrs like Perpetua and her Companions, civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., and theologians like Thomas Cranmer.
 - Each of these people, and many others, are assigned special days so that we remember them, pray for and with them, and can be drawn into deeper life in Christ through their witness.
- The days of optional observance are rich, in that we could observe a feast or fast every single day of the year, if we so choose.
- And these days are what the title states: They are optional, meaning that no Christian must honor these days in a particular way.

THE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR

- In the cycle of seasons, feasts, and fasts, the church calendar articulates how we, as Christians, approach time.
 - The calendar tells us how we think: Christians are people who orient their entire lives around Jesus Christ; our calendar is focused around the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our savior.
 - The calendar tells us what we value: Christmas and Easter are of utmost importance, the days around which all our lives should be oriented, but every Sunday is also a major, important holiday, and underscores the importance of the day-in, day-out, lived character of the Christian life.
 - The calendar tells us what we work toward—or, more importantly, it tells us that our work is not the focus; our lives are lived in grateful response to the work that God has already done in Christ Jesus.
- Perhaps most importantly, the Christian calendar tells us what we long for:
 - Our church year begins with Advent, with the season of yearning and expectation for the coming of God into the world in the person of Jesus Christ.
 - Even as we remember the moment when God entered into history in a stable in Bethlehem, we also long for and anticipate the moment when Christ will come again into our lives and into the world, to draw the whole world to himself.
 - This is who we are; this is how we measure time.



HOLY WEEK AND EASTER



PALM SUNDAY

- The pilgrim Egeria describes an observance of Palm Sunday in the late fourth century.
 - Christians gathered on the other side of the Mount of Olives, in a place called Bethphage, where they read together the story of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem.
 - They walked to the Mount of Olives and down the hillside into the city.
 - Egeria tells us that these early Christians waved palm or olive tree branches, sang psalms (especially 118), and shouted the antiphon: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”
- Our observance of Palm Sunday, nearly 2,000 years later, follows the same pattern.
 - The service, found in the prayer book on pages 270-273, typically begins with the Liturgy of the Palms, which starts outdoors or in another place away from the church building.
 - In this portion of the service, we commemorate the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, one of the few events described in all four gospels (Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11a, Luke 19:29-40, John 12:12-19).
 - We read aloud the story from one of those gospels, and then we re-enact that story as a community, waving our own palm branches while walking into the sanctuary.
 - We sing or say hymns of praise and joy, including the refrain “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” and often Psalm 118, the same words Egeria tells us were said in the fourth century.
 - After entry into the church on Palm Sunday, the service continues as usual until it is time for the gospel.

- *The Book of Common Prayer* calls this holy day “The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday” because it is a day when we remember Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem as well as the rest of the Passion narrative: Jesus’ betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and death.
- On Palm Sunday every year, the passion gospel is either read or chanted.
 - We hear the story on Palm Sunday from either Matthew, Mark, or Luke; on Good Friday we hear the passion narrative again, but it is always read from the Gospel of John on that day.
 - The reading of the passion gospel on Palm Sunday and Good Friday is the only time in the year when the gospel can be read by lay people and/or read “in parts,” with different people taking specific roles (at other times, the gospel is read in whole by ordained clergy—preferably a deacon, if one is available).
 - The reading of the gospel is not a play or a performance; instead in this holy drama, everyone is invited to enter into the story.
 - The entire congregation has a role, taking the part of the crowd.
 - And the congregation does not sit passively but instead is instructed to stand at the verse that mentions Jesus’ arrival at Golgotha.
- The passion narrative of Palm Sunday is not meant to take the place of the observances in the week to come, especially the three holiest days in the Triduum.
- Instead, Palm Sunday gives us an overview of what is to come, so that as we continue through the week, we can engage even more deeply with the story in the coming days.

HOLY MONDAY, HOLY TUESDAY, HOLY WEDNESDAY

- The days between Palm Sunday and Holy Thursday are known simply as Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, and Holy Wednesday.
- Each day commemorates different events from the last week of Jesus' life.
- On Holy Monday, we hear the story of the anointing of Jesus at Bethany (John 12:1-11), which tells the story of Jesus' anointing in a way that prefigures and prepares us for the anointing of his body after death.
- On Holy Tuesday, we hear some of Jesus' predictions of his death (John 12:20-36).
- On Wednesday, we hear the story of Jesus predicting his betrayal by Judas (John 13:21-32). These stories from the Gospel of John set the stage for what is to come in Jesus final days.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

- On Maundy Thursday, we remember Jesus' final meal with his friends before he was crucified; this is often called the Last Supper.
 - In a sense, we recall this event every week when we celebrate Holy Communion.
 - On Maundy Thursday, we offer a special commemoration of this meal, following the service in *The Book of Common Prayer* on pages 274-275 and *The Book of Occasional Services* on pages 93- 94.
- In the epistle reading from 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Paul describes the tradition of sharing bread and wine as the body and blood of Jesus.
 - As Paul writes, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."
 - On Maundy Thursday, we remember not only this moment in Jesus' life, his final meal with his friends, but also his commandment to his disciples and to us to "Do this in remembrance of me."
- The word maundy comes from the Latin word for commandment, because Maundy Thursday is the day when we remember Jesus' commandments, the things that Jesus commanded us to do on the night before he died.
 - In the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus commands us to share the bread and wine in remembrance of him.
 - The Gospel of John tells another story and introduces another commandment. John's version of the Last Supper doesn't talk about the bread and wine. Instead we hear about Jesus kneeling down on the floor and washing his disciples' feet. In this ultimate example of servanthood, Jesus sets an example for his disciples and for us, commanding us to wash one another's feet and "love one another as he has loved us."

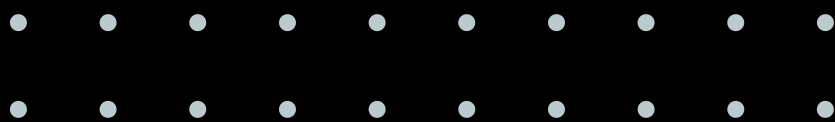
- In many congregations, the Maundy Thursday service continues after the readings and sermon with a ceremony of the washing of feet.
 - Sometimes this is done symbolically: The clergy or other members of leadership wash a specific number (usually twelve) of people's feet, or the clergy wash everyone's feet.
 - But more appropriately the foot washing ought to be done by everyone—everyone both washing and getting washed— so that everyone is participating in and fulfilling Christ's commandment: "So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14).
 - The liturgical action of washing one another's feet symbolizes that servanthood is something we all do for one another—a mutuality where all are served and all are servants.
- After the ceremony of washing of feet, the service continues with the Prayers of the People and then Holy Communion.
 - This is the last celebration of Holy Eucharist until the Great Vigil of Easter.
 - Some churches choose to consecrate more bread and wine than is necessary at this service, in order to reserve some of the sacrament for Good Friday.
 - If additional elements are being reserved, they are taken, often via a solemn procession, to a separate chapel or other place out of the main sanctuary.
 - The area where the sacrament is kept is called the Altar of Repose.
 - In some congregations, people remain through the night to pray and keep vigil with the sacrament, as an echo of the disciples who Jesus asked to stay awake and pray with him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

- After Holy Communion is concluded, many communities observe the custom of stripping the altar.
 - Members of the congregation remove all decoration and ornaments from the church and veil or cover all visible crosses.
 - This can be done in silence or with a recitation of Psalm 22.
 - As we strip our sanctuaries of their decorations, we are reminded of the moment in the passion story when Jesus is stripped of his clothes.
 - Many communities conclude by washing the altar and extinguishing the sanctuary lamp, the sign of Christ's continued presence among us.
 - These actions not only prepare the sanctuary for the solemnity of Good Friday, but they also exist as an invitation to focus on the center of what is happening—Jesus and the cross, rather than all the “trappings.”
- After this altar is stripped, the ministers and people depart in silence.
 - There is no dismissal or end to the service.
 - This invites people to remember that the Triduum services are part and parcel of one another—they are one, continuous liturgy telling one continuous story.
 - Maundy Thursday is the first act of the Triduum; the story continues with our re-membering the next day with Good Friday and on Saturday night or Sunday morning with the Easter Vigil.

GOOD FRIDAY



- Good Friday is the day when Christians recall with our prayers and readings the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior on the cross.
- On this day, the people and ministers enter in silence, into a church that is bare of ornamentation following the stripping of the altar on MaundyThursday.
- The liturgy on this day, like the church, is “stripped down” to the essentials; it is brief and solemn.
- The prayer book service (276–282) begins with an opening collect (prayer) and readings.
- Then, just as on Palm Sunday, we hear a reading of the passion, this time from the Gospel of John.
 - Once again, the Passion may be read or chanted by lay people; different people may take on specific roles and the congregation may participate as the crowd, with all standing at the verse that mentions Golgotha.
 - This repetition of the Passion that we heard only a few days prior helps us to hear and interact with the story in a new way.
 - We can notice the things that are the same between the two accounts and ponder those that are different.
 - And we are encouraged to find our own place in the narrative in a different way each time.
- After the passion is a sermon and an optional hymn.



- Then we engage in an extended time of prayer, using the ancient tradition of the solemn collects.
 - In these prayers, we pray for people everywhere:
 - For our own sins and redemption
 - For the church throughout the world
 - For all nations and people of the earth
 - For all who suffer and are afflicted
 - For those who do not know God
 - These prayers remind us that on Good Friday we do not merely focus on our own grief or sense of loss at the death of Jesus but instead allow that grief to fuel our prayers and action on behalf of the whole world.
- The service of Good Friday can end here, with a hymn, the Lord's Prayer, or a final prayer.

- The *Book of Common Prayer* also includes two additional, optional parts of the service: Veneration of the Cross and Holy Communion from the reserved sacrament.
 - Communities can add one or both of these options to their observance of Good Friday.
 - Veneration of the Cross
 - For Veneration of the Cross, a wooden cross is brought into the church and placed in the sight of the people.
 - The prayer book includes the words to appropriate anthems that can be sung or said, or the congregation can choose another suitable anthem.
 - During or after the anthems, people can offer “appropriate devotions” to the cross.
 - In some communities, people kneel before the cross in prayer.
 - Some might choose to touch or kiss the cross, as a sign of devotion.
 - In other communities, people lay flowers at the foot of the cross, much the way we might put flowers on a grave at a funeral.
 - All of these options are different ways that communities attempt to honor the holy cross of Jesus, by which our Savior redeemed the world.
- Holy Communion
 - The final option for the Good Friday service is to celebrate Holy Communion—but in an unusual manner.
 - Tradition demands that we do not consecrate the bread and wine on Good Friday, as a way of remembering that Jesus was dead, in the grave, absent from our presence on this day.
 - Using the bread and wine set in reserve or Maundy Thursday, the minister conducts a simple service of communion, offering the prayer and wine without the traditional prayer of consecration.
 - The community eats and drinks all of the bread and wine that remains, so that there is no sacrament until the bread and wine are consecrated for the first time at Easter.
- The Good Friday service concludes with a simple prayer, no blessing or dismissal, and the people depart in silence.
 - In this way, we stay in the solemnity of the occasion.
 - But we are also reminded that Good Friday is not the end—of the story of Jesus or of this holy service.
 - Good Friday is just the second act of the Triduum, which will continue and conclude with the Great Vigil of Easter.

HOLY SATURDAY

- Consisting of only one page (283) in The Book of Common Prayer, the service for Holy Saturday is simple and brief; it is more about what it is not than what it is.
 - There is no celebration of Holy Eucharist on this day, a reminder that Jesus is absent, dead and in the tomb.
 - Instead the service consists of simply a collect, a few readings, and a few short anthems from the Burial Office (484 or 492).
- The liturgy offers no easy answers or trite statements.
- Instead the mood of the day is quiet and stillness, reflective of an old tradition that required silence throughout the day.

THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER

- The Great Vigil of Easter is the fullest expression of Christian life and joy in our earthly pilgrimage.
- Starting on page 285 of our prayer book, the service begins in darkness, a reminder that what is to come emerges from the darkness of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the cross and the grave.
 - In the darkness, a fire is kindled. This recalls both the creation of light—the first creative act by God—and the light that is brought into the world in the new creation of Jesus Christ.
 - From the new fire, we light the paschal candle, which stands as a symbol of Christ, both in its association with light and in the candle's association with baptism.
 - The deacon carries the paschal candle in procession, stopping three times to acclaim the light of Christ. In some places, members of the congregation have handheld candles that are lit from the paschal candle, spreading the first new fire into the congregation, filling the church with the light of Christ.
 - The paschal candle is taken to the front of the sanctuary, where it will remain throughout the fifty days of Easter.
- Next, a minister sings or says the Exsultet, an ancient hymn which proclaims the heart of Easter joy:
 - "Rejoice and sing now, all the round earth, bright with glorious splendor, for darkness has been vanquished by our eternal King."
 - This hymn is a raucous celebration of the mighty power exhibited in the resurrection, when light overcame darkness, when love overcame sin, and when life overcame death.
 - Again and again the Exsultet proclaims, "This is the night..." a reminder of the way that in this holy moment heaven is brought down to earth and the past is brought into the present as we celebrate our salvation as though it were the first time.

- The service continues with a selection of stories from the Hebrew scriptures.
 - At least two or as many as nine are read.
 - The reading from Exodus, when God brings the people out of slavery in Egypt, is always read.
 - These stories remind us of the whole arc of salvation, the way that God has been present with and loved humanity from the beginning of creation.
 - After each reading, the people respond by singing a psalm or a canticle and praying a collect.
 - In this way, we hear what God has done, we praise God for his presence in our past, and we pray for God's continued presence and action.
- Following the readings is the service for Holy Baptism.
 - The Great Vigil of Easter was once the main day when new Christians were welcomed into the Church through baptism, and it continues to be a major occasion for baptisms.

If there are no candidates for Holy Baptism, those present instead renew their own baptismal vows, recommitting themselves on this holy night to the life of faith.

- Then comes the moment we've all been waiting for : Easter is joyously proclaimed with the words, "Alleluia.Christ is risen."To which the people respond,"The Lord is risen indeed.Alleluia."
 - This simple statement proclaims our deepest truth as Christians: the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- After joyfully proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus three times, the congregation sings one of the canticles of celebration.
- The service then continues with an epistle reading, psalm, gospel reading, sermon, and prayers of the people.
- Then the table is set for the first eucharist of Easter, a true thanksgiving when we recall with gladness Christ's resurrection and are nourished by Christ's body and blood to proclaim it to the world.

THE GREAT 50 DAYS OF EASTER

- The Great Vigil of Easter is just the beginning.
 - The celebration of Christ's resurrection continues in the rest of the services on Easter Day.
 - The joy of Easter is so great that it cannot even be contained in one day. Easter Day is only the first day of the Easter Season, which lasts for fifty days.
 - The paschal candle remains lit and in the front of the church throughout the season, calling to mind the light of Christ that was proclaimed at the vigil and that continues to shine.
 - Throughout the season of Easter, the service begins with the same proclamation of Christ's resurrection that we heard at the Great Vigil: "Alleluia. Christ is risen."
 - In fact, additional alleluias are sprinkled throughout the service of Holy Eucharist during the season of Easter: at the opening, during Holy Eucharist, and at the dismissal.
 - Alleluia is a word of great celebration, a shout of unbridled joy; thus we refrain from saying it during Lent but proclaim it with great gusto during Easter.
 - These extra alleluias are not added at other times of year, so they serve as a way to set the Great Fifty Days of Easter above and apart as an occasion of deep joy.
- The liturgies of Holy Week are not simply a checklist, an obligation that Christians are required to fulfill. Instead they are an invitation to walk more closely with Jesus, to enter into the story of salvation in a unique and powerful way.
- The patterns of prayer are ancient, and in walking this holy path, we join pilgrims from around the world and through time who have also chosen to walk with Jesus.
- In Holy Week we move through all of the experiences of Christ's life—from the excitement of Palm Sunday to the pain and suffering of Good Friday and finally to the unparalleled joy of Jesus' resurrection from the dead at Easter.
- Observing all of the liturgies of Holy Week is our way of standing with Jesus through both the good and the bad, the highs and the lows of life. In so doing we are reminded that God in Jesus Christ stands with us as well—no matter what.



THE BURIAL OFFICE



RUBRICS: SETTING THE STAGE

- The services begin with a list of rubrics or guidelines.
- Though these might seem like mundane details, these notes provide important insight into how the symbolic actions in funerals express what we believe about death.
- One of the first sentences clarifies that death of a member of a church should be reported to the minister of the congregation, and that “Baptized Christians are properly buried from the church.”
 - Church funerals are not only for those who give money to the congregation or reserved for those who were very active and attended services frequently.
 - All baptized Christians, regardless of age, denomination, or church attendance records, are properly buried from the church.
 - It doesn’t matter if they haven’t been to church in a long time; it doesn’t matter if the person who died had a difficult or complicated relationship with faith (don’t we all?).
 - The church is here to welcome you home, no matter what.
- The notes say that the service should be held at a time “when the congregation has opportunity to be present.”
 - This is an important reminder that part of the gift and responsibility of Christian community is to “bear one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2).
 - The burial service is not a private affair only for the family of the person who has died.

It is a service of the church, an opportunity for the Christian community to gather in prayer, both for the person who has died and for the family who is now bereaved.

- The notes go on to say that the coffin should be closed before the service and covered with a pall.
 - A pall is a cloth, usually white, that is spread over the coffin.
 - This detail is a reminder that before God we all look the same.
 - It doesn't matter if the person had money for the most expensive coffin or could only afford to be buried in a cardboard box; in death we are all covered in the love of Jesus, dressed in the white of baptism, and carried into the church on the day of our burial as a beloved member of the Body of Christ.
- Next, the notes describe the different roles that people take in the service:
 - A priest normally presides, but a deacon or lay reader may lead the service if a priest is not available.
 - The lessons from the Old Testament and Epistle should be read by lay persons; this is an opportunity for family members or friends to participate in the service in a meaningful way.
- Even before the service begins, "it is customary that the celebrant meet the body and go before it into the church or toward the grave."
 - In fact, The Book of Common Prayer includes a lovely series of prayers for "Reception of the Body" on page 466, in which the priest prays both for the person who has died and for those who mourn.
 - By receiving the body and going before it into the church and to the grave, the celebrant offers a reminder that the person who has died does not travel alone; the faithful saints who have gone before are present with the deceased, and Jesus himself led the way through death and the grave and into life eternal.

THE LITURGY

- We will look specifically at The Burial of the Dead: Rite II (pages 491-505), but the theological and pastoral points are similar across both rites.
- The service begins with everyone standing as the body is carried into the church.
 - During this entrance, one of the anthems printed on pages 491-492, or a hymn, psalm, or other anthem is said or sung.
- The service continues in a manner similar to a regular Sunday service, with prayers and selected readings from Holy Scripture.
 - The prayers focus on the reality of grief and the importance of our ministry, as the church, to love and support one another in these times.
 - The readings, like the anthems that began the service, help to focus on the joy of resurrection, while also striving to comfort those who mourn.
 - In all these things, the focus is on God, not the person who died, and we know and proclaim that there is nowhere we can go that Jesus has not already been, not even to death and the grave.
 - If there will be communion, a gospel reading must be included.
- After the readings, there may be a homily by a priest, a family member, or a friend.
 - A homily is not a eulogy; whereas a eulogy is a speech in praise of a person, a homily is a reflection on the scriptures that have been read.
 - This is an important distinction, because while it can and should be personal, a homily is not focused exclusively on the person who died, but on the connection between that person's life and the passages from the Bible that have just been read.
- The service can continue with the Apostles' Creed.
 - This creed, which is used at baptismal services, reminds us of the connection between death and baptism: Each is an entrance into a new

- Here, the service for burial can take one of two paths.
 - If the burial service does not include communion, then it continues with the Lord's Prayer and the Prayers of the People or other suitable prayers, and then skips ahead to the commendation and committal for the ending of the service.
 - If the burial service does include communion, then it continues with the Prayers of the People.
 - Families, in consultation with their priest, can make the determination whether or not to include Holy Communion as part of the burial service.
 - Sometimes, certain dynamics may make offering communion difficult or divisive. But in most instances, communion is a powerful and important part of the service of burial.
 - After all, in Holy Eucharist we are joined together with angels and archangels and with the communion of saints, all those who have gone before, including the one who we bury this day.
 - Communion means "together with," and sharing communion at a burial in the midst of sadness can be an important way to join together with the one who is died and with the gathered community, supporting one another in grief.
- Either way, the service continues with the Prayers of the People.
 - These prayers specifically refer to the death of Jesus' friend Lazarus, brother of Martha and Mary, (John 11:1-44).
 - When Lazarus died, Jesus wept so openly that people around him saw it as a sign of his deep love.
 - Then, in the midst of his grief, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, restoring him to life.
 - This story, referenced in the prayers, reminds us both of the way that Jesus himself experienced grief and of the power that Jesus has to raise all of us to newness of life.

- Then the service continues with the peace and the offertory of bread and wine, just as in a regular eucharistic service.
 - In the eucharistic prayer, the celebrant offers the Preface for the Commemoration of the Dead, “Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who rose victorious from the dead, and comforts us with the blessed hope of everlasting life. For to your faithful people, O Lord, life is changed, not ended; and when our mortal body lies in death, there is prepared for us a dwelling place eternal in the heavens” (382).
 - This preface, like many of the elements of the liturgy, reinforces our understanding of death: As Christians we proclaim that in death our life is changed, not ended. The one who has died continues, even now, in a new life in Jesus Christ.
- After Holy Communion, the service continues with a prayer found on page 498, which reminds us that sharing communion is a “foretaste of {God’s} heavenly banquet.”
- Then, the celebrant and other ministers take their places at the body for the commendation.
 - The commendation is our sending forth of this person, commending them to God.
 - We affirm our belief in God, the God who created us and to whom we return.
 - And we hear the focus on the joy of resurrection even in the midst of the grief of death: “even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.”
 - The celebrant faces the body and says the prayer at the bottom of page 499. This prayer names the true identity of each of us: servant, sheep, lamb, sinner, redeemed, saint.
 - We are reminded that the deceased was not perfect but is beloved of God even so, just as we are.
- The service concludes with a blessing, and then an anthem or hymn is sung or said as the body is carried from the church.
- In this way, the service ends as it began, affirming our focus on Jesus Christ, who leads each of us through death and the grave and into paradise.

- Even though the service in the church has ended, the burial is not over.
 - The final portion of the burial rite is the committal, prayers that we say as the body of the deceased is placed in its final resting place.
 - The service for committal is brief; it includes only a few anthems and prayers.
 - It normally takes place wherever the body is being laid to rest: at the graveside if the body is being buried, at the columbarium if ashes are being interred in a niche, or at the site where the ashes are being scattered.
 - The Episcopal Church's burial rites offer a great deal of room for a variety of different burial practices.
 - Some people prefer to have their bodies preserved and buried in a coffin; others choose to be cremated before burial.
 - Both are completely acceptable in the Episcopal Church.
 - In this way, we go with the deceased to the very end of their journey on this earth, lovingly accompanying them with prayers even to the grave.
 - As the body is placed in the grave, or the ashes are scattered or interred, the celebrant says a prayer commending the person who has died to God and committing them to the earth.
 - The directions specify that "earth is cast upon the coffin," an important connection to the words of scripture that humans were created out of the earth and we return to it.
 - The service concludes with the Lord's Prayer and other prayers, and then the celebrant offers the dismissal.
- These final words of the service begin with the very same words that we proclaim at Easter: "Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia." In this way, we end with a focus on Easter, on joy, on Christ's resurrection from the dead.

FINDING MEANING

- Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, we learn that the death and burial of a loved one hangs in a balance.
 - Our prayers reflect our belief and our feelings in the face of death: a combination of joy and grief, celebration and sadness.
 - The Episcopal service attempts to help people find a middle ground that acknowledges both celebration and sadness.
 - Yes, we celebrate the joy of resurrection, proclaim alleluias, and affirm that when someone dies, their life is changed, not ended.
 - But we also repeatedly pray aloud the reality of our grief and loss, naming that Jesus himself wept at the loss of his friend.
 - It is by holding both of these things in tension, by naming and honoring both joy and grief, that we live out the fullness of our faith and humanity, and find the peace that God promises us.
- Secondly, we are reminded that, even in the midst of grief and death, we are surrounded by the church, the Christian community.
 - Again and again, the service of burial emphasizes the importance of the gathered community.
 - As Christians, it is incredibly important that we show up to funerals, to love and support those who are grieving.
 - But just as death is not the end of life, so too the funeral is not the end of grief.
 - It is important to remember those who are grieving, not only on the day of the burial but also in the weeks and months to come.
 - When you attend a funeral, pick a date on the calendar in a week or a month, or a few months, to call and check on those who are grieving.

- Each component of the burial service reminds us that death is a step on the journey and not its end, that it is a time of joy as well as grief.
- This understanding should make us less afraid of talking about and acknowledging death—our own and those of our loved ones.
- As Christians, we are called to be honest about death.
 - Jesus talks about death a lot, and our liturgies acknowledge the reality of death.
 - For a Christian, death is not the enemy but a moment in the continuum of life.
 - When we begin to talk about death honestly, we begin to be freed from fear.
 - We are also able to plan for and discuss with our families the way we want to live and the way that we hope to die.
- One of the great gifts that we can give our families is planning our funeral service.
 - People often resist this idea because it sounds morbid to them, but it's important: It helps us acknowledge the reality of our mortality, and it is an incredible help to our families.
 - When someone dies, the family is often paralyzed with grief.
 - Trying to make the many decisions surrounding burial services can be overwhelming.
 - And those who have never talked with their loved ones about death can spin their wheels, wondering: “What would [my mom] want?” “I don't know what hymns [my dad] liked.”
 - Grieving is already a wrenching experience without adding the heartache of indecision and uncertainty.
 - When people participate in a service that was planned in concert with the one who has died, they feel connection and comfort, hearing God's Holy Spirit speaking through the readings and hymns.