

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

task 1 - openings

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- 1** What should the first person to stand at the front on a Sunday morning do and say to embody welcome, confidence and warmth?
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Once you've decided, you can try it out, by creating two sentences that attempt this. You might want to practise your first two sentences by standing up and directing your words to the room.

- Ideally, look up but not too high.
- Rotate your view. If you find it really hard to look into people's eyes, you can either warn some friends of yours that you'll be looking at them, or you can pitch your gaze into the direction where it looks as if you're looking at people.
- Remember to speak clearly, with conviction!

task 2 - an introductory prayer

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- 2** What would we want to say? Ideally, the following things...
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- We want to make an acknowledgement of God and God's qualities (That might be to call God Almighty God, or loving God or wonderful God).
- Then we want to make a statement about God being with us, and our gratitude – (Thank you God that you are with us today and always).
- A request that God guides us/our behaviour so that we have an experience of value. (Help us to hear more about your love and your kingdom today).
- (In your name we pray, Amen)

Let's write those prayers now.

Then you can read them out. Remember that reading prayers requires a different approach to starting the service off...

- Most people won't be looking at you, so you don't need to look at them – perhaps aim your gaze at the back of the room.
- Start with an invitation for people to pray with you.
- This prayer might not need an introduction, but some instruction might be useful. “Feel free to close your eyes / put your hands together / think about these words”
- Slow and steady and clear. Leave space for the words to be heard and understood.

task 3 - your role

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It's time to think about your particular role. Listed below are a number of potential ways to serve. Take some time: pray about it, talk to friends, or others who can support you (perhaps the leaders in your church, or a Vocations Officer).

Roles include, but aren't limited to...

- Welcoming those in attendance: Being the voice and face that people hear and/or see first. Explaining what's happening, and what might happen, and what's coming next. Share info about points of contact. Collaborating with other people to have knowledge, understand the message, share the ethos of the church. How often are church's vision statements shared from the front, at the top of a gathering?
- Playing the music: You might be leading on organ, piano, guitar, violin, or be part of an ensemble. Are choices about how this will happen made collaboratively? Encourage a conversation with all those leading part of the service.

- Leading the singing: This might be leading acapella, as well as playing an instrument, or with other musicians. Again, are conversations, planning and collaboration taking place before the event?
- Running the band, orchestra or choir: As above, but with extra organisational duties; rehearsals, rotas, equipment. Do you lead collaboratively? Do the members of the choir or band have the opportunity to contribute their ideas and views?
- Assisting with priestly duties: Guided by the priest(s) to assist and support their role. Are conversations and planning able to take place?
- Reading Scripture and texts: Often seen as the first step into leading, it is of course an important role in itself. Is there space and scope for suggesting what is read and how? Are you able to encourage new and diverse readers? Are you reading from a book, or modelling how to read scripture?
- The opportunity to lead those gathered in prayer: The opportunity to lead those gathered in pray is a huge privilege. While off-the-cuff (known as extempore) prayer is held in high regard in some contexts, and undoubtedly has huge value, to lead a group in prayer where you are often the solo voice needs careful planning, ideally in collaboration with other leaders. Do your prayers mirror the key messages? Will you use liturgical templates (there are many resources available to help with this)? Can you collaboratively encourage creative (very new, very old, everything in between) ways to pray? Can you use this role to inspire the prayer lives of others?
- Taking part in a planning, delivery or review committee: One of the most useful roles and people in leadership are those who are able to supportively pray, assess, encourage and question. There is no doubt that if a church community is to flourish, there has to be space for these voices, either informally or formally.

- Focussing on children and young people (not only with separate activities): There is a danger with this role that you will be shepherded into providing specific activities for those who are younger. In truth, the holy grail is that all aspects of a service appeal and are relevant to all ages. This role will often be to encourage other leaders to think in these ways, remind people what it was like to be a child, and to ensure that younger people aren't marginalised, or become performing monkeys.
- Supporting shared testimony, interviews, how you baptise, confirm, Christen and welcome. If collaboration is our goal in worship, the space where the voices of others are heard and promoted is a foundation to our gathered worship. Encourage people to share and encourage other leaders to use these voices. If people are nervous, offer to prerecord. Use the oldest members as well as the newest to contribute. Be the voice in the community that pushes this agenda.
- Operating the technology, both online and in the building: Perhaps the most stressful of all the roles?! Very public facing, in a different kind of way. Can be often forgotten, with little understanding of the preparation needed. This role requires collaboration with all other leaders of worship. It is also a role that others can be encouraged into, initially in supporting roles.
- Decorating, structuring and organising the space: A role that isn't always thought of as leading, worship or even something that needs thinking about; nevertheless, our church spaces were designed with specific values, ideas and hopes in mind. There is huge potential for the reclamation of these concepts, and can inevitably be a huge piece of work, so needs to be acknowledged as a role for a worship leader. As always, collaboration is key; is the voice of this role heard in leadership conversations? Much like the technology role, this is something that others can be encouraged into, initially in supporting roles.

- Providing materials to take away: There are generally two likely outcomes when entering or leaving church – a) you're given a pile of papers, that have no cohesion or b) you get nothing. If you ask a church leader or administrator to streamline their approach to information sharing and advertising, you may well get short shrift – perhaps you can be the person to collaborate with all parties and organise how this occurs. The best examples of information can enable further learning and discipleship away from the Sunday gathering.
- Facilitating parallel or separate online spaces: The era we live in means that many people may well engage with your worship without ever attending. It can't be expected that someone fulfilling another role can also facilitate an online space, so your role might be to find ways of making this flourish. The Church of England, as well as the Diocese of Exeter are very keen to support these things, and their online resources and communities should see you off to a flying start.
- Encouraging innovation, change, collaboration: As above, but more so. Are you called to support worship innovation, research, and encouraging new ways of collaboration? This role can build links to outside organisations, whether Anglican, ecumenical, interfaith, secular or more.

task 4 - community

4

Question: What does a community that reflects Jesus' character and nature look and feel like?

task 5 - next steps

5 Take some time to think about what you're going to do next. You might...

- Carry on doing the brilliant work that you're already doing.
- Expand your pre-existing work into new fields, places or concepts.
- Undertake some more learning.
- Consider your vocation further.
- Start having conversations about your role.
- Slot into a pre-existing role or team.
- Or many other things!

The Diocese of Exeter had a number of additional courses resources and groups, many of which are relevant to leading from the front.

- Grow courses on liturgy, preaching, sharing our faith and more - <https://exeter.anglican.org/ministry/lay-ministry/lay-learning/>
- Resources for Festival Churches - <https://www.growingtheruralchurch.org/resource/>
- Mission Sheds - <https://exeter.anglican.org/resources/mission/mission-shed/>

Further resources include...

Pete Grieg's 24/7 prayer website is full of explanations and ideas:
www.24-7prayer.com/helpmepray

CAFOD, the Catholic Aid agency gives useful intercessory examples:
www.cafod.org.uk/Pray/Prayer-resources

The Church of England has a searchable section on their website, for different types of prayer.

www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/topical-prayers

The Diocese of Exeter offers a monthly prayer diary on issues, locations and people relevant to Devon.

www.exeter.anglican.org/prayer-diary/

Almanac is a complete calendar and lectionary according to the calendar of the Church of England for both Common Worship and the Book of Common Prayer.

<http://almanac.oremus.org/>



Grow:
Equipping God's
people to serve
with joy

