



### **A Lector's Prayer Before Worship:**

*Almighty God, As I prepare myself to read, still my heart. Help me immerse myself in the Scriptures to hear your message in them, that I may proclaim your message to others. I ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## **Trinity Lutheran Church Lector's Guide**

The role of the lector, or reader, is one of the most important responsibilities in every church service. As one ELCA congregation's *Lector Handbook* puts it, "Hearing God's Word is one of the major reasons for gathering to worship....When the lector stands before the worshiping assembly to speak the words of Holy Scripture, God's voice is being heard, and God's will is being revealed. These are 'the words of eternal life,' and it

is the lector's job to deliver such words ... in such a way that God's voice can be heard and understood." The following suggestions may help us to fulfill this responsibility successfully, and ensure consistency between us.

### **Preparations**

- Familiarize yourself with the passages you'll be reading.
  - Good reading requires that we understand the passage's *meaning*.
  - Learn pronunciations of people's and places' names. The website [netministries.org/resources/resource-pronunciation-guide](http://netministries.org/resources/resource-pronunciation-guide) includes many biblical terms and names, grouped in alphabetical order. Click on a term's first letter, then the term itself, and a sound file will pronounce it as many times as you wish. Once you have mastered the term's pronunciation, write it out phonetically. For example, "ephah" > "EE-fah"
  - Identify words or sentences needing emphasis. Remember, all emphasis is no emphasis. Be selective in deciding the main point(s) that should be stressed. For emphasis techniques, see the entry under "Offering God's Word," (over).
  - Decide on an appropriate tone of voice – joyous, serious, mournful, cautionary, hopeful, etc.
  - Read each passage aloud several times, focusing on potential "trip-up" areas. One expert wrote, "Preparation includes reading the passage aloud, and more than once, if only to yourself. There is a need not just to let your mind become familiar with the ideas and words, but also to let them 'get around your tongue' as you practice the rhythm of the phrasing of the words. Otherwise, even if you believe you have prepared the reading, you will find yourself sometimes 'off-step' in your verbal rhythm in the middle of a sentence when you read before the congregation."
  - Consider recording your practice readings, then playing them back, evaluating your delivery and deciding on needed adjustments.
  - If you cannot serve as a lector on a particular Sunday, it's your responsibility to arrange for someone to fill in for you. Lectors no longer should ask Kathy or the church office to find a substitute, but still should advise Kathy of the change as soon as possible so it can be reflected in the service's bulletin.

### **Before the service**

Upon arrival, *30 minutes* before the service,

- Check with Pastor Fred about any last-minute changes in the service.
- Check that the microphone is working. Turn it on, using the switch on its side. A green light should glow near the switch. Test the "mic" by tapping it with your finger or speaking into it. (Blowing into a microphone can damage it!) (Replacement batteries can be found in the sacristy. Turn right upon entry. In the first wall cabinet you'll find a tray with 9-volt batteries. The microphone's end unscrews to reveal the battery.) Sometimes, the sound system needs to be turned on. The switch is on the sacristy wall, just behind the door. If a problem arises, tell Pastor Fred right away.
- Adjust the microphone's height so it's slightly *above* or *below* your mouth, and about a hand-span away. Be careful not to "crowd" the microphone, which can cause squealing (feedback) or "popping p's." Consider asking someone in the nave whether you can be heard easily. If not, move the "mic" closer to you.
- Position the microphone's switch so it's immediately visible and accessible, by rotating the microphone in its holder.
- After you've checked the microphone, turn it off to conserve battery power.
- Check the readings in a loose-leaf binder on the lectern to confirm they match what you've practiced.

**(Continued, over)**

## During the service

- Sit where you have easy and direct access to an aisle.
- Begin moving toward the lectern immediately after the preceding segment (usually the Prayer of the Day, or as shown in the bulletin, or as Pastor Fred has advised.) Adopt a confident, purposeful walking gait to the lectern. (Because readings are in the lectern's binder, your own copy of the bulletin may be left at your seat.)
- If at times you tend to lose your place while reading, consider bringing a strip of white paper with you to reveal one line of text at a time as you read (or, use your index finger!) Remember to take the paper strip with you when finished.

## Offering God's word

- Upon arriving at the lectern, turn on the microphone and silently count to "3" before speaking; the sound system takes one or two seconds to activate. Pausing also helps to ensure the congregation is attentive and ready to listen to you.
- Introduce the reading, as found in the binder: For example, "A reading from Exodus." It's not necessary to mention chapter and verse. Pause again, briefly, after the introduction.
- While speaking...
  - **Pacing:** Speak more slowly than you would during a conversation. In a large room like our sanctuary, sound takes a bit of time to reach the rearmost pews. Slower speech is more easily understood. Be mindful that some members of the congregation may have hearing impairments.
  - **Enunciation** is important: Watch for – and *clearly* pronounce – all word endings. Often, because of too-speedy delivery, "something" becomes "sumpin'," "going to" becomes "gonna." Pay special attention to words ending in "-ing." (readin' > reading) Remember, these are the words of the Lord; we should cherish them as we speak them.
  - The congregation absorbs sound; it's better to be a bit too loud than not loud enough. Project to the back of the nave! Be sure to maintain your **volume** *especially* at the ends of sentences, ensuring that all can hear you.
  - Observe **punctuation**: A comma calls for a *tiny* pause. A semi-colon means a *brief* pause. Dashes and periods need a longer pause. Psalms once were sung; now they're essentially a poem. If we are *reading* the psalm, and there is no punctuation at the end of a line, do not pause, but run that line immediately into the next one.
  - Be mindful of **tone**, the musical note of your voice. Avoid monotone by knowing what the passage means, being aware of what you're reading, and having an enthusiasm or passion for reading.
  - **Eye contact** is important, especially at the beginnings and ends of the lessons. It connects you, the passages' messages and the congregation. Eye contact occurs naturally when you know the passage's meaning and "what comes next." Maintain eye contact when you're introducing the passage, and again, just before or as you conclude with, "The word of the Lord." If you can keep your place while reading, try to look up briefly as frequently as possible. Try to "touch" each area of the congregation with your eyes at least once during the readings.
  - **Gestures** should be natural (you "feel" them), but minimal, and should not draw attention to one's self. They help to create the impression that, as a speaker, you're comfortable (rather than terrified! Clinging with white knuckles to the lectern probably should be avoided.) Leaning on the lectern is a no-no. Arms loosely at your side are fine.
  - **Stage fright** – Actors appearing on Broadway say that sometimes, a *little* stage fright is *normal*, even *good*, because it gives their performances an "edge" or an "electricity." But it can quickly impair a presentation and disconnect the audience. Avoiding stage fright is simple: **Practice, practice, practice!** Delivering the passages with confidence lifts everyone's spirits!
  - **Emotion** – As one clergy member put it, "The Bible is full of sacred drama, and to be faithful and reverent to it means to allow that this drama be shared with the listeners. We should not be afraid to allow emotion to be expressed in our voice (as long as it is not 'over the top') if it reflects the emotion that is in the scripture passage .... If there is no emotion at all in our reading, we are reading words, but not God's word."
  - **Emphasis** – How can we emphasize a key point?
    - Speed – Slowing your delivery can be emphatic.
    - Volume – Both loudness and softness can stress content, especially if it contrasts with what precedes it.
    - Pauses – A *short* pause can draw attention to what follows.
- If the congregation is to read the psalm, (rather than sing it – see next page), remember that many psalms tend to be more joyful and if so, this should be reflected in your tone of voice and enthusiasm.
- After leaving the binder on the lectern, return to your seat with joy in your heart, having served the Lord!

## Procedural changes effective December 1

Please be aware of the following changes, approved by the Worship and Music Committee and Pastor Fred, to begin with the first Sunday of Advent, December 1.

- Two lectors will serve each Sunday. Lector 1 reads the Old Testament lesson, the first one in the bulletin. Lector 2 reads the New Testament lesson, listed after the psalm.
- Lector 1 will proceed to the lectern and read his/her passage, then return to his/her seat. After the psalm (see below), lector 2 will go to the lectern and read her/his lesson.
- The congregation will sing the psalm. Pastor Fred will read or sing the verses in “regular” type, and the congregation will sing the boldface responses. If, for some reason, the congregation will *not* be singing the psalm, one of the lectors – to be agreed upon between them in advance – will lead the congregation in reading the psalm, as we have done in the past.