



THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER
SESSION 3
THE DAILY OFFICE

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TODAY'S SESSION

Today we will study the way the Episcopal Church deals with the daily prayers of the church.

This is the context in which we will study *Morning and Evening Prayer*, as well as other parts of the Daily Office.

The Daily Prayers of the Church

The earliest group of Jesus' disciples were Jews. St. Paul was a Jew, and at least according to the Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul visited and preached in Jewish synagogues on the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath (*Shabbat* שבת).

Judaism and the early church

- In Judaism there were prayers which were said on a daily basis.
- The early church, as early as Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition* (second to third century C.E.), and Basil the Great (fourth century C.E.), had developed set patterns of prayer at different times of the day.
- These prayers were said in the church, and for those who could not be present in church, were to be said privately.

St. Basil the Great

- He was one of the three Cappadocian Fathers (along with St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Gregory of Nazianzus). They were stout defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity after the Council of Nicaea. Basil is known as one of the “doctors of the church.”
- In one of his writings, the *Longer Rule*, Basil describes a scheme of daily prayers for ascetic Christians of Pontus and Cappadocia.

St. Basil the Great

The hours of prayer for Christian ascetics in Asia Minor included

1. midnight
2. before dawn
3. at dawn
4. third hour
5. sixth hour
6. ninth hour
7. evening
8. the beginning of the night

The Daily Office in Rome

- The extant evidence for daily prayer services in Rome generally starts in the sixth century C.E. Before the sixth century, the hours of prayer were observed in private.
- In *The Rule of St. Benedict*, St. Benedict of Nursia formulated a detailed scheme of prayer services. These became the foundation of the Monastic Breviary.
- The Breviary is a book with the texts of all the daily offices.

The Benedictine Way

In *The Rule of St. Benedict* there are eight hours of prayer. Benedict added the last two to the existing Roman pattern.

1. Vigil or Mattins
2. Lauds
3. Terce
4. Sext
5. None
6. Vespers
7. Prime (= dawn)
8. Completorium

Dr. Massey H. Shephard, Jr.

- Massey H. Shephard's *The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950) was by far the definitive guide to the 1928 Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church.
- Dr. Shephard taught at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, California, for many years. He did a Ph.D. in Early Christian Literature at the University of Chicago with Prof. Edgar J. Goodspeed, so he was well versed in patristic literature and theology.

Morning Prayer

Lord's Prayer (said aloud,
not silently)
Versicles and *Gloria*
Venite and Psalms (read in
a monthly, rather than a
weekly, course) } Matins

First Lesson
Te Deum }

Benedicite }

Second Lesson
Benedictus } Lauds

Creed, Lord's Prayer and
Suffrages } Prime

Collect of the Day
Collect for Peace } Lauds

Collect for Grace } Prime

Evening Prayer

Lord's Prayer (said
aloud, not silently)
Versicles and *Gloria*
Psalms (in course, as at
Morning Prayer) } Vespers

First Lesson
Magnificat }

Second Lesson
Nunc Dimittis
Creed, Lord's Prayer,
and Suffrages } Compline

Collect of the Day
Collect for Peace } Vespers

Collect for Aid against
Perils } Compline

The Book of Common Prayer

1549

1552

1. Mattins

1. Morning
Prayer

2. Evensong

2. Evening
Prayer

The typical pattern

The typical pattern for Sunday worship, according to the early BCPs of the Church of England was this:

- Mattins / Morning Prayer
- The Litany
- The Holy Communion
- Evensong / Evening Prayer

Morning & Evening Prayer

- By law, clergy of the Church of England are required to say Morning and Evening Prayer daily. If they are in a parish, they are required to ring the bell so that the people may come and pray with them!
- The Episcopal Church is one of the only churches of the Anglican Communion that does not require its clergy by canon law to say Morning and Evening Prayer daily.

What is in Morning and Evening Prayer?

The structure of the daily prayer services is like this:

- Opening Sentences
- Invitatory (*Venite* or *Phos hilaron*)
- Psalm(s) appointed
- Reading from the Bible, as appointed
- Canticle
- Reading from the Bible, as appointed
- Canticle

What is in Morning and Evening Prayer? (continued)

- The Apostles' Creed
- Prayers, starting with the Lord's Prayer
- Suffrages
- Collects (traditionally there were three)
- Hymn may be sung
- Intercessory prayers may follow
- Final prayers, such as the General Thanksgiving and the Prayer of St. Chrysostom
- The Grace or other conclusion

What Abp. Cranmer did

- Archbishop Cranmer took the six to eight daily prayer services and reformulated them into two.
- He brought them into English and made it possible for laity to participate in them.

In the eighteenth century

- In the British colonies in North America and the Caribbean, it was extremely difficult to get clergy to come and work. Many of the clergy that were sent as missionaries from England were not thought to be high quality Anglican clergy.
- Many congregations went for long periods of time without a priest. “Lay readers” would very often lead Morning Prayer on Sunday mornings. In the English cathedral pattern, Morning Prayer was followed by the Litany and then the Holy Communion. Without a priest, Morning Prayer was frequently the main, if not the only, service.

Necessity became the mother of invention . . .

- What started out as the necessity to have Sunday morning services consisting of Morning Prayer / Mattins, because of the lack of priests, became the norm in most Episcopal churches.
- Morning Prayer, together with “Lay Readers’ Sermons,” kept many small congregations alive when no priest was available to come to preside at the Holy Eucharist.

The 1928 BCP

Dr. Massey Shepherd wrote the following words in his widely praised commentary on the 1928 BCP, published in 1950: “The Holy Communion is the primary and central act of corporate worship of the Church, and regular participation in its observance is a solemn obligation upon all the faithful of God. Every other liturgical service of the Church is centered on it, being either an anticipation, or preparation, for it, or a consequence and development of it” (p. 65).

The current BCP

- The opening paragraph of “Concerning the Service of the Church” reads as follows: **“The Holy Eucharist, the principal act of Christian worship on the Lord’s Day and other major Feasts, and Daily Morning and Evening Prayer, as set forth in this Book, are the regular services appointed for public worship in this Church”** (p. 13).
- This made explicit what some church leaders thought was implicit in the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*.

The 1928 BCP

- Since in Daily Morning Prayer in the 1928 Prayer Book there was no provision for a **sermon**, the collection of a monetary **offering**, or a final **blessing** at the end of the service, many liturgists and parish clergy concluded that Morning Prayer was not intended to be the main Sunday service when a priest was present.
- This point was much debated in years past!

As a result . . .

- Parishes with priests in residence, which offer Morning Prayer as their main service on most Sundays each month, have become few and far between. This changed after the 1979 BCP began to affect how the Episcopal Church operated.
- The old wars between low churchmen and high churchmen, which were fierce and which characterized majority of the history of the Episcopal Church, were fundamentally put to rest by this BCP in the 1980s.

✠ Thomas Cranmer

- ✠ There is a lot that one can say about Thomas Cranmer, not all of it flattering.
- ✠ Archbishop Cranmer was the most successful liturgical reformer in the history of the church. He effected not only a translation of the liturgy into English; it was also an adaptation of traditional liturgy to the changes in theology and the changes in society.
- ✠ Cranmer did, in fact, die as a martyr for what he believed.

Morning & Evening Prayer . . .

- have made a great contribution to Anglicanism in terms of liturgy and personal spirituality of the clergy.
- have made a great contribution to church music with “morning services” and “evening services,” the former containing music for the *Te Deum laudamus* and the *Benedictus*, with the latter containing music for the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*.
- have made it possible for laity to officiate in public worship in Episcopal churches.

Other parts of the Daily Office

- Although Abp. Cranmer put parts of Compline (Completorium) in Evening Prayer, many people have found it helpful to have a separate prayer service as the last prayers before sleep.
- In *A Book of Offices* (1917) there was the order of Compline, and it was put into the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, along with Noonday Prayers, by the Standing Liturgical Commission.

Two types of liturgy

- From study of the history of Christian worship, it is clear that there are two types of liturgical worship.
- One type is liturgy that is designed for **monastic communities**, where people live all together, and want to have worship in common, for those who are just a few feet away, or maybe a couple of buildings away.
- The other type is liturgy that fits in **parish settings**, where people come together once or twice a week. Generally this is simpler.
- These two types of liturgy are quite different from each other!

Diversity in liturgy

- Many people have expressed their dismay with the current 1979 Prayer Book because there are so many options. They think there are far too many.
- In general, those of us who have seen the wide diversity of congregations and dioceses and seminaries within the Episcopal Church, are aware that most of the multiple options are legitimate, and could be removed only with grave difficulty!