

People Praying

Purpose.

The basic aims of this suggested form of worship are two-fold. First to involve as many people as possible in the total activity of prayer. Second to create a structure within which prayer becomes directly related to peoples' own experience and is engaged in language meaningful to them.

In thinking about this I have tried to put myself in a pew as a worshipper and so to gauge the motive, the aspirations, and the reactions of the worshipper as he moves through the service. Having said this it is necessary to detail in the following plan the machinery by which those worshipping may be so moved.

Plan.

I think we have to recognise that the worshipper arrives in the Church building as an individual. Even though he may come with his family, or perhaps sit beside friends, nevertheless to a large extent he begins sitting by himself as one person.

This means that we have to take into account his individual thoughts, thoughts and ideas about God, himself, and the relationship between God and himself. Thus set prayers, whether they are in ancient or modern English do not necessarily take into account the individual's thoughts, nor do they always express those thoughts in meaningful terms for him. Indeed set prayers can inhibit and frustrate the individual by creating images and concepts which may be alien to him. The only thing we can say about him is that he wants to pray as he knows how. So we begin the service with the Minister leading "Guided Meditation and Corporate Silence".

1. "Guided Meditation and Corporate Silence"

By these terms I simply mean that the Minister will invite the people with a variety of "bidding sentences" to express and concentrate their thinking on God, themselves, and the relationship between. This not only removes the possible inhibitions and frustrations caused by set prayer, but places the responsibility for praying fully on the people themselves.

After each “ Bidding sentence ” there should be a period of corporate silence to allow the people to pray individually. But this is also the beginning of the first movement of the service, namely from individual to corporate, as in the silence the individuals begin to be drawn together. This first movement of the service ends with an opportunity for the corporate body to express its re-awakened awareness of its relationship with God. This the “ Gloria ” seems to do best not just because of its basic theology, but because of its brevity, its joy, and perhaps above all, its eternal quality. For at one and the same time the individuals act corporately in saying it, and are also united with the whole history of Christian witness.

2. “ **Praise** ”

A Hymn or Psalm of Praise or Adoration.

3. “ **Reading / Prayer / Suggestion** ”

This is the second movement and the central activity of the service, which is basically one of corporate intercession. The idea is that, say twice a year, the regular worshipping congregation should be divided into “ intercessory groups ” each group being given an area of concern to deal with, e.g., “ the parish ”, “ the Church universal ”, “ the world and peace ”, “ industry ”, etc. The congregation would then allocate particular groups to particular Sundays, thus making one of them responsible for this part of the service each Sunday.

The group would meet with or without the Minister towards the end of the week to discuss their particular area of concern. They would make themselves fully informed about it, and being so would then begin to shape their part of the service.

They would begin with reading from Scripture, newspapers, etc., relevant and appropriate to their area of concern, and follow the readings with prayers of intercession on a responsive basis. Two or three people would act as spokesmen for the group, actually doing the reading and leading the prayers.

If the group felt from their meeting that their area of concern also required some practical action, then this action would be suggested to the congregation. Again this second movement of the service would end with the Gloria, thus uniting the congregation and allowing those in other groups to identify themselves with the leading group.

In this the individual, having already been moved into the corporate, is now further moved into an area of concern which becomes common to all.

4. **“ Praise ”**

A Hymn or Psalm appropriate to the area of concern.

5. **“ The Offering ”**

The beginning of the congregation's response to the area of concern.

6. **“ Prayers of Thanksgiving and Commitment ”**

This is the third movement of the service in which first, all that has gone before is rendered to God in thanksgiving, and second, the congregation is moved to commit itself to God and through Him to the area of concern.

Here the Minister, who will lead these prayers, must try to underline the second movement with theological emphases and point to the transcendental nature of prayer which gives the thoughts expressed and the words used a deeper significance. He must lead the people in a re-dedication to discipleship, making them aware of the strength which faith provides thereto. Once more the “ Gloria ” acts as the exclamation mark at the end of these prayers.

7. **“ Praise ”**

A Hymn of discipleship or Faith and Trust.

8. **“ The Blessing ”**

The Praying People go out renewed to continue praying.

Summing up.

Briefly what has happened. A man has come to worship. His thoughts have been guided to think of God and His love, and to think of his love, in return. In doing so he finds himself united with all the others who have been doing the same. Together then, all are guided to think of God and His love for the world, and to think of their love for others. Finally, grateful for these truths and opportunities, they dedicate themselves anew, and are blessed as they go back into the world to continue their witness.

SUGGESTED FORM FOR EVENING SERVICE

“ People Praying ”

Guided Meditation with Corporate Silence.

“ Gloria ” (said V/R).

Praise.

Reading followed by Prayer and Suggestions.

“ Gloria ” (said V/R).

Praise.

Offering.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Commitment.

“ Gloria ” (said V/R).

Praise.

The Blessing.

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