

Readers

ALL NEW readers will be auditioned by a committee consisting of [the Rector,] the Acolyte Warden, one or more additional MC's and/or Subdeacons, and one or more current readers. Periodic Readers Workshops will provide additional training.

Since the Advent does not presently have a sound amplification system beyond the building's natural acoustics, readers must have clear, carrying voices. Good diction and the ability to read aloud with expression are essential. *Think* about what you are reading, the Word of God. Readers should study, pray, and meditate upon the assigned lesson before the service.

A note about appearance: there is no 'unwritten rule' requiring male readers to wear a jacket and tie rather than a sweater, or women to wear a dress rather than slacks. Everyday standards of sartorial neatness apply.

Preparing the Reading

Confirm what the Lesson will be in advance. Consult the Lectionary or call the Parish Office for this information.

Take home a copy of the reading to practice. If you don't have a copy of the Lectionary at home, make a copy of the Lesson on Sunday morning. There is a copying machine on the second floor of the Parish House down the hallway behind the Choir Room. Practicing with a copy of the Lectionary text is easier than practicing from your Bible—not that you should stop reading your Bible!—because the text is laid out in the way you will see it on Sunday, without distracting footnotes, verse numbers, or other annotations.

Omit optional portions. Many of the Lessons have portions, indicated with a vertical line next to the text, that may be omitted. Unless the preacher specifically asks you to read the indented portion, omit it.

The Reading

On the assigned day, sit in the front pew under the Lectern at the beginning of the service. (The Reader may move to his/her accustomed pew after reading the Lesson.) Remember that the clergy and servers at the sedilia can't see the lectern and don't know if the reader is actually present until he or she speaks. A lengthy gap between the Collect of the Day and the reader's arrival at the lectern not only breaks up the flow of the liturgy, but is also a terrible strain on sacerdotal nerves.

Following the Collect of the Day the Reader should proceed to the Lectern (while the congregation is chanting "Amen"). Remember to genuflect upon leaving the pew to go to the Lectern.

If the Sacrament is not present at the High Altar, e.g., for certain Evensongs, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil, *bow* instead of genuflecting.

Announcing the Reading

At Mass and Evensong, the reading is announced according to the usual form: "A reading from the ..." (e.g., Book of the Prophet ...; First Book of the Kings; Acts of the Apostles). At the conclusion of the reading the salutation is, "The Word of the Lord", *not* "This is the Word ..."

At Special Services

For Lessons and Carols (Advent and New Year's Eve) the introduction to the reading is a set sentence printed on the page above the Lesson. The conclusion of the reading is "Thanks be to God," with no congregational response.

For the Easter Vigil, there is neither introduction nor conclusion to the reading. The lesson is simply read in its entirety.

Guidelines for Technique and Style

Readers should project their voices toward the back wall rather than reading down "into the page." Avoid making direct eye contact with people in the congregation.

The acoustics in the nave are superb; it is not necessary to yell – a slightly louder than normal conversational voice will suffice. Speak naturally but clearly, and enunciate carefully but without exaggeration.

The reading should be expressive, but not dramatic. Do not over-emphasize words or phrases. The language of the Scriptures flows naturally and does not require artistic interpretation.

For tricky Old (and New) Testament names, there is a pronunciation guide in the Sacristy. Ask the MC to find it for you so that you can confirm and practice the pronunciation in advance.

Even if you are uncomfortable with or self-conscious about your speech, do not attempt to disguise your accent or adopt one which is not native to you. Whether you have a Dorchester twang or a Southern drawl, speak in the voice God and your relatives gave you.

In general, do not draw attention to yourself with excessive movement or unnecessary enthusiasm. The Reader is a minister of the service as much as the vested choir, clergy, and servers in the chancel, and as such should maintain the standard of anonymity which is expected of all participants in the liturgy.