

LECTOR HANDBOOK

A lector (i.e. lay reader) is one who publicly reads scripture and/or leads assigned prayers in worship. This is a great responsibility. Although it is your voice being used, it is God's word being spoken.

Most sermons at St. Anne's draw heavily on the Biblical texts of the day, so in some sense the lector's readings are the first part of the sermon. Not everyone who goes to church reads the Bible regularly, so what they hear on Sunday may be the only Bible they know. For these reasons, it is critical that lectors read in a manner that conveys the words of scripture audibly and accurately.



PREPARATION PRIOR TO SUNDAY

Lectors must study and practice before reading at the service. Follow these tips to prepare effectively.

VERIFY

- **Receive the Reading.** You will receive your passage by email from the church office a few days before your assigned Sunday. You may also look up the Sunday readings ahead of time on lectionarypage.net.
- **Verify the Options.** On some Sundays, multiple options are offered for certain readings. If you are unsure which option to use, DO NOT GUESS. It is the preacher's choice. Call the church office to verify.
- **Include the Brackets.** Some passages have bracketed or parenthetical sections. Unless specifically instructed to the contrary, do NOT omit bracketed or parenthetical sections. Again, call the church office if you need to verify.

UNDERSTAND

- **Understand the Context.** Study your passage in a good New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible.
 - Read the **introduction** to the book of your passage.
 - Read the **passages before and after** your passage.
 - Read the **footnotes and comments** at the bottom of the page.
- **Understand the Genre.** We do not read novels the same way we read newspapers. Similarly, you should not read Genesis the same way you read Romans. Ask yourself, “What genre is this, and how should I read it?”
 - **Narrative** (*Genesis, Exodus*)
 - **Poetry** (*Psalms, Song of Solomon*)
 - **Wisdom Sayings** (*Proverbs*)
 - **Prophecy** (*Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos*)
 - **Letters** (*Romans, Hebrews*)
- **Understand the People Involved.** When was your passage written, why, to whom, by whom? Who are the people involved, and what is their stake in what is being said? Are the speakers angry, hopeful, mournful, instructive?

PRACTICE

- **Pronunciation.** Biblical names can be difficult. Look up pronunciations in a Bible dictionary or at biblespeak.org. Confidence is more important than perfection when it comes to pronouncing difficult Biblical names in public.
- **Practice Aloud.** Read the passage aloud to yourself to hear what God is saying. Remember, the way you listen to and interpret the words you are saying directly affects how the person in the pew will understand it.

AT THE LECTERN

READINGS

- **Do Not Delay.** Sit near the lectern and be prepared to step up immediately when it is your turn.
- **Do Not Wait for the Celebrant to Sit.** If you are the first reader, *do not wait* for the Celebrant to be seated before you begin. This is an unnecessary custom. Once the Celebrant says, “Please be seated,” step up and begin.
- **Do Not Fumble with Paper.** The readings are marked by the MC in the lectionary book on the lectern. If you need to read from a separate sheet, please be discreet.
- **Introduce Correctly.** Always introduce your passage by saying, “A reading from _____,” using the correct book designation. (*See appendix.*)
- **Tips for Good Delivery**
 - If crossing in front of the Altar, pause and offer a distinct and reverent bow toward the Altar.
 - **Adjust the microphone before reading.** It should be pointed directly at your mouth. Sound booth technicians cannot compensate when the mic is too far from your face.
 - Don’t worry about looking at the congregation. It is more important to engage them with your well articulated words than with your eyes.
 - Breathe deeply and keep your feet flat.
 - Project your voice and use its full range.
 - Convey the emotion appropriate to the genre.
 - Don’t rush. If you feel you’re going a little too slowly, you’re probably just right.
 - Remember the rules of punctuation. Commas require a brief pause; semicolons a longer pause; periods a full stop. This is especially helpful when reading Paul’s letters.
 - Pause slightly at the end before saying, “The Word of the Lord.”
 - Walk away from the lectern with dignity.

LEADING THE PSALM

The lector reading the first lesson also leads the psalm.

- **Psalms Are Prayers.** Psalms are ancient prayers, used by generations of Jews and Christians to express their joys and sorrows. Invite the congregation to *pray* the psalm with you.
- **Lead with Confidence.** Do not to mumble your way through the psalm, as yours is the only voice people worshipping online will hear. Keep a steady pace and speak clearly without overpowering the congregation.
- **Utilize the Correct Recitation Method.** Several methods of recitation are appropriate and may be changed at the rector's discretion according to the liturgical season. Check the bulletin for the method to be used.
 - **In Unison.** This is the most common method wherein the lector and congregation pray the psalm together. Introduce by saying, "Please join me in praying the psalm found in your bulletin. We will pray it in unison."
 - **Responsively.** In this method the lector and congregation alternate verse by verse. Introduce by saying, "Please join me in praying the psalm found in your bulletin. We will pray it responsively by whole verse. I will read the odd verses; you will read the even."
 - **Antiphonally.** Here the two sides of the congregation alternate verse by verse. Introduce by saying, "Please join me in praying the psalm found in your bulletin. We will pray it antiphonally by whole verse, beginning with this side of the congregation."
- **Chanting/Singing.** In some seasons the choir sings the psalms. In this case the lector does not lead the psalm but is seated immediately after the first reading.
- **Regarding Canticles.** Canticles are songs found in other portions of scripture. Occasionally the lectionary allows the use of a canticle in place of the psalm. Lead it as you would a psalm unless it is being sung by the choir.

APPENDIX: INTROS TO READINGS

BOOK	STANDARD INTRODUCTION
1 Chronicles	A reading from the first book of Chronicles
1 Corinthians	A reading from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians
1 John	A reading from the first letter of John
1 Kings	A reading from the first book of Kings
1 Peter	A reading from the first letter of Peter
1 Samuel	A reading from the first book of Samuel
1 Thessalonians	A reading from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians
1 Timothy	A reading from Paul's first letter to Timothy
2 Chronicles	A reading from the second book of Chronicles
2 Corinthians	A reading from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians
2 John	A reading from the second letter of John
2 Kings	A reading from the second book of Kings
2 Peter	A reading from the second letter of Peter
2 Samuel	A reading from the second book of Samuel
2 Thessalonians	A reading from Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians
2 Timothy	A reading from Paul's second letter to Timothy
3 John	A reading from the third letter of John
Acts	A reading from the Acts of the Apostles
Amos	A reading from the book of the prophet Amos
Colossians	A reading from Paul's letter to the Colossians
Daniel	A reading from the book of the prophet Daniel
Deuteronomy	A reading from the book of Deuteronomy
Ecclesiastes	A reading from the book of Ecclesiastes
Ephesians	A reading from Paul's letter to the Ephesians
Esther	A reading from the book of Esther
Exodus	A reading from the book of Exodus
Ezekiel	A reading from the book of the prophet Ezekiel
Ezra	A reading from the book of Ezra
Galatians	A reading from Paul's letter to the Galatians
Genesis	A reading from the book of Genesis
Habakkuk	A reading from the book of the prophet Habakkuk
Haggai	A reading from the book of the prophet Haggai
Hebrews	A reading from the letter to the Hebrews <i>(Authorship of Hebrews is unknown; do not attribute to Paul.)</i>

Hosea	A reading from the book of the prophet Hosea
Isaiah	A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah
James	A reading from the letter of James
Jeremiah	A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah
Job	A reading from the book of Job
Joel	A reading from the book of the prophet Joel
Jonah	A reading from the book of the prophet Jonah
Joshua	A reading from the book of Joshua
Jude	A reading from the letter of Jude
Judges	A reading from the book of Judges
Lamentations	A reading from the book of Lamentations
Leviticus	A reading from the book of Leviticus
Malachi	A reading from the book of the prophet Malachi
Micah	A reading from the book of the prophet Micah
Nahum	A reading from the book of the prophet Nahum
Nehemiah	A reading from the book of the prophet Nehemiah
Numbers	A reading from the book of Numbers
Obadiah	A reading from the book of the prophet Obadiah
Philemon	A reading from Paul's letter to Philemon
Philippians	A reading from Paul's letter to the Philippians
Proverbs	A reading from the book of Proverbs
Psalms	A reading from the Psalms
Revelation	A reading from the Revelation of John <i>(Do not pluralize. It is Revelation, NOT Revelations.)</i>
Romans	A reading from Paul's letter to the Romans
Ruth	A reading from the book of Ruth
Sirach	A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus <i>(This is an apocryphal book occasionally used. Note that it is distinct from Ecclesiastes.)</i>
Song of Songs	A reading from the Song of Solomon
Titus	A reading from Paul's letter to Titus
Wisdom	A reading from the Wisdom of Solomon <i>(This is an apocryphal book occasionally used. Note that it is distinct from the Song of Solomon.)</i>
Zechariah	A reading from the book of the prophet Zechariah
Zephaniah	A reading from the book of the prophet Zephaniah