



approach (a “Processional Hymn”). The second singing is normally a metrical Psalm since it is traditional practice to sing a “Gradual Psalm” during the Liturgy of the Word. Apart from this being an ancient and wide tradition it is good to keep in touch with the Scottish Psalter so important in our Reformed history. The third hymn follows the sermon. It marks the beginning of the “Response” half of the service and takes up the major theme of the Word which we have heard. The fourth hymn may be a simpler, lighter text. It bears in mind that we are about to go out into the world with God’s blessing.

**What about tunes?** Looking at tunes is obviously an important part of the selection process. The ministers are unlikely to agree thoughtlessly to tunes which are “impossible”. Of course we may not *like* a tune. That is one thing, and never quite the point, since we are offering worship and not listening to our “Hundred Favourite Tunes”. But we should be able to *use* the tune. It is always hoped that, after studying the music, the tunes chosen will be usable. If the set tune appears to be doubtful, the metrical index is searched for a “safer” alternative. Tunes as well as words are also appropriate to the season. An obvious example of this is the season of Lent when hymn tunes are naturally more sombre in keeping with the mood. Then come the happy *alleluias* of Easter!

Anyone interested in the whole topic of hymns in Christian worship and how they are used in today’s British churches will find all these matters discussed in a book to which the minister was a contributor; *Singing the Faith* (The Canterbury Press Norwich 1990)



Praise the Lord  
O praise God in his sanctuary;  
Praise him in the firmament of his power.

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## The Shape of Sunday Worship

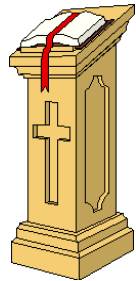
Sunday worship in our churches follows the pattern of the Church of Scotland’s Common Order. The Reformers, Calvin and Knox, who set the course for our church believed that the Lord’s Supper was the central act of worship for Christians. It was what our Lord had commanded us to do. But communion of the people had been infrequent in the medieval Catholic Church and the Reformers found it difficult to change old ways; yet even when the bread and wine are absent, Reformed worship should still reflect the order of the eucharist (Communion Service).

There are two main sections of the service – the Liturgy of the Word and the Response to the Word. This is the order of the Gospel itself. We are reminded of Galilee where by word and action and by his very presence Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God; and then we remember how he went to Jerusalem to give his life for us and to rise triumphant.

The Word: The congregation hears a greeting in God’s name and offers a prayer

for blessing upon the service. In the first main prayers we remember the days that have gone and ask God to forgive and renew us and we hear his assurance of forgiveness. There will also be a *collect for the day* (a short prayer which gathers up the theme for that Sunday).

The Bible lessons are read. There may be three, from the Old Testament, the Epistles or letters of the New Testament



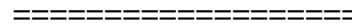
and from the Gospel. These readings are laid out in a table called *The Revised Common Lectionary* agreed by all the major world churches some years ago. It is exciting to think that Christians around the world are hearing the same Scripture. Any member of the

congregation who wishes one is welcome to a copy.

The sermon is another way by which God speaks to his people. The ministers use the pulpit only for preaching to underline the solemnity and importance of this part of the service.

Response to the Word: At this point, when we have been challenged, reassured, called to discipleship, we wonder “How shall I begin to live in the light of God’s Word?” At the Communion service the Bread and Wine would be in place at this point – the Lord already helping us to respond by offering his own life before the Father. Even when

the sacrament is not celebrated the pattern is the same. We bring forward our offerings (token of much more than just the money offerings). We offer an affirmation of our common Faith – an important reminder that we are a people who believe together. We offer our thanksgivings and our prayers for the church and the world, and we remember the faithful of past times (an important little prayer). We offer the Lord’s Prayer. As we have been greeted by the Lord, so he sends us out to be his people in the world. He gives us his blessing.



### Hymns in the service

**What is the purpose of hymns?** Over the past century hymns have

become an important part of worship in the Church of Scotland. For almost 400 years after the Reformation only metrical Psalms and, later, scripture paraphrases were allowed. Hymns provide us with words for worship which we can offer together. They

are all the more important in our type of service which offers to the congregation less vocal participation than the service does in some other Christian traditions. So hymns may be prayers of penitence, intercession or thanksgiving; they may be affirmations of our faith. Whatever their particular role in the service they are offered to the Father through Christ in the Spirit just as all worship is. They are vehicles of what we wish to express in common.



**Is there any reason for particular hymns to be used at certain times and special places in the service?** Hymns must be carefully chosen if they are to serve the worship. They must fulfill a purpose. Obviously as the Bible story unfolds through the year, hymns will reflect the themes of Christ’s birth, his passion, his resurrection, and so on; but within each service there is an order, a progression which is common to all Christian worship. We begin by approaching God and seeking his forgiveness. We listen for his Word as it comes to us through the reading of scripture and preaching. We respond joyfully to that Word through our offering, our thanksgiving, our concern for his world and by participating in the sacrament when it is celebrated. We receive his blessing and are sent out to live for him in the world.

**How are hymns for Sunday chosen?** The ministry team choose hymns early in the week after considering the theme for the following Sunday. At certain seasons (e.g. Advent, Lent) several Sundays are planned ahead. Bearing in mind the scripture lessons, hymns are selected first for their content. There will be a hymn of