

page number in the Prayer Book if it is not in the bulletin.) Do not say, as is often done, that it will be said “together in unison.” Unison means together!

A **general footnote** on the use of the voice applies to all people attending corporate worship as well as those who lead. We are the gathered People of God. It is indeed *corporate* worship. Individual voices should not be heard above or ahead of the voice of the people when the congregation is speaking as a whole. To hear someone jump in ahead of the congregation or to hear a voice standing out as the people are reciting is most distracting. Persons, especially readers, who do so diminish the worship experience.

## ***INFORMATION***

### **ANNUAL RENEWAL OF A READER’S LICENSE**

Each year licensed Readers gather with the Vicar<sup>1</sup> for renewal of his or her license. In that application, the Reader does the following:

1. State your full name
2. List activities in the previous year as a Lay Reader
3. States to the Vicar why you wish to have your License renewed

### **READERS AND THE MINISTRY OF SERVING AT THE ALTAR: ACOLYTING**

Readers should be well informed about the duties of serving at the Altar. These duties are normally handled by Acolytes. (Let us pray that God raises up young people in our church!) Since Acolytes are scarce at this time, the Reader should have a basic knowledge of the acolytes duties so as to serve in this capacity. The Lay Reader should know especially the crucifer duties, serving at the Altar at the time of communion preparation and the distribution of the alms basins.

CHURCH of THE MESSIAH  the Episcopal Church for Myrtle Beach

<sup>1</sup> Readers and Lectors are now “licensed” by the Vicar. Eucharistic Ministers are licensed by the Bishop. There is a separate license for Eucharistic Ministers. Lectors read scripture and selected by the Vicar.

# The Ministry of Lector & Reader

Saint Paul’s letter to the Colossians (3:16) says: “let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

To be formed spiritually by the Word which would dwell in us richly depends to a significant degree on our **listening** to God, not only within our individual pilgrimages, but also in genuine Christian community, especially as that community gathers in worship, adoration and praise.

When we gather for worship we offer God an *environment* in which God's Word can teach, admonish, forgive, affirm, challenge and bid us grow in love. Our movements and gestures can assist the gathered body to focus on the Word of God and enhance the receipt of the Word, Jesus, in our midst. As we connect the story of salvation with its signs of water, and bread and wine with our personal stories, then our “**I**” is transformed by grace to “**WE**”.

Readers are the “**handmaids of the Lord.**” Our ministry is like Mary’s (the “handmaid of the Lord”), to be vessels -- humble vessels -- for the transformation and nourishment offered Christ’s Body, the Church, as it gathers week-by-week, day-by-day, for worship, adoration and praise.

## ***USE OF THE VOICE AND READING***

The Lay Reader is especially charged with the transmission of the Word of God. The hearers are there expecting to have the Good News read in such a way that it will connect their lives to the life of Jesus in the New Testament and to the People of Israel in the Old Testament. They need to know and feel that the Bible story we hear is real, nourishing and related to their lives. Your voice, your inflections,

your manner of communicating from the sacred writing conveys (or inhibits) the voice of the Spirit of God for the hearers!

Your ministry is needed to take the scripture from the book on the lectern and give those words life. You are a storyteller. Your human voice can give God's Word life and breath.

### **SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE READING**

- 1.** Always, always, always prepare for your ministry by reading that which you will present in public worship. This cannot be stressed enough! If you are unfamiliar with the passage, your lack of preparation will be obvious to the hearers and inhibit the telling of the Story! This preparation may include some research into the context of the passage in order to get a "feel" for the circumstances to assist your proclamation. A good study Bible which contains notes and commentary will assist this work. (The Oxford Annotated New Revised Standard Version [NRSV] of the Bible is recommended.)
- 2.** Your reading is nothing more than sound unless it comes from your personal prayer life and experience. Be diligent in your prayer and study to undergird your ministry.
- 3.** The people's attention should be directed to the reading, *not the reader*. The reader is a herald. The reader, then, should refrain from the use of any "stained glass" voice and other mannerisms which focus attention upon the reader. While scripture is something of an unfolding drama and the reader is something of an actor, overly dramatic presentations are neither helpful nor desired.
- 4.** Practice your reading aloud. Vary the stresses to see which works best. Make sure that it makes sense to you. Since you are reading an English translation of the original languages, the syntax is sometimes awkward and needs sensitive oral expression.
- 5.** Control the volume of your voice so that you speak each word clearly and distinctly with *special attention to sentence endings*.
- 6.** Never read too loudly and never read too softly. The people in the last row need to hear you! And the people in the front row do not want to be blasted out of their seats.

**7.** Make your reading slow and deliberate, but not too slow. Make the cadence of your speaking be somewhat slower than your ordinary speech (unless, of course, you speak very slowly already).

**8.** If you have prepared your reading, you will be able to maintain eye contact with the hearers. It is important for effective communication to maintain eye contact.

**9.** If you make an obvious error, correct it and move right along.

**10.** There are many words in scripture that are uncommon to our eyes and ears. Your preparation should assist you in being able to speak them with confidence. Further, there are some words in English which sometimes causes readers to stumble. For example, the word **prophecy** is a noun and the word **prophesy** is a verb. They are pronounced differently! Do not let such subtle nuances slip by you in your preparation! (Another word to remember is that "saith" is pronounced **seth**.)

**11.** Most everyone is influenced by a regional dialect of their native tongue (in our case, English). Certain aspects of our dialects inhibit communication to any group of hearers who are made up of persons from different regions. We all know the words that will most likely cause hearing problems. Pay special attention to pronunciation to diminish the effect of dialect.

**12.** Punctuation is important. Observe it carefully. But also remember that it is sometimes valuable to add mental commas and periods to help the passage make sense due to the complex sentence structure often found in scripture.

**13.** When leading prayers which lead up to an *Amen* to be said by the people, always give them a "clue" to assist with the Amen. A more deliberate cadence in speech with a slight inflection on the last word before the Amen is helpful.

**14.** On a few occasions (the most obvious example being when you introduce a Psalm for public recitation) you will need to make an introductory statement to assist the people in knowing what will be done. Be succinct! Give them all information they need without adding redundant verbage. For example, say: "Appointed for today is *Psalm 23*. We will say the Psalm in unison." (add the