Written in an engaging style that is both conversational and informative, *Inwardly Digest* is a timely invitation to life in the Spirit sustained by the patterns and rhythms of the Prayer Book.

—Frank Griswold
25th Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church

With the spiritual foundation in *The Book of Common Prayer,* Derek Olsen shows how everyday Christians can grow closer to God through a "training regimen" that incorporates the spirituality of Anglican liturgy as a daily practice. In straightforward and accessible writing, Olsen provides a guide to Prayer Book spirituality for everyone.

—The Rev. Susan Brown Snook
Episcopal priest and editor of *Acts to Action: The New Testament's Guide to Evangelism and Mission*

INWARDLY DIGEST

THE PRAYER BOOK AS GUIDE TO A SPIRITUAL LIFE

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FORWARD MOVEMENT
CINCINNATI, OHIO

By putting substantial prayer Offices at the hinges of the day—morning and evening—the Church joins its worship spiritually and symbolically with the twice daily sacrifices God commanded the Israelites to perform in scripture. As they did in worship, we too are sacrificing something of value—our time—to God as an act of dedication. When we pray the psalms, say the prayers, and lift up our hands with or without incense, we unite ourselves with the people of God across time and offer our own sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

CHAPTER 6
THE ANATOMY OF THE DAILY OFFICE

THE SERVICES

When we consider the Daily Office—the regular prayer services of the Church and our official public services on all days of the year that aren't holy days—we see that a number of items fall under this heading. They are grouped together at the front of the prayer book:

Rite I (Traditional language)

- Concerning the Service (p. 36)
- Daily Morning Prayer: Rite One (pp. 37-60)
- Daily Evening Prayer: Rite One (pp. 61-73)

Rite II (Contemporary language)

- Concerning the Service (p. 74)
- Daily Morning Prayer: Rite Two (pp. 75-102)
- An Order of Service for Noonday (pp. 103-107)
- Concerning the Service (p. 108)
- An Order of Worship for the Evening (pp. 109-114)
- Daily Evening Prayer: Rite Two (pp. 115-126)
- An Order for Compline (p. 127-135)

Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families

[Concerning the Services] (p. 136)

In the Morning (p. 137)

At Noon (p. 138)

In the Early Evening (p. 139)

At the Close of Day (p. 140)

Additional Directions

[Directions]

Morning and Evening Prayer (pp. 141-142)

When there is a Communion (p. 142)

Order of Worship for the Evening (pp. 142-143)

Suggested Canticles at Morning Prayer (p. 144)

Suggested Canticles at Evening Prayer (p. 145)

Psalm 95: Traditional (p. 146)

Let me make a few observations here.

First, a distinction is drawn in the title of some services as "Daily" and others as "An Order." Four services earn the term Daily: Morning and Evening Prayer in Rites I and II. (The brief devotions receive the term, Daily, as a class rather than individually.) This title reinforces their importance and their place in the Church's understanding of the liturgical round. The others beginning with "An Order..." are recommended but do not have quite the same stamp of authority or necessity as those identified as Daily.

Second, you can't actually pray either Morning or Evening Prayer with just the contents of this section. You need at least three other pieces to complete the service. They are:

The Collects for the Church Year

Concerning the Proper of the Church Year (p. 158)

Collects: Traditional

[Collects for Sundays of the Church Year] (pp. 159-185)

Holy Days (pp. 185-194)

The Common of Saints [for Days of Optional Observance] (pp. 195-199)

Various Occasions (pp. 199-210)

Collects: Contemporary

[Collects for Sundays of the Church Year] (pp. 211-236)

Holy Days (pp. 237-246)

The Common of Saints [for Days of Optional Observance] (pp. 246-250)

Various Occasions (pp. 251-261)

The Psalter (pp. 581-808)

Daily Office Lectionary

Concerning the Daily Office Lectionary (pp. 934-935)

[The Lectionary] (pp. 936-995)

Holy Days (pp. 996-1000)

Special Occasions (pp. 1000-1001)

Third, instructions on how to do the services are scattered throughout the book. This can be confusing. The majority of what you need to know can be found in the service itself. However, directions on who should do the service are found in the brief "Concerning the Service" notice found just before the service instructions. Some possible points of confusion are addressed in the "Additional Directions" at the end of the section. Items specific to the psalms and the readings may be found in the notes prefacing the Psalter and the Daily Office Lectionary; clarifications on the Calendar are tucked away among the collects.

Fourth, the Rite II services and the Daily Devotions agree in dividing the day into four chief liturgical sections: Morning, Noon, Evening, and Night. The patristic and medieval churches had their own counts for daily liturgical divisions (6 and 7+1 respectively); we have one as well. The fact that we have one at all hearkens back to the patristic and medieval models, but the fact that the count is less than both of the earlier models reflects our intention that these hours not be burdensome; they ought to be possible for the regular working person—not just a monk or hermit. Four sets of prayer a day may seem like a lot, but they are actually more doable than the alternatives, especially as two of those are recommended rather than required.

When it comes to services that you might experience in churches, Morning and Evening Prayer are the big ones. In my years as an Episcopalian, I've seen Morning and Evening Prayer done in a number of ways in a number of places. Noonday Prayer is less common. I've only experienced it in churches that have a special vocation to keeping the full liturgical round like St. Mary the Virgin, Times Square. It tends to be a small group or individual Office. Compline too tends to be individual or small group due to its nature as a bedtime Office. I have seen it done regularly and publicly only in intentional communities like monasteries or seminaries. It is not uncommon to use Compline to conclude evening church meetings or during multi-day retreats, though. Additionally, there seems to be a growing interest in the use of Compline as a choral experience: Both St. Mark's Cathedral in Seattle and Christ Church, New Haven, have well-known Compline services that create a place of chant, candles, and beauty, inviting Christians, seekers, and non-Christians alike to experience Christian liturgy as a place of holiness.

I don't recall ever experiencing an "Order of Worship for Evening." It was an interesting idea with classic roots new to

this prayer book, but it has never generated the interest that its framers hoped.

The Daily Devotions are, by their very nature, not intended to be public church services—these are individual or household liturgies. I honestly can't say how much they are used; I don't hear very much about them around the church. I think that may be a missed opportunity for us. As a father of young children, I am fond of them; they instill the concept of regular prayer but are not too long or burdensome for even young children. Early on, our family adopted the devotion "At the Close of Day" as bedtime prayers for our girls. Since it is short and sweet, both of them had (quite unconsciously) memorized it even before they were able to read. I have frequently thought that a colorful laminated placemat with the text of the devotions "In the Morning" and "In the Early Evening" on either side might be a way to get these devotions into the kitchens and consciousness of families with children.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE OFFICES

The structures of Morning and Evening Prayer closely mirror one another. These twin Offices are meant to complement and reinforce one another. Noonday Prayer and Compline share in the same overall movement as the main Offices, but the elements do not fit together in the same way. Compline, in particular, cleaves closer to models of older liturgies and therefore follows a slightly different logic than the other three. An Order of Worship for the Evening has its own internal structure and possibilities, some of which mirror the Offices, others of which do not—it is doing a different thing and should be considered apart from the other liturgies in this section.

If we put the elements of the four prayer Offices in parallel with one another, common elements emerge. Optional elements are in italics; common elements are in bold:

	Morning Prayer	Noonday Prayer	Evening Prayer	Compline
[Fore-Office]	*Opening Sentence*		*Opening Sentence*	Versicles[12]
	Confession & Absolution		*Confession & Absolution*	*Confession & Absolution*
Invitatory & Psalms	**Opening Versicles**	**Opening Versicles**	**Opening Versicles**	**Opening Versicles**
	Invitatory	*Hymn*	Invitatory	
	Appointed Psalms	**Appointed Psalms**	**Appointed Psalms**	**Appointed Psalms**
Lessons	OT Scripture Reading		*OT Scripture Reading*	
	Canticle		Canticle	
	NT Scripture Reading	**Scripture [Sentence]**	**NT Scripture Reading**	**Scripture [Sentence]**
	Canticle		Canticle	*Hymn*
	Apostles' Creed		Apostles' Creed	
The Prayers				Brief Suffrages
	The Lord's Prayer	**The Lord's Prayer**	**The Lord's Prayer**	**The Lord's Prayer**
	Suffrages		Suffrages	
	Collects	**Collects**	**Collects**	**Collects**
	Hymn		*Hymn*	Canticle
	Concluding Prayers		Concluding Prayers	
	Blessing	**Blessing**	**Blessing**	**Blessing**

Notice the arc we have here. We start with scripture and move to prayer. One way to make sense of this pattern is that we start with edification and then we move to praise—but that's not the best way to think about it. This is the Office; it's all praise! It would be better to say that we begin with praise that reveals and reminds us who God is (and, specifically, who God is for his people through time), then we continue with praise that offers our response to who God is.

The large headings printed in Morning and Evening Prayer divide the Offices into four natural parts that can also be applied to Noonday Prayer and somewhat to Compline. There is no initial heading, which is why I've supplied one, Fore-Office, in the chart. The headings reinforce the character of the arc. The pattern starts with the psalms highlighting their crucial function in the Office ecosystem. Notice that the presence of psalms is never optional. This book of divine praises is the scriptural centerpiece of the Office. Then we move to the scripture readings. I think that the heading, "The Lessons," in Morning and Evening Prayer is an unfortunate choice of words. It reflects a holdover mentality from the early Reformation era that locates worship's purpose in its instructional value. Even "The Readings" would be a better way to label what is about to occur that doesn't prejudice the purpose of these scriptures in the same way that the term lessons does. Then we move to the prayers. We get several different kinds of prayer in these sections but many cut across the four Offices: the Lord's Prayer, suffrages, collects, and blessings. Our prayer is not all of one type, and our Offices lead us through a variety as they school us in the arts of praise.

THE ELEMENTS OF MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER

The Fore-Office

These are the elements of the Fore-Office:

Element	Required?	Variation (if any)
Opening Sentences	Optional	Seasonal/ Occasional
Confession of Sin	Optional	

The Fore-Office elements are, as a group, optional. Their use represents our first theological choice as we begin the Office each day. These initial bits date back to our most Puritan point—the 1552 English prayer book—when we as a Church were wrestling with the great Reformation questions. One of these revolved around the issue of sin and grace, and an answer is framed by way of the Fore-Office. In short, this section originally suggested that due to human sin, we can't even worship God properly without a healthy dose of grace and therefore without confessing our lack of it and need for it.

On the other hand, the ancient opening of Morning Prayer—"O Lord, open our lips" (taken from Psalm 51:16)—was meant literally back in the monastic days; silence would be kept in the monasteries from the end of Compline, the last liturgical words of the day, until the beginning of Morning Prayer. Those ancient opening words were literally the first words spoken each day. To use that opening after a page and a half of talk blunts its force a bit. (As does chatty conversation before Morning Prayer or breakfast table dialogue. I find it harder to apply the lip-opening rationale seriously when I pray the Office at 9 in the morning rather than 6 a.m.)

In any case, the prayer book gives us the freedom to go either way: either begin with confession or begin with lip-opening. It certainly makes sense to use the Confession of Sin on the penitential days, those identified in section 4 of the Calendar as "Days of Special Devotion," but other than that, it's up to you and how much penitence you need that day.

The Opening Sentences

While these used to be a scriptural introduction to penitence (and were all penitential in character), our Opening Sentences now serve to set the mood. Morning Prayer offers a much more extensive selection that allows us to invoke either the liturgical season that we're in or the character of the day; Evening Prayer offers a more limited set (but also allows us to use the Morning options if we prefer).

At Morning Prayer, you'll note that each liturgical season is offered a couple of choices. The idea is that you start from the top and work your way through the sentences as the season progresses. If you choose to use the provided sentences at Evening Prayer, you will see there are eight, which gives us a set to rotate on a weekly basis. Of course, you can always just pick what you like.

The Confession of Sin

When it comes to the Confession of Sin, I have to confess that I'm a fan of the longer exhortation to confession in Morning Prayer in Rite I. The opening lines ground our common purpose in praying the Office together:

> Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father,
>
> - to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands,

- to set forth his most worthy praise,
- to hear his holy Word, and
- to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and salvation (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 41).

The Rite II version drops the first of these points, not because we have ceased "to render thanks" but to underscore that the primary purpose of the Office is praise—the direct worship of God not tied to obligations or to a transactional model. That is, while we do need to thank God for his gifts to us, we also want to avoid the implication that we are somehow paying God for miracles with prayer either in advance or after the fact.

Rite I offers the traditional version of the confession while Rite II presents the wording that appears in the Rite II Eucharist. The former confession contains more vibrant imagery concerning our wrongdoing; the image of the lost sheep, in particular, provides a nice resonance with the invitatory psalms in Morning Prayer that compare the congregation to sheep under God's pastoral guidance. The latter confession is more clearly structured to reflect our twofold duty to love God and neighbor, and to acknowledge our failures in doing so.

The Invitatory and Psalter

These are the elements of the Invitatory and Psalter:

Element	Required?	Variation (if any)
Opening Versicles	Yes	A little
Invitatory Antiphon	Optional	Seasonal
Invitatory	Morning: Yes Evening: Optional	Morning: Seasonal
Appointed Psalms	Yes	Choice of Pattern

This section gives us a great big block of musical material, chiefly psalms, after a short dialogue that gets things going. Most of this material is not optional as it forms one of the great theological centers of the Office. If the Office is a "sacrifice of praise," then this is a big part of where that offering actually happens.

Opening Versicles

As mentioned above, the Opening Versicles of Morning Prayer ("O Lord, open our lips...") come from Psalm 51 and as discussed, were literally true in a monastic environment; most orders observed a Great Silence from the end of Compline to the beginning of Matins where no talking was allowed. These words would be the first words spoken in the morning. The Opening Versicles of Evening Prayer ("O God, make speed to save us...") are from Psalm 70:1 and reflect the breath prayer taught by John Cassian and the Desert Fathers. These are the normal opening versicles of the Offices from before the Reformation. In the English prayer books, they were included at Morning Prayer as well, right after the morning versicles.

The only variation is that the "Alleluia" gets dropped in Lent and Holy Week.

Invitatory Antiphons

The invitatory antiphons are sentences used with the invitatory to communicate a sense of the season or occasion. Morning Prayer has them; Evening Prayer does not. Options are given for seasons and for holy days. (Lesser feasts do not receive their own antiphon and use the appropriate seasonal option.) The first part of the antiphon establishes a sense of the season or event; the second is an invariable call to praise,

"O come, let us adore him," from Psalm 95:6 (although our present prayer book rendering of this phrase is: "O come, let us worship/bow down"). And, yes, the Christmas hymn, "O Come All Ye Faithful," is a deliberate riff on the structure of the invitatory antiphon.

We are not given any clear direction as to exactly how the antiphon is to be used with the *Venite* or other Invitatory Psalm. (It is not used with the Christ our Passover as it has its own internal Alleluia antiphon.) There are two common ways to use it. The easiest is simply to use it before and after the psalm. The other and more traditional method is to include it several times within the psalm; the musical settings in the hymnal confirm that this should be done at each section break.

Invitatory

The invitatory is an opening song or psalm that literally invites the worship of God. The prayer book contains five different options for Morning Prayer and a single one for Evening Prayer. Three of the morning options are all shades of the same text, Psalm 95. It is customary to refer to the psalms by the first couple of words in Latin. The monks didn't memorize the numbers, so they simply referred to the opening words. This custom was continued by Cranmer at the Reformation and has stuck. In our case, it's particularly useful because our *Venite*, the first word of Psalm 95, is actually not identical with the psalm. The Rite I *Venite* contains the first seven verses of Psalm 95, then substitutes verses 9 and 13 of Psalm 96 for the condemnatory verses at the end of Psalm 95. The Rite II *Venite* simply omits these verses. However, at points (particularly Fridays in Lent and Friday and Saturday in Holy Week), all of Psalm 95 is appointed. Psalm 100, the *Jubilate*, is also an option and was

historically used when Psalm 95 appeared among the Morning Prayer psalms.[13] For Easter, the Christ our Passover (*Pascha Nostrum*) is provided. It must be used during Easter Week and may be used for the rest of the Easter season. I prefer to use it throughout the season, as it is a good daily reminder that Easter is fifty days long. The Evening Prayer invitatory is an ancient hymn from the Greek Church, O Gracious Light (*Phos hilaron*). It doesn't need antiphons nor are any provided.

At the heart of the invitatory is an invitation. The appointed texts urge those praying them to worship. Psalm 95 holds such a privileged place because it issues the invitation three times in rapid succession. It opens with a repeated call to worship in verses 1 and 2: "Come let us sing...let us shout for joy...Let us come...and raise a loud shout to him with psalms." The call repeats in verse 6: "Come, let us bow down." The other element of Psalm 95 that makes it so attractive is found at the end of verse 7: "Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice!" Although this passage logically goes with the next section of the psalm—which gives the rebellion of the people under Moses as an example of what not to do—the Rite II *Venite* ends here. In addition to the call to come and worship, we are reminded to also listen and take heed of what God is telling us. The Rite I *Venite* does not include any of the condemnatory section but includes additional encouragement for praise from Psalm 96 and retains the notion that God is also coming to meet us in our worship.

The *Jubilate* contains these elements as well. It opens with an exhortation to worship: "come before his presence with a song" (Psalm 100:1), and repeats it, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise; give thanks to him and call upon his Name" (Psalm 100:3).

During Easter time, Christ our Passover is Cranmer's compilation of Sarum antiphons drawn from the writings of Paul. The repeated "Alleluia" is its own internal antiphon, so

it doesn't need an invitatory antiphon to accompany it. As appropriate for the resurrection season, this text focuses on the passage from death to life and Christ's victory over the grave. The repetition at the beginning of the second and third sections, "Christ...raised from the dead," and the conclusion with its triumphant, "all shall be made alive," is one of my favorite pieces of the Easter experience.

The Evening Prayer invitatory, O Gracious Light, served as the Eastern Church's lamp-lighting hymn for centuries. In an electric-lit culture, we usually miss the symbolic moment when the day moves from light to dark; this hymn helps remind us. At its heart, this is a simple hymn of praise to Christ as the light of the world that praises the Trinity at the hinge of the day.

The Psalm or Psalms

The appointed psalms come next. As I have said, this is the historical and theological center of the Office, and the next chapter is devoted to exploring the psalms within this context. The main decision is which psalm scheme to adopt. The book gives a choice of two; the first appears in the Daily Office Lectionary while the second is found in the section of the prayer book containing the psalms.

The first option is the lectionary cycle. This cycle spreads out the 150 psalms across seven weeks. The cycle begins on the first week of Advent, the first week after Epiphany, the eighth week after Epiphany (if there should be one), the second week of Easter, with Trinity Sunday and Proper 2, Proper 9, Proper 16, and Proper 23. The earlier iterations of the cycle often are not complete because of a number of proper psalms around Christmas, the length of the Epiphany season, proper psalms for Holy Week and Easter, and on what

Proper the season after Pentecost begins. The last three cycles, though, are only interrupted by occasional holy days.

If you look at the layout of this particular lectionary, a pattern emerges. Psalms were specifically picked for Saturday evening, Sunday morning, and Sunday evening. Next, the many parts of the lengthy Psalm 119 were assigned to Wednesdays, alternating between evening and morning. Then, the remaining psalms were distributed to each week, trying to balance out the number of verses and placing some penitential or passion psalms on Fridays (i.e., Psalms 22, 51, 69, and 88). Psalm 95 falls in the evening—so you don't need to worry about it appearing right after you have used it as the invitatory at Morning Prayer. (Psalm 100, though, falls on Tuesday morning of week six.) The pattern shows that the emphasis is on having appropriate psalms for public worship on Saturday nights and Sundays. In addition to this, provisions are made for dropping verses of psalms or whole psalms that might be deemed offensive or problematic to congregations. On balance, each Office prays just under thirty psalm verses.

The second option is the monthly cycle found within the Psalter itself. Turning to page 585 in *The Book of Common Prayer*, the first page of the Psalter, you'll see a note in italics above the title of Psalm 1: "First Day: Morning Prayer." On page 589 before the start of Psalm 6 is another note: "First Day: Evening Prayer." These notes are given for thirty days, morning and evening. If a month has a thirty-first day, the psalms given for the thirtieth are repeated. On average, this cycle provides about forty-five verses of psalms for each Office. (The longest is the evening of the fifteenth with seventy-three verses; the shortest is the evening of the second with twenty-four. Most counts fall between the high thirties and low fifties, though.)

The monthly cycle highlights the catechetical role of the Office. That is, it emphasizes the continuous repetition of the psalms for the purpose of learning them. It presents a less flexible cycle that is not particularly responsive to seasonal awareness. Most of the people I know who use this cycle (myself among them) only deviate from it for the Principal Feasts. This can lead to unusual combinations when a particular angry psalm might show up on a happy festival or a joyous one occur where it doesn't seem to fit. Often it is in these moments that I learn something important—either about the psalm or the occasion—that had always been present; I just hadn't noticed it before. The odd combination casts the new insight in relief and makes it stand out.

In contrast, the seven-week lectionary covers the psalms but over a longer period. Its strength is that it lends itself to occasional use. That is, the monthly cycle is used best and works best when it is prayed daily. The seven-week cycle neither assumes nor requires a previous discipline. Similarly, using proper psalms for holy days is the better option if a parish that doesn't normally pray the Office together decides to hold an Evensong.

THE LESSONS

These are the elements of the Lessons:

Element	Required?	Variation (if any)
Old Testament Lesson	Morning: Yes Evening: Optional[14]	Daily
Canticle	Yes, if reading	Variable
New Testament Lesson	Yes	Daily
Canticle	Yes	Variable
Apostles' Creed	Yes	None

This section contains the biblical readings and the sung canticles. It concludes with the Apostles' Creed, which reminds us of the Church's interpretive lens for the scriptures.

The Lessons and the Office Lectionary

The Daily Office Lectionary provides for three readings per day over a two-year cycle: an Old Testament reading, an Epistle reading, and a Gospel reading. Both Morning and Evening Prayer can accommodate—and have traditionally had—two biblical readings each for a total of four per day. As a result, you have a choice: You can use the three readings as appointed and distribute them through the Offices (usually two at Morning Prayer and the third at Evening Prayer) or you can find another reading. The normal way to do this is to use the Old Testament reading from the off-year and place it as the first reading for Evening Prayer.

In terms of completeness, the lectionary does a good job with the New Testament. Of the Gospels, all of Matthew and Mark are read each year. Luke is missing about fifty verses (4 percent of its length), but these are the genealogy and the iconic birth story and his appearance in the temple at age twelve, which are included in the Eucharistic Lectionary. John is missing about eighty verses (9 percent of its length), and these are all sections from the passion and resurrection narratives, which, again, are well represented in the Eucharistic Lectionary.

Of the New Testament apart from the Gospels, the large stand-alone books of Acts, Hebrews, and Revelation are read in their entirety each year. We read 97 percent of both the Pauline Epistles and the general Epistles. Missing from the general Epistles is one section from 1 Peter 3 dealing with wives being submissive to their husbands; most of the material missing from the Pauline Letters, primarily from 1 Corinthians

and 1 Timothy, similarly deals with the social roles of women and slaves. Two verses missing from Romans loom large in many current discussions of human sexuality.[15]

When we come to the Old Testament, the percentage drops. Overall, across both years—or in one year if you read two readings—we read just under half of the Old Testament. When you look at it by category, we read more percentage-wise of the minor prophets than any other grouping (72 percent as opposed to the others at about 40 percent). This is due mostly to the brief length of these books. Year One reads through about 22 percent of the Old Testament and contains more of the histories and the major prophets. Year Two reads about 25 percent and contains more of the minor prophets, the law, and the wisdom literature. There is some overlap in which certain passages are read in both years (apart from the holy day readings). This occurs mostly in Isaiah, the histories, and Genesis and Exodus, but it accounts for under 10 percent of what is read each year.

Why so little of the Old Testament by percentage? It's pretty simple: math. The Gospel readings and other New Testament readings average about eight and seven verses long respectively. The Old Testament readings currently average a little under ten verses in length. If you were going to move through the entire Old Testament, you would have to more than double that amount. If you want to keep the length of the three readings balanced, this is the problem you're going to have to face.

The original Daily Office Lectionary scheme that Cranmer came up with when he compiled the first *Book of Common Prayer* included most (but not all) of the Old Testament each year. Readings were typically assigned by chapter not verse; thus, on January 4, for example, you would read Genesis 5 in the morning and Genesis 6 in the evening. The corresponding New Testament and Gospel readings that were of an equal

length went through the full cycle three times in a year. That is a lot more reading than what we have now. In fact, looking over the past 500 years, we have seen the length of the readings steadily drop over time. The goal is to get people to pray the Office and read their scriptures. The trend has been to reduce the time it takes by reducing the amount of scripture required.

Like the seven-week psalm cycle, the Daily Office Lectionary has two different options for the sake of occasional use. For the most part, biblical books are read through continuously. That is, a reading will generally stick with a book and read straight through it, or, when it does skip material, it usually does so sequentially. However, this sequence is interrupted for Sundays. A different cycle of readings appears on Sunday for the benefit of those who only experience the Offices once a week—or less—and who may have occasion to experience a Sunday reading and not any of the others. Thus, the Daily Office Lectionary will jump on Sundays to a different place and pick up a different story than what has been read through the rest of the week.

The Canticles

Following each biblical reading is a canticle. When I first experienced Episcopal Morning Prayer as a Lutheran seminarian, I was completely baffled by the canticles. The priest leading the group would call out a number; she never had any hesitation about what to pick. Some canticles were often said, but others were never said. Furthermore, other people in the group seemed to know in advance what she was going to say. I had a hard enough time finding the right number, since the first canticle that I saw was numbered 8! Eventually, I got it all figured out, but I have never forgotten my initial confusion.

What I didn't know was that the canticles numbered 1 through 7 are located in Morning Prayer: Rite I. Canticles 8 through 21 are in Morning Prayer: Rite II. All of the canticles in Rite I appear in contemporary language in Rite II, but not vice-versa. Furthermore, there is no inherent or logical connection between the Rite I numbers and their Rite II counterparts. So your first challenge in negotiating the canticles is navigating through them. Some canticles are also usually used for Morning Prayer, while others are customarily used at Evening Prayer (which is why I never heard them).

There is a basic principle at work here. In both the Rite I and Rite II blocks, the canticles appear in canonical/chronological order. Thus, the Rite I block starts with material from the Apocrypha, goes through the canticles from Luke in canonical order, then moves to the two compositions from the Early Church. In a corresponding fashion, the Rite II block starts with material from Exodus, then goes to the canticles from Isaiah before moving to the Apocrypha but adds an additional one before moving to the Luke material and items from Revelation, then ending with the Early Church compositions.

As with the invitatory psalms, the names of the canticles are given both in English and in a classical language, usually Latin. People and reference works may use either name, so it never hurts to be familiar with both.

Canticles 1 and 12 are "A Song of Creation" (*Benedicite, omnia opera Domini*). The *Benedicite* comes from one of the additions to the book of Daniel that is found in the Greek Old Testament but not in the Hebrew version. It's best understood as an expansion of the content and theme of Psalm 148 where all creation is called upon to worship and give glory to God. In the narrative, this is a song put into the mouth of Daniel's three companions in the midst of the fiery furnace. As a result, sometimes this will be referred to as "the song of the three

young men." In the former prayer books, this canticle was used as the first canticle during penitential seasons when the *Te Deum* was suppressed. That's not because there's anything penitential about it—it's one of the most joyful canticles around! Rather it is because this was the second canticle found in the pre-Reformation prymers (medieval prayer books) and Books of Hours; if the *Te Deum*—which was the first canticle in them—was dropped, this one was next in line. Hence, the tradition grew that the *Benedicite* should replace the *Te Deum*, and this tradition subsequently formed the prayer book practice.

Canticles 2 and 13 are "A Song of Praise" (*Benedictus es, Domine*). This song comes from the same place as the previous canticle and comes right before it in the text. While the first one calls all creation to bless God, this is an example of such a blessing. It praises God, envisioning him enthroned within a grand temple having aspects of the temple in Jerusalem but being located "in the firmament of heaven." Dwelling "between the Cherubim" is a reference to the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant, which was kept in the Holy of Holies, the inmost part of the Jerusalem temple.

Canticles 3 and 15 are "The Song of Mary" (*Magnificat*). This is one of the most beautiful songs in all of scripture and is Mary's response to the dual greeting from her cousin Elizabeth and the yet-unborn John the Baptist. Based in part on the Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10) and with echoes of Psalm 138 and 146, it admirably anticipates Luke's Beatitudes (Luke 6:20-26)—and, indeed, they are well worth studying together. In the pre-Reformation system, Evening Prayer (their Vespers) only had one canticle—and this was it. As a result, it became the standard third canticle, the one after the first reading of Evening Prayer. It still holds this place in both Rite I and Rite II services of Evening Prayer.

Canticles 4 and 16 are "The Song of Zechariah" (*Benedictus Dominus Deus*). This song was sung by Zechariah, the husband of Elizabeth and father of John the Baptist, at his son's birth. This was the standard second canticle of Morning Prayer and was the chief canticle of the pre-Reformation version. I have always found the second part of this song especially meaningful. Through the voice of Zechariah, we who pray this canticle are commissioned and reminded of our duty to spread the Gospel—and are given a convenient summary of it, focusing on forgiveness, mercy, light, and walking in the paths of peace.

Canticles 5 and 17 are "The Song of Simeon" (*Nunc dimittis*). Simeon, having waited all his life to see the Messiah, holds the infant Jesus in his arms at the end of his days and sings this song. With its themes of ending and new beginning, a growing light and a coming peace, it was used in the pre-Reformation system at Compline just before sleep. Adapted into the prayer book system, it became the fixed fourth canticle, following the second reading of Evening Prayer.

Canticles 6 and 20 are the "Glory (be) to God" (*Gloria in excelsis*). While it begins with the song of the angels at the birth of Christ, the rest of the canticle is a composition from the Early Church. Familiar to most of the Western Church from its use at the beginning of the Eucharist, its appearance here is an eastern element; this was the standard morning canticle for the Eastern Churches.

Canticles 7 and 21 are the "We Praise Thee/You" (*Te Deum laudamus*). Another composition of the Early Church, the *Te Deum* was sung at Matins on Sundays and festivals. At the Reformation, the prayer book appointed this as the first canticle of Morning Prayer every day of the year except for the forty days of Lent. Its connection with festivals was strong enough that, by the early medieval period, the *Te Deum*

was sometimes used with some additional suffrages as a celebratory liturgy.

Canticle 8—the first of the canticles only found in Rite II's contemporary language—is "The Song of Moses" (*Cantemus Domino*). It is "especially suitable for use in Easter Season" because this is the song sung by Moses and the Israelites after their deliverance from Egypt through the Red Sea. The Red Sea passage has long been understood as a symbol of Baptism and Resurrection, and this connection is stated explicitly in the Easter Vigil's own victory song, the *Exultet*.

Canticle 9 is "The First Song of Isaiah" (*Ecce, Deus*). Coming from the prophet Isaiah, this song concludes his vision of the messianic age to come. This song is to be sung in celebration of what God has accomplished and the salvation wrought through his messiah. For us, it is a reminder that we stand in the midst of the "already/not yet;" God's promises have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus, yet we do not always perceive the fulfilment of these promises. The use of this canticle is a sign of hope.

Canticle 10 is "The Second Song of Isaiah" (*Quaerite Dominum*). This song comes from the latter part of Isaiah. It closes out a section that encourages the people, exiled in Babylon, to return and rebuild Jerusalem to its former glory. It urges them to seek the Lord and to trust in the fulfillment of the divine word at a point when many doubted that the city would ever be rebuilt and the land reclaimed. The language of repentance makes it particularly suitable in penitential seasons.

Canticle 11 is "The Third Song of Isaiah" (*Surge, Illuminare*). This song from the end of Isaiah, also from the time at the end of the exile (around 520 BCE), exhorts the people with a vision of the rebuilt Jerusalem. This vision of a preternaturally brilliant city that calls the nations to it influenced Revelation's vision of the New Jerusalem as the

Bride of the Lamb and, subsequently, the theology of the Church as a New Jerusalem. The images of light connect it strongly to the themes of both Advent and Epiphany.

Canticle 14 is "A Song of Penitence" (*Kyrie Pantokrator*). This canticle comes from the brief apocryphal book, *The Prayer of Manasseh*. Manasseh was crowned as king of Judah at the age of twelve around 700 BCE and reigned for fifty-five years. He has the dubious honor of being the most evil king to hold the throne of Judah. The narrative of his reign in 2 Kings 21 is a catalog of idolatry and slaughter. The retelling of it in 2 Chronicles 33, however, includes a scene of Manasseh's repentance and makes mention of a prayer where he humbled himself before God and received forgiveness of his sin. Although our composition is likely not this prayer itself, it certainly represents what the prayer could have been.[16] It is, as the prayer book note suggests, the perfect canticle for Lent and for other penitential circumstances.

Canticle 18 is "A Song to the Lamb" (*Dignus es*). While the Book of Revelation is known for its apocalyptic imagery and its abuse by those who would read modern political events through it, it should be better known as the book of the New Testament that contains the most songs! This canticle comes from the description of the heavenly throne room. We are treated in Revelation 4-6 to a vision of the throne room of God, where a set of concentric circles of worshipers arrays the whole created order in a ceaseless song of praise to God and to the Lamb. This is the celebration of the saints and angels and all creation in thanksgiving for creation and redemption.

Canticle 19 is "The Song of the Redeemed" (*Magna et mirabilia*). In an interlude between acts of judgment and the seven last plagues, the seer John has a vision of the martyrs singing a song described as "the song of Moses, the servant of God and the song of the Lamb" (Revelation 15:3). This canticle is that song. From the introduction, then, the author

of Revelation intended this song to be in conscious continuity with our Canticle 8, the Song of Moses.

Now that we've gotten through all of these, how do we go about using them and what's the best way to arrange them? What canticle should you use when—and why?

There are several ways of answering this question. Like so much about the prayer book, it depends on your tradition—and that, in turn, gives us the simplest answer. Does your parish pray the Office together? If so, it's best to find out what pattern they go with and use it.

If not, there are a variety of choices. I'll talk you through three of them.

The simplest is a traditional pattern that has the least amount of variation. As I mentioned in discussing the canticles, the prayer books up until the present one had a fairly fixed order. There were four readings, two at each Office, and a canticle after each reading. The first canticle was either the *Te Deum* or the *Benedicite*—depending on the season. The three Gospel canticles, the *Benedictus*, the *Magnificat*, and the *Nunc Dimittis* were the second, third, and fourth canticles respectively. The reason why these canticles appear in these positions is based on how Cranmer consolidated the eight hours of prayer into two: Morning Prayer received the *Te Deum* from Matins and the *Benedictus* from Lauds; Evening Prayer received the *Magnificat* from Vespers and the *Nunc Dimittis* from Compline. Thus, the simplest way to arrange the canticles is to use this basic pattern.

One of the more complex options is the way that the prayer book recommends. After the Offices themselves, a means of deploying all of the canticles appears on pages 144 and 145. We'll start with the suggestions for Morning Prayer on page 144. The basic idea is that the Old Testament Lesson receives an Old Testament canticle and the New Testament

Lesson receives a New Testament/Early Church canticle. Sundays and feast days retain the traditional canticles, though not in the traditional order; Wednesday and Friday—the traditional fasting days—receive the more penitential materials, especially in Lent. Additionally, in Lent and Advent the *Te Deum* and *Gloria* are replaced by other options. The easiest way to use this chart is to write it in where you intend to use it. As a result, in several of my prayer books, I have copied it into the blank space at the bottom of page 84 and have also written the appropriate days and seasons at the top of the canticles themselves.

The suggestions for Evening Prayer on page 145 assume the use of two lessons at Evening Prayer. If you are only using one lesson, use the second column and alternate between the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*. Otherwise, it alternates between the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc dimittis* for the second canticle except on Sundays and feast days when both are used. On weekdays the first canticle rotates through a set of Old Testament options.

A third way to proceed is by a blend of these two. For those who want to retain the classical use of the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat* but also experience the variety of new canticles that this prayer book offers, the Old Testament option for Morning Prayer can be followed with the *Benedictus* after the second lesson; the New Testament option for Morning Prayer can be used to follow the first lesson at Evening Prayer and use the *Magnificat* after the second lesson.

The truth is, it doesn't matter which pattern you use—only that you use one. The canticles serve as constant reminders that a most proper response to God is bursting out into song. The advantage of a pattern is that, like the lectionary, we intentionally move through several options—not just picking our favorite parts. And, in the act of being paired up, the canticles and the readings invite us to regard them together as

a set. What does the reading say to us in light of the canticle's praise? Conversely, what light does the reading shed on the canticle as it informs us about the nature of God and our relationships with him and his creation?

The Apostles' Creed

Finally, after all of this biblical material, the Lessons finish up with the Apostles' Creed. As we discussed in the Calendar section, the creed is the Church's guideline for interpreting scripture. In this position, the Apostles' Creed stands both as a summary of our faith and a reminder of our key interpretive principles: all readings, all canticles, are read in light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the revelation of the Triune God.

THE PRAYERS

These are the elements of the prayers:

Element	Required?	Variation (if any)
Lord's Prayer	Yes	None
Suffrages	Yes	Choice of 2
Collects	Yes	Variable
Prayer for Mission	Yes	Choice of 3
General Thanksgiving	No	None
A Prayer of St. Chrysostom	No	None
Blessing	No	None
Closing Benediction	No	Choice of 3

After having frontloaded the Office with adoration, praise, and thanksgiving in the psalms and the scripture lessons, we move toward intercession and petition.

The Lord's Prayer

Since the second century, Church writers have urged that the Lord's Prayer be prayed three times a day.[17] Incorporating it within Morning and Evening Prayer is one of the simplest ways to accomplish this. In this central prayer, we remind ourselves to align our wills with God's, we ask for our daily sustenance, and we commit ourselves to forgiving that we might be forgiven. Taking Christ's words upon our lips, we properly start our prayers by grounding ourselves in his prayer.

The Suffrages

The world that birthed the Church had a great respect for canonical works. The deep study of Homer's works and Virgil's *Aeneid* gave birth to a new art form, the *cento,* or, as we now call it, the mashup. As a means of demonstrating their mastery of canonical texts, authors would compose new works created entirely by taking snippets, phrases, and lines from these epics and using them to construct a new story. The rules for this kind of poetic composition were first written out by Ausonius in the fourth century. Needless to say, Church writers took part. One of the first great compositions by a Christian woman writer was Proba's life of Jesus constructed entirely from pieces of the *Aeneid.*

Since we see this kind of play at work with the epics of the time, it is not surprising to find it in the liturgies that were being constructed around this time as well. Our suffrages are composed in just this style. Rather than taking pieces out of Virgil, though, the suffrages are put together with pieces from different psalms. Suffrages A are a version adapted from the Sarum Breviary for the first prayer book and used thereafter with some modifications. The Morning Prayer Suffrages B are a very old set that historically traveled along with the

Te Deum. As a result, my preference is to use this set whenever the *Te Deum* is used as a canticle. The Evening Prayer Suffrages B are not related to the cento form and are standard intercessions.

The Collects

The officiant is then directed to say "one or more of the following Collects." The Collect of the Day is listed first along with seven other collects. According to the rubric, we may choose to use the Collect of the Day and another collect, to simply pray the Collect of the Day, or to skip it and to pray only one of the printed collects. As I have argued in the chapter on the Collects, the Collect of the Day is an important link that binds us to the Church Year and connects our Office cycles with our weekly Eucharists. We don't have to pray the Collect of the Day—but it's definitely a good idea.

Of the next seven collects, the first three are identified as pertaining to specific days of the week. Although the remaining four have titles related to various other purposes, it takes no great stretch of the imagination to create from them a weekly cycle. Indeed, it is probably not accidental that the collect that would fall on Thursday evening contains such strong Eucharistic resonances given that the Eucharist was established on a Thursday evening.

The Prayers for Mission

The final required element in the Office is the inclusion of one of the three prayers for mission or a form of general intercession. The prayers for mission are, at root, prayers for the whole Church, asking that it be strengthened to fulfill its fundamental mission of manifesting the good news with which we have been entrusted. The third prayer in the morning has a particularly rich image of Christ's arms

extended on the cross embracing the world; the second prayer in the evening is based on a prayer by Saint Augustine and paints a lovely picture of the compassionate presence of God.

The option for a general intercession has two main referents. At Morning Prayer, this is the point where the Great Litany may be inserted. Classically, it was prayed on Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday at the conclusion of Morning Prayer because it served as the transition to the Eucharist that was appointed on those days. The regulation to insert it on those days remained in the American prayer books until the 1928 revision, and it still appears in the English *Book of Common Prayer*. Alternatively, two prayers were written to be used together at the end of the service on days when the Litany was not being used: the Prayer for All Sorts and Conditions, which served as a general intercession, and the General Thanksgiving. While the General Thanksgiving is still included here, the Prayer for All Sorts and Conditions has been relegated to the back of our prayer book on pages 814-815.

The Final Prayers

A set of optional prayers then follows. The General Thanksgiving is a much-loved prayer for its stately cadences and its even-tempered joy. The echo of the *Benedictus* in the passage that speaks of "walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days" is surely not accidental. The Prayer of Saint Chrysostom likewise puts beautiful poetry to our request that God hear our prayers and grant them as may be best for us. Just as this section opened with the Lord's Prayer asking that "your will be done," this final prayer comes full circle, requesting that we be reconciled to the answering of our prayers— whether we receive the answer that we wish or not. The final optional act is to bless God and for us, in turn, to receive a blessing as well.

CHAPTER 7
THE PSALMS

THE SOURCE OF THE PSALMS

At the heart of the historic discipline of the Office are the psalms. The recitation of the psalms has always been a central part of the Office, and many of the other elements in the Office are either borrowed from or directly inspired by the psalms. As a result, it's worth taking a closer look at them.

Psalms (capitalized) refers to a book of the Old Testament containing 150 chapters. These chapters are, for the most part, discrete poems or songs known as psalms (not capitalized) that involve the relationship between God and his people, whether individually or corporately. What makes the psalms unusual, given our typical perspective on the Bible, is their direction. That is, we ordinarily consider the Bible to be God's self-revelation to humanity—God's Word, revealing himself to us. The psalms, though, are prayers from humanity to God, noteworthy for their emotional vulnerability and self-disclosure—feeling often more like humanity's self-revelation to God! Thus, the psalms are a paradox of sorts: divine revelation laying bare the soul of humanity.