

Excerpts from Thomas Cranmer's Preface to the first Book of Common Prayer
published in 1549, preserved as "Concerning the Service of the Church" from 1662 onwards.

[Ancient Patterns] There was never any thing by the wit of man so well devised, or so sure established, which in continuance of time hath not been corrupted: as, among other things, it may plainly appear by the common prayers in the Church, commonly called Divine Service: the first original and ground whereof, if a man would search out by the ancient fathers, he shall find, that the same was not ordained, but of a good purpose, and for a great advancement of godliness. For they so ordered the matter, that all the whole Bible (or the greatest part thereof) should be read over once in the year, intending thereby, that the Clergy, and especially such as were Ministers of the congregation, should (by often reading, and meditation of God's word) be stirred up to godliness themselves, and be more able to exhort others by wholesome doctrine, and to confute them that were adversaries to the truth. And further, that the people (by daily hearing of holy Scripture read in the Church) should continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God, and be the more inflamed with the love of his true religion.

[Medieval Accretions] But these many years passed, this godly and decent order of the ancient fathers hath been so altered, broken, and neglected, by planting in uncertain stories, and Legends, with multitude of Responds, Verses, vain Repetitions, Commemorations, and Synodals; that commonly when any book of the Bible was begun, before three or four Chapters were read out, all the rest were unread. [...] And moreover, whereas St. Paul would have such language spoken to the people in the Church, as they might understand, and have profit by hearing the same, the Service in the Church of England (these many years) hath been read in Latin to the people, which they understood not; so that they have heard with their ears only; and their hearts, spirit, and mind, have not been edified thereby. [...] Moreover, the number and hardness of the Rules called the Pie, and the manifold changings of the service, was the cause, that to turn the Book only, was so hard and intricate a matter, that many times, there was more business to find out what should be read, than to read it when it was found out.

[Current Reforms: reading of Scripture in course] These inconveniences therefore considered, here is set forth such an order, whereby the same shall be redressed. And for a readiness in this matter, here is drawn out a Calendar for that purpose, which is plain and easy to be understood, wherein (so much as may be) the reading of holy Scripture is so set forth, that all things shall be done in order, without breaking one piece thereof from another. For this cause be cut off Anthems, Responds, Invitatories, and such like things, as did break the continual course of the reading of the Scripture.

[Current Reforms: simplification of the rubrics] Yet because there is no remedy, but that of necessity there must be some rules: therefore certain rules are here set forth, which, as they be few in number; so they be plain and easy to be understood. So that here you have an order for prayer (as touching the reading of the holy Scripture), much agreeable to the mind and purpose of the old fathers, and a great deal more profitable and commodious, than that which of late was used. It is more profitable, because here are left out many things, whereof some be untrue, some uncertain, some vain and superstitious: and is ordained nothing to be read, but the very pure Word of God, the holy Scriptures, or that which is evidently grounded upon the same; and that in such a language and order as is most easy and plain for the understanding, both of the readers and hearers. It is also more commodious, both for the shortness thereof, and for the plainness of the order, and for that the rules be few and easy. Furthermore, by this order the curates shall need none other books for their public service, but this book and the Bible; by the means whereof, the people shall not be at so great charge for books, as in time past they have been.

[Current Reforms: Common Prayer] And where heretofore, there hath been great diversity in saying and singing in churches within this realm: some following Salisbury use, some Hereford use, some the use of Bangor, some of York, and some of Lincoln: now from henceforth, all the whole realm shall have but one use. [...] And all Priests and Deacons are to say daily the Morning and Evening Prayer, either privately or openly...

Daily Cycle: *The Story of Salvation*

Office	Theme	Canticle
[Invitatory]	preparation, dedication	<i>Venite</i> (Psalm 95); alt. Pss. 100, 67, 24
Matins / Readings	foundation, great story	<i>Te Deum laudamus</i>
Lauds / MORNING PRAYER	praise, creation, dawn of salvation	<i>Benedictus</i> (Luke 1:68-79) “the dawn from on high shall break upon us”
Terce / Midmorning	descent of Holy Spirit, spiritual anointing	
Sext / Noonday	crucifixion, self-emptying, Christ’s humility	
None / Midafternoon	death of Christ, self-offering, mission	
Vespers / EVENING PRAYER	thanksgiving, reversal of salvation	<i>Magnificat</i> (Luke 1:46-55) “He has brought down the mighty... exalted the humble”
Compline / Night	self-examination, mortality, eschaton	<i>Nunc Dimittis</i> (Luke 2:29-32) “Now let your servant depart in peace”

Creation	Fall	Redemption	Consummation
<i>Matins</i>	<i>Sext</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Compline</i>
<i>Lauds / MP</i>		<i>Vespers / EP</i>	

Yearly Cycle: *The Life of Jesus*

Season	Color	Theme	Readings
Advent	Violet	second advent of Christ (the eschaton), first advent of Christ	Isaiah, Revelation
Christmas	White / Gold	nativity of Jesus	birth narrative in Luke
Epiphany	White	the revelation (“ <i>epiphany</i> ”) of Christ to the Gentiles	visit of the Magi
[Baptism of Jesus]	White	beginning of Jesus’ public ministry	baptism by John
Season after Epiphany	Green	the teaching of Jesus [the Transfiguration (Sunday next before Lent)]	[Transfiguration narratives]
Gesima/Ash Wednesday	Violet	call to true repentance	1Cor 13, Joel 2, Matt 6
Lent		Jesus journeys to Jerusalem	the temptation narratives the cost of discipleship
Holy Week	Red	The Passion of Jesus	
Palm Sunday		Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem	Ps 118, Triumphal Entry
Maundy Thursday	White / Red	new commandment, institution of the Eucharist	John 13 (the “Maundy”)
Good Friday	(denuded)	trial and Crucifixion	Ps 22, Isa 53, the Passion narratives
Holy Saturday/Vigil	(denuded)	keeping vigil at the tomb (Great Vigil of Easter)	Genesis 22, Exodus 14 (Passover)
Easter	White / Gold	Resurrection of Jesus	the Resurrection narratives
Ascension	White	Ascension of Jesus	the Ascension (Luke, Acts)
Pentecost/Trinity	Red/White	Descent of the Holy Spirit (“to guide us into all truth”)	Acts 2 (Pentecost)
Season after Trinity	Green	the teaching of Jesus	growth in holiness of life
[Christ the King]		[the Kingdom of Jesus (second coming, final judgment)]	[Matthew 25, John 18, Luke 23]

Advent	Christmas	Epiphany	Lent	Easter	Pentecost
<i>coming (1st, 2nd)</i>	<i>birth</i>	<i>start of ministry</i>	<i>passion</i>	<i>resurrection</i>	<i>ongoing ministry</i>