

LITURGICAL COMMISSION & FOOTPRINTS OF GOD

What is the Daily Office

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One of the features in the Anglican tradition is its strong commitment to daily prayer within the life of the Church. This practice is sometimes referred to as the “Daily Office, “fixed-hour prayer” or “liturgical prayer.” In the Daily Office, a similar prayer is offered every day at different times. The prayers involve readings from the Scriptures, fixed prayers, seasonal prayers, and a period of intercession (free form). No matter which form is applied, the Daily Office is anchored with readings from the Psalms.

The practice of daily prayer goes back to the Scriptures, where the people of God met often to pray, praise, give thanks, and intercede for the needy. The practice of fixed hours of prayer, on the other hand, goes back to the Temple of King Solomon in Jerusalem. The psalmist writes, “I will praise you seven times daily ” (Psalm 119.164). In the book of Acts, “Peter and John went to the temple one afternoon to take part in the three o’clock prayer service (Acts 3:1). “Peter is engaged in noon-time prayers when he sees the vision that leads him to Cornelius House. Additionally, Acts 4 indicates that the early church not only prayed together but that their practice was rooted in the reading of the Psalms.

Practices in the wider Church community.

The format of daily prayers came from St. Benedict, who ordered parts of the psalms to be recited seven times daily for the religious community he served and led. St. Benedict said, “To pray is to work; to work is to pray.” The modern word for the Daily Office comes from the Latin “opus,” meaning work. Essentially, this practice of prayer can be regarded as our daily work.

Many early Protestant reformers saw the observance of hours as an attempt to “appease God with songs or unintelligible mumbling.” Despite this view, despite differing opinions, the church

continued these daily prayers, hours, or divine offices. Some, however, disregarded the saying of the Daily Offices in favour of teaching ministry (bible study) in the Church.

When compiling the prayer book for the Church of England, Thomas Crammer merged the eight offices of medieval monasticism—Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None Vespers, and Compline—into two—the Mattins and Evening Prayer or Evensong. Compline and midday office were added around the turn of the 21st century. The Clergy of the Church of England are required to say Morning and Evening prayers daily, and Lay Readers are strongly encouraged to join and participate.

Anglican reformers wanted the laity to know their Bible using the lectionary cycle, including the Old and New Testaments. The intention was that the whole Bible would be read within three years. The daily offices **allowed** the laity to hear and know the scriptures. The use of a lectionary was to ensure that the Bible was read in an orderly cycle. While teaching the scriptures is good, should the **church's daily office** be abandoned? If the answer is no, how can we reincorporate this practice into the life of our churches today?

Some evangelical churches have relegated the keeping of Daily Offices to the private life of individual believers. They emphasise spending time alone with the Lord (as opposed to cooperative prayer. Many have learned to say their private prayers using different daily meditation books in the morning. This is evident in Churches where the prayer partners ask for meditation books and prayer items for intercessions.

However, this changed when the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements required an emphasis on prayer in a new format. The prayer ministries opened prayer rooms with a sign-up and a scheduled time for all-night prayers. It also took another form, fasting and praying for the nation,

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churches, and many other prayer items. Healing services and casting the demons drew many people to a time of prayer and receiving immediate blessings. the reintroduction of mid-day prayer, called it noon-day prayer, encouraged everyone to stop at noon and say a prayer. These are some of the trends that we have seen in bringing people to a collective time for prayer.

I recently had the opportunity to hear Bishop Steven Abbarow's practice of saying the Daily Office. Read on, and may you find it a blessing and encouragement to reconsider the practice of the Daily Office in your individual lives and in the Church.

Testimony from Bishop Steven Abbarow

I have discovered that the practice of the Daily Offices was God's Fingerprints and Footprints in my life. This was especially prominent in my pilgrimage through my valley of struggle with cancer.

On 16th June 2022, I was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma. I went through seven cycles of chemotherapy in six months. The cocktails and aggressive treatment of cocktails of steroids and medications had mood and physical-altering effects.¹

It was the prayers and God's word, embedded in the practice of the Daily Offices, that gave me strength to hold on to God, to be grateful, and to receive the present, the here-and-now, and to live joyfully.² It affirmed that: God called me, trusts me, loves me. The question – is, will I allow my perceived anticipatory loss of the period of

short episcopacy to paralyse my hope, or will I grasp every moment to serve Him in whatever the cost or context?³ Talking to God, reading, and praying through God's word, the Daily Offices reinforced in me who I am, and who I am.⁴

It has been 16 months and 19 days since my successful stem cell transplant. I have been in full remission since. The Daily Offices still hold me up whenever I return for my quarterly review with my haematologist. All through, I can say that the practice of the Daily Offices has burned into my soul these affirmations: Christ amidst my Episcopacy, Christ amidst the Pandemic, Christ amidst my Cancer. The Big C (Christ) always trumps the other small "c"s in my life.⁵

In conclusion, Praying together in the daily office is vital for the health of our church as we move into the future. It offers us a way to gather in the community outside the Sunday services, and it gives a structure to our prayer that is grounded on theological principles that derive from

Scripture, not on personal whim or feeling. We don't pray only when and as we feel. Prayer is a duty as well as a delight. We're called to give thanks, praise, and intercede, and we do this best in company with others, whether we feel like it or not. Saying the daily office together opens us to the gift of God's presence and can renew us when we feel low, disheartened, or disinclined to pray.

The personal testimony of our Diocesan Bishop is so enriching and captivating that we should follow in the footsteps of those who have used the daily offices and have been healed.

¹<https://dsamusingofmm.wordpress.com/2022/07/29/pilgrimage-of-steroid-driven-emotions-and-thoughts/>.

²<https://dsamusingofmm.wordpress.com/2022/07/13/encouragement-to-hold-the-plough-in-the-here-and-now/>.

³<https://dsamusingofmm.wordpress.com/2022/06/29/anticipatory-loss-and-love-language/>.

⁴[https://dsamusingofmm.wordpress.com/2022/12/31/looking-back-sacred-space-family-hidden-in-the-deep-dark-](https://dsamusingofmm.wordpress.com/2022/12/31/looking-back-sacred-space-family-hidden-in-the-deep-dark-recesses-of-my-soul-like-a-big-dark-ball-of-tightly-knitted-emotions-it-is-there-but-just-not-aware-it-how-do-you-look-for-a-da/)

[recesses-of-my-soul-like-a-big-dark-ball-of-tightly-knitted-emotions-it-is-there-but-just-not-aware-it-how-do-you-look-for-a-da/](https://dsamusingofmm.wordpress.com/2022/12/31/looking-back-sacred-space-family-hidden-in-the-deep-dark-recesses-of-my-soul-like-a-big-dark-ball-of-tightly-knitted-emotions-it-is-there-but-just-not-aware-it-how-do-you-look-for-a-da/).

⁵ <https://dsamusingofmm.wordpress.com/2023/02/01/the-upper-case-c-and-the-lower-case-c-in-my-episcopacy/>.

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What is the Daily Office

Let us recommit ourselves as a Church – across the spectrum of theological and liturgical viewpoints- to praying together each day in our place of ministry, putting our hope on the Lord who draws us into life and refreshes us before sending us out on the mission of the Triune God.

References:

- 1 <https://www.gerrylynch.co.uk/teaching/praying-the-daily-office/>
- 2 This Praydos App carries all the Services in the current Diocesan of Singapore Service Book (DSB), Pastoral Services (SEA), Psalter, and Prayers. The Daily Offices and Holy Communion Services are "live daily" and include our Cycle of Prayer. It also hosts an adapted version of BCP 1662, usable for daily prayers. The Daily Office and Communion Services are also available in Chinese, Nepalese, Malay, and Thai.
- 3 IOS:
<https://apps.apple.com/sg/app/praydos/id6451497427>
- 4 <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=app.web.praydos>
- 5 <https://newlifeithaca.org/why-pray-the-daily-office/>
- 6 Calvin remarked on this in his Institutes in Book 4:8:18-19
- 7 <https://tma.melbourneanglican.org.au/2024/05/praying-the-daily-office-together-is-vital-for-our-churchs-health/>