

### Fr. Joe Reynolds' address to Lay Readers—10/23/2016

In some churches, there is always a discussion of doctrine—justification by faith. The Episcopal Church, however, is not a doctrinal church. That doesn't mean that we don't believe in anything—we do. It doesn't mean that anything goes—it doesn't. We do believe the Bible to contain the revelation of God and we believe that what we do matters. But we don't gather around a common doctrine. We gather around a common altar. There we offer our lives and work to be transformed.

Thus, we are a liturgical church and there will always be a discussion about liturgy. Liturgy is what we do. The word means “work of the people.” Participation by the people is essential.

In that framework it is tempting to see the church through the eyes of a consumer. So the “product,” if you will, is produced by the people up front on the stage. It centers around the sermon and as consumers we judge the quality of the product, which is more often than not mediocre. But really, if there is a consumer of worship it is God. The people are the producers of worship, and worship centers around the altar. Worship is the work of the people.

As a lay reader, then, your part is essential. You are a representative of the participation in the liturgy. Thank you for your ministry—it is one of love.

Here are some practical tips regarding your work:

- Prepare. You are not just reading, you are transmitting meaning. You should understand your assigned passage contextually in order to make a passage intelligible and powerful. To research the context, Google is your friend. You can find contextual commentary regarding your assigned passage on practically anything. It is often evangelical Protestant, but that is OK.
- Pronunciation. Don't worry too much because no one knows for sure how the ancients pronounced their words, but do look them up on Google. One common English word that is often mispronounced is prophesy (with an s, pronounced prof-eh-sigh), the verbal form of the noun prophecy (prof-eh-see).
- Prayers of the People. There are different forms for the 8:00 and 10:30 services. Make sure you use the right one. As a last resort check the service leaflet.
- Italics are used in the Prayer Book to draw attention to options, not for emphasis.
- When you read, emphasize verbs, not pronouns.
- If your team member is listed in the bulletin as the first or second lector and fails to show up, the priest who is preaching the sermon will read that passage. This is because the priest has researched the passage and knows the context. On the other hand, if you have communicated with the absent team member in advance and prepared for his or her part, let the priest know before the service. (This doesn't apply to the intercessor's part. Please cover for your absent team member there.)

### Nancy Litton's tips on reading well at the mic

- Speak more slowly than conversation, but not so slowly that you sound stilted.

- You are reading to share, so look up at the congregation often. Use your finger or a card to keep your place in the reading.
- Use the punctuation in the reading to help you give it expression. For example, a comma indicates a slight pause.
- Watch your volume. The mic is good so no need to shout, but speak loudly enough to be heard. Breathe deeply from the diaphragm.
- Consonants give clarity, so pronounce them distinctly but do not overemphasize. Vowels give speech their beauty.
- Pronunciation of “the”—long “e” generally before a vowel (thee apple) and short “e” generally before a consonant (thuh potato).