

SAINT THOMAS CHURCH

Fifth Avenue · New York City

The Order for Choral Evensong with the Choir according to the Book of Common Prayer 1662

WORSHIP is at the heart of our Church and its Choir School. The part of the building where the singers gather to lead our worship is named after them – *the Choir*. It is very similar to a Synagogue – the people face each other near the lectern for the reading of the Scriptures. At the heart of the *daily office* are the psalms from the Hebrew Scriptures – psalms are songs that explore all emotions and ways of life; joy and praise, sorrow and sickness, even anger and cursing. There are psalms about birth and marriage, the creation, war and peace, life and death. Thus, each day, like churches all over the world we consecrate time and space with our prayer. That is why the daily office is sometimes called *the liturgy of the hours*. Before the Reformation up to seven offices were sung each day; now the choir generally sings just one – usually evening prayer and sometimes morning prayer on some Sundays. Clergy and parishioners still regularly gather to recite some of the other offices, especially morning and evening prayer in the Chantry Chapel. Even when the choir are not present, the office is said – it is the *Prayer of the Church* – and we welcome you today whatever your reason for coming. As is still our custom from pre-reformation days, the choir sings most of the service and we invite you to be still and allow the music to lift the words and your own thoughts or prayers to God. We hope that you find the music an inspiration and an oasis of calm in a busy and troubled world. May the love and peace of Jesus Christ be with you.

THIS is the order for Evensong. The directions for posture are followed by the clergy and the choir but we hope you find them helpful. If you cannot stand or kneel, or simply wish to sit, that is absolutely fine and you do not have to join in the prayers if you do not wish to.

AFTER Evensong, there will be a short, said mass for those who wish to stay. All baptized Christians are welcome to receive Holy Communion.

Please stand for the entry of the choir and ministers.

[Introit

Occasionally, on a Feast Day, the choir may sing an introit.]

A minister and the choir now sing the

Opening Responses

O Lord, open thou our lips
and our mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;

*as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.*

Praise ye the Lord.

The Lord's name be praised.

The Psalmody

*The choir sing the psalms appointed. We sit for the psalms.
Each psalm ends with 'Glory be to the Father, and the
Son: and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning,
is now and ever shall be: World without end, Amen.'*

A Reading from the Old Testament

*We sit for the first Lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures. This
may be followed by a period of silent reflection.*

[Office Hymn

If it is the eve of a Feast Day, we stand to sing a hymn.]

Gospel Cantic: Magnificat

We stand when the choir sing the Magnificat or 'Song of Mary'. This is from Luke's Gospel as is the song Mary sang when she visited her cousin Elizabeth.

MY soul doth magnify the Lord
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded
the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth
all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me
and holy is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him
throughout all generations.
He hath shewed strength with his arm
he hath scattered the proud
in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat
and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy
hath holpen his servant Israel
as he promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his seed for ever.

Luke 1.46-55

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be;
world without end. Amen.

New Testament Reading

We sit for the second Lesson. This may be followed by a period of silent reflection.

Gospel Cantic: Nunc Dimittis

We stand when the choir sing the Nunc Dimittis or 'Song of Simeon'. This is also from Luke's Gospel and is the words used by the priest Simeon in the Temple in Jerusalem when Mary and Joseph brought in the child Jesus.

LORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace
according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen
thy salvation;
Which thou hast prepared
before the face of all people;
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles
and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Luke 2.29-32

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be;
world without end. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

We remain standing for the Creed which we all say together, facing East towards the High Altar – a custom of monastic communities.

I BELIEVE in God
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth:
and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell;
the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God
the Father almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge
the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost;
the holy catholic Church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

The Prayers

A minister and the choir sing these responses and the Lord's Prayer.

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.

Where possible, we kneel.

Let us pray.
Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

OUR Father, which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us.
And grant us thy salvation.
O Lord, save the State.
And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.
Endue thy ministers with righteousness.
And make thy chosen people joyful.
O Lord, save thy people.
And bless thine inheritance.
Give peace in our time, O Lord.
Because there is none other that fighteth for us,
but only thou, O God.
O God, make clean our hearts within us.
And take not thy Holy Spirit from us

The Collects

The minister sings three short prayers which 'collect' our thoughts.

The Collect of the Day

The Second Collect

O GOD, from whom all holy desires,
all good counsels, and all just works do proceed;
give unto thy servants that peace
which the world cannot give; that both,
our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments,
and also that, by thee, we being defended
from the fear of our enemies
may pass our time in rest and quietness;
through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. *Amen.*

The Collect for Aid against all Perils

LIGHTEN our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord;
and by thy great mercy defend us
from all perils and dangers of this night;
for the love of thy only Son,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

The Anthem

*The choir now sing a piece of music appropriate for the hour,
the season or the feast day. We sit to reflect as they sing.*

Prayers and Intercessions or Meditations

*We kneel or sit for some brief prayers and intercessions led
by a minister. This prayer may be used to conclude the service*

THE grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost,
be with us all evermore. Amen.

[Hymn

*If it is a feast day or a weekend, we sometimes sing a hymn at
this point.]*

[Blessing

If it is a Sunday or a feast day there may be a blessing.]

Organ Voluntary

*Except if the service is unaccompanied, evensong ends with
organ music; if you are not staying for mass, please do not
talk until you have left so as not to spoil people's enjoyment
of the voluntary.*