People Who Pray: A Glossary

* **officiant** – one who *officiates* at an Office
* **celebrant** – the priest/bishop who *celebrates* the Eucharist
* **presider** – an alternate term for the one who *presides* over the Eucharist – some prefer because,   
   theologically speaking, *all* present “celebrate” the Eucharist…
* **intercessor** – one who leads the congregation in praying the Intercessory Prayers
* **cantor** – someone who has been designated to lead a particular prayer or part of worship in song,   
   usually chant
* **priest/deacon/bishop** – sometimes, the BCP will mention that a particular order of clergy leads a   
   particular prayer or component of worship…

Types of Prayers: A Glossary

**4 Categories of Prayer—** broadly speaking**:**  *Usually, a prayer will do several of these at once!*

• Praise / Adoration – praising God

• Supplication / Petition – asking for something

• Thanksgiving – thanking God

• Penitence / Repentance – repenting of our sins, turning away from them

• **collect** – (from Latin *ecclesia collecta*, a public prayer prayed by and for the assembled church)

An ancient form of prayer with a very particular structure. Typically, a collect is one very long, complex sentence, with its component parts separated by colons, semicolons, and commas; however, a few collects in the Prayer Book are two or more sentences.

• **canticle** – a prayer/song taken from scripture or very ancient tradition, ideally sung or chanted

• **intercession** – petitionary prayer on behalf of another

• **litany** – a series of petitions, usually recited by a clergyperson or other leader, and responded to by the people; this response is usually a recurring formula

• **suffrage** – a short petitionary prayer in call-and-response format; unlike most litanies, the people’s response is different each time!

• **Eucharistic Prayer** – The gathered church’s prayer of thanks and consecration of the communion

• **Prayers of the People** – intercessory prayer, often in “litany” style, wherein a designated leader articulates the Church’s petitions for: 1) the universal Church, 2) the nation, 3) the world, 4) the local community, 5) those who are in any sort of need, or suffer, 6) the departed. The People respond to each petition—either by silence, their own additions, or formulaic responses.

Voice, Pace, Sense

Those who lead prayer must do so in a way which allows the congregation to enter into that prayer. After all – it’s the whole Church’s prayer – you are just designated to *lead* parts of it.

Voice / Volume

You want to be heard clearly, without being overpowering. Does your church have a microphone system? How “loud” is it? Many small churches do not have a speaker system. Worship Leaders might need to project, to pray in a “loud voice” appropriate for small to medium size rooms (or outside settings) without PA systems.

**But watch out**: as we raise our voice in volume, we also naturally tend to raise our voice in pitch, and our voices tend to flatten to a more monotone sound (with less of the natural modulation of tone found in our “normal” speaking voices). This can sound like “angry,” like shouting—or flat and emotionless. It might behoove you to practice a loud “projecting” voice that avoids this monotone, “shouty” sound. Cultivate a big voice that still encompasses your normal range of expression.

One helpful way to think about it that you are casting your voice like a frisbee over the heads of those assembled, to reach someone *at the back of the room*. Don’t shout, but try to arc your voice back to them, as if you are speaking to them.

A picture containing mirror, lamp

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Sense / Expressiveness / Affect

The person leading liturgical prayer might be the only one looking at the *text* of a prayer; while others listen. Therefore, it is up to you to pray it in such a way that people can understand it. Therefore, *you* have to have a sense of what it means, so that you can help get this across.

Don’t speak like you are reading a grocery list; but ***try to strike a balance***. Too flat and unexpressive is bad, but *too* expressive can yank the congregation out of their own prayerfulness! Try not to sound like you are overacting, or filled with disingenuous emotion—it’s a prayer, not a community theater audition, or a poetry slam! But try not to sound too flat and dry, either, like you have no feelings (and no sense) of what you are reading.

Pacing

Reading a prayer (or lectionary reading) too fast will impede people’s understanding, but reading exaggeratedly slowly can take distract people from praying along, as well. Try to find a nice medium pace which is comprehensible, and natural.

Collects

* **collect** – (from Latin *ecclesia collecta*, a public prayer prayed by and form the assembled church)

An ancient form of prayer, with a very particular structure. Typically, a collect is one very long, complex sentence, with its component parts separated by colons, semicolons, and commas; however, a few collects in the Prayer Books are two or more sentences.

Structure of a collect:

Collects have a threefold shape: an *Address* (concluded with a colon), a *Petition* (concluded with a semicolon), and a *Conclusion*. Both the address and petition may contain subordinate clauses.

One catchy mnemonic for this structure is: “***You—who—do—to—through***,” for the function of each clause (and, in some cases, even the words which frequently signal the beginning of each clause).

1. **Address** (“you”) – Addresses the God to whom we pray

1a. …& **Attributive Clause** (“who”) – Says something about God. (Look for the “*who*” clause)

2. **Petition** (“do”) – What is God being asked to *do*? (Begins with “*grant*,” often)

2a. … **Purpose** (“to”) – What do we hope will come from this? (Watch for “*that*”)

3. **Conclusion** (“through”) – concludes, often either naming Jesus or the Spirit as the agent   
 “through” whom these prayers will be granted (“*through whom…*” or “*you who…*”)   
 and usually including a *doxology*—praise of God.

Examples:

**Wednesday in Easter Week** (p. 223)

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of the bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen*.

**Collect for Purity** (p. 355)

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your Holy Name, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**Before Worship** (p. 833)

O Almighty God, *who pourest* out on all who desire it the spirit of grace and of supplication: Deliver us, when we draw near to *thee*, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affection we may worship *thee* in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

When we use Collects:

🡪 **particular occasions**: Tailor-made for a Feast Day or occasion. Usually at the *beginning* of a service (Collect for Purity, Collect of the Day), but occasionally *within* a service (see Vigil, p. 295).

🡪 **summation / conclusion**: To “gather together,” “wrap up,” or “collect” a series of prayers, litany, or Prayers of the People, which may have been led by a different party (see pp. 394-395).

🡪 **specific intercessions**: The BCP includes a variety of Collects which can be prayed at particular times, as appropriate, whether corporately or as a part of one’s person devotions (pp.814 –835).

🡪 **blessings / absolutions**: a few of these sacerdotal prayers (only pronounced by priests/bishops) have a collect-like form (see p. 307, 431, 488).

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| Exercise: Write your own collect(s) ! | | |
| Address | Oh God, |  |
| Attribution | who… |  |
| Petition | Grant… |  |
| Purpose | that… |  |
| Conclusion | through… |  |