

An Anglican Lauds and Vespers: (aka The Commute Offices)

For those prevented from reading the Offices with the diligence they would like to have, I offer here a form of morning and evening prayer designed to be memorized over a period of time that will—eventually—require no books. I will lay out the basic ordo or structure, explain the elements, and give some tips for learning the Offices. Finally, I will lay out the elements that change according to the seasons of the Church Year. Incorporated with a discussion of the elements, I identify what parts can and should be sung and provide page numbers from several resources: all numbers beginning with “S” are found in the very front of the 1982 Episcopal hymnal, SDP stands for the *Saint Dunstan Psalter* from Lancelot Andrewes Press. For the psalms, the *Saint Dunstan Psalter* contains a noted traditional-language Coverdale; Church Publishing’s *The Plainsong Psalter* has the contemporary text.

The *ordo* presented is a simplified version of the old Roman secular Lauds and Vespers. I am using typefaces here to distinguish between three types of elements. Those in boldface represent the heart of the Offices. If these elements are omitted, then these liturgies cease to stand in the tradition of the offices from which they were adapted and they become some other form of liturgical prayer. The elements in normal type should be seen as normal, uncontroversial elements to be included whenever possible. The elements in italics have a certain catholic character either in their nature or associated use that contradict historical readings of the 39 articles and may be omitted if they offend sensibilities. Elements in square brackets change seasonally. Explanations of each of the items follows the *ordo*. (n.b., the *ordo* below can be clipped and affixed to a steering wheel or like object...)

Lord’s Prayer
Hail Mary
Opening Versicles
[Alleluia]
Psalmody
[Little Chapter]
[Office Hymn]
Gospel Canticle
Salutation
[Kyrie]
[Lord’s Prayer]
[Versicles/Responses]
Collect of the Day
Salutation
Benedicamus
Prayer for the Dead
Lord’s Prayer
Verse/Response
[*Marian Antiphon*]
Verse/Response

Explanation of the Elements

Lord's Prayer/Hail Mary

These two elements are known as the Double Prayer. They were used together before many of the Offices in the old Roman Rite; sometimes the Apostles' Creed was added in which case it was referred to as the Triple Prayer. These are said silently or in a low monotone—not sung.

Opening Versicles/[Alleluia]

This is the same for both Offices, the usual: “O God make speed to save us/ O Lord, make haste to help us” followed by the Gloria Patri. Alleluia follows except in Lent. It may then either be omitted or replaced by “To thee, O Lord, all honor be, King of endless majesty.”

Chant Settings	
Rite I: S26	Trad Simple: SDP 245
Rite II: S58	Trad Solemn: SDP 247

Psalmody

Because these Offices are intended to be done without books, the psalmody will require the most preparatory time as it will have to be memorized. See below on **Learning the Offices**.

Historically, the Office of Lauds had more or less fixed psalmody with only one variable psalm (secular; two in the monastic) and one variable canticle daily. Thus, we may retain any or all of the fixed psalms with the introduction of a psalm and/or canticle that fits the season. The traditional Lauds canticles were Pss 67, 51, [then the variable pss and the canticle] 148, 149, 150. The service derives its name from the last three which all begin “*Laudate*” in Latin (after the Alleluia).

The Office of Vespers has entirely variable psalmody that historically began with 109 and ran through until 147, excluding only 119 and 134 (used at other offices). As a result, any psalms selected from this range (up to 5) would be appropriate. Ps 141 with its mention of the evening sacrifice has often been selected in more fixed-psalm rotations and falls within the range; it would be an ideal first psalm for Vespers.

Little Chapter

The Little Chapter is a verse or two selected from Scripture. There tend to be different Chapters for Lauds and Vespers (except in Easter), change seasonally, and are seasonally appropriate. They are sung on a monotone and always conclude with “Thanks be to God.”

Office Hymn

Hymns also change seasonally. There are hymns that are traditionally used with the Offices but these have varied over time and place and setting.

Gospel Canticle

The *Benedictus* is always used at Lauds; the *Magnificat* is always used at Vespers. No questions, no substitutions. As this is a memorized form, I offer no antiphons for these. Should you desire an antiphon, a verse either taken from Sunday's Gospel or a seasonally appropriate text will suffice. There are many good musical settings to choose from, these may be rotated on a seasonal basis at your discretion.

Chant Settings	
Benedictus	Magnificat
Rite I: S190	Rite I: S185
Rite II: S231	Rite II: S242
Trad: SDP 397-428	Trad: SDP 437-474

Salutation

This may either be the common “The Lord be with you/[And with thy spirit| And also with you]/Let us pray” or “O Lord hear our prayer/And let our cry come unto thee/Let us pray”. The latter is preferable for individual recitation.

Chant Settings	
Rite I: S21	Trad: SDP 248
Rite II: S51	

[Kyrie/Lord's Prayer/Versicles/Responses]

These are to be included on penitential days. While the definition varies according to preference, Advent, Lent, Fridays outside of Easter, and other regularly scheduled fast days are typical candidates. I use the BCP's form of the Versicles/Responses as it is an abridged version of the old Roman litany for this point in the Office. When the Kyrie and Versicles/Responses are sung, the Lord's Prayer is sung too—on a monotone.

Chant Settings	
Rite I (V/R): S22	Trad (Kyrie): SDP 249
Rite II (V/R): S58	Trad (V/R): SDP 250

Collect of the Day

If the day has no proper collect, the preceding Sunday's collect should be used. Collects can either be sung in the usual manner or on a monotone. Alternatively, a seasonal collect could be used.

Salutation

While the text is the same, the chant for this salutation may be different:

Chant Settings
Trad: SDP 252

Benedicamus

This is the normal “Let us bless the Lord/Thanks be to God” each of which may be followed by two alleluias during the Easter season.

Chant Settings		
Rite I: S24	Rite I (Festal): S25	Trad Simple: SDP 252
Rite II: S54	Rite II (Festal): S55	Trad Solemn: SDP 252

Prayer for the Dead/Lord's Prayer/Verse/Response

The normal prayer for the dead is a low “May the souls + of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.” The Lord’s Prayer is said silently and is followed by the verse and response: “The Lord + give us his peace/And life everlasting. Amen.” None of these elements are sung. As this Lord’s Prayer balances that of the Double Prayer, this iteration and the accompanying verse should be omitted if the Double Prayer is omitted.

[Marian Antiphon]/Verse/Response

The Marian Antiphon (Anthem) follows and consists of a four-line hymn, a verse and response, and a collect. All change seasonally. If one of these elements is sung, all should be; the collect is normally sung on a monotone. The verse and response following the collect is spoken: “May help divine + be with us all, forever abiding/Amen.”

Learning the Offices

This may look like quite a lot of material to memorize—and it is. There are two key things to remember as you begin: 1) Don’t be frustrated if it takes a while to memorize all the various parts; it’s not a race. 2) Work with small pieces.

Memorizing Basics

Memorizing things is not emphasized these days. Few people have to do it much any more. The good news is that the more you do, it the easier it gets. The bad news is that it can be difficult when you start. As you go, learn how your mind absorbs things. Some do better learning a text with music, others do best memorizing the text, then fitting the music to it. Do whatever works for you. I memorize the text first, then learn the music. Given my schedule, this happens in the car on my way to work... I’ll get a sentence at a stop sign, red light, or major traffic slowdown (I get lots of these). I’ll say the sentence several times to myself—aloud if possible so that I can hear it and feel it in my mouth—then repeat the whole piece from the beginning as far as I have it memorized. I’ll do that until I hit the next stop/red light/slow-down where I’ll start on the next sentence. I do that for as long as it takes to work through the whole thing. Then I’ll repeat the whole to myself two or three times—then set it aside. As I go through my day I’ll try and say the memorized piece at intervals. Then, I’ll check what I remember against the actual text on the way home and adjust as necessary.

Start with the Major Pieces

Don’t memorize in the order that things appear. Rather, memorize according to the order of importance. Get the main unchanging things firmly set in your head first, then move to the other parts. I recommend proceeding in this fashion:

- Begin with the easiest common parts first: The Opening Versicles, the Salutations, and the Benedicamus. After all—if you’re familiar with the Offices already, you probably know these anyway.
- Work on the Canticles next. Start with the Benedictus, then do the Magnificat. If you don’t already know how you memorize things best, experiment here.

- Get a Psalm or two down next. Start with Ps 67; it's short and repetitious. Despite temptations to go faster, I try to limit myself to memorizing a psalm or two per week. Then, I repeat it in both Offices all week long, then move on to the next. And, yes, I'll say "Lauds" psalms at Vespers. It's not a crime and it helps to get everything fixed in mind. Use Ps 67 or 67 and an additional psalm for both Offices at first so you get in the habit of maintaining the correct ordo.
- Memorize the Little Chapters for the season. This is typically only a verse or two and shouldn't take you long.
- Then do the Collect for the current week.
- Then memorize the Versicles/Responses—especially if you're in a penitential season.
- Now memorize the hymns of the season. Start with one and learn it thoroughly before moving to the next or else you'll start mixing up which stanzas go with which hymn.
- Learn the Marian Antiphon for the season if you choose to use it.
- Add more psalms at your leisure.

Don't be surprised if it takes you a good month or more to get the main pieces in place. Once that is done, add psalms as you wish until you reach a number that feels right for you.

Elements will change over time, of course; you'll need to earn a new collect at least every week, unless you choose to use a seasonal collect, but their consistent patterns will help as you go. Seasonal change is more difficult—there will be a host of new items. Start by memorizing the new chapters, then the new hymns, then the new Marian Antiphon.