

Using *The Book of Common Prayer* for Devotional Reading and Prayer

The Daily Office services in *The Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) are a rich resource for individual or corporate scripture reading and prayer. The **two primary services** of the Daily Office are Morning Prayer (also known as Matins) and Evening Prayer (also known as Evensong). I usually do the morning one after coffee and the evening one after dinner, but find times that work best for you.

Daily Morning Prayer Rite One (traditional language) is found on BCP 37-60 and **Daily Morning Prayer Rite Two** (contemporary language) is found on BCP 75-102. Each version includes the following elements of scripture reading and prayer:

1. Opening sentences (choose one or more according to the season of the church calendar).^[L]^[SEP]
2. Confession and absolution [take some time to think through your life: *Where are you strong/weak?*^[L]^[SEP] *What are some areas you struggle in? Where have you sensed God's smile on your life? Where do you feel you were living in a way that was displeasing to God?* Confess who you are, both good and bad, and bring to mind your failings/sin as you pray the confession prayer in the BCP.
3. Invitatory and Psalter (either use the Daily Lectionary as described in #4 below or read the assigned psalms for the day of the month. The Psalter is in BCP 585-808. If you wish to read through the entire Psalter each month, there are rubrics throughout the Psalter that will guide you on 582-584).^[L]^[SEP]
4. Scripture reading(s). Readings from the Daily Office Lectionary: The Daily Office Lectionary beginning is in the BCP 934-1001. Follow the directions on 934-935 in order to find the scripture readings for the day. After awhile, it becomes second nature. (A helpful website I use for finding out the assigned Daily Office scriptures for each day is [here](#).)
5. Following each scripture reading, read a canticle (a canticle is a hymn or chant, most often a text of scripture that has been utilized over and over by the historical church in the midst of public worship). There are various canticles assigned for each day of the week (see BCP 144). Canticles 1-7 are on BCP 47-53 and canticles 8-21 are on BCP 85-96. ^[L]^[SEP]
6. The Apostles Creed – This is the classic summation of basic Christian belief is recited after the readings and canticles, centering us each time we pray on what it is we believe.
7. The Prayers. These include the following prayers: a. The Lord's Prayer, b. Suffrages (intercessory prayers) A or B (alternate as desired), c) 3 Collects (a collect is a short general prayer historically used by the church—pronounced “ka’-lect”): *first*, use the collect of the Day (the Collects are found on BCP pages 159-210 (old English) and BCP 211-261 (contemporary). Each collect has a heading above it. To find the collect for the day, simply find the collect that matches the date of the week you are in (i.e. the week where the Sunday closest to June 6, you will do Proper 5 on page 178 or 229 [same prayer, just traditional/contemporary, respectively] and you pray that prayer for the whole week from Sunday to Saturday. *Or*, you can do a collect of your choice from pp. 123-124 instead, and *secondly*, do a collect for mission—alternate as desired (p. 124-125), and *thirdly*, add your own personal prayers/thanksgiving.

8. The General Thanksgiving— This is a powerful prayer of thanksgiving that reminds us of the big picture of all God has done for us in Christ, how he sustains us with his grace, how he calls us to live a life of gratitude in response to his love, all of it to his glory.
9. A Prayer of St. Chrysostom— A renowned early church father, St. John Chrysostom (347-407), bishop of Constantinople, was very well known as a powerful preacher. This beautiful concluding prayer is attributed to him and is based on Matthew 18:20.
10. Concluding sentences (choose one verse from list with which to close).

Daily Evening Prayer Rite One (old-English language) is found on BCP 61-74 and **Daily Evening Prayer Rite Two** (contemporary language) is found on BCP 115-126. Each version contains the same elements as Daily Morning Prayer with a few differences:

1. The opening words of the Invitatory are different.
2. The canticle after the first scripture reading is always either the Song of Mary (*Magnificat*) or the Song of Simeon (*Nunc dimittis*). See BCP page 145 for specific canticles for each weekday.
3. The Suffrages differ somewhat from Morning Prayer.

-Additional devotional services in *The Book of Common Prayer* include An Order of Service for Noonday (pages 103-107), An Order of Worship for the Evening (108-114), An Order for Compline (127-135) and Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families (136-140). Simply follow the directions for each service.

-An online version of BCP is available at www.bcponline.com.