

# Guidelines for Reading Scripture During Worship

Public reading of Scripture is an important part of our weekly worship together. It is an opportunity for people to hear God's Word. The Bible is a book far different from any other book we may read - it is the holy, God-breathed Words of Almighty God (2 Timothy 3:16). And these are the Words He wants us to hear because they bring life and salvation. Preparation then is important to speak God's Words during our time of worship.

*O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will proclaim your praise. (Psalm 51:15)*

## Here are some things to consider:

- St. John follows the Lectionary, a three-year series of readings (Old Testament, New Testament and Gospel selections) for each Sunday and Festival day of the church year (this can be found in the front of our hymnals). Sometimes other Scripture readings are chosen as part of a special series or a particular Sunday - but they are chosen ahead of time - so there is always a schedule of readings.
- A schedule of Readers is assigned by our church office and sent ahead of time with the readings for Sunday. If you can't read for your assigned time, please contact the church office.
- **The week before reading:**
  - **Pray.** Pray that the Holy Spirit will prepare your heart and mind to understand what you are reading and that you will be able to publicly speak clearly and understandable to those listening.
    - Blessed Lord, you have given us your Holy Scriptures for our learning. May we so hear them, read, learn, and take them to heart, that being strengthened and comforted by your holy Word, we may cling to the blessed hope of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen
  - **Understanding.** Read through the selected passages ahead of time. Do you understand what you are reading? Pay attention to things like the setting, if it is poetry or narrative, and anything else that is important. If something is confusing use a study Bible or ask the Pastor to help you understand what you will be reading.
  - **Practice.** Read through the assigned readings several times in your head. Mark up the text if that will help your public reading (where to pause or take a breath, highlight important words or things that should be emphasized). Then read out loud several times - hearing it verbally is different than reading silently and can help you to be more effective in reading out loud.

- **Sunday morning:**

- **Pray.** Pray that God will help you read His Word clearly so all may hear.
  - Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as these scriptures are read and your Word is proclaimed we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen
- **Dress appropriately.** While we don't have a "dress code" remember that you will be standing in front of the congregation and it is true - how you dress will affect how you deliver the reading.
- **Arrive early.** Give yourself enough time to make sure you are prepared, not rushed, and address any last-minute things that may come up. Check to see if the correct readings are available and that the microphone is in a good position for your speaking.
- **Reading is done at the lectern** (smaller podium on the left side of the altar area). Come forward at the appropriate time (you can be coming forward before the reading) A copy of the readings should be available but please check before the service to make sure they are the correct readings.
- There is a **microphone** that you will need to stay as close to as possible to allow your words to be amplified so all can hear.
- **Begin with** "A reading from *Book Chapter:Verses*" (example "A reading from Genesis chapter 1 verses 1 through 10." A summary of the reading, or commentary, is not necessary and should be avoided.
- **Mind your pace.** The tendency when we are nervous is to speed up. You want to read at a reasonable pace that gives people time to hear and consider the Word.
- **Use your finger.** It helps many to put your finger under the words as you are reading. This helps you keep a reasonable pace and from jumping around.
- **Read with feeling but don't over do it.** This is not a dramatic reading but a natural, practiced reading - the goal is that God's Word is clearly heard!
- **Conclude with** "This is the Word of the Lord." and wait for the congregation to respond.
- **When finished** reading you may return to your seat.

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you,  
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)*