



‘O Lord, Open Our Lips’

Resources for celebrating the resumption of congregational singing, Ordinary Time 2021

These resources have been prepared by the Bishop of Southwark’s Advisory Group for Liturgy in the hope that they may be useful to Parishes as they prepare for the happy day when we can once again sing together in Church as a whole congregation.

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Reflections and Resources

WHEN WILL CONGREGATIONAL SINGING RESUME?

It is likely that the Government will lift all restrictions on 19 July. In which case congregational singing will be permitted from then onwards.

DIFFERENT TRADITIONS

The resumption of congregational singing will be very different for different Churches. For some it will be a profound moment which they will want to mark. For others it will not even be a moment but more a period of change. For yet others, singing or not singing will not be particularly important relative to all the other things that are different from normal at present: how we share the Peace, how we celebrate Communion together, how we meet or don't meet after the service and so on.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Each Parish will find its own way to pass this milestone. Here are some suggestions:

- Use material from the Easter Vigil: with the processing of the Paschal Candle into Church at Dawn, this is rich in symbolism of renewal. Sample liturgy drawing on these resources is below.
- Process into Church with a repeated refrain such as 'O Lord, open our lips', perhaps on a rising tone, perhaps beginning with a soloist
- Gather with unlit candles and use a simple chant: all begin by humming the chant, and then as candles are lit, begin to sing. As the light passes from candle to candle, our mouths are opened and we sing again. Again, one might use 'O Lord, open thou our lips' or some variation, particularly if this was familiar to the congregation from Evensong; or a Taizé chant.
- Begin singing outside the Church and bring the singing in, in procession - particularly if there is a tradition of lighting the Easter Fire and bringing it in to the Church.
- Consider preparing the ground by singing an opening hymn outside in the weeks leading up to the resumption of indoor singing.
- Leave space for silence from which the singing can emerge.

- Move from speaking to singing. First say the words of a familiar hymn, then *hear* them sung by the choir, then *sing* them together, for instance. It might be worth listening to the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with this in mind: the moment at which the power of the orchestra to articulate the themes is exhausted so that first the soloist and then the choir burst into song, a very powerful one.
- Involve children: if there is a children's choir, or a tradition of children's singing, it might be very effective to invite the children to sing the first verse of the first congregational hymn.
- Whatever approach is taken, it would obviously be worth serious thought about what tunes and words will be most familiar and welcome.

Leave Nobody Behind: a Checklist

Not everybody will have the same feelings about this moment. To help ensure all can join in with a will, here are some questions on which it might be helpful to reflect in planning:

- How might people feel about removing their masks?
- Might there be anxiety for some?
- How can they best be reassured that it is ok to continue wearing it if they feel the need?
- Who may be uncomfortable to be surrounded by the unmasked, particularly when they are singing, and what provision can be made for them?
- What range of feelings may be present in the church when we sing again?
- Will some feel angry at the length of time it has taken to get to this point?
- Will some feel regret at what has been lost?
- Will there be fear of the future?
- How can all this be given expression?
- What is the first thing to sing?
- If a popular hymn, is it popular with everyone, or will some feel left out? Perhaps something more obscure would be more inclusive.
- For whom is this not a moment of joy?
- How do we reflect what has been lost as well as what we are again able to enjoy?
- How will people feel after having sung together for the first time after so long?
- Is it worth taking time to reflect and share together about the experience?
- If people are feeling very emotional are there ways for us to help people process these emotions?
- How can the chance to sing again together in church really glorify ‘the God of all feelings, emotions and seasons?’
- What written and spoken words can we use around the singing part of our worship to ensure that everyone feels included and

that their worship is worthy, whatever their joy or worry at this time?

- How are we including different musical styles to express the collection of feelings and emotions that are present within our church family at this time?
- What hymns / worship songs can we include for singing that express the breadth of emotions that our church family will be feeling?
- How might our music and singing help heal the trauma of the past few months and year?
- How, over time, can our musical and sung worship support our church family as they journey through ‘recovery?’
- How are we enabling our sung worship to ‘restore?’
- How are we enabling our sung worship to ‘rebuild?’
- How might our coming together to sing really reflect who we are as God’s people?
- What does our singing express about our vision as being ‘church?’
- How can choir or worship band can best *support* congregational singing rather than replace it? In some Churches the pattern of the congregation listening to someone else sing has become familiar
- What impact will it have if we are still socially distanced when we sing? Some may be reluctant to raise their voices without the cover of other singers close by. Would it be worth even considering some warm up exercises to encourage and enable people to sing boldly?

A Liturgy for the Resumption of Congregational Singing

This is to be adapted to suit local customs and needs; however, an assumption is made that the main liturgy will be Eucharistic.

The service begins as has been normal in recent times, according to recent local custom.

At the entry of the ministers, there is accompanying instrumental music, or silence, according to local custom.

At the head of the procession the Paschal Candle (or another suitably large candle) is carried in, unlit, perhaps by a chorister or person who has been acting as cantor. It is placed in a stand at the front, perhaps near the chancel steps or nave altar. No other candles are lit and, if possible lights in church are low or off.

The President greets the people, followed by the Prayers of Penitence as normal.

Once the Absolution has been pronounced, the President says the following as the Paschal Candle is lit by a chorister or another church musician:

Generous God,
we thank you for the gift of music
to inspire and uplift us as we offer you praise.
As once again we worship with the songs of praise,
may this candle remind us of the joy of restored life;
by your grace, grant that what we sing with our lips
we may believe in our hearts;
and what we believe in our hearts
we may show forth in our lives.
Amen.

The church lights come on and other candles are lit at this point.

It is suggested that either of the following is sung at this point:

Sing, choirs of heaven! Let saints and angels sing!
Around God's throne exult in harmony!
Now Jesus Christ is risen from the grave!
Salute your King in glorious symphony!

Sing, choirs of earth! Behold, your light has come!
The glory of the Lord shines radiantly!
Lift up your hearts, for Christ has conquered death!
The night is past, the day of life is here!

Sing, Church of God! Exult with joy outpoured!
The gospel trumpets tell of victory won!
Your Saviour lives; he's with you evermore!
Let all God's people sound the long Amen!

Tune: Woodlands

or the Peruvian Gloria, by cantor and congregation:

Glory to God, glory to God, glory in the highest.
Glory to God, glory to God, glory in the highest.
To him be glory for ever.

To him be glory for ever.

Alleluia, Amen.

Alleluia, Amen

Alleluia, Amen.

Alleluia, Amen

Alleluia, Amen.

Alleluia, Amen

Glory to God, glory to God, glory to the Saviour.

Glory to God, glory to God, glory to the Saviour.....

Glory to God, glory to God, glory to the Spirit.

Glory to God, glory to God, glory to the Spirit.....

The service continues with the Collect for the Day

Propers for the Celebration of Singing

INTRODUCTION

Brothers and sisters in Christ, as restrictions on congregational singing are lifted, we celebrate with joy at this Eucharist God's gift of music, offering special thanks for the way it has enriched the worship of the Christian Church in many musical styles and in many places around the world. In this Eucharist, we make our prayer in word, silence and song, as we give thanks for all the spiritual graces we receive through singing, and seek God's blessing on all who minister through music.

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

We have too often exchanged the worship of the living God for idols of our own imagining. As we gather to offer our praises to the holy and undivided Trinity, and to worship him in spirit and in truth, let us call to mind and confess our sins.

An authorised form of confession is used or the following Kyrie confession.

We have not always worshipped God, our creator.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We have not always sung the Lord's song in a strange land.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

We have used your gifts to serve our own ends.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

An authorised form of absolution is used.

COLLECT

Creator God, you have made us in your image to reflect your goodness, and called us to use our gifts for the building up of your kingdom on earth. We give you thanks for the gift of music and singing. Pour your grace into our hearts that we may give you glory and uplift all who worship you. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

SUGGESTED LECTIONARY

OLD TESTAMENT READINGS

Exodus 15.1-21
1 Chronicles 15.16-28
2 Chronicles 5.11-end
Isaiah 6.1-8

PSALMS

33.1-12, 40, 47, 66, 95, 96, 98, 100, 149, 150

NEW TESTAMENT READINGS

Colossians 3.2-17
Ephesians 5.15-20
Revelation 4
Revelation 5.6-end

GOSPEL READINGS

Matthew 28.16-20
Luke 1.46-55
Luke 1.57-68
Luke 2.8-14
Luke 7.31-35

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
Sound praises to the Lord, all the earth;
break into singing and make music.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

THE PEACE

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms,
hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

PREFACE FOR THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
at all times and in all places to sing of your glory,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord:
so now we give you hearty thanks
as we receive once again your gift of music,
through which earth and heaven combine.

At the creation of the world,
the morning stars sang together,
and the heavenly beings shouted for joy.
At the deliverance of your people from Egypt,
Moses and Miriam sang of your salvation.
At the birth of your Son, Jesus,
the angels sang 'Glory in the highest'.
And so, with the saints and angels around your throne
who offer you ceaseless songs of praise,
we join to glorify your name,
for ever praising you and singing:

PRAYERS AFTER COMMUNION

God of majesty,
Whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven:
be with your servants as we sing and make music for your glory,
that, with joy, we on earth may glimpse your beauty;
bring us to the fulfilment of that hope of perfection
which will be ours as we stand before your unveiled glory,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening into the house and gate of
heaven, to enter into that gate and dwell in that house, where there
shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light; no noise nor
silence, but one equal music; no fears nor hopes, but one equal
possession; no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity; in the
habitations of thy glory and dominion, world without end. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

The Lord be with you.
and also with you.

May the songs of the angels sustain you,
may the praises of the saints inspire you,
may the silent music of the Unseen Trinity be in your heart,
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

With a song in your heart, go in the peace of Christ.
Thanks be to God.