

THE SERVER'S ROLE IN CORPORATE WORSHIP

The order of server or subdeacon dates back to around 200 A.D. The server is considered a highly privileged individual whose honor it is to minister in the holy place and with holy things.

The server's work is conspicuous and cannot go unnoticed. Thus, it is vital to the liturgy that the server's duties be performed in a dignified and unobtrusive manner. Serving should most certainly be an outward expression of the inward reverence for the worship of God..

Practical difficulties will invariably arise, especially on the appointment of a new rector. No two churches ever worship in exactly the same fashion. The Anglican communion embraces a diversity of liturgical styles and servers in particular should have some understanding of these things. They should know the meaning of the ceremonial to which they are accustomed. Changes in the form of worship instituted by the priest should be carefully described and explained to the servers. Servers should understand why parishes do things differently and also that while traditions may vary, the same Faith is taught.

What has come to be known as the 'Liturgical Movement' is at present having a noticeable influence on Anglican, Roman and other liturgical communions.

"It is most important to remember that good serving shuns anything that saves hours of ostentation, exaggerated outward devotion, or fussiness. Restraint, dignity and simplicity are the marks of good serving." (From *Serving at the Altar* by Denis E. Taylor, 1966).

The key phrase in serving must be '*flexibility and understanding*'. The server should be prepared to act in a manner that is both practical and fitting to the worship, be it traditional or contemporary in keeping with the rector's wishes.

Most parishes have an established Server's Guild. Any guild will benefit if it is led by an experienced 'head Server' (best appointed on an annual basis by the rector). The Head Server can assist in the training of new members and act as Master of Ceremonies in overseeing the smooth operation of the liturgy. Such an individual should be responsible to the rector, be on good terms with other members of the guild, and have the experience of at least one or two years service. Servers may be male or female.

Duties are best executed when distributed on an 'assignment basis'. Servers should be involved in the liturgy as often as possible, and it is often helpful to assign the same duty to a server for several services. This gives each individual an opportunity to become comfortable and confident in executing each respective task.

Duties, training and guild business are best discussed at regular meetings (perhaps monthly). A time proven approach is the 'server breakfast' on a Sunday morning when servers can meet for corporate worship, fellowship and training. Finally, new members, after they serve an initial probationary graining period, should be admitted to the guild at the central service of the day.

The server's office is an important one; it should be taken seriously by both the server and the rector. When these things are taken into consideration, the server will be an asset to the worship of the Church and a living example of Christian service.

Recommended Resource Book:

Greig S. Dunn, *The Server* (Toronto: The Anglican Book Centre, 1978)