

**LAY READER GUIDELINES**  
**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**  
**February 2019**

Thank you for your service to God and Good Shepherd congregation! In Lutheran worship, members of the congregation are encouraged to deep involvement in worship, and to share in the assisting roles of worship as their abilities allow, in addition to the clergy of the parish. Reading God's Word is a primary element of worship. It is by hearing God's Word that believers receive the gift of faith. The privilege of reading in the assembly of believers should be approached with prayer, practice and preparation.

**Schedule:**

Scheduling is done by a computer program administered in the church office. The schedule for the month is posted online at <http://gslutheran.org>.

- Check the schedule to see when you are assigned to serve.
- If you know a month in advance that you are unable to serve for a specific date or dates, please do contact the church Office Coordinator, you will not be scheduled.
- If you cannot serve your assigned time, please first try to switch with another lay reader, either scheduled that month or any other communion lay reader. Call the church Office Coordinator with your replacement so that the verger can be informed.
- The church office can help if you can't find a replacement. However, keep in mind that there are approximately 30 Sunday servants each Sunday. Please make every effort to find your own replacement.
- You will receive an email reminder.

**Some Background on Effective Lay Readers:**

What are some qualities desired for Lay reader? First, there is a passion or desire for proclaiming the word. Secondly, there is a sense of humility and wonder when proclaiming the word; those who read the scripture aloud during the liturgy have been entrusted with the word in its purest form beyond the bread and wine of Holy Communion.

The Lay Reader must never lose that original sense of awe and wonder to have been chosen as a spokesperson of the Divine. Those who worship in community owe their gratitude to those who give breath to that word – to you. This responsibility begs for a little fear and trembling on the part of even the most experienced reader!

The holy scriptures never fail to reward those who encounter them. As a Lay Reader, you will exert a significant influence on those rewards through careful preparation for your task. A personal and thorough understanding of the meaning of the text paves the way for effectively sharing the text with others. Here are a few tips towards getting to that understanding:

- Read the assigned text devotionally; listen to the words and hear them as spoken directly to you. Receive the word with thanksgiving and consider the word prayerfully.

*“Allow the text to work on you before you begin to work on the text.”*

- Sound out the text; whose voice(s) are heard? What do they sound like and what emotions are being conveyed? What are the details of the story or events and what are the words intended to reveal? Listen carefully.

*“Let the word in before attempting to get the word out.”*

- Devote the necessary time to its understanding; strive for a deeper understanding by utilizing the tools, people, and perspectives available to you that will result in greater personal meaning. This kind of understanding enables the reader to convey greater meaning to those listening.

Having taken these steps, you have already been rewarded by your encounter with the word. Further steps should be taken to ensure the most effective delivery of the word. There are many practical tips that may be learned and practiced to that end, and countless resources that describe them. Listed below are a few key points to consider how you can best convey both the meaning of the word, and your passion for proclaiming the word:

- Volume: Romans 10:17 “Faith comes from what is heard”. Speak up! Too loud is not too likely.
- Pace: words rich with meaning, thoughts and ideas take time to absorb when listening. There is no hurry in the proclamation of the word. It is of the essence of our worship.
- Enunciation: Hearing consonants is critical to understanding words. Emphasizing them may feel like exaggeration, but it is most often heard simply as clear speech.
- Pronunciation: Learn the proper way to say the words, particularly the many proper names and places found in scripture. Many bibles have pronunciation guides, and there are other resources available for looking up this information. Do not assume that no one else will know if you said it wrong. That is rarely the case, and mispronounced words are a distraction to the listener.
- Intensity and concentration: Revelation 3:16 “Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth”. The role of Lay reader demands your best efforts. A sense of intensity and real concentration helps to hold the attention of the hearer. While the reader should be mindful not to overlay the reading with artificial drama, no one can deny the real drama embodied in much of scripture. We honor the scripture as we look for and utilize the dramatic components inherent in the text – and share them!
- Practice: Read the text aloud; look for trouble spots, such as difficult phrases or long passages. Explore the cadence and varying volume of the text to convey its meaning, and read repeatedly until it can be done smoothly and confidently. Oh, and did we mention? Practice.

Finally, with all this preparation, there is one more consideration. As the Lay Reader, you will be both heard and *seen*. What does a good reading *look* like? Here are some tips about appearances:

- The significance of scripture is conveyed by what we read it from – that is to say, the lectionary book or Bible, and not a paper copy you carry to the pulpit
- A careful, deliberate approach and departure from the reading lectern conveys a sense of importance and reverence to the task.
- Hands on lectern or at your side convey confidence. Hands behind back or arms crossed do not.
- Consider too your legs and feet. Constant movement will convey unease, and is a distraction. Crossed feet or legs do not convey confidence and are not particularly good for your balance or good breath support and should be avoided.

- Facial expressions and tone of voice should match the emotions from the reading, making it easier for all to better understand. To read the words “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice” with a somber face is just as disconcerting as reading “you brood of vipers” with a smile! Spend time considering the appropriate “face” of the reading.

### **Nuts and Bolts: Guidelines for Lay Readers:**

Preparation for lay reading begins with some “nuts and bolts”, which will initially include spending a bit of your time in the sanctuary in actual training: going over the “nuts and bolts” of coming in, going out, where to sit or stand, and so on. The guidelines below help to prepare you for this and other elements of your duties, but are not a replacement for training. Even if you are experienced in another congregation, or even this one, it is important to attend scheduled training to ensure all lay readers are “on the same page” and are given consistent instruction in preparation for service.

When You Arrive For the Worship Service: (arrive 15 minutes before service is expected).

- Let the verger know that you are present.
- Review the bulletin to be certain that the lessons occur “normally” within the service.
- Take a look at the lectionary book to be sure it is on the right page for the lessons to be read.

During the Service:

- At the time for the “First Reading”, go to the pulpit. You read from the lectionary book on the pulpit. All the words you need are printed there in black. Do not read words printed in red.
- Introduce the reading just as it is written in the book: “A reading from...” It is not necessary to add any additional words such as chapter and verse numbers.
- Read the lesson, and at the end of the reading, conclude with the statement, “The word of the Lord,” as printed in the lectionary. The congregation will respond, “Thanks be to God.”
- If there is a psalm between the lessons you may sit in a chair behind the pulpit. If there is not a psalm, the second lesson begins immediately.
- When readings have been completed, return to your place in the congregation.