

Westfield House

A Guide to Leading Chapel

Daily chapel begins most days at Westfield House. During the Michaelmas and Lent terms, we begin promptly at 8.20, giving time for students to get to University lectures at 9 o'clock if they need to. In the Easter term, when there are few University lectures, we begin at 8.30. On Mondays, however, we use an evening office following the pericope seminar.

Chapel is led by the faculty and students of Westfield House. This allows students to observe the practice of the pastors, and to gain experience in leading worship. More importantly, the daily office is an opportunity for worshipping together as a community. In this way it really has the place of family devotion for the House. We also want to conduct our prayers with a sense of responsibility to one another and to our shared confession of the faith.

The chapel rota will prescribe for each day the particular order to be used. These are taken from a number of source books to reflect some of the diversity of resources within our fellowship. The rota will also give the lesson for the day, and the appointed psalm setting for the week. Please stick to the setting selected for the week, as some of them are best mastered by daily use throughout the week. The lesson will govern the theme of the office. For example, it is appropriate to select a hymn to complement the lesson. It is normal in the morning prayers to include the collect for the week, but additional collects may also take up the theme of the lesson, or any particular circumstances of the Westfield community or our wider Christian family. Unless there is a particular reason for looking elsewhere, try to select the hymn from the service book(s) already required for the service.

Students leading unfamiliar orders understandably often want to mark their copy of it with prompts about posture or hymn numbers, pages for psalms, collects and so on. Please do not make notes directly into the hymnals, but photocopy the appropriate pages for your annotations. The general rule is that the leader faces the people for parts of the service addressed primarily to them, and the altar for those parts addressed primarily to God.

The chapel leader should take responsibility for notifying choice of hymn to the organist, if we have one. An inexperienced organist will appreciate advanced notice of this. A sufficient number of each book required for the service should be put out, so that everyone can collect them as they enter the chapel. Please ensure that there is adequate light, especially for more senior members. If candles are to be lighted, please ensure that they are extinguished at the close of chapel.

The person leading chapel wears an academic gown. There is no obvious precedent for this practice, except that over 40 years at Westfield House it has emerged as an appropriate way to distinguish our chapel from informal prayers on the one hand and public worship on the other. A clerical shirt need not be worn. In fact you are asked to respect expectations about the use of clerical collars which may be quite different

from those of some other cultures. The collar is worn by ordained ministers and by theological students only while they are specifically carrying out duties of the ministry under the authority of a pastor.

Normally the offices are chanted to the extent that musical notation is provided in the hymnal. If you are unfamiliar with an order, or not confident about your ability to chant, part or all of it may be spoken. Naturally God's people want to offer the best they can in their worship, but none of us expects a perfect rendition from those who are learning. In truth we are all learning and all make mistakes. Try not to feel self-conscious about it.

When a layman leads the chapel it is customary to substitute the form "us" for "you" in the benediction, and to omit the salutation.

Since the present building was erected, it has been made available by Resurrection congregation for the chapel life of Westfield House. The building is also available to students for private prayers, and by arrangement for piano or organ practice. But prayers having the character of corporate worship are only conducted under the direction of the pastor.

*It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to thy name, O Most High;
to declare thy steadfast love in the morning,
and thy faithfulness by night.*