

# A Guide to UNITING in WORSHIP



**Robert Gribben**



# **A Guide to Uniting in Worship**



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**Robert Gribben**



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A GUIDE TO UNITING IN WORSHIP

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# Contents

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<b>Foreword</b>	7
<b>Preface</b>	9
<b>Introduction</b>	11
<b>Chapter 1 Initiation</b>	19
Baptism and the Reaffirmation of Baptism called Confirmation	
Baptism of a Child	
A Congregational Reaffirmation of Baptism	
A Personal Reaffirmation of Baptism	
The Covenant Service	
<b>Chapter 2 The Service of the Lord's Day</b>	43
Prayers before the Service	
The Gathering of the People of God	
The Service of the Word	
<b>Chapter 3 Moving to the Sacrament</b>	61
The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper	
The Sending Forth of the People of God	
Communion Beyond the Gathered Congregation	
<b>Chapter 4 Times and Seasons</b>	79
Resources for the Christian year	
The Calendar and Lectionary of the Uniting Church	
The Calendar of Other Commemorations	
Readings for Other Occasions and Themes	
Principal Liturgical Dates until 2013 AD	
<b>Chapter 5 Marriage and Children</b>	91
Pastoral Services:	
The Marriage Service	
A Reaffirmation of Marriage	
Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child	

<b>Chapter 6 Making Whole</b>	105
Pastoral Services:	
A Service of Healing	
A Service of Reconciliation	
New Beginnings in Faith	
Reception of a Member by Transfer	
Reception of a Member-in-Association	
<b>Chapter 7 Witness to the Resurrection</b>	115
Pastoral Services:	
The Funeral Service	
The Service at the Cemetery or in the Crematorium Chapel	
<b>Chapter 8 Godly Order</b>	123
The Ordering of the Church:	
Ordination of a Minister of the Word	
Induction of a Minister of the Word	
<b>Glossary</b>	135
<b>A Short Annotated Bibliography</b>	139



# Foreword

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The *Guide* is a welcome arrival on the scene. *Uniting in Worship*, published in October 1988, is still new to many people in the Uniting Church in Australia. Its riches take time to explore; and after that exploration still more time is needed to discover the most appropriate uses for the various parts of the two books: *Leader's Book* and *People's Book*.

Ideas for this *Guide* have come from a considerable number of people, but the Assembly Commission on Liturgy decided that the book would have unity and coherence only if one hand was responsible for the entire text. It was delighted that the Revd Robert Gribben agreed to be the writer. Himself a major contributor to *Uniting in Worship*, Mr Gribben has a wealth of experience as parish minister, lecturer, writer and liturgical scholar. His incisive mind and keen eye for practical detail have produced a book which should be on the shelf of every regular user of *Uniting in Worship*. So the Commission heartily commends this *Guide*.

The *Guide* does two main things. It explains the rationale behind each service. The *Uniting in Worship* services have, in many cases, emerged after lengthy debates and many drafts. The *Guide* explains why the Commission came to the conclusions it did. And secondly, the *Guide* gives practical suggestions as to how the services can be used. Ministers, lay preachers, elders and other leaders will derive great benefit if they read first the Notes which precede each service in *Uniting in Worship* and then turn to the *Guide* for greater detail.

This is not to say that all congregations will use *Uniting in Worship* in the same way. The Uniting Church has many styles of worship which reflect diverse history, geographical location, size and age-range of the congregation and theological background. *Uniting in Worship* does not aim at uniformity, nor does the *Guide*. But congregations of all types will find *Uniting in Worship* a rich source of guidance and stimulus for both private prayer and public worship.

Other publications, such as the comprehensive index, will accompany *Uniting in Worship* and the *Guide*. Details of these can be obtained from the Joint Board of Christian Education.

I take this opportunity of thanking our author Robert Gribben and the staff of the Joint Board for their devoted and skilful work in providing for the church these resources.

D'Arcy Wood  
Chairperson, Commission on Liturgy, 1977-88  
Assembly Worship Consultant, 1989-



# Preface

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Some very basic beliefs underlie this book. The mediaeval scholar-saint Anselm of Canterbury argued his theology directly with God, so that his doctrine and his prayer were one. So too the church's worship reflects the church's doctrine; what we believe affects the way we pray, and we pray to One who guides us by the Spirit into the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. This *Guide* comes out of the Uniting Church's experience mediated through the Assembly Commission on Liturgy.

Secondly, Brunner's much quoted motto, 'the church exists for mission', needs to be balanced by the affirmation: the church exists for worship. Those who hear the gospel give God glory — and also go and tell others. Worship and evangelism are part of a cycle, and the church is called to do both. Indeed, when worship does not flow into mission, it becomes an ecclesiastical indulgence; and when mission proceeds without being refreshed and redirected in worship, it becomes mere do-goodism. Fundamental to this book is the conviction that the church's missionary life and the church's liturgical life are essentially interconnected.

Thirdly, the liturgy, as its name implies, is the work of the people. It is not the preserve of specialists, although the Spirit does give distinctive gifts to people in the church, including gifts of leadership in worship. And the 'gift' of worship leaders is the ability to help a whole congregation offer true and spiritual worship. That is not as simple as it sounds. In developing their gift, worship leaders must be well informed about the church's experience of worship (history and culture), the church's understanding of worship (theology) and the church's practice of worship (liturgy). The leader who does not know these things is fettered. What is the essence of the tradition which is to be faithfully passed on? What is essential to the liturgy which needs a new form? How can we avoid 'throwing the baby out with the bath water' or merely storing the water? It has been well said that those who do not know their history are bound to repeat the errors of old: so too with liturgists.

A decade ago, in his book *Christian Worship in Transition*, the American Methodist liturgical scholar James F. White wrote a chapter entitled 'You are free — if', in which he summarised the basic structure and purpose of all the major services and sacraments of the church. When you have the fundamentals clear, he said, you may 'do' worship any way you wish. There is not only one way to prepare or conduct a particular service. Quite the contrary: you are free — if. So, a major intention of each section of this *Guide* is to help the reader recognise the central point of each act of worship in the church's marvellous treasury.

In the end, however, whatever we do to prepare for 'good liturgy', whether it is scholarly research, composing new music, re-designing a building, careful staging to capture the drama, adapting old patterns or

creating new ones, or simply wrestling with God over a sermon, true worship 'happens' only because God's Spirit takes up our work and makes it live, transforming the church in the process.

Many people have contributed to this book, and I owe a great number of debts. In particular, I thank those who helped in the preparation of this book: the Assembly Commission on Liturgy and the convenors and members of sub-groups for each service throughout Australia; those who read the whole of the manuscript in preparation: Frances Hyde, Rodney Horsfield and D'Arcy Wood; those who offered criticism from their own area of scholarly speciality: David Brown (lectionary and calendar), Graeme Griffin (funerals), and Ron Dowling, a member of the Anglican Liturgical Commission (services of initiation). Many others read various bits and pieces; I am grateful to them all, though I must take responsibility for the final form.

There is also a sense in which twenty years of learning and practice have gone into this book, so I must take the opportunity to acknowledge my debt to my teachers: to Professor Gordon Rupp in Cambridge and Dr Harold Leatherland in Melbourne, who now judge all this from the perspective of the heavenly liturgy; to my first tutor, the Revd Raymond George, father of Methodist liturgists in England; to the great Reformed scholar of Bible and liturgy, Professor Jean-Jacques von Allmen in Switzerland, whose work has encouraged Reformed and Evangelical Protestants to believe that an interest in liturgy is not against their tradition, and to the Sisters of Grandchamp who so well show how worship should be done; to many colleagues in the Ecumenical Liturgical Centre, especially Gregory Manly C.P., and in the Australian Consultation on Liturgy; to a large number of patient congregations, and to my students over the years who have always kept my liturgy ecumenical.

To those named above, a cloud of witnesses, to my family, and to Samuel, Michael and Austin, my three godsons, this book is gratefully dedicated.

Robert Gribben  
Pentecost 1990

# Introduction:

## A Leader's Guide

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### *AN UNFAMILIAR BOOK*

The first hurdle for those who wish to help congregations use *Uniting in Worship* is its novelty. It looks large and strange. It will take time to find a way through it. Ministers and other leaders will actually need to sit down and read through it carefully, several times, before its riches will be revealed. The Assembly Commission on Liturgy and Presbyteries will begin to offer ways of helping worship leaders become familiar with this resource; this commentary is one such help. Worship committees of congregations might take a service per meeting, and look at the provisions and the best way of using them. The surprise — perhaps the disappointment for some — is that the services are so familiar. There is little that is new about them. They stand in the general Protestant tradition of worship. No revolutionary change is required, but a wider variety of doing the familiar is offered.

### *'MINISTERING' THE BOOK*

It is this richness that needs to be opened up. It should be done gradually and gently. Because our people are not used to following a service in a book, and become lost very quickly (often because leaders do not think the service through from the people's point of view), it is probably best to begin by 'supplementing' the normal order of service until people begin to find their way around.

### *THE PSALMS*

Begin with one of the greatest treasures of *Uniting in Worship* — its psalter. It is a liturgical psalter; that is, one especially designed for use in worship. Not all the psalms are there, but all the suggestions in the three-year lectionary cycle are. A psalm in the service every week will begin to deepen the biblical vocabulary and the prayer life of a congregation. (For more commentary on their use, see the section on The Service of the Lord's Day.)

### *MUSIC*

Leaders of worship should work with the organist and with a group of singers to introduce some of the regular parts that may be sung. The first possibility is the 'Lord, have mercy' (Kyrie eleison), if that is chosen as the form for the prayer of confession. There are many musical settings of this refrain. The next is the doxology, either the 'Glory to God' (see settings in *Sing Alleluia*) or 'Now to him who loved us' (AHB 576). In the

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## ***A Guide to the use of this Leader's Guide***

At the head of each chapter will be found the services commented on. The commentary generally follows the order of service, section by section. Further material is printed alongside.

LB = Leader's Book

PB = People's Book; the number is that of the page.

# indicates a section number in a service.

A glossary of more technical terms, which in any case have been used as little as possible, is found at the back of the book.

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Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, all may sing the 'Holy, holy, holy Lord/ Blessed is he who comes'. Finally, 'Lamb of God' may be sung as a communion devotion. Local composers may like to write music for the responses before and after the Bible readings. Some parts for which music *can* be found are perhaps best left said: for example the Lord's Prayer, the Creeds and most Amens. The special contribution of music is that it helps people memorise the words so that they hardly need refer to the book! Music brings a congregation together, and provides an important alternative to the spoken word which so dominates our worship.

### ***THE SHORT RESPONSES***

Over a period of time, the most commonly used responses between leader and people can be learned. 'The Lord be with you/and also with you' is a good way to open a church meeting! The opening greeting in the Service of the Lord's Day ('The grace. . .') and the Peace at the Lord's Supper have the same people's response: 'and also with you'. Congregations soon become used to the short responses to petitions in prayers: 'Lord, in your mercy/hear our prayer' or 'Lord, hear us/Lord, hear our prayer', which may be used in prayer meetings outside worship services. These responses set up a vocabulary of prayer and greeting within the congregation; and this binds all together in worship.

### ***THE STRUCTURE OF THE SERVICE***

It may be necessary slowly to adapt the order of service, especially if the local custom has been to end with the sermon followed only by a final hymn and blessing. There is a new 'logic' to the Service of the Lord's Day, which draws profoundly on Reformation insights (see the commentary). The key to it is that provision is made, within the service, to respond to the Word proclaimed. We begin to act out the gospel's claim on our lives: in faith, in gifts, in prayer. There is also a balance between the opening section, a time of consciously coming together as God's church, and the closing part, being sent forth on mission. These changes should be explained to the congregation, not just imposed by the leader. The new order *is* a better framework for worship than the old. In this commentary, we have attempted at several points to say why.

### ***AN OVERVIEW OF THE SERVICE***

When it is time to follow the Service of the Lord's Day in full, its structure and most of its parts now being familiar, spend a few minutes at the beginning of a service (or several services) helping people 'leaf through' the order. Point out the four major headings (Gathering, Word, Sacrament, Sending Forth). Point out the places where a prayer is printed, but another may be substituted (for example Adoration, Confession). Suggest that before a service, people might like to put a marker in the psalm for the day, and another at the point in the service where the psalm is required – so that they can find their way back!

### ***THE ANALOGY OF THE HYMNBOOK***

Help people understand that they have an aid to worship in their hands, not some novel exercise foreign to their past. *Uniting in Worship* is no more foreign than a hymnbook. In a hymnbook we move from section

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***All the responses you will ever need to learn:***

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with you all.

**And also with you.**

PB 58, LB 82

Lord, have mercy,  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Christ, have mercy.  
**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

PB 59, LB 84

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:  
your sins are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God.**

PB 59, LB 84

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet:  
**a light to our path.**

This is the word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

Lord, may your word live in us:  
**and bear much fruit to your glory.**

PB 61, LB 86

Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

Lord, hear us.  
**Lord, hear our prayer.**

PB 64, LB 89

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
**And also with you.**

PB 64, LB 90

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.  
**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

PB 65, LB 93

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

PB 68, LB 130

And of course, frequently, **Amen.**

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to section to find appropriate hymns. Our former hymnbooks had sections of psalms, paraphrases and canticles to which we turned at particular points in the service; creeds and other prayers were printed on inside covers, and so on. *Uniting in Worship* does the same for the order of service, and for congregational prayers.

### *LITANIES AND OTHER PRAYERS*

A further resource for occasional use is found in the litanies and other responsive prayers. Some of them are linked with the seasons of the Christian year, itself a valuable aid to prayer and teaching (see the commentary). Some will help respond to particular biblical themes in the sermon. The dedication of the offering may be done by everyone through the use of one of the prayers in the Treasury of Prayers (PB 211).

Two thirds of *Uniting in Worship* are resources of this supplementary kind.

### *PROVISION FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS*

On occasions like baptism, confirmation, the commissioning of elders, the welcome of new members by transfer, a service of healing, and various other celebrations along the faith journey, the congregation may turn to the particular service where they will find the framework and responses for that occasion. These too must be used with careful preparation and attention to the balance of the rest of the service. Not every word is intended to be used! If services turn out to be long, it is not necessarily the fault of *Uniting in Worship*!

### *THE ESSENTIAL AND THE VARIABLE*

There *is* a temptation to start at the beginning and read through services without attention to what may be omitted or varied. But this kind of liturgical editing is not strange to Uniting Church worship leaders; we have always done it. *Uniting in Worship* will guide you through what is essential, and what elaborates the theme, partly through the careful wording of rubrics in the use of 'may' and 'shall'. 'Shall' indicates something whose omission would distort what we are doing or saying in this service, and most of these matters are obvious.

### *KEEPING A SPIRIT OF PRAYER*

Many people find the use of books distracting to prayer. That is partly because they are not used to service books — they do not find it distracting to find and sing a hymn, or to use a hymn as a prayer. Familiarity will help overcome this. But a great deal depends on how the leader uses the book. It is important, first as a courtesy to people, and especially older people, to allow time for people to find the page or section about to be used. It is important too to leave time to allow people to focus on what they are about to do.

In the first months of the introduction of *Uniting in Worship*, it will no doubt seem tedious to be announcing page and section numbers, but the need for that will grow less. For newcomers and visitors, some help may always need to be given, but perhaps from neighbours rather than from the leader. But if time is taken, such seemingly intrusive instructions will simply become part of the hospitality of worship. 'In our prayers today, I will offer a prayer of adoration in which we praise God for the gift of



Sunday, the Lord's Day [for example LB 567, 10]; after that we will make our confession together to God in the words printed at the top of page (PB) 59. [pause] Now let us take a moment to recall that we are in the presence of God, and offer our worship. [pause] 'O God, our God, how great you are. . .'

Using printed prayers takes skill and sensitivity so that they do not sound as if they are read. The secret is: first to read the prayer out loud when choosing it; then to say the words clearly and slowly so that listeners can 'catch up' with the thoughts the words convey. It seems so obvious to say 'don't gabble the words' or 'don't read them like a drone', but many worship leaders unconsciously do things when reading which they do not do when speaking free of a text. Preachers using a full text have the same difficulty. Reading prayers requires the same gift as reading poetry; a spirit needs to be conveyed along with the meaning.

### *THE CORPORATE NATURE OF WORSHIP*

Sometimes the objection to the use of printed material in worship is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of worship. People who see worship as a time for getting on with their private prayers to the Lord in a generally worshipful atmosphere *will* find the invitation to turn to page so-and-so intrusive. But worship is fundamentally corporate. It is not simply the juxtaposition of individuals offering private prayer; it is the sacrifice of praise by a whole people, one in Christ. So it is right that what happens in our services should make us come together.

That is why we sing hymns. People singing hymns must be aware of each other, listen to the melody and the metre; the very discipline in the music forms them into a single voice. There is a profound danger in the increased use of songs which are best sung by one person, or whose words are highly personal. Hymns also express the faith of the whole church, the creed we hold in common. So it is with a liturgical book. Without such material, a congregation is reduced to silence, while the minister or other leader offers worship on their behalf. They can (but frequently do not) only give their assent: Amen. Especially for inheritors of the Reformed tradition, the sense that worship is a spiritual offering by a priesthood of all believers has been lost. The emphasis on the corporate nature of worship is one which the Uniting Church needs to recover, and *Uniting in Worship* will help.

### *THE YOUNG IN WORSHIP*

This is not the place for a full exposition of the place of younger members in worship, but *Uniting in Worship* will help them too. Pre-schoolers will not only soon learn the regular responses, but they will enjoy making them alongside the rest of the congregation. As they grow older, longer responses will become familiar: the Lord's Prayer (used in a consistent translation!), the 'Glory to God', the 'Holy, holy, holy Lord', and so on. Responses which are sung, even long texts, will be learned quickly and retained. Children are in fact our best guide to the use of the book. A great deal of it is best learned by heart, leaving eyes free to watch what is going on, to recognise fellow worshippers, to respond; they will turn to the book to take their part in prayer which involves the whole congregation. *Uniting in Worship* will do a great service to our children if it gives them a vocabulary of Christian praise. And for those who can read, the possibility of leadership as well as participation opens up.

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## A word about copyright

*Uniting in Worship* contains worship resources from many different sources around the world. In all cases, permission to publish has been obtained from copyright owners. This permission does not always extend to others making further copies of what is printed in *Uniting in Worship*. The publishers of *Uniting in Worship* have prepared a comprehensive guide for people who want to reproduce any of the material in *Uniting in Worship* — People's Book. If you are interested, ask for a copy of *Copyright Guidelines for Uniting in Worship*. These are available from the Joint Board of Christian Education, Second Floor, 10 Queen Street, Melbourne 3000. The Commission on Liturgy strongly discourages leaders of worship reproducing for congregations material from the *Leader's Book*. It is better to worship than to read!

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## IN SUM. . .

*Uniting in Worship* is a worship resource which on most Sundays will be handed out at the door with the hymn book (or, better, be kept in the pews) and will be used in the same way. On some Sundays, it may be picked up only twice — for the psalm and for a responsive prayer somewhere in the service. For a baptism and confirmation, the appropriate section may be followed very closely. As we have said above, a great deal of the services can be learned by heart, so that the book is not needed after a while. And there will be many who will be glad to keep a marker in the Service of the Lord's Day or at the Treasury of Prayers and turn to the appropriate page as they are moved in the service. Many who buy personal copies will find themselves turning to it in private prayer, and this will deepen their participation in public worship. Soon the book becomes part of their worship; they are grateful for a guide and its good gifts; it becomes like a well-worn shoe — comfortable and serviceable.

## A LITURGICAL BOOK FOR THE UNITING CHURCH?

Almost any aid to worship would have found an easier acceptance in the Uniting Church than a book. Some have raised cries of protest over an alleged greater formality of Uniting Church worship, over a suspected slow slide towards Anglicanism, over the notion of a 'liturgy' at all.

In expressing these concerns, they are drawing on a long tradition. Presbyterians and Congregationalists of the 17th century suffered because of the imposition of a prayer book, and the memory is still there. Of course, it was not the book alone, but the monarchy (they formed a Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell) and the episcopal form of government linked with the Establishment (they preferred Presbyterian and independent forms of church government). And it was not the content of the book; many of the dissenters used its lovely prayers even after they were ejected from their ministries for refusing to swear that the *Book of Common Prayer* was 'conformable to the word of God' in every part. The great Puritan leader Richard Baxter is one example. And it was not the idea of using a book in worship at all, because the Westminster Assembly of Divines, the dissenting church parliament, produced a book for worship, the *Directory of Public Worship* (1644) as a substitute for the *Book of Common Prayer*. But suffer because of the book they undoubtedly did, and this is the memory that has been passed on.

We need to purge our memories if we are to worship in ways right for our own day. We are not in the 17th century; their disputes are not ours, and we are not bound by their answers. Ironically, the most recent Anglican prayer books are all notable for their freedom and for the variety of options within them. But *Uniting in Worship* is closer to a directory than a book of common prayer. In the general services, not a word is imposed on ministers or congregations. (For the sake of being consistent in what we claim to do, some parts of, for example, the Ordination service are fixed by the Assembly, but may be changed by the Assembly.) The book is chiefly a framework, with prayers which are interchangeable, and with a vast resource of further material for worship from our own historical traditions and from others, both ancient and modern.

The Methodist tradition had its own struggle with the Prayer Book. John and Charles Wesley and all the early leaders were Anglican priests, required by law to use the forms of the Prayer Book of 1662. But early in the evangelical movement, John Wesley, who admired the Prayer Book

and used it loyally, decided not to be confined by its forms. Thus he frequently added extempore prayer or invented new worship forms for new occasions, adapting whatever material was at hand. Former Methodists will find that *Uniting in Worship* offers the same choice of using both fixed and free prayer to express the people's prayer at different times and different places.

The Uniting Assembly took a bold step when it called one of its commissions the Commission on Liturgy. The word 'liturgy' also needs to be reclaimed in the Uniting Church. It does not imply formality, or 'high churchmanship', or particular doctrines or styles of worship. It chiefly refers to worship which is done 'decently and in order' (1 Corinthians 14:40), here as the Uniting Church understands decency and order — not, for instance, as understood by the Tudor court! It refers to worship which is the offering of thinking beings — our 'reasonable service' (Romans 12:1). Care for what we say and do in worship is an expression of our love of God; ordered worship also assists the church to be the church: it gives us a united voice. One of the central meanings of the word 'liturgy' is 'an offering of the people', an expression indeed of the priesthood of all believers. In many places, ironically, Uniting Church worship is more dominated by clergy choice and clergy voice than Catholic or Anglican worship. Liturgy, properly understood, will help us recover our heritage as Reformed and Evangelical Christians as well as opening to us the treasures of the Church Catholic. Liturgy which is ministered by leaders who have the gifts of helping people to pray will indeed be 'worship in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24).



