

First Church of Christ, Scientist San Juan Capistrano

READERS GUIDELINES

Updated March 2019

Thank you!

We are all grateful for your willingness to serve as Reader.

These helpful hints reflect the current consensus of the members and participants. They may change. They are not meant to be rigid or detailed; we leave a lot to the Readers' inspiration, freshness, and spontaneity and to the congregation's unconditional support.

These helpful hints are not comprehensive instructions for effective reading. We highly recommend that new Readers obtain guidance and individual help from any of our more seasoned Readers. We also have a Reader Coordinator to help you in any way you need. They all love to help!

Excellent direction for the Reader role is in the Mother Church Manual. Please familiarize yourself with Article III (Readers Duties, pp 31-33), Article VIII Section 2 (p 40), Article XVIII Section 2 (p 61), and the Present Order of Services (pp 120-126).

Background

Our guiding philosophy is to provide everyone with a church service experience that leaves the visitor with a heartfelt touch of Christian Science "afire with divine Love." We try to approximate the welcome of a gathering of family and friends in a home living room, and to help newcomers feel at ease. Our services are an ongoing endeavor to balance our respect and appreciation for the *Manual* provisions regarding the services and our desire to create a deeply spiritual, friendly and joyous atmosphere free of all coldness and formality.

We also strive for services that blend informality and dignity in a way that expresses our warmth and joy as well as our reverence for the Christ's Church.

The Role of the Readers:

Setting the tone and conducting the service

All members are responsible for setting the friendly, inspired and reverent tone of our worship services. As primary hosts, the Readers have the main responsibility in setting that tone. Please prepare in whatever way is best for you so that you can proceed from one part of the service to another smoothly, without sounding either mechanical or unprepared.

Avoid getting into ruts! Not every detail needs to be the same every week. Readers do not need to follow the traditional roles of First and Second Readers.

The following tips are designed to help achieve the type of service described above:

Welcoming:

- Introduce yourselves. Always begin the service with a friendly welcome to both those present and those attending via teleconference. Be aware that teleconference attendees, though not visible, are a vital part of our congregation.
- If there are newcomers, you may take a few moments and have everyone introduce themselves (at your discretion.) Some Readers prefer to use the announcement period for this.
- As host, be prepared to respond to any event or need, such as the room temperature, how the sound level is for the teleconference listeners, seating latecomers, or helping newcomers.
- Offer Full Text Quarterlies at the end of introductions or just before the start of the Bible Lesson.

Silent Prayer:

- We provide an extended period for silent prayer.

- On Sundays be prepared to introduce the Lord's Prayer with its spiritual interpretation from the Christian Science textbook. You may include the Lord's Prayer in Spanish if you wish.
- We invite anyone wishing prayerful support to place their request in the Offertory bowls or via email. Prior to announcing our extended period of Silent Prayer be prepared to explain this invitation briefly (for example, prayer requests should be dated and will be read for two consecutive services. They may be resubmitted.) Read any requests that are in the folder by the Readers' chairs and invite the congregation to include these in their prayers. The Reader may edit the prayer request for length, or to focus on the condition rather than on the person. Don't advise on how to pray.
- Excuse Sunday School students at the appropriate time.

Announcements:

- Review the announcements in the folder by the Readers' chairs ahead of time. Many announcements are listed in the program and don't need to be repeated, but you may ask if there are other brief announcements from either the room or from those on the teleconference.

Reading The Weekly Bible Lesson:

- Certain phrases and wording are *Manual*-mandated. See *Manual* p 120, items 7 and 10.
- Readers have the option to draw on contemporary translations of the Bible for scriptural readings, benedictions, I John 3, and for Wednesday readings.

Offertory:

- During announcements or the Offertory time explain the bowls and that we welcome financial contributions as well as ideas, suggestions and prayer

requests. Describe how and why we tithe, and also the organization which we are currently supporting financially and metaphysically. You may invite the congregation to use the Offertory music for quiet reflection.

Benediction:

The benediction is literally an expression of good wishes – a blessing. Benedictions do not command or admonish. They simply bless. "Peace be unto you" is one good example. The Bible is a primary, but not the only, source of great benedictions. Many fine ones can also be found in *Prose Works* and in *Science and Health*.

- You may invite the congregation to enjoy fellowship and snacks on the patio.

Wednesday Services:

- If you choose to have a topic for the Wednesday meeting, please let the Program Coordinator know your topic by Thursday of the preceding week.
- If you have ***brief*** remarks or a ***brief*** written selection to introduce the topic, do this prior to the first hymn in order to comply with the *Manual Present Order of Services* (p 122).
- So as not to be repetitious, be familiar with the topics and hymns used in recent Wednesday meetings. Also, stay current with other information such as tithing groups, announcements, etc.
- Be sure to invite those on the teleconference to give testimonies by raising their hand so the phone host can unmute them.

Additional Information: Children:

We value having children participate in the services, so feel free to include them

in leading hymns, prayers, the Scientific Statement of Being, the responsive passage I John 3, etc. If they have musical talents, encourage them to use their talents in the services.

Music:

- Music is a key feature in our services. We especially like the music in our services to be lively, inspiring, and relevant. We draw from a variety of sources for our hymns including, but not limited to, the *Christian Science Hymnals*.
- The Reader is ultimately responsible for the quality of the music. Feel free to work directly with the musicians and the Music Coordinator to select the hymns and solos. Likewise, select hymns from whatever sources you feel are appropriate.
- The Music Coordinator is responsible for locating and qualifying musicians, and also for making sure they get paid.
- A solo may be included in the Offertory at the Reader's discretion.
- If musicians or soloists are new to Christian Science services, spend some time explaining the format of the service to them.
- It's okay to experiment and try new approaches. Solicit advice from members as well as musicians. Be open to feedback. Be clear about the purpose of the service and the importance of the Pastor.
- Feel free to have the musicians introduce their music and to thank them for it.

Communication and Coordination:

Here are some key steps for Readers to take to ensure coordination with others:

- ✓ ***If you arrange for a substitute it's your job to advise the church's Administrator, the Reader Coordinator and the Host Coordinator as soon as possible. Immediately is even better.***
- ✓ ***Sunday Readers need to advise the Program Coordinator of the hymns, solo(s), scriptural selection and benediction by Thursday prior to the service.***
- ✓ ***It's the Readers' responsibility to advise the musicians of hymns rather than wait for the musicians to contact the Readers.***

Off-Site Readers on Wednesdays:

If you are reading over the teleconference, please

- use a landline, a handset or wired earphone, not a speaker phone
- call in early to do a sound check
- email a copy of your readings for the alpha host in the room to read from in case you are disconnected

Fellowship Sundays:

Once in a while, as decided by the Readers, the Weekly Bible Lesson may be read communally by volunteers from the congregation. Let the membership know in advance. The two primary reasons we do this are to develop future readers and to regularly set aside a service that is more informal, inclusive, and interactive. Full Text Quarterlies may be used to read from in this service.

Metaphysical Support:

Anytime you feel that you need metaphysical support for the service, feel free to call any member and ask for their prayerful support. Members have agreed to serve in this role.

Checklist:

Beforehand:

- Select music, scriptural selection, and benediction
- Advise musicians of your hymns and solo(s)
- Send this information to Program Coordinator
- Have properly marked books or print outs.

When you arrive:

- Arrive at least 20 minutes early for the AV check
- Familiarize yourself with announcements and prayer requests
- Familiarize yourself with the tithing group to explain it during the Offertory