

A COMPANION TO
ANTE-COMMUNION



*An introductory guide to Ante-Communion from
The 1662 Book of Common Prayer:
International Edition*

PROLOGUE

One of the forgotten treasures of the prayer book is the service of Ante-Communion. It presents the law and the gospel, and it is closely tied to the cycle of the church year.

But what is Ante-Communion? Just to be clear, it isn't Anti-Communion! The prefix *ante* is Latin for 'before.' So *Ante-Communion* refers to the first half of the Communion service, which comes before the act of communion itself.

The prayer book does not envision that communion will be offered every Sunday and feast day, and it does not assume that all communicants will be ready to receive the sacrament each and every time it is offered. But it does prescribe reading at least Ante-Communion after Morning Prayer and the Litany on every Sunday and on other feast days. Other names for Ante-Communion are 'the Second Service' (Morning Prayer and the Litany being the first) and 'Table Prayers' (from the rubric instructing the priest to stand at the north side of the table).

Ante-Communion is a complete service in itself, and its structure corresponds to the Daily Offices. It begins with confession of guilt, proceeds with proclamation of the gospel of grace, and concludes with an expression of gratitude – a thank-offering and a prayer for the church on earth. Ante-Communion provides the framework for two invariable elements of Sabbath observance that are not found in Morning Prayer, namely the sermon and the offertory.

If you do not belong to a prayer book parish, but you are using the prayer book at home on a Sunday morning, you can pray Ante-Communion. There is nothing in Ante-Communion that a lay-person cannot read (or lead, if others in your home join in).

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The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion.

- ¶ As many as intend to be partakers of the holy communion shall signify their names to the pastor at least some time the day before.
- ¶ And if any of these liveth in open and notorious sin or hath done any wrong to his neighbours by word or deed, so that the congregation is thereby offended, the pastor, having knowledge thereof, shall call him and advise him not to come to the Lord's table until he have openly declared himself to have truly repented and amended his former evil life, that the congregation may thereby be satisfied which before were offended; and have recompensed the parties to whom he hath done wrong, or at least declare himself to be in full purpose so to do as soon as he conveniently may.
- ¶ The same order shall the pastor use with those between whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign, not suffering them to be partakers of the Lord's table until he know them to be reconciled. And if one of the parties thus opposed is content to forgive from the bottom of his heart all that the other hath trespassed against him, and to make amends for what he himself hath offended, yet the other party will not be persuaded to a godly unity but remain still in his contrariness and malice, the minister in that case ought to admit the penitent person to the holy communion and not him that is obstinate. Provided that

OPENING RUBRICS

The rubrics preceding the liturgy provide instructions concerning eligibility to partake in the Lord's Supper, the placement and array of the holy table, and where the presider stands in relation to it.

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every minister so repelling anyone, as is specified in this paragraph or the preceding paragraph of this rubric, shall be obliged to give an account of the same to the ordinary within fourteen days after at the farthest. And the ordinary shall proceed against the offending person according to the canons.

¶ At the communion time, the table, having a fair white linen cloth upon it, shall stand in the body of the church or in the chancel, where Morning and Evening Prayer are appointed to be said. And the priest, standing at the north side of the table, shall say the Lord's Prayer with the collect following, the people kneeling.

OUR Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen.

The Collect.

ALmighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Begin by reading the Lord's Prayer. This is a pattern in the prayer book: The Lord's Prayer often serves as an entrance into prayer, because this is the way that our Lord taught his disciples to pray. It is our model prayer. One advantage to the frequent use of the Lord's Prayer is that it aids memorization, so you can use it whenever need arises. A second advantage is that each time we say the Lord's Prayer in the course of the morning service, a different part of it resonates with the surrounding text. At the beginning of Ante-Communion, the focus is likely to fall on 'thy will be done', because the first movement of the service involves hearing the righteous demands of God's law (that is, his prescriptive will) and 'give us this day our daily bread' because the service points ahead to feasting on the Word of God in the Scriptures read, the sermon preached, and (when there is Communion) in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

THE COLLECT FOR PURITY

Like the Lord's Prayer, this prayer, which has come to be known as 'the collect for purity', serves as an entry-way, orienting our hearts toward what is to come. Its opening draws attention to God's omniscience (Heb. 4:13), preparing us to hear the Ten Commandments, in which the righteousness of the law is set before us. The heart tends towards self-defense, but we kneel before him who knows even the secrets of our hearts. All three movements of the liturgy are previewed here: recognizing our *guilt* (a consequence of recognizing God's omniscience); seeking the *grace* without which our guilt dooms us ('cleanse the thoughts of our hearts'); and expressing our *gratitude* ('that we may perfectly love [him] and worthily magnify [his] holy name').

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¶ Then shall the priest, turning to the people, rehearse distinctly all the Ten Commandments. And the people (still kneeling) shall after every commandment ask God for mercy for their transgression thereof for the time past and grace to keep the same for the time to come, as followeth.

GOD spake these words and said: 'I am the LORD thy God; thou shalt have none other gods but me.'

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

'Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them. For I, the LORD thy God, am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and show mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.'

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

'Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain. For the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.'

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

'Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work – thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy manservant, and thy maidservant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

While Morning Prayer begins with the confession of 'our manifold sins and wickedness', it assumes that we already know the divine precepts we have transgressed. Ante-Communion spells out those precepts in the form of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1-17).

To each precept we respond 'Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law' (with a variation at the end). To say these responses honestly, we cannot hear with pharisaical ears, but must hear in light of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. Heard aright, the commandments set before us a 'righteousness [that] exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees' (St. Matt. 5:20). Righteousness consists not in outward compliance alone, but in the very desires and motivations, the roots of behavior: 'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer' (1 John 3:15). The absence of hatred is insufficient, 'for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also' (1 John 4:20-21). Heard in this way, the Ten Commandments provide a beam of light that shines into the secret corners and crevices of our hearts.

In light of this probing self-examination, the responses implicitly acknowledge our guilt – 'Lord, have mercy upon us' – and ask for the interior transformation without which we cannot keep God's commandments – 'incline our hearts to keep this law'.

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six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the LORD blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

‘Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.’

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

‘Thou shalt do no murder.’

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

‘Thou shalt not commit adultery.’

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

‘Thou shalt not steal.’

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

‘Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.’

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

‘Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his.’

Lord, have mercy upon us, and write all these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee.

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¶ Then shall follow one of these two collects for all those in civil authority, the priest standing as before and saying,
Let us pray.

ALmighty and everlasting God, we are taught by thy holy word that the hearts of rulers are in thy governance, and that thou dost dispose and turn them as it seemeth best to thy godly wisdom: We humbly beseech thee so to dispose and govern the hearts of thy servants, whom thou hast placed in civil authority, that in all their thoughts, words, and works, they may ever seek thy honour and glory, and study to preserve this people committed to their charge, in wealth, peace, and godliness. Grant this, O merciful Father, for thy dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ Or this.

OLORD our governor, whose glory is in all the world: We commend this nation to thy merciful care, that, being guided by thy providence, we may dwell secure in thy peace. Grant to [*title of the head of state or government,*] and to all in authority, both wisdom and strength to know and to do thy will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness, and make them ever mindful of their calling to serve this people in thy fear, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

THE STATE COLLECT

It may be surprising, at first glance, that right after the rehearsal of the Ten Commandments comes a prayer for civil authority. Yet the divine law not only concerns each individual soul in relation to her creator, but also the relation of individuals with each other. It has a vertical and a horizontal dimension.

Just as the law exposes our guilt and drives us to seek God's grace (sometimes called 'the first use of the law'), so the law also restrains weakness and wickedness, thereby promoting public peace (sometimes called 'the second use of the law'). Although force cannot convert, the general safety afforded by good government creates space for repentance. It is most apt, therefore, after having confessed our guilt and prayed for the grace of repentance, that we should now pray for the continuance and prosperity of the civil order, recognizing God's patience, for he is 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' (2 Pet. 3:9).

The prayer book provides two options for this prayer. Read either one at your discretion, though it may be a good idea to make a habit of alternating them. The two options provided here are appropriate for use in any nation regardless of polity. For those in the United Kingdom or Commonwealth Countries, the Collects for the Queen found on page 47.

Thus the first of the three movements of Ante-Communion concludes. The service turns now to focus on God's grace.

 THE COLLECT, EPISTLE, AND GOSPEL

After the state collect, read the collect of the day. You will have already read it once if you started with Morning Prayer. You will find the collect somewhere in pages 49-238 – this is the section of the book that gives the ‘propers’, that is, the collect, epistle, and gospel that belong to (‘are proper to’) each day of the year. As soon as you read the propers for today, you will be returning to page 246, so keep a bookmark or finger there.

A collect is a short prayer, usually containing only one petition. Most of the proper collects are very ancient, though others were written during the Reformation (while a few were written for the 1662 revision). The proper collect is designed to work the two Scripture readings that follow it, touching upon a theme, topic, or implication of one or both readings.

The epistle follows immediately after the collect. It is usually a selection from one of the New Testament epistles. Sometimes it is taken from Acts or Revelation or the Old Testament prophets (these are given the heading ‘for the epistle’ instead of ‘the epistle’). The rubric at the top of page 246 provides the form for introducing the reading and concluding it.

After the epistle comes the gospel. The rubric indicates that all should stand for this reading, and even if you’re reading Ante-Communion at home, you may wish to rise. This expression of reverence is a very ancient custom of the church; it was nearly universal by the fifth century.

One commentator (the Rev. Dr. Robert Crouse) called the collects, epistles, and gospels for the Lord’s Supper ‘the heart of the Prayer Book system.’ This is true in more ways than one, being both a focus point of the prayer book’s design and also the largest section in the book. This annual cycle of readings was carried over from the

medieval church. Though little is known about its origins, it can be traced back to Rome and is quite ancient (possibly as far back as the fifth century). While the principle of the daily lessons for Morning and Evening Prayer is sequential reading through the Scriptures, the principle of selection for the epistles and gospels is thematic. While the daily lessons provide breadth, these provide depth; these readings are generally shorter. Within this annual cycle of epistles and gospels there are three axes, Christmas, Easter, and Trinity, dividing up the church year into three smaller cycles: a Nativity Cycle, an Easter Cycle, and an Ecclesiastical Cycle.

Why is there no Old Testament reading? The service presupposes use of the Daily Offices. Reading daily Morning and Evening Prayer provides a steady diet of Old Testament readings. The Order for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper, of which Ante-Communion is the first half, aims, as Paul said, to ‘show the Lord’s death till he come’ (1 Cor. 11:26). Even when Ante-Communion is not followed by communion proper, it always looks to the oblation of Christ without which we are dead in our sins and without hope. Though all of Scripture speaks of Christ, this service draws our attention to the Scriptures written after the cross, those which explain that the hope of the Hebrew prophets has been fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

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¶ Then shall be said the collect of the day (p. 49). And immediately after the collect, the priest shall read the epistle, saying, The epistle (or The portion of Scripture appointed for the epistle) is written in the — chapter of —, beginning at the — verse. And the epistle ended, he shall say, Here endeth the epistle. Then shall he read the gospel (the people all standing up), saying, The holy gospel is written in the — chapter of —, beginning at the — verse. And the gospel ended, the creed following shall be sung or said, the people still standing as before.

I BELIEVE in one God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made, Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man, And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord, and giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the prophets. And I believe one

THE CREED

After the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is read, the response (said by all together) is to confess our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed. The earliest record of this creed is its adoption at Chalcedon, the fourth ecumenical council, in 451, though it may have been written at the second ecumenical council, at Constantinople, in 381.

'I believe in God' should not be thought to mean simply 'I accept the existence of'. Both the Latin *credo* (from which we get 'credit') and the Greek *πίστεύω* (*pisteuo*) express the sense of confidence, trust, faith, and loyalty. We still sometimes use the word 'believe' this way; for example, when a parent says to a child struggling with her homework, 'I believe in you!' In saying the creed you are not simply stating facts, you are pledging allegiance.

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catholic and apostolic church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come. Amen.

- ¶ Then the minister shall declare unto the people what holy days or fasting days are to be observed in the week following. And then (if there is occasion) shall notice be given of the communion; and the banns of matrimony published; and briefs, citations, and excommunications read. And nothing shall be proclaimed or published in the church during the time of divine service but by the minister, nor by him anything but what is prescribed in the rules of this book or enjoined by the ordinary of the place.
- ¶ Then shall follow the sermon, or one of the homilies set forth by authority.
- ¶ Then shall the priest return to the Lord's table and begin the offertory, saying one or more of these sentences following, as he thinketh most convenient in his discretion.

LET your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. *St. Matthew 5:16.*

Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth, where rust and moth doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. *St. Matthew 6:19-20.*

Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them, for this is the law and the prophets. *St. Matthew 7:12.*

THE SERMON

A sermon or homily is meant to explicate (literally, 'to unfold') the Word of God, which includes both interpretation and exhortation. If circumstances require you to be reading Ante-Communion on this day without a pastor, a published sermon could be read here. That is a time-honored Anglican exercise. The two Books of Homilies are commended in the Articles of Religion (Article 35, page 642). One of those official homilies is printed as an appendix in the 1662 IE (page 654).

THE EXHORTATION

When there is to be communion the following Sunday or on a festival day in the coming week, an exhortation is read after the sermon. It provides guidance on how to prepare to partake in the Holy Communion. You'll have to flip ahead in the book to page 251 to find it. There are three options for the exhortation, but only the first two are for Ante-Communion (the third is only for Communion Sundays and is read at a different place in the service). You will find a brief overview of all three below.

THE OFFERTORY

Now begins the final movement of Ante-Communion. On a Sunday morning at which there is to be no communion, the Prayer Book envisions the morning liturgy to culminate with this expression of gratitude or charity.

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Not everyone that saith unto me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. *St. Matthew 7:21.*

Zacchaeus stood forth and said unto the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have done any wrong to any man, I restore fourfold.' *St. Luke 19:8.*

What soldier goeth a warfare at any time of his own cost? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? *1 Corinthians 9:7.*

If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your worldly things? *1 Corinthians 9:11.*

Do ye not know that they who minister about holy things live of the sacrifice, and they who wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord also ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. *1 Corinthians 9:13-14.*

He that soweth little shall reap little, and he that soweth plenteously shall reap plenteously. Let every man do according as he is disposed in his heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. *2 Corinthians 9:6-7.*

Let him that is taught in the word minister unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. *Galatians 6:6-7.*

While we have time, let us do good unto all men, and

Having confessed our sins, heard the gospel, and proclaimed our faith, we now present our offerings to God our Saviour. The Scriptures distinguish between two kinds of offerings or oblations. The quintessential oblation is a propitiatory sacrifice for sin. The purpose of this offering is to remove guilt and restore the offending party to favor. For that, only the blood of Christ is sufficient. He alone is our propitiation. The second kind of offering is a thank-offering. It does not seek to earn favor, it expresses thanks for favor already received. By giving self-sacrificially we show our gratitude to the Lord for the inestimable benefits we have received at his hands.

Beginning on page 247 a number of Offertory Sentences are provided. The presider may choose as many as seem appropriate. Like the sentences at the beginning of Morning and Evening Prayer, this is the part of the office that provides the greatest number of options, yet each one serves the same purpose: to exhort us in the Bible's own words to give generously and joyfully to support the work of the ministry.

If you are reading Ante-Communion at home, you may wish to skip over this part or you may read one or more of the Offertory Sentences in anticipation of making an offering at a church service later.

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especially unto them that are of the household of faith.
Galatians 6:10.

Godliness is great riches, if a man be content with what he hath, for we brought nothing into the world, neither may we carry anything out. *1 Timothy 6:6-7.*

Charge them who are rich in this world, that they be ready to give and glad to distribute, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may attain eternal life. *1 Timothy 6:17-19.*

God is not unrighteous, that he will forget your works and labour that proceedeth of love, which love ye have showed for his name's sake, who have ministered unto the saints, and yet do minister. *Hebrews 6:10.*

To do good and to distribute, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. *Hebrews 13:16.*

Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? *1 John 3:17.*

Give alms of thy goods, and never turn thy face from any poor man, and then the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee. *Tobit 4:7.*

Be merciful after thy power. If thou hast much, give plenteously; if thou hast little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little, for so gatherest thou thyself a good reward in the day of necessity. *Tobit 4:8-9.*

He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again. *Proverbs 19:17.*

Blessed be the man that provideth for the sick and

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needy; the LORD shall deliver him in the time of trouble. *Psalm 41:1.*

- ¶ Whilst these sentences are read, the deacons, churchwardens, or other fit persons appointed for that purpose shall receive the alms for the poor and other devotions of the people in a decent basin (to be provided by the parish for that purpose), and reverently bring it to the priest, who shall humbly present and place it upon the holy table.
- ¶ When there is a communion, the priest shall then place upon the table as much bread and wine as he shall think sufficient. After which, the priest shall say,

Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's church militant here on earth.

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, who by thy holy apostle hast taught us to make prayers and supplications, and to give thanks, for all men: We humbly beseech thee most mercifully [** to accept our alms and oblations, and*] to receive these ** If there are no alms or oblations, then shall the words of accepting our alms and oblations be left unsaid.* our prayers which we offer unto thy Divine Majesty, beseeching thee to inspire continually the universal church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord. And grant that all those who do confess thy holy name may agree in the truth of thy holy word, and live in unity and godly love. We beseech thee also so to direct and dispose the hearts of all Christian rulers, that they may truly and impartially administer justice, to the punishment of

THE PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT

The Offertory culminates in the presentation of the congregation's gifts at the holy table in the prayer 'for the whole state of Christ's church militant here on earth' (page 250). If there were no offerings made, the prayer is still read, but the bracketed words 'to accept our alms and oblations, and' are omitted. As our thank-offerings support the work of the church, so this is a prayer for the church. Both the gifts and the prayer are acts of charity.

In the garden before the crucifixion, Christ said 'I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.... Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word' (St. John 17:9, 20). Likewise, here we pray for the church not for the world. Nevertheless, it is not exclusive of the world, for the hope of the world is the church's proclamation of the gospel. Moreover, Ante-Communion is not designed to stand alone, but rather presupposes the regular use of the Litany, in which we make intercession for all generally. After the Prayer for the Church Militant, the service concludes with the final collects and benediction (pages 266-268).

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wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of thy true religion and virtue.

Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all bishops and pastors, that they may, both by their life and doctrine, set forth thy true and lively word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy sacraments. And to all thy people give thy heavenly grace, and especially to this congregation here present, that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear and receive thy holy word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. And we most humbly beseech thee of thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succour all those, who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity. And we also bless thy holy name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear, beseeching thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom. Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only mediator and advocate. *Amen.*

¶ When the minister giveth warning for the celebration of the holy communion (which he shall always do upon the Sunday or some holy day immediately preceding), after the sermon or homily is ended, he shall read this exhortation following.

DEARLY beloved, on — day next I purpose, through God's assistance, to administer to all those who shall be religiously and devoutly disposed the most comfortable

THE EXHORTATIONS

Three exhortations are provided, each serving a different purpose. The first announces an upcoming opportunity to receive the sacrament and provides advice about how to prepare for it. It urges self-examination, repentance, and, when we have offended against our neighbors, reconciliation. The Ten Commandments, read at the beginning of Ante-Communion, are one such means of self-examination. The 1662 IE also provides four prayers in preparation for the Communion, beginning on page 694, which have been widely used by Anglicans in the past.

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sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, to be received by them in remembrance of his meritorious cross and passion, whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven.

Wherefore it is our duty to render most humble and hearty thanks to almighty God, our heavenly Father, because he hath given his Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, not only to die for us, but also to be our spiritual food and sustenance in that holy sacrament. Which, being so divine and comfortable a thing to those who receive it worthily, and so dangerous to those who will presume to receive it unworthily, my duty is to exhort you, in the meantime, to consider the dignity of that holy mystery, and the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof, and so to search and examine your own consciences – and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God, but so that ye may come holy and clean to such a heavenly feast, in the marriage garment required by God in holy Scripture, and be received as worthy partakers of that holy table.

The way and means thereto is: First, to examine your life and conduct by the rule of God's commandments, and in whatsoever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended, either by will, word, or deed, there to bewail your own sinfulness, and to confess yourselves to almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life. And if ye shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God, but also against your neighbours, then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them, being ready to make restitution and satisfaction (according to the uttermost of your powers) for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other; and

The second explains why we should not neglect the Lord's Table, but instead prepare to keep the feast when it is offered.

The third exhortation is for use on Communion Sundays. It warns against receiving 'unworthily', that is, without 'a true penitent heart and lively faith', and it urges that we receive with sincere gratitude for the salvation purchased for us by Christ Jesus our Lord. In other words, it sums up the triad of guilt, grace, and gratitude (or repentance, faith, and charity) around which Ante-Communion and other Prayer Book offices are built.

The exhortations are also useful for individual reading and reflection in preparation for receiving communion.

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being likewise ready to forgive others who have offended you, as you would have forgiveness of your offences at God's hand. For otherwise the receiving of the holy communion doth nothing else but increase your condemnation. Therefore if any of you be a blasphemer of God, a hinderer or slanderer of his word, an adulterer, or be in malice, or envy, or in any other grievous crime, repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy table – lest, after the taking of that holy sacrament, the devil enter into you, as he entered into Judas, and fill you full of all iniquities, and bring you to destruction both of body and soul.

And because it is requisite that no man should come to the holy communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience, therefore if there be any of you who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's holy word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with spiritual counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience and removing of all scruple and doubtfulness.

¶ Or, in case he shall see the people negligent to come to the holy communion, instead of the former he shall use this exhortation.

DEARLY beloved brethren, on — I intend, by God's grace, to celebrate the Lord's supper. Unto which, on God's behalf, I bid you all who are here present, and beseech you, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, that ye will

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not refuse to come thereto, being so lovingly called and bidden by God himself. Ye know how grievous and unkind a thing it is, when a man hath prepared a rich feast – decked his table with all kind of provision, so that there lacketh nothing but the guests to sit down – and yet those who are called (without any cause) most unthankfully refuse to come. Which of you in such a case would not be moved? Who would not think a great ingratitude and wrong done unto him? Wherefore, most dearly beloved in Christ, take ye good heed, lest ye, withdrawing yourselves from this holy supper, provoke God's indignation against you. It is an easy matter for a man to say, 'I will not communicate, because I am otherwise hindered with worldly business.' But such excuses are not so easily accepted and allowed before God. If any man say, 'I am a grievous sinner, and therefore am afraid to come,' why then do ye not repent and amend? When God calleth you, are ye not ashamed to say ye will not come? When ye should return to God, will ye excuse yourselves, and say ye are not ready? Consider earnestly with yourselves how little such feigned excuses will avail before God. Those who refused the feast in the gospel, because they had bought a farm, or would try their yokes of oxen, or because they were married, were not so excused, but counted unworthy of the heavenly feast.

I, for my part, shall be ready. And according to mine office I bid you in the name of God, I call you on Christ's behalf, I exhort you, as ye love your own salvation, that ye will be partakers of this holy communion. And as the Son of God did vouchsafe to yield up his soul by death upon

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the cross for your salvation, so it is your duty to receive the communion in remembrance of the sacrifice of his death, as he himself hath commanded – which if ye shall neglect to do, consider with yourselves how great is your ingratitude to God, and what sore punishment hangeth over your heads for the same, when ye willfully abstain from the Lord's table, and separate from your brethren who come to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food.

These things if ye earnestly consider, ye will by God's grace return to a better mind, for the obtaining of which we shall not cease to make our humble petitions unto almighty God our heavenly Father.

OMITTED MATERIAL

Because this introduction is about Ante-Communion, most of the second half of the Communion service is omitted here. On the next page you will find two items from the end of the Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper that may also be used at the end of Ante-Communion: the benediction and the final collects.

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¶ Then the priest (or bishop if he is present) shall let them depart with this blessing.

THE peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always. *Amen.*

¶ These collects are to be said after the offertory when there is no communion, on every such day one or more. The same may also be said, as often as occasion shall serve, after the collects either of Morning or Evening Prayer, Communion, or Litany, by the discretion of the minister.

ASSIST us mercifully, O Lord, in these our supplications and prayers, and dispose the way of thy servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation, that,

BENEDICTION

The blessing or benediction concludes a service of Ante-Communion. In it the presider, speaking as an ambassador of Christ, pronounces over the congregation ‘the peace of God, which passeth all understanding’ (Phil. 4:7), before they depart from the church, as a defense against the challenges and temptations of the world. One custom when a lay-person presides at Ante-Communion is to change the pronouns in the blessing from second person plural to first person plural – ‘keep our hearts and minds’ rather than ‘your’ and ‘be amongst us’ rather than ‘you’.

FINAL COLLECTS

These six optional collects, among the most compelling in the prayer book, are intended for Ante-Communion. One or more of them is said right before the benediction. Each one follows after some aspect of the preceding service: our prayers and supplications, the commandments, the word read and preached, and grace, as we depart from the church, to glorify God’s name in ‘all our doings’.

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among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, they may ever be defended by thy most gracious and ready help, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

OALMIGHTY Lord and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of thy laws and in the works of thy commandments, that, through thy most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

GRANT, we beseech thee, almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may, through thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honour and praise of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

PREVENT us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works – begun, continued, and ended in thee – we may glorify thy holy name, and finally by thy mercy obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

ALMIGHTY God, the fountain of all wisdom, who knowest our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: We beseech thee to have compassion upon our infirmities; and those things which for our unworthiness

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we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

ALmighty God, who hast promised to hear the petitions of those who ask in thy Son's name: We beseech thee mercifully to incline thine ears to us who have made now our prayers and supplications unto thee, and grant that those things which we have faithfully asked according to thy will, may effectually be obtained, to the relief of our necessity and to the setting forth of thy glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ Upon Sundays and other holy days (if there is no communion) shall be said all that is appointed at the Communion until the end of the general prayer for the whole state of Christ's church militant here on earth (p. 251), together with one or more of the collects before rehearsed, concluding with the blessing.

CONCLUDING RUBRICS

Other rubrics follow the Communion service (pages 268-270), and they are not printed here. Also not printed in this introduction are the prayers for the Queen and royal family in use in England and Commonwealth countries (page 270).

POSTSCRIPT

Thus Ante-Communion guides us through the sequence of guilt, grace, and gratitude. If you're reading it after having read Morning Prayer (with or without the Litany), then you probably noticed some redundancies, like confessing your sins twice, saying the Lord's Prayer four times, and frequently asking God to 'have mercy upon us.' While unusual to modern sensibilities, these reiterations are strengths of the prayer book's design. We are subject to both 'coldness of heart and wanderings of mind', weaknesses which the prayer book counteracts by regularly circling back, only to go forward again, advancing by a spiral movement.

Morning Prayer, Litany, and Ante-Communion may be read straight through as found in the prayer book without a break between them. With the addition of hymns or other music, or when the Litany is sung, the combined offices can become quite lengthy. Accordingly, some abbreviations have become fairly common. Appendix III (starting on page 719) has suggestions for including hymns, as well as suggestions for shortening Morning Prayer and the Litany when Ante-Communion immediately follows.