What must the minister consider when planning, preparing and delivering an act of worship?

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Christian worship has many facets and the minister must ensure an appropriate element of as many of these as possible in each act of worship, possibly in the wider context of ongoing acts in the church community. These facets are first reviewed and then their contextualisation is considered. This essay is only at the point of an outline plan.

Ritual is a behaviour common to all humans and important to cohesion of communities, and worship is ritual (White, 2001, p. 19). It is therefore important that all acts of worship have a ritual element, based on repetitive elements familiar to regular and, hopefully, intermittent worshippers. Some element of common forms of words, familiar songs and action should therefore be present.

From the time of the early church, under pressure from other philosophies and from heretical and immature understandings of the Christian position (Cocksworth, 1997, p. 95), through to Luther’s *Large Catchechism* where he says that people “assemble to hear and discuss God’s Word”, and Cranmer’s intention of “setting forth of God’s honor and glory” (White, 2001, p. 22) teaching has been an important element of worship. Appropriate opportunity must therefore be provided for instruction appropriate the time and context.

Praise, the “sacrifice of praise” (*thusía* in the Greek) must be encorporated.

Confession of sins, of faith of Jesus as Lord.

Prayer, supplementing personal devotions. (White, 2001)

Acts planned and delivered by a minister are by their nature acts of “common worship”, public acts bringing together the people as the Body of Christ and as a community separated out from the world (White, 2001, p. 29) to, in part, perform rituals together and strengthen the community and the individuals within it. This publically known and available common worship should also act to attract non-members, non-believers and non-participants, into the community.

As a corporate activity or liturgy, opportunity should be provided for all members to take an active part in service. Additionally those with special gifts and abilities should be encouraged and supported to play particular roles, as those to greet and welcome worshippers, as scripture readers, music leaders, teachers etc.

The contexts to be considered are time, place and community.

1. Worship may be designed to answer the needs of the times of day, the regular passing of the week, to coincide with the yearly church cycle of festivals and commemorations.
2. The location.
3. The presentation, form of words, choice of music and other worship materials should reflect the range of expected participants; age, gender, culture, ethnicity, faith background.

# Bibliography

Cocksworth, C., 1997. *Holy Holy Holy: Worshipping the Trinitarian God.* Lodon: Darton, Longman and Todd.

White, J. F., 2001. *Introduction to Christian Worship.* 3rd ed. Nashville TN: Abingdon Press.