

# Foreword

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## Worship: from the United Reformed Church

These resources for worship are offered to the church as a contribution to the conduct of public worship at the beginning of the 21st century. In 1980, eight years after the foundation of the United Reformed Church, 'A Book of Services' was issued by the Doctrine and Worship Committee under the wise and able guidance of John Huxtable. In his short preface he wrote *'The orders found here are not prescribed. It is not expected that they will be used in our churches to the exclusion of others. Yet we believe most of these services reflect the ethos of our Church and of its inherited traditions'*. These sentiments applied also to the 1989 Service Book and still hold true for this publication.

What has changed at the beginning of the 21st century is the context in which public worship is offered. We now find ourselves in a missionary setting where the church can no longer take for granted that most people understand the religious language and imagery of past generations. Language is changing and the language of worship has to take account of this. Our words may be beautiful and doctrinally sound, but if they are not *'something understood'*, they do not aid our worship. There is, of course, a measure of ambiguity and mystery lying at the heart of the most telling language of worship. However we should aim at clarity as well as elegant expression. We should be expressing old truths in new ways. We also need the language to express new truths in thoroughly Christian ways. Contemporary liturgists search for such language - and this quest can bring a creative tension with the traditional language of the church.

The current Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee has been aware of the need for continuity and change within the worship of the church. We have provided worship resources deeply rooted in our Reformed heritage, along with resources

which develop our liturgical tradition in the spirit of the dictum '*the reformed church is ever in need of reformation*'. We are aware of the breadth of liturgical expression within the church and we have sought to provide a range of styles of services. The rubrics have deliberately been kept to a minimum, thus encouraging worship leaders to develop styles appropriate to their situation. There are exceptions, such as Prayers for Healing and Laying-on of Hands, where it was felt greater guidance would be welcomed. The Baptism Service contains wording required by the General Assembly. It is our hope that all the services act as guides to the development of the worship life of the church, and all to the glory of God.

Part one of this publication includes a new element in the form of an order for Daily Worship. The First Order of Holy Communion and the Baptism service had originally been issued in draft form and the comments received from the church have been taken into account in the final texts. The Committee owes a debt of gratitude to all contributors to this publication, which uses the work of many talented liturgists. It was originally conceived in hardback form but a change was made to loose leaf binder form to aid flexibility of use. The format is designed to cope with anticipated additions and revisions as well as giving worship leaders the opportunity to insert other useful materials. The accompanying CD Rom contains both the published services and a wealth of additional material. Part two will contain services for marriages and funerals, for the ordination and induction of Ministers, for the ordination of Elders, orders for the commissioning of Lay Preachers and Church Related Community Workers and a rededication service, as well as other texts.

The Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee expresses thanks to all contributors who made this publication possible: in particular its secretary, Kirsty Thorpe, John Reardon who convened the Drafting sub-committee and Susan Durber convener of the Publication sub-committee; also United Reformed Church staff secretaries John Waller and David Cornick; along with Geoffrey Duncan who is responsible for the CD production, and Carol Rogers, Secretary for Communications.

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