

# Theme Sundays

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## A. Principles

In the renewal of the Church in our time, rediscovery of the importance of the Lord's Day has played a large role. "All Sundays of the year are feasts of our Lord Jesus Christ", says the *BAS*; and only principal feasts of our Lord can properly take precedence over the celebration of Sunday itself.

For this reason, **it is improper to allow any of the many legitimate issues which concern us as ambassadors of the reign of God to be named as the actual theme of a Sunday celebration.** We need to be clear each time we gather that we have come to celebrate the mystery of salvation in the life and death and rising of Jesus Christ, and to enter into mystery ourselves, a living sacrifice in union with Christ.

We honour this primacy of Sunday as a feast of the Lord by hearing the testimony scripture bears to him, and by proclaiming his death and exaltation in the breaking of bread. For Anglicans, this discipline is manifest in the use of the propers of the day; the appointed prayers and especially the scripture readings. Likewise, we honour this weekly festival by making the sermon a window into the scriptures read, not an appeal for a particular cause.

None of this precludes the naming of our concerns in prayer, or the reflection on them in the light of the scriptures read. Indeed, the point of the liturgy is never found within itself, but only beyond itself in the Kingdom of God. In every liturgy we pray that "the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of God's Messiah."

## B. Possibilities

While we express our concerns over the turning over of Sunday worship to a specific theme, we do realize that there is a real need to address the concerns of our times and that this can legitimately be incorporated into Sunday worship.

Listed below are a few possibilities which parishes may wish to choose:

1. The incorporation of our concerns into the Prayer of the People (if necessary, with a brief explanatory comment included in the bulletin).
2. The theme may be addressed at the time of the sermon and be done in the context of reflection on the scriptures of the day rather than with an alternate set of readings (not always as hard as it sounds).
3. Including special information and scriptural reflection in a bulletin or insert for the day so that members of the congregation could consider it at a later time.



4. Having someone directly involved with the issues come to speak at a time following the service. This works well with one of the first two options and can help make Sunday more of a time of worship and reflection, particularly if combined with a time of fellowship or at coffee hour.

We realize also that some parishes may still wish, from time to time, to substitute an alternative set of readings and turn the focus of the service into a specific theme or area of concern. If you do this, we urge you to remember in your planning that the main focus of the Sunday worship is Jesus the Christ.

