Introduction to the singing of Prayer Tones

Prayer Tones are a form of “sung speech.” They are a set of pitch patterns designed to intensify the public proclamation of an important text. The important text in this case, is the celebrant’s prayer offered in the name of the entire worshiping community. As a form of “sung speech,” proper phrasing, word rhythm and accentuation constitute the essential foundation for the effective use of these Prayer Tones.

The singing style to be used for these Prayer Tones is that of good solemn public proclamation. For that reason, one should move as if “leaning” toward the next accent in the sentence. Each accent will then be a “springboard” leading the voice toward the next accent. The last accent of a phrase, or a sentence, should be treated as a point of “arrival.” For this reason, the final accent – and all the syllables that might follow – should be sung more softly and slowly than the rest of the phrase that has preceeded it. In general, try to increase the energy and tempo at the beginning of each new phrase and let it relax and slow down as one approaches the final accent of each phrase. The relaxation and slowing down will be greater at the Final Cadence form that ends the body of the prayer and at the Final Doxology Cadence that concludes the entire prayer text.

1. The Opening Prayer for the 1st Sunday of Advent is given as a first example:

   1       /
   Let us pray.‡ / (−)
   All-powerful God, ∞
   increase our strength of will for doing good *
   that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming †
   and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven, •
   where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, *
   one God, for ever and ever. ∆    Amen.
Sing the melodic patterns indicated by the special signs for this Opening Prayer in the following manner:

**For the Body of the Prayer**

1) Use the **Initial Flex** (‡) for the first phrase of the Opening Prayer. This flex has one note of preparation (indicated by the number “1”) before the final word accent of the phrase. For example:

   \[ \text{Let us pray.‡} \]

2) Use the **Direct Address Accent** (∞) to mark off an opening clause of direct address (e.g., “All-powerful God”). Since the clause used in the example ends with an oxytone (a one-syllable accented word), both the accented black note and the lengthened whole note that follows it, are sung to that one-syllable word. For example:

   \[ \text{All - power - ful God, ∞} \]

3) Use the **Mediant Cadence form** (⋆) to mark off a principle phrase, or sense unit, of the body of the prayer. It will often have a colon (:), a semicolon (;), or at least a comma (,) to indicate it. This mediant cadence has two notes of preparation (indicated by the two numbers) before the final accent of the phrase. Any extra syllables after the final accent of this phrase are sung to the same pitch as the accent itself. For example:

   \[ \text{in - crease our strength of will for do - ing good*} \]

4) Use the **Intermediate Flex** (†) to mark off any subordinate clause(s) that occur after the Mediant Cadence of the prayer. This flex has one note of
preparation (indicated by the black note) before the final word accent. Any extra syllables that occur after that accent are sung to the same pitch that is used for the accented syllable. For example:

that Christ may find an eager welcome at his com-ing.

5) Use the **Final Cadence form** (•) to conclude the body of the prayer text. The body of the prayer text will always have a period at its conclusion. This Final Cadence has two notes of preparation (indicated by the two numbers) before the final accent of the text. Any extra syllables after the final accent are sung to the same pitch as the accent itself. For example:

and call us to his side in the king-dom of heav-en,*

**For the Doxology of a Prayer**

4) Use the **Mediant Cadence** (•) for the phrase that ends the invocation of the Trinity (i.e.: “… and the Ho-ly Spír-it”). This flex has two notes of preparation and is identical to the **Mediant Cadence form** as given above in example #2). For example:

where he lives and reigns with you and the Ho-ly Spír-it,*

5) Use the **Final Doxology Cadence** (Δ) for the final phrase of the doxology. If the last accent of this phrase is an oxytone (e.g.: “God”), the final two notes (indicated by whole notes) are sung over that single syllable. For example:

one God, for ever and ev - er.Δ
2. The Communion Prayer for the 1st Sunday of Advent is given as a second example:

Let us pray. ‡

/ 

Father, ∞

1 / may our communion ‡

2 1 / teach us to love heaven. *

1 / May its promise and hope †

2 1 / guide our way on earth. •

1 / We ask this through Christ our Lord. ‡

For the Body of the Prayer

1) Use the Initial Flex (‡) for the first phrase of the Opening Prayer. This flex has one note of preparation (indicated by the number “1” ) before the final word accent of the phrase. For example:

2) Use the Direct Address Accent (∞) to mark off an opening clause of direct address (i.e., “Father,”). For example:

3) Use the Initial Flex (‡) to mark off a subordinate clause near the beginning of the prayer. This flex has one note of preparation (indicated by the number “1” ) before the final word accent of the phrase. Any extra syllables that occur after that accent are sung to the same pitch used for the accented syllable. For example:
4) Use the **Mediant Cadence form** ( *) to mark off a principle phrase, or sense unit, of the body of the prayer. It will often have a colon ( : ), a semicolon ( ; ), or even a period ( . ) to indicate it. This mediant cadence has two notes of preparation (indicated by the two numbers) before the final accent of the phrase. Since the word “love” is a strong single-syllable word, both of the preparation notes are used for it. Any extra syllables after the final accent of this phrase are sung to the same pitch as the accent itself. For example:

![Mediant Cadence](image)

*may our commun-ion†*

5) Use the **Intermediate Flex** ( † ) to mark off any subordinate clause(s) that occur after the Mediant Cadence of the prayer. This flex has one note of preparation (indicated by the number “1” ) before the final word accent. Any extra syllables that occur after that accent are sung to the same pitch that is used for the accented syllable. For example:

![Intermediate Flex](image)

*teach us to love heav-en.*

6) Use the **Final Cadence form** ( • ) to conclude the body of the prayer text. The body of the prayer text will always have a period at its conclusion. This Final Cadence has two notes of preparation (indicated by the two numbers) before the final accent of the text. Any extra syllables after the final accent are sung to the same pitch as the accent itself. For example:

![Final Cadence](image)

*guide our way on earth.●*
**For the Short Doxology**

Use the **Initial Flex** (‡) for the concluding phrase of the Short Doxology. This flex has one note of preparation (indicated by the number “1”) before the final word accent of the phrase. For example:

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\[ \text{We ask this through Christ our Lord.‡} \]
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