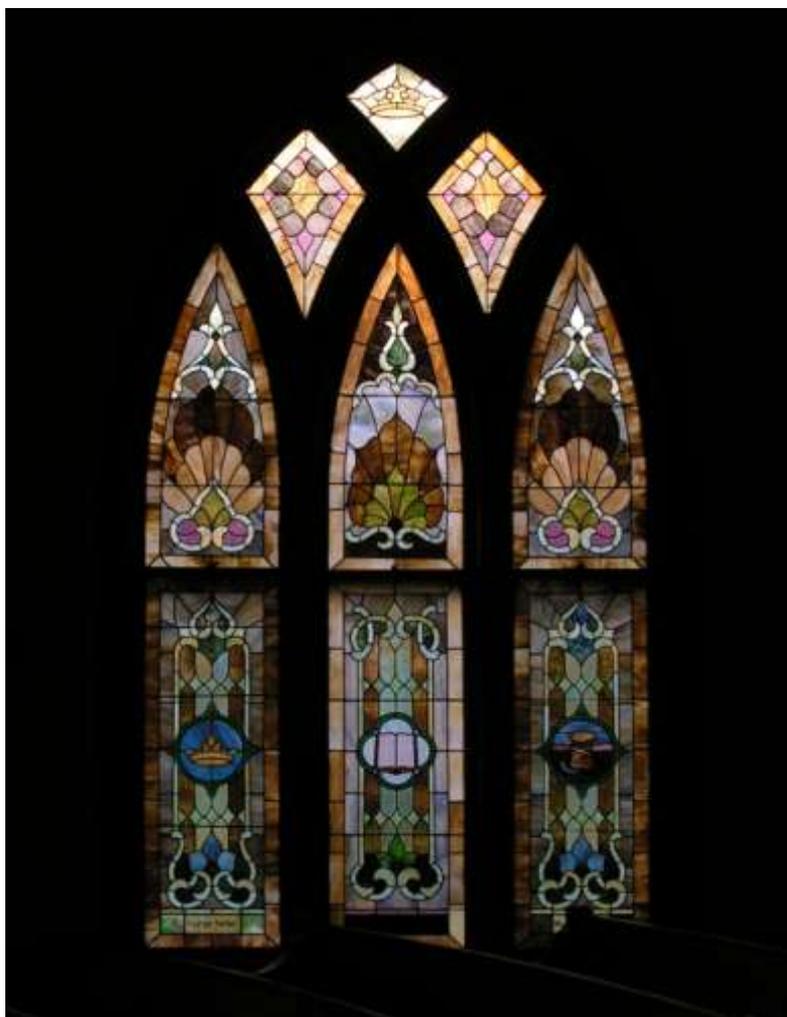


Worship Guide for Smaller Assemblies



Worship Guide for Smaller Assemblies

Sponsored by SW District Worship Team, United Methodist Church, Iowa Conference

You may also download a pdf of this guide from the Southwest District web site. We anticipate changes and additions over time and welcome recommendations. Route them to the SW District Worship Team via the district office.

Christian worship is God-centered. In public worship we center ourselves and align with God through: adoration and praise, confession of sin, scripture reading, sermon, prayers of the people, reconciliation, communion and discipleship.



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Section 1 - Overview of Public Worship



What is worship? What is it we expect to see or feel when we go to worship service? Do we expect the same things to happen Sunday after Sunday, year after year? Or, do we expect that euphoric feeling from having a mountaintop experience in the very presence of God? How can clergy and laity work together to create spirit-filled, meaningful worship, especially in small congregations?

In simple terms, worship is when we give honor and reverence to God. We align and center ourselves with God. According to Robert Schnase in his book Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations, we do not attend worship to fit God into our lives, but rather to meld our lives into God's.

Worship can be done two ways: privately or publicly. Our private worship can be much like we experience at church with hymns, prayer and Bible study. It can also be a way of life. Living a life holy – pleasing to God – is an act of worship. However, many see worship as the weekly, holiday and special occasion times when we gather as a group to sing hymns, pray and hear a sermon. This is public worship – when we gather as community.

Through public worship, in community, we encourage one another in the work we do for God, celebrate the various blessings God has given, and remember we are not alone in our struggles. Through public worship we are taught the word of God and how to apply it. We also receive the sacraments of communion and baptism.

Currently and traditionally, different styles of worship are practiced, ranging from sitting solemnly in a pew to standing with arms raised to speaking in tongues. The Bible also gives examples of different worship styles and formats, but it does not cite any one as correct. Public worship is not a show. Rather, it should evoke a real and authentic response based on the Wesleyan platform of scripture, tradition, reason and experience.

Worship is not the work of any one person, but a group of people. The task of planning worship should not lie totally on the shoulders of clergy or laity alone, but should be shared. The order for worship should be intentional in evoking a response to God.

In rural Iowa, church communities often meet with 35 or fewer worshipers, a situation that creates unique challenges. We hope this guide will provide ideas and resources to help these communities meet in spirit-filled and authentic worship services.

In addition, clergy and laity in smaller rural parishes may come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. All must be respectful of those differences as they work to build relationships and meaningful worship. All must remember these differences offer an opportunity to create a truly unique worship service for their spiritual community.

Finally, although our audience is primarily small assemblies, we hope larger churches find helpful resources in these pages as well – because the goal for all assemblies is celebrating our faith in meaningful worship together.

Section 2 - Ordering of Public Worship



Historical Context and Authority

Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience

The historical context of our worship is well addressed in The United Methodist Book of Worship. (See pp. 13-14 or text in Appendix A.) Our Basic Pattern of Worship is rooted in scripture and in the rich heritage and experience of the church. (The United Methodist Hymnal, p. 2) Our norm for the substance and practice of public worship is: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience. So, United Methodists fall within the orthodox stream of Western Christian belief about the substance and form of worship.

United Methodist worship combines “Anglo-Catholic” (Wesley/Cramner) thought and practice and free-church pragmatism and practice as developed during American westward expansion. So today, many involved with worship planning yearn for clear norms. Bishop Francis Asbury and his followers founded American Methodism without Wesley’s strong emphasis on sacramental forms of worship, including the real presence and the Eucharist as sacrifice.

Yet today a remarkable recovery of the Christian Year and the classic order of Word and Eucharist exists in our church, to the point that Methodists, Anglicans, Lutherans, Roman Catholics and other mainline groups can virtually interchange worship books, follow each others’ printed liturgy and still maintain integrity. Historic churches have converged on the issue of what should be the norm for conducting

public worship, and it bodes well for the unity of the church in Christ as the gospel proclaims. For United Methodists, this convergence takes the form of *A Service of Word and Table*.

Much of our public worship order is an “adaptation of the ancient synagogue service,” portrayed throughout the Book of Acts (Acts 20:7). Our Service of Word and Table reflects as well the Emmaus account found in Luke 24:13-35. We are also mindful our experience must include prayer (Romans 8:22-26) and the praise of God (I Corinthians 14:25).

Scripture reflects our understanding of worship as a means of grace in which we encounter the “living God through the risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.” When children of God gather, scripture makes clear the Spirit is free to move among us in diverse ways, meeting our needs however encountered.

Scripture gives us the pattern of worship practiced by Jesus and his disciples both in the synagogue and in Jewish families, especially around the table. From early times, the Christian tradition and, in particular, the Wesleyan tradition has invoked rich scripture-based worship to speak to each generation it encounters.



Since New Testament times our basic pattern of worship has developed, in healthy and unhealthy ways. In most cases, people look for worship with integrity, more than a service with “bells and whistles.” If we believe a worship

service should offer an encounter with the living God and the moving of the Holy Spirit, then using what is familiarly steeped in the Bible and our historical heritage frees us for this experience.

When the church short changes basics of the faith and the reason behind our practices, we lose an opportunity for encounter with God. Reintroducing scriptural and historical bases for our worship pattern can open doors to new understanding and experience. If what we do makes sense and is connected to history, then worshippers become open to new experiences, meaningful worship and integral practices.

Pattern & Core Elements

The 1984 UMC General Conference adopted an ordinary Sunday order of liturgy called *A Service for Word and Table* with four basic divisions: (See page 2 of UMH)

- (Entrance)
- (Proclamation and Response)
- (Thanksgiving and Communion)
- (Sending Forth)

It is comparable to services in many other mainline churches as well as to the flow of the Roman Catholic Mass since reformed in the '60s. For the UM church to be truly ecumenical in character, it is desirable to adhere to the four-part liturgy. Holy Communion every week? John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, strongly held that weekly Eucharist, at a minimum, should be the norm. Most UM churches celebrate Holy Communion at least monthly and on special festivals of the church (Christmas, Easter, etc.). For a small church, weekly communion can emphasize its family character.

Seasonal / Festival services

Within the basic four-part Sunday worship service is a scheme or rhythm called the "Ordinary" or the core worship elements that remain the same all year long. Examples include: the collect/opening prayer, the proclamation of scripture, the creed, the offering of gifts, the doxology and the Lord's Prayer.

Another set of ingredients for the service are called “Propers.” Propers change daily or weekly. Examples include: lectionary Bible readings, sermon topics, songs and hymns and prayer themes.

The “Ordinary” gives worshipers constancy while the “Propers” add variety and interest through the year, so each gathering of public worship is an event. Christmas is not Easter!

Sundays and Special Days* The United Methodist Planning calendar outlines each of the following seasons and special days. In addition, it includes the lectionary readings.

Season of Advent Purple & blue

First Sunday of Advent to Fourth Sunday of Advent

Season of Christmas White and gold

Nativity of the Lord (Christmas Day)

First Sunday after Christmas

New Year’s Day

Second Sunday after Christmas

Season of Epiphany (Ordinary Time)

Epiphany of the Lord

First Sunday after Epiphany (Baptism of the Lord)

Second to Ninth Sunday after Epiphany **Green**

Last Sunday after Epiphany (Transfiguration Sunday)

White

Season of Lent Purple

Ash Wednesday

First Sunday to Sixth Sunday in Lent

(Passion Sunday or Palm Sunday) Purple or Red(optional)

Holy Week

Monday of Holy Week

Tuesday of Holy Week

Wednesday of Holy Week

Maundy/Holy Thursday

Good Friday **Black or no color**

Holy Saturday

Season of Easter White or gold

Resurrection of the Lord

Easter Vigil

Easter Day

Sunday of Easter

Second Sunday of Easter to Sixth Sunday of Easter

Ascension of the Lord

(Sixth Thursday of Easter)

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Day of Pentecost **Red****Season after Pentecost (Ordinary Time)**Trinity Sunday (First Sunday after Pentecost) **White**

Second through Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

GreenReign of Christ or Christ the King (Last Sunday after Pentecost) **White****Special Days**

Watch Night Dec. 31

All Saints Day Nov. 1 **White**Thanksgiving Day (4th Thursday in November)**Special Offering Sundays – UMC Conference**

According to the Book of Discipline, special offering Sundays are intended to illustrate the nature and calling of the church. “The special Sundays are placed on the calendar to make clear the calling of the church as the people of God, and to give persons the opportunity to contribute offerings to special programs.” These Sundays are:

Human Relations Day, Sunday before observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day

One Great Hour of Sharing, 4th Sunday in Lent

Native American Ministries Sunday, 2nd Sunday after Easter

Peace with Justice Sunday, 1st Sunday after Pentecost

World Communion Sunday, 1st Sunday in October

United Methodist Student Day, last Sunday in November

Rites – Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Service of Death and Resurrection



Baptism and confirmation are also considered liturgical events within the life of the church and are expected to take place within the worship service of the gathered congregation. These are rites which should be performed only after clear education and teaching of the individual family and gathered community.

Baptism is a means of grace that initiates us into Christ's whole church, not into a denomination. But, it may be one and the same for those who receive it at an age of accountability (during confirmation). We believe baptism "should unite, rather than divide, Christians." See The United Methodist Book of Worship, Page 81.

United Methodists baptize by "any of the modes used by Christians," such as by sprinkling, pouring or immersion. Again, scripture gives us the foundation for our practice and experience of baptism (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-5; John 3:3-5; Matthew 3:16 . . .) See The United Methodist Book of Worship, Page 81. Baptism is the beginning of our journey with God, Christian commitment and ministry in the name of Christ. We are called and empowered by our baptism to a life of service to the world.

United Methodists practice confirmation as a response to baptism. Most have been baptized as infants, so confirmation gives the opportunity to respond for ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. This is an opportunity to reaffirm the covenant made at our baptism on our behalf by parents/godparents.

Both rites take place within the larger setting of the gathered body. We believe we are a community of faith - a

family - in which we take seriously our responsibility to each other. What happens to each of us individually will affect all members of the body of Christ. It was the practice of John Wesley, and now many of us as United Methodists, to reaffirm our commitment to Christ and the church through a service of reaffirmation each year. (1st Sunday in January - The United Methodist Hymnal, pg. 32)



We should teach the historical context of each of these rites and their importance to our lives. We are a people of family, community and universal church. These rites are central to our continued growth.

The United Methodist Book of Worship recognizes Christian marriages and funerals as liturgical events. Thus the entire assembly, not simply the clergy/worship leader(s), needs to be engaged. The four-part general “Ordinary” of public worship is applicable to these occasions. Another important observation: as worship should never deviate from being worship without other motives, marriages and funerals provide excellent opportunities for inactive members and others to experience quality worship.

Other Services – Memorial Day, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, 4th of July, Thanksgiving

Throughout the Christian year we celebrate other services. These may include Valentine’s Day and other secular celebrations such as Memorial Day, Mother’s Day,

Father's Day and the 4th of July. Many online resources exist, as well as books available at Cokesbury, for these special days. [The United Methodist Book of Worship](#) also gives us special prayers and other resources for celebrating some of these moments in the life of your congregation.



If you find yourself in conflict with the premise of the secular celebration, seek guidance in scripture and prayer to recognize the importance of this celebration in the life of your congregation while still approaching it with integrity.

Many celebrate the Christian Home rather than Mother's Day and Father's Day. It is appropriate to recognize our own mothers/fathers and those who have been like mothers/fathers. Many pastors use this time to celebrate mothers/daughter/sisters who share the "mothering spirit" and to testify to the importance of the women in our lives. This includes those who have never married or had children; those who had difficulty having children, and those who had a less than healthy relationship with their own mother. We can do the same for father's day and the men in our lives.

It would be easy to become lost in the secular nature of July 4th and Thanksgiving. Yet, we can easily plug into Christ's saving grace, the love of our sisters and brothers, and thanksgiving for all God is doing in our lives and in history. Again, many resources exist to help focus on the appropriate Christian values while not ignoring celebrations important to the community.

Section 3 - Conduct of Worship

Tasks of Clergy and Laity

Our polity designates a few things that only licensed clergy may do: preside at sacraments (Baptism, Eucharist/Holy Communion) and officiating at weddings. Otherwise, laity may perform a number of functions in the conduct of worship:

Lector/Reader: Scripture read well has power to heal, convince, instruct, convict, comfort and encourage. Much of this power is diminished or magnified according to the commitment, training and passion of the lector/reader.

As a lector/reader, you have the great privilege of speaking the Word of God into existence in the midst of the worshiping community. In our tradition, no word is preached without scripture first being read. The work of the lector precedes and is the foundation for the work of the preacher. It is no mere ritual or formality to *read* the words of the Bible out loud. It is very meat and drink to a hungry and thirsty congregation.

Preparation: First, know ahead of time what you will be reading. If the pastor or worship team is not in the habit of letting lectors know ahead of time what the scriptures will be, lobby for change.

Pray: Ask God to help you read with energy and integrity. Pray people will connect to God through your reading.

Practice the reading: First, read through it silently, noting any unfamiliar words. Look them up in a dictionary or Bible dictionary. If pronunciation is the main concern, a book such as The Harper Collins Bible Pronunciation Guide (William O. Walker Jr., Ph.D., ed., New York, Harper Collins Publ., 1989) is a useful tool. It is paperback and not expensive.

Second, read it out loud two or three times. Listen to the cadence of language and the emotions expressed. Is this scripture instruction? A story? Happy? Sad? Angry? Let the context, the intention of the writer, and the emotion guide how you read.

Presentation and technique: Arrive early to make sure the lectern is set up and the microphone is adjusted. Don't stand too close to the microphone; allow someone else to guide you. Generally a lectern microphone should be about one to 1½ feet from and slightly below your mouth. Speak slightly over it unless those assisting tell you otherwise. This helps remove wind noise and popping from consonants. Do not tap or blow into the microphone as this can damage it.



With computers and online Bibles, it is very simple to print out scripture in the font and size best for you to read. (Try the Oremus Bible Browser at <http://bible.oremus.org/>) If you use a printed sheet, format it to help with reading. Use extra space between sentences. Start new lines where appropriate. Use bold face or underlining to highlight problem words or words to emphasize. Even putting in pronunciations can be helpful. Try putting them inside brackets in a different font or smaller type to indicate they are not part of the text.

As with singing, warm up your voice. Hum a song while you come to church, read through the scripture aloud before the service, and even warm up with the choir.

When you stand to begin, take a short moment to compose yourself, especially if you tend to be nervous. Look at the congregation and pick out supportive friends. Remember you are bringing a joyful gift to the congregation – not performing.

Speak slowly and distinctly, but also with emotion and vitality; do not be afraid to open your mouth. Pause for emphasis or drama to help the congregation stay with you.

Stand comfortably, as relaxed as possible. Don't be overly concerned with eye contact *while* you are reading. It is good to make eye contact with the congregation before and after reading, especially if you use an acclamation (such as "The Word of God for the People of God.")



In addition to reading scripture, many lectors also serve as liturgist for the worship service. How much you do varies from one location to another, but commonly, you will be asked to lead some combination of the call to worship and opening prayer, the prayer for illumination, the leader's part of the psalms and the first and second scripture readings. You may also be asked to lead a confession of sin, the creed, and perhaps the prayers. Normally the lector is not asked to do *all* these things, but any combination of them is fairly common.

Leading Liturgy: When leading the liturgy, you welcome the congregation to come with you into God's presence. Any ways you project this idea are helpful. Hand gestures such as raising your hands, palms up, when you say "The Lord be with you" can emphasize what you are saying. Again, this is not a performance; you are helping people worship God with integrity, joy and love.

As with the scripture reading, practice the liturgy. Joyful phrases should be said joyfully, sorrowful ones sorrowfully, and people should sense you are worshipping God.

When you read through the bulletin, mark where you need to help people move or transition. (And remember, typos do hapin!) Normally people feel more comfortable being instructed to stand or sit, than trying to figure it out for themselves. Simple hand gestures usually are enough to prompt them. Likewise, it may not be necessary to announce hymn numbers if they are printed in the bulletin. You may also need to provide verbal cues other times, such as after prayer time when folks may still have their heads bowed. (Of course, using projection calls for different techniques than using hymnals and bulletins.) Try to strike a balance between hospitality toward those unfamiliar with your worship and regular attendees, who find spoken instructions distracting.

Another part of leading liturgy may be leading the congregation in prayers. Typically, these may include:

Collect/Prayer of the Day: This prayer gathers the people into the theme of the day's texts and time of the church year. It is appropriate to reflect on the day in some brief way similar to the following prayer example.

L: "The Lord be With You"

P: "And also with You"

"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 Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen"

Offertory: The following prayer is appropriate for worship services without Holy Communion:

"Most merciful and gracious God, from whose open hand we have all received a great bounty, we ask you to accept this offering of your people. Remember in your love those who have brought it. Remember also those persons and purposes for which it is given. So follow this sacrifice with your blessing

that it may promote peace and good will, and advance the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen."

Prayers of the People: Following the liturgy of the Word and creed, prayers/petitions are next offered in line with tradition going back to Jewish worship and as witnessed as part of early Christian worship by Justin Martyr and Augustine of Hippo. "I urge that intercessions be made for all men, kings . . ." I Timothy 2:1-6. See UMH Page 877 for a basic litany of intercession where, after each petition, the prayer Leader concludes with "Lord, in your mercy" and the assembly responds with "Hear our prayer."

Benedictions: The Benediction is a "good word." It is a final blessing upon the people of God that they can take into the world with them. It can also incorporate a call to service -- to taking God's blessing out to the world.

As always, The United Methodist Book of Worship is a great resource. Pages 13-32 discuss and outline a basic pattern of worship and give many suggestions from the Hymnal and from other resources in the Book of Worship itself. This information is much more complete than that found in pages 2-5 of *The United Methodist Hymnal*. Under the section: "SENDING FORTH," the Book of Worship says:

Whether or not Holy Communion has been celebrated, the service concludes with a series of acts in which the congregation stands and is sent forth to active ministry in the world.

[Then are given several suggestions for a final hymn or song. The section concludes with:]

The Dismissal with Blessing, often called the Benediction, is given by the pastor [or worship leader], facing the people. It is addressed to the people, not to God, and the pastor and people appropriately look at each other as it is given. For this reason, it should be given from the front, not the

back, of the sanctuary. See 39, 151, 157, 559-66. [referring to items in the Book of Worship.]



If the closing hymn or song is a recessional in which the pastor [or worship leader] joins, it should follow the Dismissal with Blessing; otherwise it should precede the Dismissal with Blessing. (pp. 31-32)

There is no one set benediction. Often it is modeled on one of the benedictions of the Bible. The benediction at the end of the communion service can be used at any time (United Methodist Hymnal, p. 11). The letters of Paul are rich sources of benedictions, e.g., Romans 1:7b; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; Galatians 1:3-5; 6:18; Ephesians 6:23-24, etc.

Sometimes the pastor will sum up the main theme of the worship service, commending the people to live it out by the grace of God, and ending with a Trinitarian blessing such as “And, the blessing of God almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always.”

A benediction can be a call-response liturgy as well, such as “leader: Go forth to serve the Lord,” “People: We go forth in the joy and strength of God!”

Communion Assistants

In This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion, we find this general job

description for lay people who are serving as communion assistants:

“In accord with the tenet that the whole gathered community should be actively engaged in Eucharistic celebration, laypeople read Scripture and lead prayers (not the Great Thanksgiving), prepare the table and elements, bring the elements forward in offering, help distribute the consecrated elements to those communing, and render other appropriate service. Ordained leaders have the responsibility of recruiting and training people for these services. Confidence, consistency, and effectiveness are essential in making this lay ministry meaningful to all in the congregation.” (pp. 44-45)

Acolytes

<http://www.stalbansaustin.org/Acolyte%20Training%20Manual.pdf>

This manual from St. Albans Episcopal Church, Austin, TX is more complex than most UMC's would use, but offers some good thoughts.

<http://www.gbod.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=nhL RJ2PMKsG&b=5690503&ct=4191467>

From our General Board of Discipleship, it includes links to the following resources:

- "Work of Acolytes" by Michael J. O'Donnell, OSL, (chapter 4) in [Worship Matters: A United Methodist Guide to Worship Work, Volume 2](#), edited by B. Byron Anderson (Discipleship Resources), pages 38-46. This is a comprehensive article for those who want to understand the work of acolytes or who will be training and working with acolytes. (NOTE: Upper Room seems not to have this book at present.)
- [The Acolyte's Book](#) by Hoyt Hickman (Abingdon). This is a basic manual for young acolytes and is a useful tool for training and reference by acolytes.
- [Children Worship!](#) by MaryJane Pierce Norton (Discipleship Resources). This 13-session worship education resource helps

congregations incorporate young children into the worshiping community.

- For more about acolytes on the Internet go to: "Acolyte" in the Catholic Encyclopedia: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01106a.htm>

The Center for Worship Resourcing does not endorse these links. We list them for the convenience of visitors to our web site and invite you to evaluate the content of these links carefully:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kfGp-t1JjA&feature=related>

This is a funny, short overview, including “dress appropriately, don’t rush, participate in service while seated.” Again, it is from an Episcopal church, so some of the instructions don’t apply.

http://www.trinitylimerock.org/structure/serve_altar.htm

Another Episcopal web page with some good ideas.

Section 4 - Fleshing Out the Order

Just as the overall worship service should evoke a real and authentic response to God, the elements of worship should be focused upon this goal. This involves both clergy and laity.

Keeping this goal in mind, we've assembled some ideas for small congregations to try as they work to create Spirit-filled worship services. In addition, if you crave more ideas and resources, this guide includes a complete bibliography and list of resources to help you explore further options.

The Children's Sermon & engagement of children and youth

Children and youth are energetic, and traditional worship can seem long and boring. Anything we can do to engage them in worship will make it more meaningful for them. And a little movement, even if it's simply walking to the front and sprawling on the floor with the pastor can make the entire worship service more fun.

The pastor does not have to be the only one giving the children's sermon. A lay member or senior high student can do this quite well, and it's another way to get them involved!

Children are uninhibited and informal. They also don't go in for a lot of God-talk or big words, so sitting on the steps to chat often works well.

Humor is another important tool to connect with children. They enjoy when the pastor or lay teacher is silly and funny. Make use of objects to illustrate your point. For example, squeeze toothpaste out of a tube onto a plate. Then hand the plate to one of the kids and ask him or her to please put it back into the tube. Explain how the toothpaste is like the mean things we say to or about people – once out, they can't be put back in.

Some other ideas include:

- Acting out a story, allowing the kids to take on different roles.
- Singing and having them teach a song to the congregation.

- Inviting children up and explaining the sacraments, as well as showing them the physical objects used, such as the cup, platter and baptismal font. Allow them to see, feel and touch wherever possible.
- Have children come up, encircle and sing to those being recognized: for birthdays, awards, anniversaries, etc.
- Use children and youth to serve as greeters, candle lighters, readers, ushers.
- Display art works, banners and displays created by children and youth in the sanctuary during worship.
- Use the art of children and youth on the bulletin. Provide materials for them to create bulletin covers during the worship service.
- Ask youth with musical, theatrical, speech gifts to share them during a worship service.
- Include youth and children's activities and concerns in the announcements/time of sharing.



Other more specific children's sermon ideas can be found a variety of places. Some of these resources offer ideas to work with the lectionary. The following resources are available on the Internet:

- <http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/s-children.php>
- <http://www.webspawner.com/users/ChildPage/>

- <http://www.childrensermons.com/>
- <http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

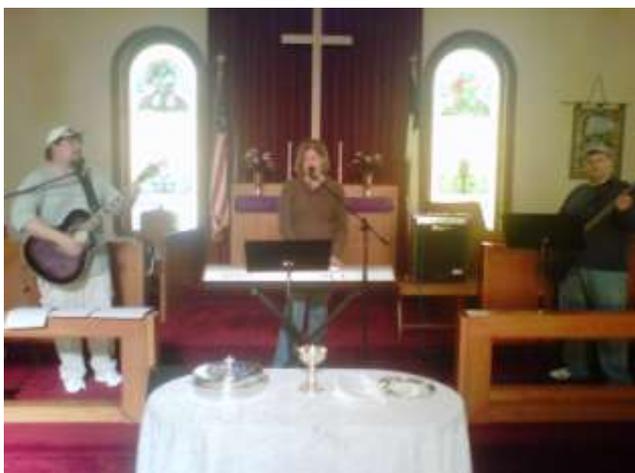
Music with sparse resources and talent

Music is a wonderful gift of God. All the elements of music – melody, harmony, rhythm, beat, tempo, mode and (sometimes) words – combine to touch or move the whole human being: mind, body, soul, spirit, emotions and relationships. At its best, music in worship can facilitate, enrich or enhance our connection with God and with each other in the congregation. It is a form of expression of our deepest selves and a form of communication through which we receive grace upon grace.



The tremendous richness and variety of music presents its greatest challenge. Every generation has its own – and every person his/her own “heart music,” the music that consistently produces a deep, personal response, usually evidenced by some bodily movement: a tapping toe, a bobbing head, a hand patting a knee or even ecstatic dancing. People exhibit a huge variety of musical tastes; not everybody likes the same style. So, if a goal of worship planners is to design a service that enables a variety of people to make as deep a connection with God as possible, the unavoidable implication is that a variety of music must be used. If a person coming to a particular congregation in worship never hears their heart music as an expression of faith, devotion, or adoration, then, in a sense, never is his/her whole self offered to God. A potential vital connection of faith and worship is missed.

Along with considerations of musical style is the issue of function, particularly of sung music. Hymns or spiritual songs can serve several functions. Some are prayers addressed to God, expressing devotion, adoration, or petition and often conveying some deep emotion. Some are declarations about God, acting as statements of faith or as tools for teaching the faith. Others are exhortations addressed to the worshiping community, serving as reminders of the faith and of commitments to a life of faith and discipleship. Still others invite us – to faith, to action, to offering or to community. Each of these functions has a place in our worship, and when combined with scripture readings, prayers, teaching and sacramental liturgies, the music greatly enriches the community's worship.



In a similar way, the tempo, beat and rhythm of music can add or distract from the mood, flow and impact of worship. The beat of a march moves us to action, while the flow of a ballad or waltz can beautifully support prayer or meditation. Instrumentation also can become a part of the magic of music, whether it is the majesty of a pipe organ played well or the simplicity and purity of a flute accompanied by guitar. Establishing a fitting musical mood or environment enhances the worship experience, in which the whole person connects with God through the Holy Spirit and with each other in the congregation.

The role of a choir, a praise team, or a worship/song leader is to guide a congregation in worshiping God. It is easy – even seductive – for them to slip into a mentality of performance, as though they were performing for the entertainment of the congregation. If there is a performance happening in any sense, it is the congregation as a whole performing its “honor and reverence for God.” If there is an audience, it is God, not the people in the worship space. So the crucial question for choirs and worship leaders is: how can we point people toward or lead people into or open people’s hearts to the presence of God? Can this be done so that attention is given to God and not to the worship leaders?

Good music done well lifts the spirits, engages the soul, and stirs the emotions. Music done poorly is a “downer” – stressing our inadequacies, depressing our self-esteem, and embarrassing us before God and our neighbors. It just hurts! This presents a challenge to our “smaller assemblies,” in which instrumentation, accompaniment, and a small number of musically-gifted people can inhibit the making of good music. Following are some suggestions for worship music in smaller congregations:

- 1) Try using a keyboard or piano for accompaniment of congregational singing. Not only may these be easier to sing to than an organ, they also provide the possibility of the music having a beat, which enlivens the tune and expresses the “heart music” of many people of many generations.
- 2) In addition to the hymnbook and its accompanying resources, consider purchasing books of hymns and religious music arranged as accompaniment, rather than just the musical score found in most hymnals. The singing experience can be enriched if the accompanying instrument plays something interesting.
- 3) Experiment with instrumentation. Substitute a guitar or a violin or an accordion for the organ or piano. Form a combo from whatever instruments are available in the congregation. Or, adding just one

other instrument can add a spark of interest and emotion to congregational singing. Ask the music student who is learning the flute or recorder to play along with the pianist!



4) If there is no one to accompany the service “live,” use recorded accompaniment. There are several versions of “digital hymnals” available, and with compact disc technology, manipulating the media is fairly easy. It takes some practice to become accustomed to it, but if your congregation enjoys singing, recorded accompaniment can be very helpful.

5) If the worshipers love to sing and have ability, consider singing “a capella” – without accompaniment. Some traditions of Christian worship do without any form of instrumentation or accompaniment. Perhaps you can, too!

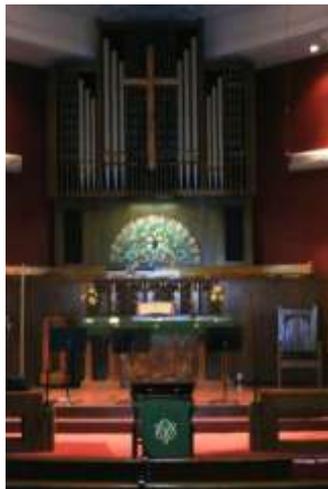
6) If your congregation is embarrassed by the quality of its singing, can’t find a suitable accompaniment, or have become too few for comfort in group singing, remember there is nothing wrong with singing/humming/listening along to good recorded music. Remind each other the point is to engage our hearts with the heart of God in worship that is “in spirit and in truth.” Anything that aids that engagement can be judged holy.

7) Finally, if music is a challenge for your congregation, remember the invitation of the psalms to “make a joyful noise to the Lord,” not as an excuse for poor performance, but as an invitation to heartfelt devotion regardless of musical giftedness. If the heart is right, whatever comes out of the mouth is acceptable – even pleasing – to God! Have a great time in worship, regardless of music!

Enriching Worship through the use of visuals

Visuals should be clear and eye-appealing. And visuals include everything from the church interior décor and lighting, vestments and worship leader attire. Something viewed (a picture) can be worth a thousand words. Visuals and symbols, like spoken words, must be used carefully and intentionally to convey clear meaning.

These items can be matched to the color of the liturgical season to help provide a sense of harmony and unity. Everything should be designed to appeal to the senses and to communicate, interpret and increase the awareness of the Holy Spirit’s presence and power.



Visual elements of worship can include:

Vestments: When clergy, liturgists, choir members and acolytes appear to lead worship they are not there to “show off” their wardrobes. In fact, clergy and laity who lead worship are sensitive not to draw attention to what they wear, as though to display their individual tastes and styles of clothing or otherwise capture attention. For this reason and others, vestments are apparel worship leaders wear to neutralize the impact of their personalities and place attention instead on their symbolic roles in worship.

- Choir members wear robes (or albs); and Clergy, out of respect for a practice that has become ecumenical, now commonly wear the white or off-white alb and a clergy stole over it.
- Laity worship leaders may also wear the alb, though they do not wear the stole, because the stole is uniquely symbolic of the yoke of Christ taken at clergy ordination.
- Clergy stole colors vary, depending on the season or occasion of the Christian calendar. Red: Pentecost. White: Christmas, Easter, funerals, weddings. Purple: Lent, Advent, hospital communion. Green: after Epiphany and after Pentecost until Advent.
- “Alb” is short for tunica alba (white tunic). It is the color of Jesus’ grave clothes and angel clothes, and thus the color of the Resurrection. Also in the ancient church, when people came out of the waters of baptism, they were dressed in white tunics.
- The alb’s use and symbolism as a worn vestment is biblically based and tied closely to evolved church liturgical traditions. At Holy Communion, for example, the white alb worn by the clergy-celebrant allows the pastor to be clearly perceived as “representative” of Christ himself offering the holy meal at the altar-table.

Paraments and banners: of appropriate design and materials placed tastefully within the worship space.

Floral arrangements: near, but not on the altar-table.

Candles and lighting: Examples of uses for candles in worship include: lighting candles in memory of the deceased

for All Saints' Day; lighting a bank of candles for Pentecost. In addition, colored lighting could be used well in a small church in coordination with the season.

Audio visual elements: For churches with projection systems, carefully chosen photos can enhance the worship atmosphere and invite contemplation. Some churches project the bulletin and order of worship.

Printed Order/Bulletins: Bulletins, which present the order of worship, should be interesting and welcoming. As with the other visual elements, they should be clear and eye appealing. They should also offer printed guidance to visitors about the order of worship, when to stand, be seated, etc.

Variations in type face can give bulletins more interest and help with readability. Generally speaking, larger type (12-14 point) with a serif is more readable. San serif type is better for headings. Readable bulletins are an important part of welcoming newcomers and helping them feel part of the service.

Images, whether photographic or graphic, can contribute to liturgical themes or communicate information about your church. For example, using children's art from Sunday School or an after-school program, lets congregants know children are an important part of your church community.

Wardrobe of dancers, singers, performers, etc.

Other church religious art that possesses integrity and avoids artificiality

Use a well-respected Altar Guild manual to help guide worship space décor. Your church's architectural style and how it affects the worship atmosphere should be considered. Work with it as much as you can. And keep in mind some basic Christian symbols:

- Equilateral triangle = the Trinity
- Circle = the love of God
- Crescent = Mary the mother of Jesus; nurture
- Torch = knowledge

- Verticals = human zeal and energy for the quest of God

For additional information on art in worship and the significance of colors, symbols and flowers, see the following references:

- Fish eaters <http://www.fisheaters.com/symbols.html>
- Colors of the Christian Church Year <http://www.cresourcei.org/colorsof.html>
- The Meaning of Church Colors <http://www.crivoice.org/symbols/colorsmeaning.html>
- General Board of Discipleship Arts page http://http://www.gbod.org/site/c.nhLRJ2PMKsG/b.3880501/k.9B0B/Arts_Artists.htm

Local florists may also offer booklets with the meanings of various flowers.

Acoustics

Good sound in a worship space is a major influence on the character and quality of worship. Think of the church interior as a musical instrument. It should be “tuned” to balance between speaking and producing quality music for instruments (i.e. organ, piano) and for singers.

Unfortunately, in the last 50 years many worship spaces have become “dead” because of installation of carpet. You can try to remedy acoustical problems with electronic amplification systems for speakers and worship leaders, but good overall acoustical situations can be complex to calculate.

If problems exist for speakers and music, it is best and most cost effective to employ a qualified acoustics consultant. Do not rely on persons selling amplification equipment or sound-deadening materials. Most often in smaller worship spaces, you don’t need an amplification system, if good acoustical planning is undertaken. An excellent overall resource for church building design issues is “Church Architecture” by James F. White/Susan J. White.

Space & Furnishings Any space can become holy space for fulfilling Christian worship. These are the key centers: Altar-table, Baptismal Font, Pulpit.

Given liturgy is the work of the people, there's value to bringing the worship assembly closer to the action at the Pulpit and Altar-table as the focal point. (Pastor can lead and consecrate at the Eucharist with face towards the assembly.)

Basic furnishings include:

Altar-Table symbolizes God's (Christ's) presence, a center of visual attention; an expression of truth, simplicity, purity. It is not a furnishing upon which to display other visually prominent objects such as large flower arrangements, large-scale crosses, open Bibles for display or offering plates. It's preferably free standing, so the holy communion celebrant stands before it facing the congregation.



Table Cloths Table surfaces should be vested with white (clean) linens. Seasonal paraments are optional to table front.

Altar Candles, ideally, should be on floor-standing holders to the sides or out from front corners of the table. Candles on table are common and acceptable, but should not be overly prominent.

Flowers may adorn the chancel/altar area except after Maundy Thursday through Holy Saturday when altar area is stripped. Artificial flowers are not appropriate; avoid flower arrangements with ribbons and artificial elements.

Visual Integrity Keep clean and uncluttered, those spaces around chancel and altar-table to ensure clear and effective visual expression.

Baptismal Font should be placed at nave entrance (symbolizing our entrance into the church through baptism) or near, or on a path to, chancel/altar.

Pascal Candle Lighted the first service of Easter, it may be brought in as part of Easter processional and lit at each public worship assembly through Pentecost Sunday. Keep it near the baptismal font. Also light it for all baptisms, and use it for funerals and marriage services.

Sanctuary Lamp/Eternal Flame To indicate and honor the presence of Christ in a sin-darkened world.



Advent Wreath display and light progressively from Advent Sunday through Christmas.

Read about building and renovating for Christian worship in Church Architecture by renowned worship arts specialists and authors James F. White and Susan J. White. It is “must” reading for groups charged with studying church design and renovation projects.

Ways of serving Holy Communion

Aside from consecrating the elements, lay people can do almost every part of Holy Communion.

With the presiding clergy (celebrant), laypersons can distribute the bread and juice to the congregation. Many different ways exist to serve communion, and what is considered normal in one place would feel awkward in another. So, the assistants should be instructed before the service on these points:

- When to come forward
- When to receive communion themselves
- Where to stand
- How to distribute the elements
- What to say while distributing the elements
- How to order the table at the end of distribution

Let’s look at one way to involve communion assistants. If we are using one loaf of bread, broken by the celebrant, and individual communion cups:

- During the offering, assistants bring the bread and juice forward. In this case, a chalice would probably be used to bring juice forward even though the actual serving will be done by individual cups.
- Assistants sit at the front of the congregation.
- After the Great Thanksgiving, words of Institution and the breaking of bread, the celebrant may call the servers to the altar. The celebrant serves the assistants, using the same phrases as will be said to the congregation: “The body of Christ, given for

you”; “The Blood of Christ, shed for you” (or similar). Then the celebrant is served by one or more of the assistants, who say the phrases to him/her.

- The Celebrant wraps a napkin around part of the loaf. If there are two or more stations, the celebrant hands the bread to one assistant and hands a tray of cups to two others. Often, the pastor and one server will go first to the musicians playing during communion, and serve them.
- For two stations at the front with people returning to their seats by the side aisles, the pastor and other server holding the bread are on the inside, and the persons holding the juice are on the outside.



- Those holding bread break off pieces and place them in congregants’ outstretched hands, saying “The Body of Christ, broken for you” (or similar). The congregant then receives a cup from the outside server who says, “The blood of Christ, shed for you” (or similar). For younger children, the server might say (as the clergy determines appropriate), “We do this to remember Christ’s love for us.” Or, “This is a gift of love from Christ.” Or, children may come forward to be blessed by the pastor instead of partaking in the elements.

- In chancels with cup racks on the altar rail, have people place empty cups there. Otherwise, empty trays can be placed strategically along the path back to the seats.
- Encourage people to spend time in prayer at the altar rail after receiving communion.
- Designated servers (the ushers, perhaps) should serve congregants who cannot come forward.
- After all have communed, servers return to the table with the remaining bread and juice. These are placed in order on the table and covered with linens. Consult with the celebrant on how to handle this.

Communion without clergy and additional ways of serving

There are almost as many ways of celebrating communion as there are congregations. This Holy Mystery indicates the cup should be common – even when individual cups are used. One suggestion to do this is to fill individual cups from a “pouring chalice.” Other ways to honor the common cup are intinction – where the communicant dips their piece of bread in the chalice – and actually drinking from the common cup. To learn more, look at pp. 49ff of This Holy Mystery.

A Liturgy for Holy Communion when the table has been “extended” by another congregation to provide the ministry of the sacrament in a congregation served by a Certified Lay Minister or Certified Lay Speaker follows. A number of congregations in the Southwest District use this service.

THE LORD’S SUPPER

L: The Church of God, to which we belong, has taken bread and wine and given thanks over them according to our Lord’s command. I bring these holy gifts that you may share in the communion of his body and blood. The bread and cup which we share in this service come from a celebration of the Lord’s Supper at _____ United Methodist Church as a visible expression of our connectionalism. We who are many are one

body, because we all share in one bread. Let us confess our sins to God.

**P: Most Merciful God,
We have sinned in thought, word and deed,
And in what we have left undone.
For the sake of your son, Jesus Christ,
Have mercy on us and forgive us,
That we may serve you in newness of life,
To the glory of your name. Amen.**

L: Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy on us,
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

P: AMEN.

L: God our Father,
we come to this feast which you have prepared,
as guests whom you have invited;
may we receive the bread of eternal life
which you provide for our healing and strength;
through Christ our Lord.

P: AMEN.

L: And now, with the confidence of the children of God, let us pray:

THE LORD'S PRAYER (in unison)

L: Receive this holy sacrament in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

GIVING THE BREAD AND CUP

After all are served

L: Let us pray:

**P: We thank you, Lord,
that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ,
and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet
prepared for all people.
Amen.**

Disposing of the Elements

When you have bread and juice/wine left over after communion, there are different ways of disposing of the elements. The consecrated elements remain holy and set apart even though worship has ended, and therefore they should be treated with great respect. Some good ways of disposing of the elements include:

- Have the assembled congregation share the bread and juice as an act of fellowship following worship.
- If there is a small enough portion, the pastor may eat the bread and drink the juice.
- Scatter the bread on the ground for the birds, and pour out the juice on the ground to nourish plants.
- For those able to take this thought to its logical conclusion, even the rinse water from washing the plate and cup should be poured out on the ground or down a *piscina* (a special sink whose drain goes into the earth, rather than into the sewer).
- Make the bread available for the congregation to take to persons who weren't able to attend. This is an ancient practice of sharing the grace of Christ with those unable to be at worship. (It's also simpler than taking it to the homebound.)

You may also make the elements available for the pastor and/or lay ministers to take communion to the sick and homebound. Here is what This Holy Mystery says:

The pastor, or laypersons at the direction

of the pastor, may distribute the consecrated bread and cup to sick or homebound persons as soon as feasible following a service of Word and Table as an extension of that service. When this service is used as a distribution of the consecrated bread and cup, the Great Thanksgiving is omitted, but thanks should be given after the bread and cup are received.

There should be whatever participation is feasible by those receiving communion. Sometimes this may simply be gestures and expression. Familiar acts of worship that persons may know by memory –the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed, or the Twenty-third Psalm – may be used. Sometimes it is possible to sing one or more hymns.

Those distributing communion should also be sensitive to the power of acts such as calling the person by name, touching the person, encouraging the remembrance of significant experiences, and allowing sick or homebound persons to minister to the visitors.

The people come together and exchange greetings in the Lord’s name.

Scriptures are read and interpreted, and prayer and praise are offered.

(This Holy Mystery. Gayle Carlton Felton. Discipleship Resources, Nashville. 2005. page 77.)

The elements of sharing communion with already consecrated bread and juice are:

- Invitation to the table
 - Confession of sin and words of assurance
 - Sharing the peace of Christ
 - The Lord’s Prayer
 - Sharing the bread and cup using appropriate words, such as *Name*, the body of Christ, given for you. AMEN.
- Name*, the blood of Christ, given for you. AMEN.

- Giving thanks for the meal just shared and the grace of God that it has shared.
- A blessing, such as “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you [all]. AMEN.



Those distributing communion need to be very sensitive to the circumstances of the visit and amend the service accordingly.

Baptism

Many helpful resources are available for baptism and are listed in this guide. Although helpful, they may not address all situations. Those times offer a wonderful opportunity to call upon an experienced pastor, your district superintendent, and search the records of your congregation to see if they have had previous such situations in their history.

Though we most often baptize with sprinkling (because we generally are asked to do infants and toddlers), there may be times when we pour or immerse. We seem to have the least information about immersion. I suggest speaking with a pastor of a denomination (United Church of Christ, United Brethren, Baptist, etc.) that regularly does immersion to learn how, so you do not fall into the water with the one being baptized.

We do not redo baptisms or require a second baptism. Since we believe God/Holy Spirit is the One moving at such a time, there is no need to “redo” what God has already done. However, individuals may want to reaffirm

their baptism, which is lifted up in our Book of Worship and Hymnal. Your congregation can do this as a meaningful reminder of commitment to the church and who we are as children of God.



Methodists believe baptism should take place in the midst of the larger community of faith; however, we may be asked to consider baptisms outside the norm. You can accomplish this without leaving out the community. For example: perhaps you have someone nursing home bound who requests baptism. With the permission of the individual's family, invite members of your faith community to join you at the nursing home and be present. Perhaps you have a sick infant, who though recovering, needs to avoid the general population. Again, with the permission of the family, invite healthy members of the faith community, willing to follow the guidelines, to join you at the church. Both circumstances, though unusual, are workable. You then lift up the newly baptized persons during the next public worship time.

Baptisms offer wonderful opportunities for us to unite in our faith experience and commit to God and one another. Use your resources. Remember baptism is usually in response to the Word of God proclaimed!

Christian marriage

Services of marriage are worship services and best if held in the church. When held outside the church at a park, home, etc., emphasize the spiritual nature of the service. The United Methodist Book of Worship contains “services of Christian marriage” and one can also be found in the United Methodist Hymnal, pp. 864-869. Each service is structured similarly to the Sunday service with proclamation of the Word, prayer and praise. “Christian marriage is proclaimed as a sacred covenant reflecting the Baptismal Covenant. Everything about the service is designed to witness that this is a Christian marriage.” (BOW, p. 115)

After careful planning and time counseling the couple in preparation for the service and their life together in marriage, the wedding should be a holy experience. Again, ethnic and cultural traditions may be included if they are appropriate and meaningful to the bride and groom.

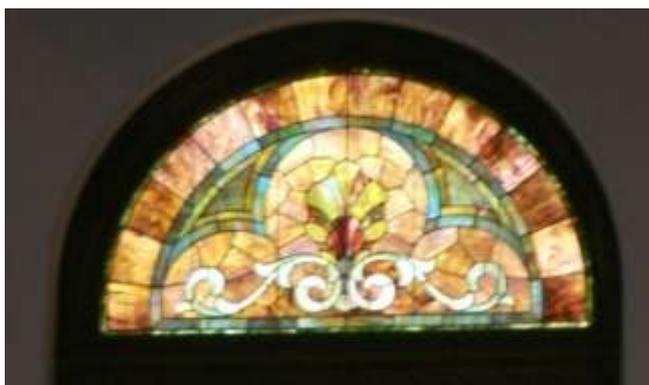


Invite the couple to make as many of the choices as possible: vows, scriptures, music to be played or sung, unity candle or sand sculpture, etc. If the couple has children, meet with them ahead of time and include them in the service if possible. Using members of the wedding party to read scripture can also be meaningful.

Care should be given to educate the couple about the meaning and symbolism of different aspects of the wedding service. This includes the response of the families, the meaning of the music and scriptures chosen, whether or not

to include communion, and the inclusion of different people who have special meaning to the couple.

Be very clear ahead of time about the use of the facility (rooms to be used, where to smoke, etc.). Remind those at rehearsal that a wedding is a worship service and, therefore, to remember they are invited to participate in love. Be prayerful and welcoming in all you do. As spiritual leader, you set the tone for all that will take place. It is appropriate to take charge and be confident in your leadership and guidance.



Rehearsals need not take more than 30 minutes unless you have a large wedding party. As spiritual leader, be present whenever the wedding party is in the church unless they are active church members comfortable with the arrangements.

Funerals

A section for “Services of Death and Resurrection” can be found in the United Methodist Book of Worship. Likewise, there is a more basic version found in the United Methodist Hymnal, pp. 870-875. This is a service of Christian worship that should be held in the church if possible. It should be approached with dignity and respect for the deceased as well as their family. The service found in both books can be adapted for memorial services and funeral home services.

Though the service is intended to celebrate the life of the departed, the person should not be raised to “sainthood.” The purpose of the service is to bring comfort, peace and

hope to family and friends who are gathered. Always pay close attention to any cultural, ethnic or family traditions to bring further meaning to the experience.

The spiritual leader often chooses to follow one basic pattern for services held at the funeral home and a basic pattern for those held at the church. This may include the use of bulletins for church funerals with more participation of the gathered congregation as a way of “setting apart” the worship settings and experience.



Invite the family’s participation in as much of the planning as they are comfortable doing. For example: choosing hymns, scriptures, eulogy, poetry or other appropriate pieces.

Though it may seem unnecessary, using familiar words/ services will help your families sense the holiness and the presence of the moment. Not every aspect of the service must be unique. The music and scriptures offer plenty of opportunity to individualize the service, as well as the time of naming and witnessing. Often, family members and others will be willing to share in the moment of “naming and witnessing.”

Occasionally families ask for something that may seem a little “quirky” or out of the ordinary, which requires prayer and careful consideration. Many times the decision will rest on whether it is really worth the price of alienating or hurting those involved.

When veterans or Masonic groups are involved, take care to build a relationship with the group that will make it easier next time. Usually Masonic groups are more than happy to do their traditional service during the visitation. The graveside service Veterans groups do is a meaningful addition to the traditional service and fits well following the benediction. In any case, discuss with those involved the focus of the worship service and what you hope to accomplish together.



When new in a community, visit the funeral home to find out the traditions practiced. If you are uncomfortable with anything, the funeral home directors are usually more than willing to consider trying something new or practicing a different way of doing the traditional. As spiritual leader, do not be afraid to be clear when there are practices you feel are inappropriate or beyond your comfort level. Try to find a common place of agreement.

When looking for scriptures and readings for special circumstances (i.e. for a “farmer,” a “fisherman,” etc.) the Internet is a wealth of information. Also go to the United Methodist web site referenced in this guide.

Implementing “Radical Hospitality / Passionate Worship”

As Christians, we are charged with welcoming all to the table. So we must work to offer radical hospitality. Many members of our church family play a role in this welcome.

Custodians: Custodians minister by making people feel at home when they come to church. They make the building safe and welcoming. The custodian becomes the eyes, ears and nose of the congregation.

This is a question of hospitality because, even though the members of a church might not notice things, visitors will. Take time to *track down* bad odors and get rid of them. Clean in the corners, and be sure to *look up!*

Talk with the experts at a custodian supply company. They will have ideas and products to make work easier, and often, they are cheaper than products from the supermarket.

Safety is even more important. Custodians should make sure flooring and carpet are tight and level, hot water is not scalding in the restrooms, there are sufficient, well-maintained fire extinguishers. Lighting is a safety issue, especially in exit signs. Clear closets, kitchens and furnace rooms of fire hazards, and store chemicals properly. Childproof outlets as needed. If custodians are not personally equipped to deal with any of these issues, then they must take them to the Trustees for action.

Custodians certainly don't need to take sole responsibility for the cleanliness and order of the building. Call upon others to work as a task group on larger projects, and they can teach about safety, encourage recycling, and help others to see the church building as a wonderful tool for spreading the gospel.

Greeters: Greeters are the face, voice, handshake and smile of your congregation. Studies suggest visitors become more likely to return with each positive greeting and personal interaction they receive. Greeters add another welcoming person visitors can interact with. If ushers are helping others, a visitor entering might be lost or confused with no one to help. Unlike ushers, the greeters do not move away from the entrance.

Nice identification pins for greeters and ushers assure visitors and remind greeters of their special role. Greeters want to look people in the eye, smile, and give a genuine and glad welcome. Greeters should know their building well, so they can point out the restrooms, the nursery, a classroom, and so on as needed. Have facial tissues and hard mints nearby to offer to someone with a cough or sneeze. Greeters should be careful not to miss a visitor or unduly hold up the line of folks entering.

Greeters may introduce a guest to a member, in the hope the member will invite the guest to sit with them. If the whole congregation has been trained on hospitality, the member almost certainly will take the hint. Station greeters at all entrances as well as at the sanctuary.

The Sacrament of Coffee/Coffee Hour Hosts: If your congregation offers hospitality via a coffee hour, here are some questions to consider:

- How might we make refreshments available for folks as they enter the building?
- Are there people who have had to skip breakfast to get to church?
- Is there a way to make the sanctuary “coffee-friendly?”
- How do we let people know they are welcome to join us for refreshments and fellowship?
- Do we have a variety of beverages? Is the coffee *good*? Is it possible to draw people to worship just for coffee?
- What about non-caffeine beverages?
- How do we structure fellowship time and space so newcomers don’t end up sitting by themselves? (What about limited tables, and most people standing? Or having hosts who introduce people to each other and suggest they sit together?)
- How do we make fellowship meaningful for children and their parents? Do we have booster seats and clean, functional highchairs?
- What foods should we serve? Store-bought cookies? What about a veggie platter for those on a diet?

Announcements: Although different churches have different traditions for making church and community-related announcements, the general rule should be for these calendar items, joys and concerns to be shared at a time that will not interrupt the flow of worship. So consider making announcements early in the service, perhaps following the introit and welcome. Another option may be to include announcements at the end of the service as part of the sending forth. In this way, they do not disrupt the act of worship and may help those attending transition from worship to acts of service in the coming week.

Follow up Personnel and Processes: Our charge is to take Christ into the world, so once we've welcomed someone in, we have a responsibility to reach out. This can be handled a variety of ways, depending on the size of your church. But each church should have designated follow-up personnel and processes.

Larger churches usually have some type of register for guests to provide their contact information. One may be kept in each pew and passed down during the worship service. Smaller churches may ask visitors to sign their guest registry. But no matter how this information is gathered, someone should be assigned to call or visit within a few days.

Again, the size of the church influences how this happens. For example, a large church may have a committee with assigned dates for committee members. Or in a small church one couple may take it upon themselves to take a fresh pie or cookies to each visitor or family.

No matter how contact is made, reaching out is important. We are called to minister to the world, and in coming to your church door, these visitors come seeking something. We need to offer them love and acceptance.

Section 5 - Resources

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- Introduction to Christian Worship (3rd Edition) , J.F. White
- New Handbook for the Christian Year, Hickman, et al.
- Services for the Christian Year, Hickman
- ¹ *This Holy Mystery*, Gayle Carlton Felton. © 2005 Discipleship Resources.

- **Web-based resources**
 - <http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/s-children.php>
 - <http://www.webspawner.com/users/ChildPage/>
 - <http://www.childrensermons.com/>
 - <http://www.sermons4kids.com/>
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 - <http://www.crivoice.org/symbols/colorsmeaning.html>
 - www.gbod.org/worship;
 - www.kencollins.com.
 - www.umc.org

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Appendix A

pp. 13-14 from the United Methodist Book of Worship

I. General Services – The Basic Pattern of Worship

“The Basic Pattern of Worship is rooted in Scripture and in our United Methodist heritage and experience. It expresses the biblical, historical, and theological integrity of Christian worship and is the basis of all the General Services of the Church. This Basic Pattern serves to guide those who plan worship and to help congregations understand the basic structure and content of our worship. Though it is not an order of worship, a variety of orders of worship may be based upon it. It reveals that behind the diversity of United Methodist worship there is a basic unity.

“Our worship in both its diversity and its unity is an encounter with the living God through the risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. When the people of God gather, the Spirit is free to move them to worship in diverse ways, according to their needs. We rejoice that congregations of large and small membership, in different regions, in different communities, of different racial and ethnic composition, and with distinctive local traditions can each worship in a style that enables the people to feel at home.

“The Spirit is also the source of unity and truth. The teachings of Scripture give our worship a basic pattern that has proved itself over the centuries, that gives The United Methodist Church its sense of identity and links us to the universal Church. This pattern goes back to worship as Jesus and his earliest disciples knew it – services in the synagogue and Jewish family worship around the meal table. It has been fleshed out by the experience and traditions of Christian congregations for two thousand years.

“The Entrance and the Proclamation and Response – often called the Service of the Word or the Preaching Service – are a Christian adaptation of the ancient synagogue service.

“The Thanksgiving and Communion, commonly called the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion, is a Christian adaptation of Jewish worship at family meal tables – as Jesus and his disciples ate together during his preaching and teaching ministry, as Jesus transformed it when he instituted the Lord’s Supper on the night before his death, and as his disciples experienced it in the breaking of bread with their risen Lord (Luke 24:30-35; John 21:13).

“After the Day of Pentecost, when the earliest Christians went out preaching and teaching, they continued to take part in synagogue worship wherever they went (Acts (9:2ff., 20; 13:5, 13ff., 44ff.; 14:1; 17:1ff., 10ff., 17ff.; 18:4, 19, 26; 19:8; 22:19; 24:12; 26:11) and to break bread as a holy meal in their own gatherings (Acts 2:42, 46).

“As their preaching and teaching about Jesus led to a break between church and synagogue, the Christians held an adapted synagogue service and broke bread when they gathered on the first day of the week. Such a combined service of Word and Table is described in Acts 20:7ff. This was apparently an accepted pattern by the time Luke wrote the Emmaus account in Luke 24:13-35, which pictures the joining together of a transformed synagogue service and a transformed holy meal and indicates to readers that they can know the risen Christ in the experience of Word and Table.

“The Emmaus account can be used today in preaching and teaching the Basic Pattern of Worship. As on the first day of the week the two disciples were joined by the risen Christ, so in the power of the Holy Spirit the risen and ascended Christ joins us when we gather. As the disciples poured out to him their sorrow and in so doing opened their hearts to what Jesus would say to them, so we pour out to him whatever is on our hearts and thereby open ourselves to the Word. As Jesus “opened the Scriptures” to them and caused their hearts to burn, so we hear the Scriptures opened to us and out of the burning of our hearts praise God. As they were faced with a decision and responded by inviting Jesus to stay with them, we can do likewise. As they joined the risen Christ around the table, so can we. As Jesus took, blessed, broke, and gave the bread just as the disciples had seen him do three days previously, so in the name of the risen Christ we do these four actions with the bread and cup. As he was “made known to them in the breaking of the bread,” so the risen and ascended Christ can be known to us in Holy Communion. As he disappeared and sent the disciples into the world with faith and joy, so he sends us forth into the world. And as those disciples found Christ when they arrived at

Jerusalem later that evening, so we can find Christ with us wherever we go.

“Since New Testament times, this Basic Pattern has had a long history of development. At times this pattern has been obscured and corrupted, and at times it has been recovered and renewed. The Wesleyan revival continued this emphasis on Word and Table, taking the gospel into the world by preaching and singing and by celebrating of the holy meal. Today The United Methodist Church is reclaiming our biblical and historic heritage, as we seek in this Basic Pattern to worship God “in spirit and in truth.”
