

From our Churches

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An Introduction to Leading Worship

Christian worship is real. It is actually words and action taking root within us to inspire us to faithful living. Worship has a vertical aspect: to give praise to God, to draw closer to God, to better understand the meaning of God's Word for our lives and to inspire us for faithful living. Worship also has a horizontal aspect: to draw us closer to each other, to support and encourage one another and to inspire us in our witness.

One place worship occurs is in the midst of a living and breathing congregation. It is an expression of profound devotion and respect, uttered through our words and music. It is enriched through other interactive sensory activities to propel us into our everyday world, confident that the redeeming gospel of our risen Lord works in and through us in all of our everyday living.

This introduction to leading worship is an attempt to help those participating in our worship service to recognize their interrelated responsibilities that facilitate our corporate time of worship. Everyone taking part in the worship service has a part in making worship meaningful. The worship committee invites willing persons to speak, lead worship, accompany music, lead singing, offer a story and usher. Thank you all for your participation.

Worship Leader

The worship leader ensures that all worship details are carried forward in a manner that helps worshipers feel engaged and potentially experience the presence of God both personally and corporately. This entails thorough advance preparation beginning two to three weeks in advance and includes:

1. Conversation with the pastor and/or the worship chair to know the theme and Scripture passages, and decide who will plan the order of worship.
2. Contact the speaker to determine scripture text and direction of the sermon.
3. Discuss worship theme with others i.e. song leader, story teller, etc. and keep all participants informed.
4. Ensure worship order is complete and the order of worship is in the church office on time.
5. Any need to "run through" details should be done before worshippers gather.
6. Being prepared to lead worship on Sunday morning by being punctual and assisting other participants as necessary (microphones, etc.) The worship leader acts as host/hostess,

welcoming and leading worshippers into active worship, drawing on personal spiritual resources and the invocation of the Holy Spirit to carry forward the order of worship.

7. Usual responsibilities include leading:

- Call to worship
- Words of confession and assurance
- Offertory prayer
- Identify with the pastor who will lead sharing time and congregational prayer
- Benediction

8. Language has power, transmitting not only ideas and facts but emotions and values as well. All participants in worship are encouraged to choose language supporting principles of inclusiveness, (ethnic, racial, gender, religious) to enhance the dignity of all persons.

Sample Order of Worship

- Prelude
- Call to Worship 5 minutes
- Invocation/Prayer
- Welcome and Introduction
- Hymns 15 minutes total
- Story Time 3 minutes
- Scripture Reading 3 minutes
- Additional Worship Music
- Words of Confession/Words of Assurance
- Sermon 15-20 minutes
- Offering 5 minutes
- Reflections 5 minutes or less
- Sharing and Concerns
- Congregational Prayer
- Announcements
- Benediction

Speaker

Worship themes and scripture lessons are selected by the pastor and the worship committee. The Revised Common Lectionary forms the basis for much of our worship planning, but other themes are chosen from time to time to serve specific occasions. The sermon, based on the scripture selected, forms the core for the worship service and is intended to both inform and inspire the congregation to further meditation and action.

1. The speaker will be informed about the selected scripture 3 to 6 weeks in advance to provide time to prepare a 15 to 20 minute sermon.
2. Suggestions for visual and other worship aids are welcome.

Music

Music is a universal language and one of the ways we worship God together. A variety of musical styles and instruments symbolize our unity in diversity, even as the use of *Hymnal: A Worship Book* and four part harmony typify our congregational singing. Our hope is that through our music our worship will be enriched and our faith strengthened.

Pianists and other instrumentalists are invited to:

1. Prepare gathering music (prelude)
2. Play an offertory
3. Accompany congregational singing

The song leader will:

1. Select appropriate hymns with worship leader
2. Discuss accompaniment with instrumentalists
3. Lead the congregational singing

Other worship music, including choir, soloists, and music groups will be invited to provide worship music to enrich our worship experience.

Scripture Reading

Scripture and its telling lie at the heart of worship. Reading should usually be from the New Revised Standard Version and done with reverence and meaning. Scripture may be read, memorized or dramatized. Participants should:

1. Familiarize themselves with the content of the passage.
2. Practice the reading to become familiar with the cadence of the passage and learn the pronunciation of difficult words or phrases.

Story Time

Story time in worship, although first conceived as a way to include children in worship, benefits all worshippers as it draws on the scripture theme of the day. This time may include a story book, drama or a personal experience. The storyteller is encouraged to sit on the top riser and use the microphone to:

1. Invite the children to the front of the sanctuary
2. Present a story of about 5 minutes in length

Reflections

The purpose of reflections is to help us get a glimpse of how we integrate our faith into our day-to-day lives. From time to time persons will be asked to prepare a five-minute presentation to:

1. Tell an experience that has helped shape their faith
2. Respond to the morning theme
3. Share a challenge with the congregation

Sound System

Designated people are responsible to ensure that the sound system is working to enable everyone to hear. Instruction notes are provided by the equipment table. Both microphones should be available for use and turned off at the end of the service.

Ushers

Ushers help people feel welcome by their friendly presence at the sanctuary doors as they hand out bulletins and assist worshippers in finding their seats. They will also ensure that:

1. The “Reserved for families with small children” signs are in place
2. Take the offering
3. Ensure that all hymnals are returned to the shelves at the end of the service
4. Check that all lights are turned off, all windows are closed, and both doors including the upstairs fellowship door, are closed and locked after the service.

Greeters

Greeters in the front foyer prior to the worship service provide a welcoming but discreet presence to people arriving for worship.