

# Guidelines for Worship Planning, part 2

Assembly Mennonite Church

Fall 2015 update

See Part 1 document for an order of worship template and other Assembly-specific info.

## Other helpful tidbits

### *Music and dance*

- If the song leader wants to use instrumentalists, the instrumentalists must know **before Sunday morning**. The worship gifts and interests survey lists people willing to play piano, guitar, drums and other instruments. You and the song leader should please note the **A** in the *Assembly Songbook*, indicating additional notes or accompaniment suggestions.
- Note the topical index and the index of scriptural allusions in the back of the *Hymnal* and the *Assembly Songbook*. The preacher may request a particular hymn. *Try to keep a balance between new and familiar songs; try also to balance the gender language in the hymns and songs you choose.* If possible, please try to limit your selections from **only two songbooks**.
- If you are interested in a dance, contact Linda Schlabach Miller as far ahead as possible. Creating a dance is time consuming, but sometimes an established one can be polished with short notice. Interplay-style interpretation may also be a possibility.

### *Offering prayer*

One possibility: “Great and loving God: You have given us Your first and Your best. We wish to follow in Your way, and we know that these gifts are one way to start. Deepen our love. Grow in us grace and generosity so that these gifts become more of our first and more of our best. Make us also good stewards of the rest we have kept for ourselves. Some of this money we are giving today will go to (name a local budget item) and some will go to (name a global budget item). Receive these gifts and use them to speed the coming of Your Reign. Amen.”

### *Scripture*

- Proclamation of the word is one of the central acts of Christian worship. Find ways to help the congregation to hear the Story so that it can form and shape us.
- Determine how the scripture will be read and who will read it.
  - children can read if they have an opportunity to practice
  - find someone who is living out what the text is about (e.g., a pregnant woman for a text about a child of promise, someone with a serious illness for a psalm of deliverance)
  - if you are working several weeks in advance, ask someone to memorize the text
- Scripture readers should read from the front lectern with amplification unless there a particular reason not to do so. The reader should announce the reference. We suggest the NRSV, but other translations are welcome. Encourage readers to pay attention to gender language and make adjustments as needed. A copy of *The Inclusive Bible* is available at the meetinghouse.

### *Sermon/teaching/homily*

- Contact the preacher one week ahead to confirm plans or answer questions. Ask if the speaker has a suggested way for the congregation to respond to the message, such as a hymn.

### **Space for reflection**

- Intentional and/or guided silence is valued in AMC; this often works best in second hour.
- Make sure you have included prayer at a number of points. As you lead out, make an effort to use inclusive language. Include all people present and be aware of the various facets of God. Books of prayers can be quite helpful. See especially *All the Seasons of Mercy* and *Words for Worship* on the resource shelf. *The Wee Worship Book* is also an outstanding resource. Outlining or writing prayers may help you to be more global and inclusive.

### **Transitions (also known as glue)**

- Transitions are particularly important. Avoid merely announcing what's next ("Now it's time for the offering"); rather, help the congregation know where they are going and why.
- Do you need a printed order of service? *Most of the time, yes.* A printed order means you don't have to introduce everyone who is participating in the service, and it helps those who struggle to hear or need to share their attention with little ones.
- At the end of first hour, **dismiss Sunday school teachers first, then the children.** Encourage people to greet visitors around them as they take a break, with or without coffee, and announce the starting time for second hour. The second part of the morning should end around 11:50 when children are done with Sunday School. We want to respect the needs of our Sunday School teachers and children.

### **Resources**

- The most recent list of volunteers is on the website. DO make use of these folks.
- The Christian Education (copier) room and the library have a variety of book resources including dramatic readings and calls to worship.
- The backs of our song books have a variety of prayers, calls to worship, and other resources.
- Assembly has marvelous people resources. Don't hesitate to ask for advice from someone whose worship leading you have appreciated.
- Contact Mary Gilbert for assistance with finding resources or other questions about planning. 574-534-1852 or [mgilbert1301@gmail.com](mailto:mgilbert1301@gmail.com).

### **Additional thoughts on leading worship:**

You are instrumental in establishing the tone and cohesiveness of the service. Prayer and thoughtful preparation will help you as you lead all of us in worship. Planners are sometimes inclined to think of the worship leader as an MC or chair of a meeting. The following ideas from Marlene Kropf that may help you think differently about what happens in corporate worship.

*Corporate worship is what we experience when we come together into the presence of God. Kierkegaard has spoken of worship as a drama, with the congregation as the actors, God is the audience, and the worship leader, preacher and song leader as prompters.*

There are three **movements in worship**:

**meeting God** (vertical)

**connecting with the community** (horizontal)

**being sent out** (centrifugal)

*When we plan for worship, we need to consider these three movements in addition to finding a balance between the objective (lectionary or biblical theme) and the subjective (an event in the congregation's life or a community or world event, or what the worship leader "likes").*

## **Digging Deeper**

With the basic building blocks in hand, you may be ready to ponder more deeply about the content and character of the service. The following questions will help you.

1. **What is the *scriptural focus*?**

- images (concrete things - do they recur in the passages?)
- movement (process, change, progress)
- themes (ideas)

2. **How has this season or Sunday been celebrated before?**

- what traditions have been important?
- what new practices might enliven our worship?

What are the *connections* between the current experience of the congregation and the focus of this particular season of the church year?

3. **How can *the arts* enhance and deepen our worship?**

- music
- drama
- gesture, dance
- visual symbols
- silence

4. **What plan will best facilitate the focus?**

- does the basic order of *Hymnal* work or is some adaptation required?
- consider issues of flow, simplicity, appropriateness and feasibility

5. **How can the *entire* faith community be involved?**

- children, youth, elderly, artists, musicians, readers, *newcomers*, old-timers...

6. **Evaluation** (*don't miss this!*)

- immediately after the service ask two people
- what helped you worship today?
  - what hindered your worship today?

We hope these suggestions are helpful to you. They are not meant to overwhelm you but rather to open you to the excitement, energy and variety that can be yours as you prepare for and lead worship. Thank you for the gift of yourself, your creativity and your time.