

Guidelines for Worship Planning Assembly Mennonite Church

Thank you for your willingness to serve and share your gifts by leading worship. Whether you are working alone or with your small group, we are grateful that you said “Yes!” This document is a collection of suggestions and resources. Feel free to delve deeply into the ideas and suggestions, or to look more quickly through the key points below. **If it’s your first time leading, please contact Anna Yoder Schlabach, who would love to sit down with you and talk about worship: 574-312-5319 or annays@assemblymennonite.org**

Practical Checklist for Sunday morning:

Singing Bowl (if using)

Offering basket on the table

Matches or lighter for peace lamp (check to make sure you can light it)

Light birthday candles at 9:29 (check name pronunciation)

Touch base with sound person about mics needed or projections

Make sure table is close to the edge of the platform so that people with walkers do not need to go up a step

Summary of Key Points

Order of service: Scott is available to copy the order of service for you. **Please send a formatted, ready-to-copy order of service by Friday at 9am. Please send the file as a Word document, not as a PDF.** If it is not in by this time, you will need to do the copying yourself (140 half-sheet copies). In the case that you make your own copies, please have printed copies in the worship space by 9:00 Sunday morning. **Please also send it to other worship participants and musicians Friday morning.**

Recruiting worship helpers: some of the responsibilities for first hour worship will have already been assigned by the worship committee (see the chart sent when you agreed to lead). You may still need to recruit **children's time leaders, scripture reader(s) and peace lamp lighter.** We value involving many people in worship -- consider asking newer attenders, MYFers, college students, etc.

Selecting Hymns: **Check in with your song leader early in the week.** Some song leaders like to choose all the hymns, some none at all. Pay attention to gendered language in hymns and balance between well known hymns and new hymns. Note the topical index and the index of scriptural allusions in the back of Voices Together. The preacher may request a particular hymn. **If the song leader wants to use instrumentalists, the instrumentalists must know before Sunday**

morning. Please contact all musicians (including guitarists) before Friday. The worship gifts and interests survey lists people willing to play piano, guitar, drums and other instruments.

- **Setting the stage:** as always, one of your main roles as a worship leader is to introduce the morning and provide enough explanation of the context for worshipers to see how the pieces link together. **Communicating with the week's preacher and early in the week is crucial for building these connections.** It can be helpful to briefly orient people to the shape and theme of the morning. Including a comment about what is planned for second hour is a good practice, as well as noting special events of the day such as fellowship meals, parent-child dedications or guest speakers. **It may also be helpful to note where empty seats are still available in the worship space.**

- **Peace lamp:** this year the worship committee will generally have a specific simple liturgy for each season that we would like to have read as you light the main candle on the front table. You can light the candle yourself or invite someone else to lead that piece if you'd prefer. Check with Anna or the seasonal worship grid about the **peace lamp specific words** for each season.

Birthday candles: The children among us are important to our worship. We acknowledge and bless our children by recognizing their birthdays (birthdays to be celebrated can be found in the current AssemblyLine)... "The candle on the piano this morning reminds us that we are celebrating _____'s ___th birthday. (To the child) Would you stand? We want you to know we are so glad you are part of Assembly. (To the congregation) The Assembly Line today tells us more about _____," and there is a picture on the bulletin board by the north entrance. If the child has not yet arrived, please check again for the child just before children's time. **Check name pronunciation with parents and be sure to light the candles just before worship begins.**

- **Announcements:** The worship reader reads any announcements during the final, "Sending" section of worship. Invite people early on to write out any important announcements and bring them up to the front table during offering. **Please ask the contact person to stand stand or raise their hand when their announcement is read.**

- **Offering:** Make sure there is a basket on the table. Sometimes they migrate. In addition, on the first Sunday of the month put out a secondary basket to collect the 2% offerings. Here are the suggested words: **Assembly's pattern of bringing the offering forward invites us to think of all that we offer and do as a joyful response to God's generosity.** If you are leading the first Sunday of the month, please also announce the 2% offering. **"On the first Sunday of the month we have two baskets for offerings -- one for our regular offerings; and the other for our 2 % offering -- 2 % of our income which is disbursed to impoverished people locally and in the 2/3rds world. We do this as an act of restitution for injustices in economic distribution. May our offerings reflect the generosity and the justice that God wills in our lives."**

Here is the offering prayer that we have been using for a number of years. You do not

need to use this prayer, but it is available and you may feel free to adapt it to the current worship theme: “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.”

• **Children’s Time:** please continue to invite children 2 and under to head to the classroom across the hall for their story time at the same time as you invite children 3 and up to the front.

Children’s time should not be more than five minutes and one idea. We now have hand free mics that work well for children’s time. Encourage the person doing children’s time to check in with sound person before worship. Since childcare begins after children’s time, please put children's time after the offering, so that children can participate in the offering time. Before children’s time begins, announce the availability of childcare for children 3 & under (up to preschool age) following children’s time.

Sharing Time: each week one member of the pastoral team will offer a pastoral prayer at the end of sharing time. They will generally also lead the entire sharing time.

Visuals: Worship committee will provide the main visual elements for each season of weeks, while worship leaders are **welcome to bring fresh flowers** or other items for the table to highlight the week’s theme or texts.

Time tips: We continually face the tension of time for worship. We have all the time we need for the Spirit to move among us, and yet we must pay attention to the clock, especially for the sake of the saints we call Sunday school teachers! **Please begin at 9:30am sharp, even if people are still finding their way in. First hour should end at 10:45am.**

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.

We suggest the Inclusive Bible, Common English or NRSV but other translations are welcome. Encourage readers to pay attention to gender language and make adjustments as needed.

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.

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

Space for reflection and Resources

- Intentional and/or guided silence is valued in AMC;
- 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.
- **The bookshelf outside office #12 has a variety of book resources including dramatic readings and calls to worship. See especially All the Seasons of Mercy and Words for Worship on the resource shelf. The Wee Worship Book is also on outstanding resource. Outlining or writing prayers may help you to be more global and inclusive.**
- 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

Sample Order of Worship

Assembly Mennonite Church

Date, Theme

Gathering (7-10 minutes)

Usually includes: chimes, Christ candle (peace lamp), call to worship, gathering hymn(s), welcome, introducing children with birthdays

Praising and adoring God; confessing and reconciling (7-10 minutes)

Usually includes: hymns of praise/thanksgiving, scripture, spoken, sung or silent prayers

Offering ourselves and our gifts (5 minutes) Usually includes: offering and

prayer May also include: covenanting or commissioning, baptism

Hearing God's word (25 minutes) Usually includes: Scripture, children's time, sermon. May also include: parent-child dedication.

Responding to the Word (15 minutes)

Usually includes: silent, sung or verbal response to the sermon, sharing of joys and concerns, and prayer. May also include: Communion or other corporate rituals

Sending (15 minutes) Usually includes: introduction of guests, announcements, sung or spoken benediction. May also include: farewells, commissioning, instructions for unusual second hours

Participants:

Worship leader, song leader, children's time, scripture readers, musicians, preacher,

visuals, peace lamp, pastoral prayer