

Guidelines for Worship Planning
Assembly Mennonite Church
For 2017-2018

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. Jonathon Schramm is available for questions about planning: 517.455.4169, or jschramm@goshen.edu.

Summary of Key Points

- *Recruiting worship helpers:* this year, many 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 will still need to recruit any scripture **reader(s) or dramatists**, as well as **someone to lead the children’s time**, that you would like to work with.
- *Setting the stage:* as always, one of your main roles as 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 song leader ahead of time is crucial for building these connections. Being aware of the second hour happenings that week is also helpful, but not as central.
- *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 lamp on the front table. You can light it yourself or invite someone else to lead that piece if you’d prefer. See the “Peace lamp” section below for specific wording for each season.
- *Announcements:* for this year we’d like to have the worship reader read 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. If their announcement requests that people contact them for more info, ask them to stand when you read their note.
- *Offering:* note that there is no longer a collection basket at the rear of the sanctuary, so please don’t refer to that. There is however, a small bowl with bees on it for children’s contributions to the building campaign on the front table that can be mentioned each week. In addition, on the first Sunday of the month put out a secondary basket to collect the 2% offerings.
- *Children’s Time:* please continue to invite children 2 and under to head to the middle classroom across the hall for their story time at the same time as you invite older children to the front.
- *Sharing Time:* each week one member of the pastoral team will offer a pastoral prayer at the end of sharing time. They will also be willing to lead the entire sharing time (which can transition easily into prayer), but you should check in with them about this to confirm that is their intention.

More details...

Helpers: We value involving many people in worship -- consider asking newer attenders, MYFers, college students, etc. The “worship gifts compilation” lists people willing to help in a variety of ways (this can be found on the AMC website at assemblymennonite.org, under the “worship” tab).

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.

Peace Lamp:

(simple liturgy to use, although you may modify it slightly as desired)

L: Today we remember the people of (name a place where an important issue is being addressed), who are working for (state issue). (light the lamp) May this light expose the false orderings of power that oppress and kill.

P: Make us bold to follow you, speak your Word, and trust in your justice and deliverance.

Blessing for preachers: Immediately before the preacher begins, please come forward and offer this short prayer of blessing for the Word they are about to share:

(Name preacher), may the words of your mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God.

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 10:50am.**

Rule of fives: As you plan, round everything up to a multiple of five minutes to allow cushions for transitions, instructions and surprises. For example, count each song as five minutes to allow the song leader to come up and announce the song, all to turn to the page, hear the pitch and sing.

Accounting for sharing: On mornings with sharing time built in, be aware that it can be difficult to know exactly how long this will go, especially if you suspect weightier items may be shared. Think in terms of starting sharing time by 10:25 or earlier in order to finish at 10:50am. Follow the Spirit’s lead, but you (or the pastor leading the pastoral prayer) may need to kindly end the sharing time if it gets to 10:50 or later.

Order of Worship

Our blue *Hymnal* is designed and organized around a basic flow of worship, in the sections listed below (don’t forget about the many liturgies and prayers added at the back of the hymnal and the supplements [*Sing the Story* and *Journey*]). However, do not feel bound to this structure: **we value variety and creativity in worship.** Each section notes what is most often included in our worship service. **Any of the**

sections could include elements such as singing, prayer, scripture, silence and/or creative expression (dance, drama, visual arts, etc.)

1. **Gathering (7-10 minutes)**
Usually includes: chimes, Christ candle (peace lamp), call to worship, gathering hymn(s), welcome, introducing children with birthdays
2. **Praising and adoring God; confessing and reconciling (7-10 minutes)**
Usually includes: hymns of praise/thanksgiving, scripture, spoken, sung or silent prayers
3. **Offering ourselves and our gifts (5 minutes)** Usually includes: offering (kid's Milk & Honey, 2% and Window offerings) and prayer
May also include: covenanting or commissioning, baptism
4. **Hearing God's word (25 minutes)** Usually includes: Scripture, children's time, sermon.
May also include: parent-child dedication.
5. **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
6. **Sending (15 minutes)** Usually includes: introduction of guests, announcements, sung or spoken benediction.
May also include: farewells, commissioning, instructions for unusual second hours

Additional information for selected items above *The text in green is available to copy and paste into your worship leading notes, if helpful.*

Chimes: *Even if people are still getting settled, start on time.* Three strikes on the chiming bowl or finger cymbals helps us transition from community-building chatter to joining the community together in God's presence.

Welcome/intro to morning: 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.

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 coffee pots.* If the child has not yet arrived, please check again for the child just before children's time.

Children's time: 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. Call children ages 3 and up to the front for children's time, and dismiss children **age 2 and younger** to the

childcare room for Little Children's Time.

Offering: 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."

On the first Sunday of the month, we also collect food donations for The Window as a response to hunger in our community. Ask the adults to please pass their items to the aisles and remain seated so the children can easily find the items to collect. The children collect the food donations, take the baskets to the library, and return to their seats or go to childcare. A song could be planned for during the collection time. This collection could happen during children's time, or it could happen immediately after children's time. Feel free to be creative and include this in another part of worship, as well.

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."

Sharing of joys and concerns and prayer: Sharing of joys and concerns is a free-flowing time in the otherwise structured service. This is time that can be used to respond to what we have experienced in worship, share experiences or prayer requests from the week, or both. The worship leader must tend this space carefully, giving clear instructions, allowing enough silence at the outset for sharing to emerge, and stepping in with grace when the allotted time is coming to an end. One of the pastors will be planning to lead a pastoral prayer at the end of sharing time, and you may ask them to simply introduce and lead the sharing time if you prefer.

Introducing guests: Guests may be introduced toward the beginning of the service, or just before fellowship time. Please convey our warm welcome.

Finally, please remember that this document is meant to be a resource, not a script. Your creativity is encouraged!

A final note: Naomi Roots is available to copy the order of service for you. **Please send her 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 finished,**

printed copies in the worship space by 8:30 Sunday morning, so that the set up crew can distribute them and know which hymnals to put out.

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.*

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.*

o children can read if they have an opportunity to practice

o 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)

o 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 particular 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.

☒ _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 Jonathon Schramm for assistance with finding resources or other questions about planning. 517.455.4169 or jschramm@goshen.edu

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) 3

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.

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