

Waterloo North Mennonite Church
GUIDE FOR WORSHIP LEADERS
May 2016

INTRODUCTION

Corporate worship is a gathering of God's people in the presence of God who listens and speaks to us. The role of the worship leader is to lead the congregation into God's presence by setting the tone for worship through advance planning and guiding the congregation into the spiritual experience of worship on Sunday morning.

BACKGROUND

A sub-group of the Worship Committee, including a minister, meets well in advance of a worship series to choose biblical texts and develop themes. A rep from music committee is part of this planning group. They prepare a worship schedule identifying themes, worship participants and any other special elements. As a worship leader you should have been given access to this document.

NOTE: The Worship Committee contact person, who invited you to serve as worship leader, is available to answer questions about any element of the planning process.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WORSHIP LEADER PRIOR TO SUNDAY

1. **Prepare your spirit** for this task through prayer and meditation on the scriptures.
2. **Contact** the preacher regarding direction of the sermon, the texts to be read in the service, and a hymn of response following the sermon.
3. **Prepare an Order of Service**, including the movements of Gathering, Hearing, Responding and Sending (or some similar wording). Within these movements, the following elements are included:
 - **Gathering Hymns** are intended to draw people into the sanctuary and should begin five minutes before the start of the service. They are chosen by the worship leader and can be listed in the order of worship. The Music rep is available to help if desired.
 - **Introduction of Visitors:** An usher brings a mic around and persons who have brought guests are invited to introduce them. When introducing this time, try to use language that encourages introductions but leaves space not to be introduced for those who feel uncomfortable with this. For example, "This is the time when we like to be introduced to visitors. If you have brought a visitor please stand & introduce yourself & your guest. If you have come on your own & you feel comfortable doing so, please stand & introduce yourself to us. We would like to greet you by name."
 - **Announcements** from the congregation should be submitted to the church office for inclusion in Information Sheet or submitted **in advance** to the worship leader.
 - **Call to Worship** may take the form of a brief statement, a Psalm, an opening prayer or invitation to silence.
 - **Greeting and Welcome** includes a general welcome to all and specific welcome to visitors. It may also incorporate a brief mention of the worship theme or instructions for the service.

- **Scripture** may be read by one or more readers or by the congregation. A translation with inclusive language is preferred. You are responsible for choosing the readers unless otherwise specified.
- **Congregational Hymns** are selected by the worship leader (or can also be chosen in consultation with song leader or music committee rep) with the exception of the sermon response hymn which is usually chosen by the preacher. A variety of musical styles is desired. Attention to inclusive language is preferred. Where exclusive language occurs in older hymns, consult with the song leader to omit the offending verse or suggest alternative wording.
- **Congregational Prayer** is normally led by a member of Ministry Team. Prayer format is sometimes printed in the bulletin.
- **Offering Collection:** Ushers choose persons to help collect the offering. During offering, an instrumental piece can be played, OR a hymn can be sung instead. A prayer is typically offered before or after the offering is collected. Connect with the pianist regarding offertory if you want them to play a piece.
- **Children's Time:** The worship leader is responsible for finding someone to lead an activity or story unless otherwise specified on the worship schedule. This may include a Bible story, a children's book, an oral story, an object lesson, or dramatized Scripture. Appropriate length is 5 minutes. Convey to the presenter to aim for one simple point at the level of a 5 year old.
- **Sermon** normally provides the theme for the service and may take a variety of forms. (On occasion may be substituted by worship sub-planning committee for a different form of reflection.)
- **Special Elements:** Occasionally additional elements are planned for inclusion in a particular service (usually noted on Worship schedule). These may include special music, drama, a ritual, farewell, Moment in Mission/Sharing our Stories, children's participation through Soul Food or Sunday School, or a special request from Ministry Team. Consult with the Worship Committee contact person or Lead Minister if you need more information.
- **Benediction** marks the end of worship with a blessing/sending forth of the congregation.

(Plan for a service that will be 1-1&1/4 hour in length)

4. **Worship Resources** – can be found in the meeting room in the cabinet against the far wall. These include written calls to worship, benedictions and prayers, as well as resources for special seasons (such as Advent and Lent). The back of the hymnals also provide worship resources. You may also want to check with your Worship Committee contact person about:
 - bulletin covers (usually provided by office).
 - hymn listing in the church office to limit repetition.
 - list of potential participants gathered from a congregational survey
5. **Choose participants** for scripture reading, children's time, and any other aspects of the service not already planned. Choose a balance of experienced persons and those who may not have participated recently, keeping gender balance in mind.
6. **One week in advance:**
 - Circulate song possibilities to musicians to give them adequate time to practice.
 - Check with preacher regarding sermon title.

COORDINATION THE WEEK LEADING UP TO SUNDAY

- Communicate sermon **title to Sharon** at the church office by **Tuesday, 9:00 am**, so that she can submit it to The Record. (If no sermon title is available, the theme listed in schedule is the default title.)
- Send the **Order of Worship** to Sharon by **Wednesday morning at 9:00 am**. This gives her an opportunity to format a final print-ready copy and send it back to the worship leader for final proof-read before it is printed on Thursday morning. The office will also send it to all worship participants.
- **Physical set-up:** Give thought to the visual and physical elements of the service like pulpit and table placement, the open Bible, wall hangings, the Christ candle and peace lamp. You are invited to be as simple or creative with presentation as you choose. Please notify the custodian in advance of Sunday morning if there are special set-up needs.

Last minute additions/changes: If the service is already planned, you are free to say “no” to any last minute additions/changes. If you require assistance in this process, talk to your Worship Committee contact person or the Lead Minister for direction.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WORSHIP LEADER ON SUNDAY MORNING

1. **Arrive by 10:15 a.m.** Check the following:
 - the ushers have moved the offering baskets from the counter in the church office to the pulpit.
 - the pulpit, tables, and candles are properly placed.
 - participants who might need a microphone (e.g. children’s story) have a mic.
 - the **Christ Candle** is lit before the service begins or during the first hymn, and the Bible is opened. The Peace Lamp is also used on occasion. (There would be explanation in worship schedule.) Remember to extinguish candles at end of service!
2. The congregational pray-er will invite the preacher and worship leader to meet for prayer at 10:30 as a way to centre and prepare for the service. This time of prayer is held in the lead minister’s office.
3. **Song Leader and Pianist** should begin **GATHERING MUSIC** 5 minutes before the service begins, in order to invite persons into the worship space for a prompt beginning.
4. **Lead the congregation** through the worship experience. This does not require announcing every activity since frequent interjections distract from worship. Most participants go to the front unannounced and song leaders can introduce the hymns.

INCLUDING CHILDREN IN THE WORSHIPING COMMUNITY

Additional Ideas for the worship leader's consideration:

- Greeting* - address children as you do adults, by name.
- mention all ages in the opening welcome and/or call to worship
- Procession* - children bring worship symbols to the worship table during the opening
- Scriptures, Litanies, Readings*
- invite parent and child to read Scripture together.
- include lines marked "children" in readings (alert them beforehand)
- Music* - choose hymns that children have learned in Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, camp, etc.
- have children sing a verse (as we often have men and women)
- invite a child to select a hymn/song
- use different instruments for certain songs
- Prayers* - adults squat or stoop to child's eye level to give a special prayer or blessing
- guide silent meditation with simple instructions so children can participate
- use prayers with repetitive phrases
- use a prayer written by a child
- inter-generational prayers with parts for each generation to read
- Children's Time* - children feel comfortable with someone they know or someone who is introduced to them
- retell the Biblical story dramatically or in children's language
- dress up as the character in the story or have objects as props for the story
- provide worship activities for children (upon entering) that tie in with the theme