

**Suggestions for Leading Worship**  
**(from the Worship Committee 11/98, updated 2002)**  
[edited July 2008 to change “Minister of Worship” to “pastor”]

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**Worship is not a program—it is an encounter with the Living God. It is not for the purpose of pleasing ourselves, but is centered on God, who alone is worthy of receiving our praises and prayers. Worship includes the entire service. Within this framework, there is movement from praise and adoration, to hearing the Word, confession and response, to sharing, to being sent forth. The arrangements of the elements that make up a service may vary, but the reason we worship never changes.**

**Be creative in planning worship, when possible. People in our congregation respond to different forms of worship: visuals (banners, paintings, photographs), the spoken word (dramas, readings, poetry), movement (liturgical dance, processions), and music (congregational singing, instrumental or vocal solos, group presentations). See the list of respondents to the worship survey, or check with the pastor to find out who is willing to participate in these. Make use of families, small groups, children and youth when leading worship. Flowers and candles or visual art help to serve as a focal point to begin to worship. Graphics, clip art or scripture on the bulletin cover also help to provide focus.**

**It is expected that worship leaders will talk with others on the worship team for that week (the pastor and song leader) at least a week and preferably two, before the service to coordinate all the elements so that they flow well and fit together thematically. Remember that when the music teams are playing, they will need to be able to choose songs well before the service so that the team can practice the music together.**

**Worship leaders play a vital role in the way our congregation experiences corporate worship. Your thoughtful planning in advance and prayerful presence during the service will be clearly evident, as will your openness to allowing the Spirit to disrupt those plans when necessary. May the Lord bless your efforts on behalf of WPMF, so that God will be honored and glorified in worship together.**



***A typical service will include the people of God gathering to praise, to hear the Word and respond, to share our joys and concerns, to partake in communion, and to be sent forth with God’s grace.***

**1) To Praise**

The purpose of our coming together as a congregation—to worship—can be enhanced by a section of time spent primarily in blessing God. The first part of every service should be a time for songs, scripture and prayer about and to God, which can be separate from the actual theme of the day. Invite the congregation into God’s

presence. We gather from varied places with varying experiences during the previous week, often with much on our minds and hearts, and need help in focusing our minds and hearts on God.

The initial set of songs can be “Gathering” songs; songs that speak to the intention of the people to gather to praise God, followed by songs about God. The next set of songs can be directly to God, as prayerful praise.

Logistically it is helpful to not introduce more than one new song a week. While learning a song, it is difficult to actually worship, so think about the placement of the new song. Be aware of the difference in tempos and dynamics. Consider limiting the amount of going back and forth between the Hymnal and the supplement, as awkward transitions can break the flow of the music. Song leader and accompaniest need to communicate with and listen to each other, practice transitions ahead of time. Including the song numbers in the bulletin helps this as well.

## **2) To Hear the Word and Respond**

This section can include such elements as the children’s time, sermon, sermon response, reading of scripture, confession and offering.

The children’s time is to help the children specifically be able to relate to the theme of the service. Children’s stories are fine if short, children enjoy things that they can see and touch.

Confession is a time to reflect, to tell God and to experience the giving over of our cares to God.

Offering is an opportunity to give back to God. Make it a celebration!

Scripture readings can be assigned to congregational participants. Make sure the scripture readers have ample opportunity to review the scripture before reading it, so the Scripture is read with conviction. Dramatic readings of scripture or drama that highlights the scripture can be used.

## **3) To Share our Joys and Concerns**

During the sharing time, invite praises as well as concerns. Allow ample time for this, and be aware that this could be a very short, or a lengthy time. Be prepared with several potential ways to respond in prayer, in order to be flexible with the time.

- Worship leader prays for all the concerns and joys
- Worship leader asks for people in the congregation to pray for the individual concerns
- Worship leader uses a reading to guide the prayer (examples are in the back of the hymnal). Remind congregants to pray throughout the week for these requests.
- Prayerful musical responses are also meaningful.

#### **4) Partake in Communion**

Our congregation includes Communion in the service the first Sunday of every month. The worship leader is responsible for providing the communion elements and the tablecloth. (Check the worship resource space for tablecloth, cups, candles, etc.) If you ask others to bring the elements, be sure to ask for bread that does not crumble easily, and that the seedless grapes are cut into small clumps for the children to easily receive.

#### **5) Sent Forth**

Consider having the announcements right before the last song and benediction.

**All worship leaders and participants in the service should arrive no later than 8:30am, and be finished setting up by 8:45am. At that time we will join together for prayer in the office. Pre-service music or singing can help draw the congregation in, to be ready to begin worship together at 9:00am.**

*Grant us your grace, O God, to grow as a joyful community of Jesus' disciples, who honor you in worship, seek your presence daily, encourage each other in faithfulness, invite others to faith in Christ, and work for the shalom of our city.*