

LESSON 10

PROCESSES FOR PLANNING WORSHIP PROGRAMMES

Introduction

"The proof is in the pudding." Everything that has been presented thus far is now submitted to the internal authority of your particular leadership style, "the pudding" which you are about to taste. By virtue of the way in which you were reared by your parents, the way in which you related to brothers and sisters as a first, second or third child, and the models which have been most influential in your ministry formation, you have developed a particular leadership style. In other words, you are somewhere in the spectrum from a task-oriented to a person-centred approach to ministry. Your comfort level falls somewhere on the spectrum from a collegial/participative to a more authoritarian leadership style. How you respond to what follows will help you to place yourself on this spectrum.

The purpose in planning orders of service (worship) is to enhance and enrich worship. At the same time one must recognize that programmes do not guarantee that worship will actually take place — that is, between the worshipper and the Lord. But one can plan appropriate orders of worship which create maximum possibilities for a well-rounded worship experience. Obviously, the better informed the congregation concerning the items in an order of worship, the easier it will be for Christians to relate to the total worship experience.

As expressed in the previous lesson, an effective order of worship will contain certain basic elements such as: praise and adoration; conviction and confession; teaching and communication; thanksgiving and sacrifice; and commitment of life.

To be meaningful, the worship experience must be well-planned. The attitude of reverence in worship may be a reflection of the quality of planning for the service. Orders of worship are guidelines, not laws governing worship. Occasionally changes or additions may need to be made spontaneously during the service. These adjustments should be made unapologetically in a smooth and relaxed manner, still recognizing that meaningful worship is most often a result of careful and effective planning, prayerfully carried out.

The use of the word "process" in relation to planning worship programmes assumes an openness to growth and change, both personally

You have developed a particular _____

(leadership, style)

We enhance and enrich worship by _____

(planning)

Orders of worship can be planned that will _____ the worshipper's opportunity for _____

(maximize, worship)

and programmatically. Let me suggest three processes that may be useful in clarifying your leadership style. The first one is subtle and hidden. It involves the extent to which you are aware of seven invisible marks of a meaningful worship service. They do not appear on a printed order of worship. These marks are reverential joy, dignity, simplicity, design, depth, variety and evaluation. The latter one is like a barometer which will rise or fall according to how much you are open to "feedback" (feelings) or evaluation (ideas) about your ministry — a collegial style — or closed — an authoritarian style.

Openness to evaluation is one way of determining whether or not worship services are being designed in an effective manner and implemented in a practical order. Leaders must have a mental image of their members during the planning process. Evaluation will enable worship planners to do a reality test on the extent to which they are applying their training and creativity in making worship meaningful.

The second process is obvious and visible. It involves the extent to which you are a "loner" — an authoritarian style — or a "team player" — a collaborative style. There are four progressive steps or plateaus in this planning process. They begin with the minister single-handedly planning the service by himself and progress to the participative strategy of selecting and nurturing a study group from the congregation to assist in planning worship services for a specific period of time.

The third process is optional and supplemental. It represents the rich resources for planning worship services which come from familiarity with the Christian Year calendar. Every leader of worship should have a basic understanding of this calendar whether it is followed closely or not. Leaders who follow this calendar do so for definite reasons that they find helpful. Churches not following the Christian Year place their emphasis upon preaching on themes they find relevant to their own congregation. However, all churches utilize some aspects of the Christian Year.

You will have three ways of tasting the "pudding" of your leadership style. The taste is not a matter of right or wrong but of good, better or best in terms of the particular characteristics and needs of your congregation. Let's begin the homeward stretch with this added reality test which is equivalent to that particular spot "where the rubber hits the road."

The author gives the processes to be used in planning worship services. The first of these is _____ and _____.

(subtle, hidden)

The second process is _____ and _____.

(obvious, visible)

The last one is _____ and _____.

(optional, supplemental)

Seven Invisible Marks of a Meaningful Worship Service

Besides the empowering of the Holy Spirit, there are at least seven invisible marks in planning meaningful worship services that do not appear in a printed order of worship.

Reverential joy

People's attitudes and concepts can be altered through wise pastoral leadership. One cannot really worship God in spirit and in truth without a reverential attitude of mind and heart. Worship leaders must be concerned as to how this perspective can be accomplished best in their own local situation. Obviously, a spirit of reverence is most easily achieved where there is order in the service and the congregation feels at ease knowing that their leaders are well-prepared and have control of the service.

Reverence does not mean deathly silence. Christians have good news to share! As Paul and Barnabus returned to the church in Antioch following the first missionary journey, "they rehearsed all that God had done with them" (Acts 14:27, KJV). Emotions need to be freed to express feelings of joy, thanksgiving and praise (Ps. 150:6). Reverence is a mood of life, celebration, drama and joy out of which comes an attitude of recognizing God's presence and holiness.

Dignity

One cannot plan for dignity, or include it as an item in the programme. Yet as worship leaders plan for the coming services, they must also prepare themselves spiritually. First, leaders must have a mental image in which they see themselves in action during the service. Therefore, a spirit of dignity in the pulpit begins in the mind and heart of the planners. Everything that is of an unnatural or stilted nature regarding mannerisms or speech should be eliminated. In this sense worship leaders indirectly plan for a dignified service with which the congregation can identify. Since dignity is synonymous with worthiness and merit, leaders must convey the idea that all that transpires in the service will be worthy of bringing before a holy God and His people.

Simplicity

The order of worship should be simple and easy to follow. Each part of the service should relate together in symmetry, design and meaning. There should be logical progression from one part of the service to the next. By mentally working through the projected order of worship, leaders can eliminate potentially awkward movement or "dead spots" in the service.

One cannot _____ worship God in spirit and truth without a _____ attitude of mind and heart.

(really, reverential)

A worship service also must have _____.

(dignity)

The order of worship should be _____ and easy to _____.

(simple, follow)

Design

Worship leaders must think in terms of a time sequence. Symmetry refers to the proportion of time given to different items in the worship programme. Generally one-half of the service is taken up with items related to music, Scripture reading, prayer, welcoming of guests, offering and announcements. The second half of the service concerns the sermon, invitation and conclusion of the service. When leaders are aware of the relationship of these items within a time frame, their planning will be more balanced and potentially more effective.

Depth

The items and moods of worship should be designed in relation to one another. When there is logical movement in the order in which items are placed, the congregation can relate more effectively to the service. Prayerful consideration should be given to achieving the objectives and goals for each service. When objectives are clear to those planning the service, prayers, Scripture readings, giving gifts, appropriate music, sermon and invitation may be designed in a logical order that demonstrates unity.

Variety

Leaders of Free Church worship must be thinking constantly of ways in which the service can be made more flexible, interesting and contribute to improved worship experiences. The purpose of varying the service is not merely for the sake of achieving variety, but for enhancing the quality of worship. The results should be improved participation on the part of the congregation—varied musical presentations and allowing capable persons to read the Scriptures or lead in responsive readings in addition to other changes that have purpose and meaning.

Evaluation

Worship services should be evaluated constantly. Worship leaders should help people to encounter God in addition to having their own personal needs met. Past services should be reviewed in the light of making present orders of service more effective. As people's needs change, worship leaders must be sensitive in responding accordingly.

Evaluation is probably the key mark in this section because it will provide insight into the other six. It also is the most difficult to implement because it calls for an openness to the ideas and feelings of others. The starting point of evaluation is asking for ideas and opinions about these six previous marks. Evaluation moves to a deeper level when it asks for the sharing of feeling,

The proportion of time given to different parts in the worship programme is called _____.

(symmetry)

The parts of the service and the _____ of worship should be designed in relation to one _____.

(moods, another)

Why vary the items in the worship service?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Why evaluate worship services?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

usually referred to as "feed-back." The ultimate test of the flexibility of your leadership style is the extent to which you can elicit an open and honest discussion at the deeper level of how your congregation perceives the way in which its worship needs are being met.

Four Progressive Levels for Worship

Having dealt with worship planning indirectly by means of invisible marks which tend to be very elusive, it is time to risk a more direct approach by venturing "where angels fear to tread." Some practical hints about planning worship services will be presented as background for the particular way in which you choose to relate to the process of worship planning in your congregation.

Worship services should be developed according to the particular spiritual needs of each congregation. Churches, like people, have personalities that distinguish them from one another. Churches vary in numerous ways. For example, they vary in spiritual needs, number and median age of members, sociological and educational levels of members, financial giving capabilities, physical facilities of the building, available instruments as well as trained talent of the musicians, aesthetic appreciation, theological training and the number and quality of church leaders. To this list might be added the educational and theological training of the minister along with his creativity, energy and personality. To a certain degree the congregation's and the minister's background and training will influence the type of worship programmes a church sustains.

In comparing the worship services of churches it is important to recognize that there are no "second class" churches with God! The size and beauty of the physical facilities or the size of the membership do not determine the quality of worship. Who is to say that one type of worship, formal or informal, will be more effective in the sight of God? Therefore, worship planners must answer two basic questions as they plan for worship:

1. Will this service bring honour and glory to God? and,
2. Will the congregation meet Jesus and have its spiritual needs met?

These concerns should be the predominant goals in planning worship services.

Obviously, churches can learn from one another's worship programmes. However, analyses and evaluations must be made in the light of a church's own abilities and needs. The transplanting of another church's order of worship will

Worship services should be developed according to the particular _____ needs of each _____.

(spiritual, congregation)

Name two questions to be asked in planning a worship service.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

not guarantee enriched worship experiences. Neither should small churches which lack the human and material resources of larger churches feel guilty for the simplicity of the worship programmes. In fact, the minister of the small church often has a more challenging task in planning for worship because of the limitations imposed upon him. Yet this minister is just as responsible for planning meaningful worship programmes as those leaders of large churches. When worship is structured to meet the spiritual needs of the congregation and is carried out in a logical and orderly manner, the use of external aids such as printed bulletins becomes secondary in importance.

Should a church not have the benefit of printed orders of worship, it is important that copies of the order of worship be made available to those having part in the service. Everyone on the programme should be informed as to his or her participation and when this will take place. In other words, there should be no surprises. People need time to make mental adjustments for their part on the programme.

The previous practical suggestions on worship planning can be implemented in one of four ways, depending upon your particular leadership style. Let me open up the four options for you without indicating my preference because I do not know all of the factors that have led to your uniqueness as a person or to the uniqueness of your congregation. These four levels in planning worship programmes are quite distinct from one another. Each one has its particular advantages and disadvantages.

The minister plans the service.

Most churches would be on this level. Since the minister knows what his messages will be for the coming Lord's day, he more than anyone else is qualified to plan the service. On the one hand, the minister may be the only person capable of planning the service in a meaningful way and, therefore, he has no alternative in the matter. On the other hand, the minister may feel that worship planning is a special gift from the Lord. He may not consult with the music director concerning the themes of the service, but act unilaterally in planning. Certainly time is saved this way. However, there are also problems. For example, the music prepared for the service might have been better co-ordinated with the sermon had the music director been informed in time to make adequate preparation. In fact, thoughtless attention to titles on printed orders of worship can become objects of laughter when unwisely fitted

State the challenge faced by the minister of a small church in planning worship programmes.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Is the following statement true or false?

There are no disadvantages to the minister planning the worship programme by himself. _____

(false)

together. Another disadvantage is that the service is more often than not hurriedly planned at the last minute and, therefore, follows the same routine order week after week. In time this repetition becomes dull and boring to the congregation.

The music director plans the service.

Churches with competent music directors are fortunate indeed. One of his or her responsibilities could be the planning of the order of worship. This person should be a student of worship and be constantly on the alert for improving the quality of worship. For this person to be effective there should be periodic communication with the minister. The pastor should inform the music director as far in advance as possible concerning the themes and emphases of his sermons. With this information in hand the music director will be able to plan the service. Once the order is made the minister should be given the opportunity to review the plans and offer suggestions concerning any modifications.

The minister and the music director plan the service together.

The third plateau calls for more involved participation in planning on the part of both the minister and the music director. A regular time should be set aside each week when they review together the total worship programme of the church. Not only do they plan together for the following Sunday but look to the weeks and months ahead. With the assistance of the Christian Year, the church, denominational and community calendars they are able to project worship emphases several months in advance. These emphases will be co-ordinated with the minister's preaching assignments. This interaction gives the music director time to prepare appropriate music. A spirit of oneness should develop between the minister and the music director as each becomes better informed and worship made more effective and natural.

The minister and music director plan with the congregation.

The highest level of planning worship services is when the congregation is involved in the planning process. Several members of the congregation could be selected to meet on a regular basis with the minister and the music director to form a study group. At the end of the desirable time period another selection from the congregation could be made and the process repeated.

This presents the minister and the music director the opportunity to explain their concepts and philosophies of worship with the study group

A competent _____ director can be given the responsibility of _____ orders of worship.

(music, planning)

The pastor and music director may plan the service _____.

(together)

DRAW a circle around the statement below that represents the highest level of planning for worship in a church.

The minister, music director, and congregation plan the worship service.

The minister and music director plan the service together.

The music director plans the service.

The minister plans the service.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

which in turn could react with ideas of its own. Study groups of this nature can contribute significantly to making worship more vibrant and expressive. The pastor and the music director will benefit from the suggestions made by the group concerning church members who could make a significant contribution to the services through their participation.

You have probably identified by now the particular way in which you have chosen to engage in worship planning in the past. You may be satisfied with your approach or you may be considering the advantages or another style. While that matter is left open-ended, this part of our journey will be concluded with one more process which you may or may not be using at the present time. It is the optional use of the rich resources for worship planning from the Christian Year calendar.

The Christian Year Calendar

While Free Church worship is not bound to follow any particular liturgy or tradition, a wealth of insight may be gained from a study of the Christian Year calendar. Undoubtedly worship leaders and their constituency are influenced more than they may realize by the traditional use of the Christian Year. Hence it is very important for all worship leaders to have a fundamental understanding of the dates, themes and major emphases of this calendar whether or not it is followed. Churches using the calendar find the following advantages:

1. By following the Christian Year churches have a *significant source of religious tradition and scriptural inspiration* that rescues worship from the drab sameness or fads which frequently characterize the approach to worship.

2. *Scripture readings for each Sunday of the year* are listed which are related to the themes in the Christian faith from both the Old and the New Testaments (both Gospels and Epistles.)

3. *The challenge of following through the entire scheme of the movement of God through Christ* can free a church from being subjected to the petty whims and narrow insights of a minister short on ideas.

4. *Regular and systematic use of Old and New Testament readings* will enable a church to hear God's Word proclaimed from both Testaments.

5. *The Christian Year focuses on specific, important themes of the Christian faith* and affords opportunities for series of sermons.

Advent

The Christian Year calendar begins four

There are certain _____ to using the Christian Year _____ in planning worship services.

(advantages, calendar)

Sundays before Christmas with the Advent season. The theme is "preparation" for Christ's coming and allows Christians to go beyond the materialism of the season to experience the true meaning of Christ's coming as Lord and Saviour of mankind.

Christmastide

Christmastide follows Advent. It is one or two Sundays — depending on what day of the week Christmas falls — between Christmas day and January 6. The theme is "receiving." The emphasis is upon the continued gift of love and life that comes through Christ. Christians are reminded of what God has done, is doing and will do for us by His coming to us and living and working through us. Christmastide lasts twelve days — from Christmas day to the sixth of January.

Epiphany

Epiphany begins on January 6 and emphasizes man's gift to God. Literally Epiphany means "uncovering," "unveiling," or "manifesting" and is related to the response of the wise men to the Christ child. Themes of these weeks are usually evangelistic applications of the gospel to all of life. The season lasts from four to nine weeks, varying with the dating of Christmas and Easter.

Lent

Lent is for Easter what Advent is for Christmas. This period represents a forty-day (plus Sundays) preparation for the celebration of Christ's resurrection. The themes of the season are "discipline" and "sacrifice." The date of Easter is determined by the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring equinox. Thus the timing of Lent varies from year to year. Lent has six Sundays. The fifth Sunday is known as Passion Sunday and the sixth as Palm Sunday.

The Thursday prior to Lent is called Maundy Thursday, coming from the Latin word for "mandate." It refers to Jesus' new commandment given to His disciples in the upper room just prior to His betrayal and crucifixion. Traditionally Christians celebrate The Lord's Supper (or Communion as it is called in more liturgical traditions) on this special day.

The Friday before Easter is Good Friday. According to tradition, the day was called "God's Friday" in recognition of Christ's death.

Eastertide

Eastertide is the next season of the Christian Year. The early Christians placed great emphasis upon Easter. The theme is the proclamation of triumph, joy, hope, victory and faith. They also

The Christian year begins with the _____ season.

(Advent)

The theme is "_____."

(receiving)

_____ applications of the gospel are made during E_____.

(Evangelistic, Epiphany)

The themes are "_____" and "_____."

(discipline, sacrifice)

DRAW a circle around the themes of Eastertide: sacrifice joy discipline victory faith.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

experienced spiritual depression following the resurrection and ascension of Christ, thus the Sunday after Easter became known as "Low Sunday." The proclamation of the indicated themes serve to strengthen Christians in their faith during the subsequent weeks of the season.

Pentecost

Pentecost (the word means "fifty") comes fifty days after Easter and concludes the Easter-tide season. The theme is the birth of the church through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Trinity Sunday

Trinity Sunday is the Sunday after Pentecost. From Trinity Sunday to the beginning of Advent constitutes some twenty-three to twenty-seven weeks, depending on when Easter falls. This time is known as the Trinity season. The focus is on the teachings of Jesus with an emphasis on ethical and moral problems.

Some Christians view the weeks after Pentecost to the next to the last Sunday of August as the Pentecost season. The Sundays from the last Sunday of August to Advent are viewed as Kingdomtide. But the emphasis is similar, focusing on the teachings of Jesus. The last weeks of the Christian Year emphasize the Kingship of Christ and seek to bring the gospel to bear on the full dimension of life and human relationships.

One Sunday has been added to the calendar more recently. The last Sunday in October is now known as Reformation Sunday, celebrating the date of Martin Luther's declaration of desired reforms in 1519. The theme is "repentance" which is needed today just as it was in the sixteenth century.

Summary

You have tasted the "pudding" of your leadership style. You either like it or have suggestions about how the recipe may be improved. Do some ingredients need to be added or subtracted? Perhaps you can consider that very personal question as the highlights of this lesson are reviewed.

Worship services should be carefully and prayerfully planned. In planning worship programmes leaders should take into account several indications or marks of effective worship. These seven marks are reverential joy, dignity, simplicity, design, depth, variety and evaluation. One will not find these indications written into worship programmes or orders of worship.

To be truly meaningful worship should be practical. Worship must be designed to meet the

The birth of the Church is the theme of _____.

(Pentecost)

Trinity season begins with _____ Sunday.

(Trinity)

needs of the congregation. Churches can learn from observing one another's worship services; however, each church is different and care should be taken to develop worship programmes that have meaning to each congregation.

There are four different levels of planning worship programmes: (1) The minister can plan the service alone; (2) the minister can inform the music director of themes and emphases to be used and allow him or her to plan the order of worship accordingly; (3) both the minister and the music director choose to plan the service together, making a thorough analysis of the worship programme in their church; and (4) a study group may be formed from the congregation to meet with the minister and the music director in planning the worship programmes.

Every student of worship should be familiar with the Christian Year calendar whether his church follows it or not. Those who do use this calendar do so for specific reasons. Those who do not use it place emphasis upon the preaching programme for their local congregation. However, all churches make some use of the Christian Year.

You were asked to reserve judgement about your leadership style and to keep it open-ended until there is clarity about the advantages and disadvantages of the four options. There is also another reason for moving slowly at this point. It is my conviction that our inner authority which causes us to be a particular kind of leader needs to be submitted to the higher authority of the Holy Spirit. Just as the final stops of our journey towards more effective ministry included the refreshment of an outdoor rest stop and a visit to your church sanctuary where you can feel the needs of your people, the next stop is one of asking you to kneel there quietly before the Lord in the spirit of prayer.

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (*Levels 1, 2, and 3*). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. What is the purpose in planning orders of service for worship?

2. Name three processes mentioned by the author for planning worship services.

3. List seven invisible marks of a meaningful worship service that do not appear in a printed order of worship.

4. Give one important principle in planning worship programmes.

5. Name disadvantages to the minister planning the order of service alone.

6. What steps can the music director take if he or she is to plan the worship programme?

7. What should be considered by the minister and music director when they work together to plan for worship?

8. How can the congregation be involved in planning for worship?

9. List five advantages to using the Christian year calendar in planning worship services.

10. What season begins the Christian year?

11. What is the theme of the Christmastide season?

12. What themes are usually carried out during Epiphany?

13. What are the themes during Lent?

14. What themes are proclaimed in Eastertide?

15. What does Pentecost represent?

16. What is the Trinity season?

Supplementary activity (*Levels 2 and 3*). Read pages 185-194 in *Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice* and answer the following questions.

1. Who is the person responsible for planning the worship service?
2. How much time does one need to spend in planning a Sunday morning worship service?
3. List guiding principles to use in planning worship services.
4. What outline for worship does Segler suggest?

Advanced activity (*Level 3*).

1. Review the study guide lesson and the supplementary reading assignment. Then write a paper to show how one may utilize the Christian year in worship. Plan and write out a complete order of worship for a morning service emphasizing one of the seasons of the Christian year.
2. Read pages 195-205 in Segler. Answer the following questions.
3. What steps does the leader need to take in preparing for worship?
4. What needs to be the attitude of the leader of worship?
5. What role does the congregation have in worship?

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss things to be considered in planning meaningful worship services that do not appear on the printed programme.
2. Discuss four ways a church's worship services may be planned.
3. How may a church take advantage of the Christian year in planning for its worship?
4. As a group, plan an appropriate worship programme.