

Developing Worship Themes: Designing Worship for “All Kinds of Kinds”

“The worship we hope to develop will be rooted in Scripture, centered on Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It will be relevant to local and emerging culture, while addressing the needs of believers and unbelievers alike. Above all, it will intentionally engage people physically, emotionally, intellectually, and soulfully.”

Experiential Worship by Bob Rognlien

The United Methodist Church’s mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Felt Need/Human Condition: What physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual need are we addressing in this service so that worship is engaging and a means of making disciples? What question needs to be posed and answered so that we are making disciples?

Liturgy means “work of the people.” Worship will look different when it is planned as a group.

Interesting worship is diverse. It relates to people based in the ways they are adept (intelligent). The seven intelligences and how they relate to worship are:

- *Linguistic intelligence:* the sermon (intellect, emotion)
- *Musical intelligence:* music (soul)
- *Logical-mathematical intelligence:* single theme throughout the service (intellect)
- *Spatial intelligence:* visuals, worship centers, placement of readers and musicians (physical)
- *Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence:* actions, such as communion and drama (physical, emotion, intellect, soul)
- *Intrapersonal intelligence:* mystery, awe, silence, reflection (soul)
- *Interpersonal intelligence:* fellowship, passing of the peace (physical, emotional)

Interesting worship is multigenerational. While kids are often drawn to the hands-on objects and activities, media, and drama, so are adults. (The Worship Workshop by Marcia McFee)

Hands-on items: Take home ideas (blue handout)

Spatial considerations: Lake Harbor’s sanctuary lends itself to large visuals that won’t work in other churches. It does not mean you can’t do visuals; you will have to learn what works in your space.

Different elements of worship connect different people to each other and God. Here are some examples of how we have incorporated these elements in various messages and message series. We’ll move through the Bible chronologically.

- Message series:** *Ancestors in Faith (November 2015)*
- Felt need:** We struggle with change. What can we learn from our ancestors in faith – those men and women who journeyed through the wilderness and faced new challenges living in the Promised Land?
- Focus:** Drama. Visuals.
- Introduction:** **Video preview**
- Week 1:** “Standing on the Edge of Something Great”
Moses looks out over the Promised Land. (Deut. 34:1-12)
 Visuals: Mt. Nebo on the ledge and **Jordan River** below
 Silhouetted drama scripture reading with audio bible narration
- Week 2:** “Crossing Over to New Life”
Ark of the Covenant near the Jordan River
- Week 3:** Call to Worship: Joshua, narrator, and congregation
- Message series:** *God Revealed (January 2015)*
- Focus:** Multigenerational drama
- Week 3:** “I’m Here”
 The Call of Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1-10)
- Message series:** *Job (October 2009)*
- Felt need:** Death. Illness. Economic woes. Job’s struggles aren’t all that different than ours. How do we praise God through life’s storms?
- Focus:** Drama. Visuals. Going “deep.”
- Week 1:** “The Tests”
 Job’s life falls apart. (Selected portions of Job 1:1-2:10)
Dramatic reading/altar setting with Narrator, God, Satan, Job, and Wife
- Week 2:** “The Trial”
 Job is at the end of his rope and puts God on trial. (Job 23:1-9, 16-17)
 Dramatic reading with Narrator and Job
- Week 3:** “The Whirlwind”
 God responds to Job. (Job 38:1-7)
 Dramatic reading with Job and God
- Week 4:** “Goodness Restored”
 Job’s “happy” ending. (Job 42:1-6, 10-17)
 Dramatic reading with Narrator and Job
- Message series:** *Images of Jeremiah (September 2010)*
- Felt need:** Anyone who has lived through disruptive times look for guidance from companions who dealt with similar situations. Jeremiah is a companion for the worst of times.
- Focus:** Strong, but simple visuals that are still relevant today
- Week 1:** “The Cracked Cistern”
 God’s people have turned away and tried to go it alone. (Jere. 2:4-13)

- Week 2:** Visuals: Broken pottery and satellite image of the gulf oil spill
 “The Potter’s Wheel”
 God is the potter. We are the clay. (Jeremiah 18:1-11)
 Visuals: Potter’s wheel/pottery/video
- Week 3:** “Houses in Babylon”
 Jeremiah urges exiles to build houses. (Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7)
 Visuals: Construction site
- Week 4:** “The Field”
 Jeremiah buys a field in a time of occupation. (Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15)
 Visuals: Field and “for sale” signs
- Message series:** *Christ Comes (Advent and Christmas 2014, Epiphany 2015)*
- Felt need:** There is a cultural expectation that the holiday season will be “merry and bright.” How do we stay true to Isaiah’s message and make it appealing enough that people will come to worship for the whole season? How can we comfort people who find the season depressing?
- Focus:** Wrestling with what to do as a worship team when you are stuck. Making your own media. Hand-on items.
- Introduction:** “**Christ Comes**” video
- Ritual:** **Bringing in the light of Christ**
Lighting the Advent Wreath
- Week 1:** “A Prophet’s Plea”
 O that you would tear open the heavens and come down... (Isa. 64:1-9)
 Hands-on item: Christmas light
- Week 2:** “A Prophet’s Promise”
 Like a shepherd he will care for his flock... (Isaiah 40:1-11)
 Message illustration: Pictures and story of the lamb, Ninian
 Hands-on item: Small lamb made from Ninian’s wool
- Blue Christmas:** “A Service of Hope and Healing”
 God is always with me. (Psalm 139)
 Come to me all who are weary... (Matthew 11:28-29)
Lighting candles of hope and healing (wooden ladder)
 Anointing with oil/prayer
- Week 3:** “A Prophet’s Proclamation”
 Good news for the poor (Isaiah 64:1-4, 8-11)
 Hands-on item: Small star (numerous descendents will be known)
- Week 4:** “Ordinary People; Unexpected Prophets”
 Mary visits Elizabeth. Mary’s song. (Luke 1:39-56)
 Hands-on item: Small angel wing
 Media: “Social Media Christmas”
<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/21887/Social-Network-Christmas>

Felt need: Most United Methodist Churches don't celebrate Christmas, without first observing the season of Advent. How do you tell the same story year after year and keep it fresh?

Focus: Variety of visuals, music, hands-on items, voices, etc.

Message series: *An Advent Detour (Advent and Christmas 2008, Epiphany 2009)*

Visuals: Road signs, snowy forest, and Christmas glitz

Music: **Advent Doxology** sung to the tune of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God, all creatures here below.

Praise God above, ye heavenly host.

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Christmas Doxology sung to the tune of "The First Noel"

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God, all creatures here below.

Praise God above, ye heavenly host.

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,

Born is the King of Israel.

Message series: *Follow the Star (Advent and Christmas 2009, Epiphany 2010)*

Visuals: Stars over the congregation. Star of Bethlehem moving forward.

Message series: *Characters of Christmas (Advent and Christmas 2012, Epiphany 2013)*

Visuals: Stained glass windows – slow reveal

Drama: Monologues by each character of Christmas

Message series: *Stations of the Birth (Advent and Christmas 2013, Epiphany 2014)*

Visuals: Maps of the journey

Banners and related vignettes

Media: Lumo Project videos

<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/search?kwrd=lumo+project>

Message "series": *Rooted in Faith (Summer 2011)*

Felt need: We crave some sense of continuity and predictability in our lives. How can the worship planning process nurture that feeling when someone different is preaching every week for six weeks?

Focus: "Theme." Visuals. Activity.

Visuals: Trees and roots

Activity: Creating our church "family tree"

Message series: *Blessed! (February/March 2014)*
Blessed are... (Matthew 5:1-12)

Felt need: Our culture has an upside-down definition of blessed. When we are feeling anything but blessed, where do we find God's grace and blessings?

Focus: Working together as a team. Message illustrations.

Visuals: Large (9'x9') BLESSED banner. Words form a cross.

Illustrations: "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit" – "Lonely People"
<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/39/Lonely-People>), New Yorker cartoon, Oseola McCarty story/photo
"Blessed Are the Meek" – Speed bump comic, Tiananmen Square photo
"Blessed Are the Pure in Heart" – Garden of Gethsemane sketch

Message series: *In Jesus' Neighborhood and Are You Ready? (Summer 2013)*

Focus: Working with, not around, giant Vacation Bible School props in worship

Introduction: "Mr. Rogers" style video

Visuals: Barn and barnyard from "Hay Day" (VBS)

IJN Week 2: "Who Is My Neighbor?"
The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
Media: "Who Is My Neighbor?"
Hands-on item: Temporary tattoos (applied in worship)

IJN Week 3: "The Better Part"
Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)
Media: "Encounters: Mary and Martha"
Drink parasols

AYR Week 1: "Rich toward God"
Storing up grain (Luke 12:13-21)
Images from Google Earth of a giant farm

Message series: *Prayers of the People (Lent 2013)*

Focus: Quiet activities. Interactive visuals.
Visuals/activity: Prayer stations around the perimeter of the sanctuary
Activity: Collection of crosses from members of the church

Message series: *Stations of Easter (Holy Week 2014)*

Focus: Writers

Palm Sunday: "The Road to Jerusalem"
Palm processional through Jerusalem gate while the bell plays and congregation sings.
"The Colt Owner: A Palm Sunday Drama" by Dirk Fuller

Message: *Maundy Thursday worship (various years)*

Focus: Fellowship. Multisensory worship.
Potluck or Seder before worship

Visuals: Last Supper in the Upper Room/ basin and towel
Drama: Multisensory worship service with communion and foot washing.
<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/multisensory-worship-service-for-holy-thursday>
Music: Sung communion liturgy TFWS 2257abcd

Message series: *The God We Can Know (Lent/Easter 2015)*

Felt need: Like Advent and Christmas, churches observe Lent and celebrate Easter every year. How can you do that and bring the story to life for long time believers and unbelievers?

Focus: Many people help behind the scenes

Activity: Making aisle runners for Palm Sunday (inset)

Week 5: "Knowing God's Way"
Palm Sunday" (John 14:1-7)
Processional following "**The Way**"

Drama: "A Tale of Two Friends: Peter and Judas"

<http://www.dramaministry.com/>

Week 6: "Knowing God's Possibilities"
Easter (John 11:17-27)
Tomb

Message: *"Helped by the Spirit" (June 2015)*

Focus: Multisensory experience. Chaos.
On the day of Pentecost... (Acts 2:1-21)
Red, orange, and yellow fabric panels coming down from the cross
Drama: "A Pentecost Gathering"

soundtrack and video

Liturgical Dance
Pentecost Sundaes

Message series: *Knitted Together (August 2012)*

Felt need: The idea of being "knitted together" is about coming together with our diverse gifts, creating something stronger and more beautiful than we are as individuals.

Focus: Ongoing activity: **Weaving paraments** with members' names and spiritual gifts

Week 1: "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism" (Ephesians 4:1-6)
Media: "One" <http://media.preachingtoday.com/mini-movies/22732/One>

Week 2: "One Body" (Ephesians 4:7-16)

Week 3: "Before Sunset" (Ephesians 4:25-5:2)

Lenten activity: God is enough. Christ provides. As we explore the I AM sayings in the Gospel of John, we learn some of the many ways in which God reveals himself to us. How has He revealed himself to you? How has God given you direction in your life? How has He fulfilled your needs? How has he shown compassion? Where has He brought freedom in your life? Which of His words (Bible verses) speak directly to you? **Take a few moments each week to write your responses to questions on the big brown paper at the back of the sanctuary.** We need to fill up three papers. They will be used in worship on March 29.

Be angry but don't sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.

- Message series:** *Extravagant Generosity: The Heart of Giving (Fall 2014)*
- Felt need:** Recognize that planning worship for a diverse group is a mixed bag.
- Focus:** Visuals. Activities.
- Visuals:** Heart made from sticks
- Activities:** Card response. Praying with **prayer beads** made during *Our Covenant Life*.
- Storytelling:** Testimony from members
- Week 1:** "EKG: Ministry Flows from the Heart"
Take hold of the life that is truly life. (1Timothy 6:6-19)
- Week 2:** "The Art of Love: Relationships Are Matters of the Heart"
Love the Lord and your neighbors. (Deut. 6:4-9; Mark 12:28-31; Phil. 4:4-13)
- Week 3:** "Bucket Lists: Visions and Hope Are Inspirations of the Heart"
Each of you is part of the body of Christ, and you were chosen to live together in peace. (Col. 3:14; Joel 2.28; Matt. 6:33)
Skit: "Cheese Puffs"
- Week 4:** "Declaration on Your Heart"
The story of Nicodemus and being born of the spirit. (John 3:1-7)
See what love the Father has lavished on us... (1 John 3:1)
Ribbons on the heart, **candle lighting, bell tolling for All Saints Day**
- Message:** *"All Things New" (May 2013)*
- Focus:** Scripture, music, media, personal testimony – writing drama as a group
Behold, I am making all things new... (Revelation 21:1-6)
"All Things New" **drama:** Three characters reveal their current situations. They are transformed as God makes all things new. Their stories were woven together with Jeremy Camp's song, "There Will Be a Day."