### 2 WORSHIP

### Safiyah Fosua, GBOD

### **Background Reading:**

The Worship Architect, by Constance Cherry

### **Handouts:**

Seasonal Planning for Preaching and Worship
Seasonal Planning Grid (update for current season at:
<a href="http://www.gbod.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=nhLRJ2PMK">http://www.gbod.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=nhLRJ2PMK</a>
<a href="mailto:sG&b=5819089&ct=3833707">sG&b=5819089&ct=3833707</a>)

Twenty-one Questions to Consider for Designing Worship

### **Supplies/Equipment Needed:**

Projector and Screen
PowerPoint Presentation
Newsprint and Easel
Bibles
Index Cards
Masking Tape
Markers

### Goals:

By the end of Module 2, participants will have:

- 1. Reflected on the purpose of worship in the life of congregations
- 2. Studied a basic theology of worship
- 3. Identified several key aspects of worship to further develop in their congregations
- 4. Developed a strategy for enhancing the quality of the worship experience in their congregation that names key leaders, actions to be taken, and a timeline.

[9:00 am]

### **Introduction to Module 2**

All modules will follow the format introduced in the first session: Loving, Learning, and Leading.

- 1. In the segment titled *Loving*, we will begin our meeting with a period of worship, followed by a time to check in with one another, and conclude with a short biblical reflection.
- 2. The second section, *Learning*, will focus on the worship life of the congregation.
- 3. In our final segment, *Leading*, you will be invited to assess the worship that takes place at your church and develop a plan for enhancing your worship experiences.

[9:10 am]

### **Group Covenant**

Read, Review, Adjust and sign group covenant from last session.

[9:25 am]

### LOVING

### **Biblical Reflection**

Read: Luke 14:13-36a

Question for silent reflection: "What is God saying to me through this passage?"

[Silent Reflection - several minutes] -

### Using a different Bible Translation, read Luke 24:13-36a again.

Question for silent reflection – Think of a time when you were surprised to discover that God had already been present and active in a particular aspect of your life.

[Silent reflection – several minutes]

Group discussion question: Describe a time when you were surprised to discover that God had already been present and active in a particular aspect of your life.

[10:00 am]

### **Formation Questions:**

**Description of Check In:** Early Methodism began with a group of college students concerned about one another's spiritual well-being and spiritual development. Their groups soon grew in numbers and they went on to become a spiritual formation movement that changed the face of Protestantism both in England and across the globe. They met weekly and often began their meetings with a simple question like: how is it with your soul? This question served as a springboard to discuss issues like spiritual accountability, progress, temptation, discouragement or even spiritual drought. Through weekly accountability, early Methodists grew in faith and supported one another through difficult times.

Vital Congregations Incubator

These incubators are more than learning groups, they are also designed to be spiritual formation groups, like the early Methodist covenant groups where we care for one another and encourage one another in good times or

in bad times. Part of the covenant we have with each other is that sharing is voluntary (not mandatory) and that

anything shared with the group is kept in strict confidentiality.

Using mutual invitation, ask one another these questions:

Since we last met, how have you experienced the presence of God?

What are you learning about being a spiritual leader?

When you are asked, you have two options: you may respond to the question, decline comment by saying

"pass," or delay comment by saying "pass for now." When all have finished, close in prayer.

[The next time your group meets, you will also ask one another about the progress made in the area of

worship.]

[10:40 am transition to worship]

Worship: "Touching Jesus"

Text: Luke 24:36b-48

Introduction:

The text you have just heard is a continuation of the text we used during our biblical reflection and takes place

on the same day as the Walk to Emmaus reading. What a day it had been! That morning the women had gone to the tomb with spices to do the customary preparations for burial. Instead of a body, they found an empty tomb —

but the men had a hard time believing them.

Later Peter and John went to the tomb to verify that it was indeed empty – but an empty tomb could mean

many things, a stolen body, a misplaced body – not necessarily a resurrected body!

All of the disciples were in a bad state. The eleven (Judas was missing) were locked up in a room, partly for

fear, partly for protection. Two of the other disciples started walking to a little city nearby called Emmaus. While they walked, a stranger with great insight joined them. Later they learned that the stranger was really Jesus. Just

as they were realizing who he was, Jesus vanished. So, two very excited disciples ran back to Jerusalem to tell the others what they had seen. While they were talking about this, Luke continues, Jesus appeared again! They were

understandably afraid, but Jesus invited them to touch him.

Touch me and See!

63

### The power of touch

We are still trying to understand the power of touch

And why it is that babies thrive on touch

And why certain adults are willing to accept a fist instead of a caress – just to be touched!

And then there's God's touch...

Jesus touched sick people and healed them. Jesus touched fearful disciples on the Mountain of Transfiguration and comforted them. Jesus touched the eyes of the blind and healed them. Jesus touched the lepers (and others who were untouchable) restoring them to health and community. People were familiar with the power and unpredictability of God's touch.

### Touch me and see

Why not just touch them, Jesus, as you had done before and end the mystery?

Perhaps Jesus did not reach out to touch them this time because the disciples were *overstimulated*. Seriously consider how you or I would react to what they had just experienced:

- Less than a week before, things had suddenly turned sour,
- A prayer meeting had turned into an arrest and their Lord and teacher had been taken all over town for interrogation.
- The worst of horrors followed. Jesus was crucified.
- And now, his body was missing!

When Jesus found them, they were behind locked doors for safety reasons – after all they had been part of his crew! Who is this person who just *appeared* in the room? Could this really be Jesus?

Instead of overwhelming them with more than they could handle at the moment, Jesus offered to *let them touch him* on their own terms. It is almost as if the scene implied:

I know that you are frightened and confused. I will not touch you. If you are ready, when you are ready, you can touch me and see...that I am who I say I am....

Our topic for today is worship. What does this text suggest about worship? To begin, we live in a culture that is *overstimulated*. Some who will visit your congregations have seen more killings in an evening of television or video games than the previous generation saw in actual war. We live among people who have been offered too many choices and have more leisure time for recreational pursuits than any previous generation. These are not the only people who are *overstimulated*. Think of others who have been battered and tossed about by the recent

Vital Congregations Incubator

epidemic of joblessness and despair. Remember people who are overwhelmed by loss and displacement. And we cannot forget the average person just trying to make it from day to day. All of this in a culture often strongly biased against Christianity. Some of our young people want to believe and are afraid to believe at the same time.

To all of us Jesus says, touch me and see. He who had just conquered death made himself transparent and vulnerable for our sake.

Touch <u>us</u> and see!

This raises questions about how we, the Church, relate to the community. Are we imposing, or are we transparent and vulnerable for the sake of those who are already overstimulated and fearful? Think about the place where you worship? Are you welcoming? Are you open to allowing people to experience God in a variety of ways? Or, do you appear to *pounce* on visitors while they are still making up their minds about your *church* and your *Lord*?

These overwhelmed disciples remind us that we each encounter Jesus in different ways. There are times when God is made known to us in explosive, overwhelming ways. But, sometimes people come to worship looking for the healing presence of God in the stillness of the worship space. Some come to be healed by a word they hear that comes from God. Others come to sing their way back to *shalom*. This passage reminds us of the many moods of worship and the need for worship to become a place where newcomers and familiar friends, saints and sinners, young and old may all draw near to God together.

Worship is many things – a time and space set aside for adoration, a place where we encounter God, a place where weary souls may feel welcomed and safe in the presence of God and God's people.

Touch me and see.

**Prayer time:** In groups of two or three, pray for someone who needs the touch of God and the touch of the local church today.

Optional Background music: "Let Me Touch You" by Kirk Franklin, available as a download from amazon.com http://www.amazon.com/Let-Me-Touch-You/dp/B001BKQ0CK/ref=sr 1 1?ie=UTF8&qid=1317593712&sr=8-1

Closing Hymn: "Fix Me" # 655 UMH or another hymn of your choosing.

[Short break, Return at 11 am]

[11 am]

### Learning

As we begin to look at worship, I would like to begin with two questions:

Why do you go to church? (Why do you think members go to church?)

[Responses from participants)

Transition: a quote from James Magaw found on p. 270 of The Worship Architect:

"If you ask me why I go to church, I could start with these reasons: ..."

[Read from page 270] ...

"But if you ask me why I worship, you raise the discussion to another plane."

So now I ask: Why do you worship?

[Responses from participants]

Here is Constance Cherry's definition of worship: "Christian worship is a God-instituted gift to the church for nurturing our relationship with God and others. Worship is above all to God, with God, and for God... (*The Worship Architect*, p. xii).

[11:10 am]

### A Biblical Theology of Worship (Constance Cherry)

Dr. Cherry offers 6 basic descriptions of worship grounded in scripture:

- 1. Worship is grounded in God's acts of salvation.
  - A. For the Jews the culminating act of salvation was the Passover.
  - B. For Christians this culminating event is the Cross.
- 2. Worship is *patterned in revelation and response*. In worship, God is revealed and we respond to what we have seen and heard from God. This is grounded in biblical precedence:
  - C. Isaiah 6 Isaiah "saw" God and worshipped
  - D. Wise men or shepherds heard from God and worshipped
  - E. Simeon and Anna saw Jesus and worshipped
  - F. Palm Sunday Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem an entire city recognized the presence of the Messiah and worshipped.

Reflection Question: How does worship create an environment where worshippers can truly encounter God and confront themselves?

[Optional: Participants respond]

- 3. Worship is *covenantal* in nature. In worship we learn about God and we experience the God who keeps covenant with us. In the worshipping community we experience how to *live into* being in covenant with one another and with God. (Exodus 6:7) I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. (NRSV)
- 4. Worship is corporate; it is not enough to worship alone. New Testament believers paint a glorious picture of frequent corporate worship in Acts and demonstrate how the Early Church wrestled with the importance of corporate – rather than individual or private worship.

Worship is a conversation between the Culture and the Covenant.

"... First is the worship relevant? I do not by relevant mean that the worship is personally satisfying to a particular set of worshippers, but rather that the worship meets the criterion of conversation between the culture and the Covenant (the biblical record) and that the volume is "up" on the biblical side of that equation...."

Dr. Valerie Bridgeman in the Introduction to the <u>Africana Worship</u> <u>Book</u>, (Discipleship Resources, 2006)

(Acts 2:42) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (NRSV)

(Hebrews 10:24-25) And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (NRSV)

- 5. There is a *Trinitarian* aspect to worship: all of God is involved in worship, all of God is addressed in worship. This Trinitarian involvement is more than invoking the name of the Trinity; it is intentional and conscious involvement with Father, Son and Spirit, (Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer). Some churches address their worship to God as Creator, while neglecting to mention the remaining two persons of the Trinity. Others emphasize the redeeming work of Jesus Christ almost exclusively. A number of churches unintentionally ignore the presence of the Holy Spirit in worship perhaps as a nod to rationalism resulting in expressions of faith that are not open to the kind of interventions or interruptions that accompany the active presence of God's Holy Spirit.
- 6. Worship is a *journey of transformation*. We journey together, each on a different stage of the journey, all headed in the same direction toward the *Christian Perfection* that John Wesley spoke of. We do not come together because of habit or obligation, we come to worship and to be transformed by God as we struggle to worship, live and work together in Christian community.

[11:30 am]

### Sermon as Meeting Place (Barbara Lundblad)



One key element of worship is the sermon. Dr. Barbara Lundblad, of Union Theological Seminary in NYC, invites us to look at the sermon as a meeting place, or intersection, between: the pastor/preacher, the people, God and the text. As preachers and regular church-goers, you may have already embraced the notion that the sermon is a place in worship where our lives intersect with God and the text. Dr. Lundblad's metaphor invites us to think about how God, text, preacher and people intersect through the entire worship experience. Before we look at the ways that the worship experience becomes a meeting place, let us take a look at two significant points on this intersection: the *pastor/preacher* and the *people*.

### The Pastor/Preacher:

Why do we accept the call to preach? It is a weighty thing to presume to speak a word that comes from God. It is weightier still to presume that any of us are able to speak for God. It is beyond the scope of this brief module on worship to explore the myriad reasons why men and women accept the call to ministry and why certain of them also accept the call to pastoral ministry that includes weekly preaching. But, perhaps we might gain further insight about this from hearing your stories.

Discussion Questions: Pastors, why do you preach? Worshippers what do you hope to gain from a sermon when you attend worship?

[Allow time for responses from participants. When pastors are meeting with other pastors, encourage them to share their personal reasons for preaching. When pastors are meeting with their church leaders, it is important for the local church leaders to hear from the pastor why he/she preaches.]

In *Preaching Grace,* Kennon Callahan (1999) lists 5 common motivations that pastors frequently have for preaching during weekly worship:

- 1. God's Compassion
- 2. To nurture Christian **Community**
- 3. To **Challenge** church members to deeper discipleship
- 4. **Reasonability** this is where both pastors and leaders attempt to make sense of what we do in church and where logic, data and analysis often compete with compassion and community in making ministry choices.
- 5. To inspire members to deeper level of **Commitment** (especially as it pertains to keeping the church going!) You could easily substitute the word *loyalty* here. (pp. 88 and following)

On the surface, these look reasonable and may even mirror your experiences in pastoral ministry or in the church where you are a member. However, when a church begins to experience trouble, or when a church hopes to grow, Callahan cautions against what could be experienced as a *motivational gap* (Callahan, 1999, pp. 91-93). For example, a pastor of a church with declining membership may unconsciously begin to lean more toward loyalty and commitment preaching. Key leaders in the church may find this appropriate— or may even encourage the pastor to address critical church management issues from the pulpit. But, grassroots members (those who may attend with regularity but do not take an active part in leadership or leadership decisions) are most likely looking for sermons and worship that communicate the *compassion of God* and *Christian community*. They are joined in these expectations by unchurched visitors and others who may periodically drop in and out of worship. You could end up with the pastors and key leaders seeing the purpose of worship and the sermon one way, while grassroots members and the unchurched, who were in need of something different, eventually drift away feeling that their needs were not met.

These are serious concerns. Visitors are looking for different things from established church members, pastors often have a different agenda from worshippers and in the midst of all this, we Methodists are somewhat at odds with one another!

### [Pastors-only section]

So, preachers, this raises several critical issues about what, why, and how we preach.

¶340 of the United Methodist Book of Discipline describes the pastoral duties of elders and licensed pastors in this way:

A fourfold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service

*Word* – to preach the Word of God, lead in worship, read and teach the scriptures, and engage the people in study and witness.

Sacrament – the United Methodist sacraments are Baptism and Communion. Pastors prepare those under their care and influence to receive the sacraments in meaningful ways that strengthen their faith and shape their discipleship.

Order – we are familiar with the administrative duties of pastoral ministry.

Service – pastors lead the way in servant ministries and teach congregations how to be in service to their community as disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Over the past three years, how has your preaching and the ways that you order worship supported fulfillment of these duties?

Key questions about ministerial identity, and the ways we vision God and our community are crucial as we attempt to understand what informs us as worship planners and what influences the sermons we preach. Let us now take a few moments to explore how personal identity, the pastor's image of God and the pastor's theology of humanity may influence how we plan worship and how and what we preach.

### Identity

There is a vast difference between *assigned* identity and *assumed* identity. If you have been in pastoral ministry for any time at all you have probably come to experience tensions over the gap between the roles assigned to a pastor and the ones that you have assumed for yourself. Personal identity is a powerful driver and your perceptions of who you are in ministry contribute a great deal to your sermonic outcomes. For example, pastors who have strong gifts in counseling may unwittingly find themselves preaching more than a few 'self-help' style sermons, while pastors who think of themselves as evangelists may tend to evangelize the congregation (again and again). If a pastor does not see herself/himself as a preacher, it is unavoidable that the sermon will be affected. When you stand in the pulpit to preach, what kind of identity have you assumed: pastor? messenger? evangelist? storyteller? witness? counselor?

### **Image of God**

Similarly, your image of God influences the tenor of your sermon. For example, a pastor who has for a lifetime been focused only on the infinite mercy and love of God may find it difficult to preach about the justice of God. We have only to look at the recent controversy with Rob Bell and *Love Wins*, to see potential pitfalls in not embracing the many ways that God deals with humanity. The sermons of a pastor experiencing a period of depression may inadvertently communicate that God is absent or indifferent. What are your sermons saying about your image of God?

### **View of Humanity**

Another key assumption that bleeds into preaching is the pastor's view of humanity, or *anthropology*. Pastors who see humanity as basically flawed tend to preach one way while those who view people as basically good tend to preach another way. What do your sermons communicate about the estate of humankind?

Most of us would be slow to admit that we have a theological bias but the truth is that core beliefs about God and the estate of humanity strongly influence the way that we think about worship, the weekly sermon and many other ministries of the Church.

### Reflection

Take a few minutes to identify your core beliefs about God. If you were asked to describe God to a stranger, list three adjectives that you would use. Write these down.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> New York Times, Pastor Stirs Wrath with His Views on Old Questions, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/05/us/05bell.html

[Allow a couple of minutes for participants to write their responses.]

Next, use only three adjectives to describe how you feel about the condition of humankind. Write these down. [Allow a couple of minutes for participants to write their responses.]

### Discuss the following questions with your table group:

- What do the adjectives you used about God suggest about your image of God?
- What do the adjectives you used about the condition of humanity suggest about your theology of humanity?
- What would your last five sermons teach a new member about the nature of God, the ways that God relates to humankind, and about you as a pastor?

[Allow time for discussion. If there is not adequate time to discuss all questions, ask participants to treat them as homework.]

### [End of Pastors-only section]

[12:15 pm]

Lunch

[1:00 pm]

### The People:

The research of Dr. Ronald Allen, of Christian Theological Seminary in Indiana, offers additional insight about congregational expectations in worship.<sup>4</sup> He uses a construct from Aristotle to describe how worshippers listen to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Dr. Ronald Allen headed a multi-year research project involving 263 lay people in twenty-eight congregations. Their research included worshipping congregations of non-Hispanic European origin, African Americans, and congregations that were racially and ethnically mixed. Clergy and laity participants were asked how they listened to sermons. Findings from this research have been published in four volumes. The four volumes are: *Listening to Listeners: Homiletical Case Studies* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), *Hearing the Sermon: Relationship, Content, Feeling*, (Chalice Press, 2004), Believing *in Preaching:* 

a sermon: ethos, logos, and pathos. Allen's research revealed that people listen to a sermon for three major reasons: relationship - a sense of connectedness with the preacher (Aristotle's ethos), content (logos), and feeling (pathos) (Allen, 2004) Allen's research suggests that worshippers of all the ethnic groups included in the survey and from the various socio-economic categories represented in the survey reported in similar ways. You may find the percentages surprising!

Ethos – (Relationship)

40% of worshippers come for relationship

- Logos (Content)
  - 40% of worshippers come for content
- Pathos (Feeling)

20% of worshippers are looking to be "moved" or "touched"

Discussion question for pastors' groups: Which of these categories describe your last 5 sermons?

OR

Discussion question for pastor/laity groups: What are you looking for in a sermon?

[1:15 pm]

### What about Worship Style?

When you start talking about worship it is not long before the discussion drifts to questions about worship *style*. Unfortunately, the whole issue of style has become a battlefield for United Methodists and other mainline denominations. In spite of the current discourse concerning traditional versus contemporary worship, controversy over worship styles is not new. For the past two hundred years, Methodist worship in America has clustered around two major streams:

- Liturgical worship (sometimes thought of as traditional worship)
- Evangelicalism and Revivalism

John Wesley was born into an Anglican parsonage and was ordained in the Anglican Church tradition. The church of the early Methodist movement was the Anglican Church, a close cousin to Catholicism. (The Episcopal Church is essentially the Anglican Church on American soil.)

If this is true, why is there such variation in present-day Methodist worship? The tensions we experience today may actually have begun in the early 1800s when America was fermenting with evangelicalism. Evangelicalism emphasized personal piety and personal commitment more than scholarship at a time when religious commitment in America was waning. In the early 1800's the eastern states experienced what some call the Second Great Awakening. Unlike the First Great Awakening of the 1700s -- that had been known for

What Listeners Hear in Sermons, (Chalice Press, 2005), and Make the Word Come Alive: Lessons from Laity, (Chalice Press, 2005).

emotional expression considered extreme by some observers -- this was a quieter *awakening*. In the East, the Great Awakening of the 1800s expressed itself in *increased social responsibility*. This is when many of the early missionary movements began and the American Bible Society hails back to this period of time.

On the other end of the country was the Great Revival of Kentucky that spread through Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio. In August of 1801 the Great Cane Ridge Revival was reported to have had between 10,000 and 25,000 attendees! The Great Revival of Kentucky was much like the First Great Awakening had been in the East in the 1700s – brimming with enthusiasm. It began with extended outdoor meetings initiated by the Presbyterians. The meetings soon became so emotion-filled that the Presbyterians denounced and abandoned them – but the Methodists and the Baptists adopted them and promoted their camp meeting style worship<sup>5</sup>. Some see this as the beginning of our tensions over worship style.

Today, we use a variety of terms to describe our worship tensions like: high church vs. low church, free-church vs. liturgical. Today's conversation includes: liturgical, traditional, contemporary, blended and emergent forms of worship.

[1:25 pm]

### **Identify your Dominant Worship Style**

Exercise: using the chart on pages 240—241 place a check mark beside the descriptions that are most characteristic of your congregation's *preferred* worship style. Pastors, if you have multiple congregations, use a numbers or alphabets instead of a check mark as you keep in mind that a 3-point charge could have 3 or more different worship style preferences.

### Group Processing for pastors' group:

Ask the following: How many in the room consider their worship:

Liturgical?

Traditional?

Contemporary?

Blended?

Emergent?

### Or, group processing for pastor/laity group:

Ask the following: Which style(s) are representative of the worship experienced in your congregation?

Liturgical?

Traditional?

Contemporary?

Blended?

**Emergent** 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> For more on this see an article by the US Department of State web site on the Second Great Awakening <a href="http://www.america.gov/st/educ-english/2008/April/20080407113519eaifas0.3545038.html">http://www.america.gov/st/educ-english/2008/April/20080407113519eaifas0.3545038.html</a> or another on the Library of Congress site titled "Religion and the Founding of the American Republic" <a href="http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel07.html">http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel07.html</a>.

[Allow 5-7 minutes for individuals to consider the worship style(s) of their congregation]

### Instructions for group discussion:

1. After participants have identified their own style(s) of worship, divide participants into small affinity groups (traditional, contemporary, liturgical, etc.) to discuss the pros and cons of their current worship style. Instruct pastors who have more than one worship service or more than one congregation to join the group that represents their newest worship style.

Allow these affinity groups 10-15 minutes for conversation about worship styles. Be sure to address any styles not represented in the talk-back session. Instruct each group to select a spokesperson who will share a summary of smaller-group conversations with the entire group.

### 2. Affinity Group reporting on worship styles:

After the affinity groups have met, invite a representative from each group to share a summary of their affinity group conversations. At the end of each summary, ask the entire group this question: What gifts do this style of worship offer to the entire church? [For example: liturgical worship offers the richness and mystery of symbols, traditional worship offers the comfort of familiarity and predictability, contemporary worship offers a new language and forms for music and often streamlines the order of worship, blended worship often makes it possible for multiple generations to find meaning in the same worship service, and emergent worship represents a movement back to the richness of symbols and experiential worship that 21st century worshippers of many generations are seeking....]

Note: If you are facilitating an incubator group whose members report only one style of worship, discuss the pros and cons of your current worship style and then explore the contributions of other styles of worship as indicated above.

### At the end of affinity group reporting, ask participants:

- 1. What have you learned about different styles of worship?
- 2. Has this session influenced your feelings about styles of worship different from your own?

Summary: Tom Long, of Candler School of Theology, offers some helpful advice for those who would war over worship. In *Beyond the Worship Wars* Long stresses that people come to worship for several major reasons:<sup>6</sup>

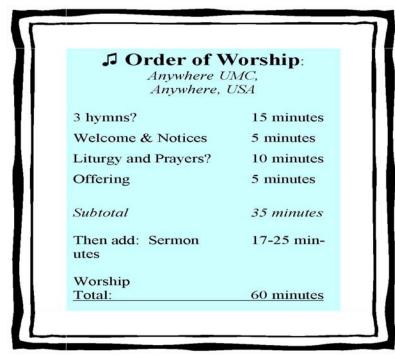
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Thomas G. Long, Beyond the Worship Wars, Building Vital and Faithful Worship (Alban Institute, 2001) *Cokesbury description: In Beyond the Worship Wars, Thomas G. Long discusses nine characteristics of vital and faithful worship practiced by a wide range of "third-way" congregations: experiencing mystery, practicing hospitality, recovering a sense of drama, emphasizing excellent and eclectic music, creatively adapting the worship space, connecting worship and local mission, encouraging worshipers to develop a repertoire of worship* 

- 1. Spirituality -- Tom Long describes this as a yearning for the *mystery* of God and faith.
- 2. Meaning -- God, is my life worth living?
- 3. Community defined as Christian community even *Beloved Community* [not social club]
- 4. Guidance can someone tell me what God wants me to do?

Remember Constance Cherry's definition: worship is directed to God, it is for God and it is with God. If, in worship we are able to direct our worship God-ward while addressing many of these most basic needs that Christians bring to the worship experience, style becomes a side-issue.

[2:00 pm]

### Leading



### 59.59, The Troublesome context of Worship

(On Sundays with Communion/Baptism/New Members/special emphasis: 7-10 min)

So much to be accomplished, not enough time! The average worship service in the United Methodist Church lasts one hour – and in some places, not a second more. How we structure worship time becomes especially important when we consider the church-going habits of 21<sup>st</sup> century worshippers. Statistics reveal that denominational worship attendance hovers below 50% and attendance

at additional church-related groups is significantly less than that!<sup>7</sup> This makes worship an extremely important weekly gathering for the congregation. So, what are you doing in worship?

[2:10 pm]

responses, moving toward a joyous festival as worship draws to a close, and employing strong, charismatic pastors. All nine of these characteristics make for vital and faithful worship.

http://www.gcfa.org/sites/default/files/u3/2009%20US%20Annual%20Conference%20Membership%20Summary 0.xls

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> GCFA report for 2009

### **Identify your Order of Worship**

Using the masking tape and index cards provided by your leader, map the progression of worship in your church on a Sunday morning. What happens first? (write that on one card) Next? (another card) When is the scripture read? (another card) How many times does the congregation sing? (one card for each time the congregation sings) Where is your offering? (card) Do this for each line of a typical worship bulletin for your congregation. Using masking tape, tape the cards that represent each element of your worship on the wall or on the desk in vertical order and stand by them as we discuss the order of worship from the United Methodist perspective.

[2:25 pm]

### The General Order of Worship

United Methodist Worship has four basic parts: entrance and gathering, scripture and proclamation or *word*, response to the word – sometimes called table, and sending forth.

- 1. Entrance and Gathering
  - No matter what our preferred style of worship or cultural preferences we must have a way to gather the people, welcome them and begin worship.
- 2. Word
  - We come together, like people in the Early Church, (and in the synagogues before there was a church) to hear the scriptures read and to hear them explained for daily life.
- 3. Table (response)
  - The sacraments are a dramatization of relationship and salvation history. Baptism reminds us of our relationship with God. We are numbered among God's people at our baptism. Communion replete with images of table fellowship both re-presents the sacrifice that Jesus made for us and reminds us that we are fed and nourished by none other than God. This is my body, this is my blood.... There are also many other ways to respond to the Word of God like prayers of commitment or recommitment, altar calls, the offering, invitation to a study group, etc.
- 4. Sending Forth
  - The preferred image is sending, not benediction. A benediction is a blessing, but a sending forth... ah! That is a challenge to go and *be* good news!

### Analyze your Order of Worship

- In small groups, determine how closely your worship is aligned with this 4-fold order of worship described in the *United Methodist Book of Worship* and the *Worship Architect*.
- Are there unnecessary elements present?
- Are all four of the "basics" present?
- Are there changes that you would like to discuss with your worship committee/staff?

•

[2:50 pm]

### **Worship Planning**

In an ideal worship service, scripture and sermon, music and liturgy, liturgical dance, visual art, and drama all support the theme for that week. The problem is that thematic worship services require advance planning. How far in advance should you plan?

Some pastors of large multiple-staff churches routinely select preaching themes and scriptures three or even six months in advance. This makes it possible for music ministers and worship committees, liturgists, worship leaders, musicians, soloists, and other worship artists to coordinate their efforts with the general theme of the sermon for each week. "Solo" pastors and pastors of smaller congregations also find advance planning valuable. Volunteer musicians and liturgists often feel more confident when they have scripture readings and music selections several weeks before the worship service. Additionally, advance work on a sermon is a big plus for any pastor who wrestles with a busy, unpredictable schedule.

Who has time to do all that planning?

Some pastors find personal planning retreats useful. You need not leave town to do a planning retreat, but you may find it necessary to leave your normal workplace and to reserve your cell phone for emergencies. Think about setting aside two or three working days. Some pastors go to a public or university library for the day. Others, who are fortunate enough to have retreat centers within an hour or so of their homes, make arrangements to use a quiet room at the retreat center during the day.

Lectionary – yes or no?

[Discuss: Advantages and Disadvantages of the Lectionary. A PowerPoint slide has been provided to assist in this discussion]

If you are using the Revised Common Lectionary, prayerfully read the lections for each of the thirteen weeks for which you are planning. For those pastors who select their own scriptures, consider two or three series that could be completed within the thirteen-week period. Consider your congregation's mission statement, the context of the community where you worship, or the special spiritual needs of those who worship weekly as you make plans for worship.

Select the texts that will be read or used as a basis for prayers or calls to worship and identify the text(s) that you plan to use for your sermon.

Next, decide upon a general theme for your sermon, like the love of God, faithfulness, or hope. This theme should be written in ways that will provide sufficient information for those who assist you in worship to write bulletins, to select music, or to schedule special visiting worship artists such as liturgical dancers or drama groups.

Chapter 2, Worship

If you are the chief worship planner in your church, make notes for yourself about the hymns, visual environment, or special music to request for that Sunday.

Finally, give your sermon a tentative title -- one definite enough to be published in the church newsletter or the local newspapers before the sermon is finished.

In the course of your preparation, be sure to write down any thoughts that may be helpful to you weeks later when you develop that sermon. A planning sheet, organized around the seasons of the liturgical year is provided in your handouts packet to help you get started. Later, you may find that you need additional columns for items particular to your congregation's worship style.

Reaping the benefits

Advance planning is good for everyone involved with worship. It allows the person who preaches to know enough about upcoming sermons to keep his or her eyes open for helpful information and illustrations. It allows those who assist in worship to prepare to the best of their abilities and to participate more confidently in worship. And, of course, worshipers benefit from a worship service that has been thoughtfully designed to help them hear one strong message based upon the scripture text.

Handout: Quarterly Planning Grid

[3:15 pm]

### Exercise:

Discuss the Handout "Twenty-One Questions to Consider for Designing Worship"

- Which of these do you feel that your congregation already does well?
- Which of these would be a disruptive challenge for your congregation?

Next:

Target 1-3 areas for work in your local congregation. Covenant with your group to begin this work before the next time that we gather. Write down the names of people you will attempt to meet with. Simple things you can do without consultation, and other plans that you have to enhance congregational worship.

[3:45 pm]

### Homework:

- 1. Using the quarterly worship planning guide, or a similar tool, complete 13 weeks of advance worship planning for your congregation(s).
- 2. Discuss the "Twenty-One Questions to Consider for Designing Worship" handout with your worship leaders and/or worship committee and select 1-3 areas to work on in the next months. Come prepared to report on progress at the next incubator meeting.

[3:50 pm]

### **Evaluation and Closing**

Before our next meeting please read *The Worship Architect* by Constance Cherry. (Be sure everyone has a copy of the book. If not, let them know how to get a copy.)

Before we leave for the day, I'd like to get feedback from you about how today went. I have three short questions:

What went well
What did you learn?
What needs improvement?

[see PowerPoint Presentation for Closing Worship]

### **Suggested Reading and Helpful Web Sites:**

Allen, Ronald J (2004). Hearing the sermon: Relationship, content, feeling. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press.

Benedict, Daniel T. (2007). Patterned by grace: How liturgy shapes us. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books,.

Callahan, Kennon (1999). *Preaching grace: Possibilities for growing your preaching and touching people's lives.*San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Long, Thomas (2001). Beyond the worship wars. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute.

Troeger, Thomas & Everding, Edward (2008). *So that all might know: Preaching that engages the whole congregation.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

### Articles:

Michael Hawn. (2010). Streams of song: An overview of congregational song in the twenty-first century. In *smu.edu*. Retrieved March 1, 2012, from <a href="http://www.smu.edu/Perkins/PublicPrograms/LaySchools/Dallas/March2012/~/media/Site/Perkins/PDF/PublicProgs/LaySchool/Hawn%20Handout.ashx">http://www.smu.edu/Perkins/PublicPrograms/LaySchools/Dallas/March2012/~/media/Site/Perkins/PDF/PublicProgs/LaySchool/Hawn%20Handout.ashx</a>.

Safiyah Fosua. (2011). Preaching for Transformation. In *GBOD.org/worship*. Retrieved March 1, 2012, from <a href="http://www.gbod.org/atf/cf/%7B3482E846-598F-460A-B9A7-386734470EDA%7D/PreachingMonograph5.pdf">http://www.gbod.org/atf/cf/%7B3482E846-598F-460A-B9A7-386734470EDA%7D/PreachingMonograph5.pdf</a>.

Safiyah Fosua. (2011). Seasonal Planning for Preaching and Worship. In *GBOD.org/worship*. Retrieved March 1, 2012, from http://www.gbod.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=nhLRJ2PMKsG&b=5819089&ct=3833707.

Taylor Burton-Edwards. (2011). Planning Vital Weekly Worship. *In GBOD.org/worship*. Retrieved March 1, 2012, from <a href="http://www.gbod.org/atf/cf/%7B3482E846-598F-460A-B9A7-386734470EDA%7D/WorshipPlanning3.pdf">http://www.gbod.org/atf/cf/%7B3482E846-598F-460A-B9A7-386734470EDA%7D/WorshipPlanning3.pdf</a>.

### Sites:

Center for Excellence in Preaching (Reformed) www.cep.calvinseminary.edu

GBOD Worship (UMC) www.gbod.org/worship

The Text This Week www.textweek.com

WorkingPreacher.org (Lutheran) www.workingpreacher.org

### Handouts: Module 2 Worship

Handouts: Module 2, Worship

### Seasonal Planning for Preaching and Worship

By Safiyah Fosua

In an ideal worship service, scripture and sermon, music and liturgy, liturgical dance, visual art and drama all support the theme for that week. The problem is that thematic worship services require advance planning. How far in advance should you plan? Some pastors of large multiple-staff churches routinely select preaching themes and scriptures three or even six months in advance. This makes it possible for music ministers and worship committees, liturgists, worship leaders, musicians, soloists and other worship artists to coordinate their efforts with the general theme of the sermon for each week. "Solo" pastors, and pastors of smaller congregations also find advance planning valuable. Volunteer musicians and liturgists often feel more confident when they have scripture readings and music selections several weeks before the worship service. Additionally, advance work on a sermon is a big plus for any pastor who wrestles with a busy unpredictable schedule.

### Who has time to do all that planning?

Some find personal planning retreats useful. You need not leave town in order to do a planning retreat, but you may find it necessary to leave your normal workplace and to reserve your cell phone for emergencies. Think in terms of setting aside 2-3 working days. Some pastors go to a public or university library for the day. Others, who are fortunate enough to have retreat centers within an hour or so of their homes, make arrangements to use a quiet room there during the day. Using the Revised Common Lectionary, prayerfully read the lections for each of the 13 weeks for which you are planning. For those pastors who select their own scriptures, think in terms of two – three series that can be completed within your thirteen-week period. Consider things like your congregation's mission statement, the context of the community where you

Handouts: Module 2, Worship

worship, or the special spiritual needs of those who worship weekly as you make plans for worship.

- Select the texts that will be read or used as a basis for prayers or calls to worship and identify the text(s) that you plan to use for your sermon.
- Next, decide upon a general theme for your sermon i.e. the love of God, faithfulness, or hope. This theme should be written in ways that will provide sufficient information for those who assist you in worship to write bulletins, to select music or to schedule special visiting worship artists like liturgical dancers, drama groups etc. If you are the chief worship planner in your church, make notes for yourself about the hymns, visual environment or special music to request for that Sunday.
- Finally, give your sermon a tentative title -- one definite enough to be published in the church newsletter, or the local newspapers before the sermon is finished.

In the course of your preparation, be sure to write down any thoughts that may be helpful to you weeks later when you develop that sermon. This year planning sheets, organized around the seasons of the liturgical year are provided to help you get started. (Links to these are provided at the bottom of the page.) Later, you may find that you need additional columns for items particular to your worship needs.

### Reaping the benefits

Advance planning is good for everyone involved with worship. It allows the person who preaches to know enough about upcoming sermons to keep their eyes open for helpful information and illustrations. It allows those who assist in worship to prepare to the best of their abilities and to participate more confidently in worship. And, of course, worshippers benefit from a worship service that has been thoughtfully designed to help them hear one strong message based upon the scripture text.

Date/Scripture	Theme/sermon title	Music	Visual Environment	Worship leaders	Special Notes/details
<b>February 22, 2012 [Purple] Ash Wednesday</b> Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 Psalm 51:1-17 (UMH 785) 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21					
February 26, 2012 [Purple First Sunday in Lent Genesis 9:8-17 Psalm 25:1-10 (UMH 756) 1 Peter 3:18-22 Mark 1:9-15					
March 4, 2012 [Purple] Second Sunday in Lent Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 Psalm 22:23-31 (UMH 752) Romans 4:13-25 Mark 8:31-38					
March 11, 2012 [Purple] Third Sunday in Lent Exodus 20:1-17 Psalm 19 (UMH 750) 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 John 2:13-22					

Page 1, The General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, Center for Worship Resourcing; PO Box 340003; Nashville TN 37203-0003 Toll-free Telephone 877-899-2780, ext. 7070; Worship-Preaching-Music Web Site http://www.umcworship.org; Email Address: worshipcenter@gbod.org

Date/Scripture	Theme/sermon title	Music	Visual Environment	Worship leaders	Special Notes/details
March 18, 2012 [Purple] Fourth Sunday in Lent Numbers 21:4-9 Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 (UMH 830) Ephesians 2:1-10 John 3:14-21					
March 25, 2012 [Purple] Fifth Sunday in Lent Jeremiah 31:31-34 Psalm 51:1-12 (UMH 785) Hebrews 5:5-10 John 12:20-33					
April 1, 2012 Passion/Palm Sunday [Red or Purple]  Liturgy of the Palms					
Mark 11:1-11 Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 (UMH 839)					
Liturgy of the Passion Isaiah 50:4-9a Psalm 31:9-16 (UMH 764) Philippians 2:5-11 Mark 14:1-15:47 or Mark 15:1-39 (40-47)					

Page 2, The General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, Center for Worship Resourcing; PO Box 340003; Nashville TN 37203-0003 Toll-free Telephone 877-899-2780, ext. 7070; Worship-Preaching-Music Web Site http://www.umcworship.org; Email Address: worshipcenter@gbod.org

Date/Scripture	Theme/sermon title   Music	Music	Visual Environment	Worship leaders	Special Notes/details
April 2, 2012 [Red/Scarlet or Purple]					
Monday of Holy Week					
Isalan 42:1-9 Psalm 36:5-11 (UMH 771)					
Hebrews 9:11-15					
April 3, 2012 [Red/Scarlet or					
Purple]					
Tuesday of Holy Week					
Isaiah 49:1-7					
Psalm 71:1-14 (UMH 794)					
1 Corinthians 1:18-31					
John 12:20-36					
April 4, 2012[Red/Scarlet or					
Purple]					
Wednesday of Holy Week					
Isaiah 50:4–9a					
Psalm 70 (UMH 793)					
Hebrews 12:1–3					
Anril 5, 2012 [Red/Scarlet or					
Purple					
Holy Thursday					
Exodus 12:1-4 (5-10) 11-14					
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19 (UMH 837)					
1 Corinthians 11:23–26					
John 13.1–17, 310-33					

Page 3, The General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, Center for Worship Resourcing; PO Box 340003; Nashville TN 37203-0003 Toll-free Telephone 877-899-2780, ext. 7070; Worship-Preaching-Music Web Site http://www.umcworship.org; Email Address: worshipcenter@gbod.org

Date/Scripture	Theme/sermon title	Music	Visual Environment	Worship leaders	Special Notes/details
April 6, 2012 [No Color] Good Friday Isaiah 52:13–53:12 Psalm 22 (UMH 752) Hebrews 10:16–25 John 18:1—19:42					
April 7, 2012 [White/Gold] Holy Saturday/Easter Vigil The number of readings may vary, but Exodus 14 and at least two other readings from the Old Testament should be used in addition to the New Testament readings. Old Testament Readings and Psalms/Canticles Genesis 1:1–2:4a Psalms/Canticles Genesis 7:1–5, 11–18; 8:6–18; 9:8–13 Psalm 136:1–9, 23–26 or Psalm 33 (UMH 767) Genesis 7:1–5, 11–18; 8:6–18; 9:8–13 Psalm 46 (UMH 780) Genesis 22:1–18 Psalm 16 (UMH 748) Exodus 14:10–31; 15:20–21 Exodus 15:1b –13, 17–18 (UMH 135) Isaiah 55:1–11 Isaiah 12:2–6 (as a canticle) Ezekiel 36:24–28 Psalm 42, 43 (UMH 777) Ezekiel 37:1–14 Psalm 143 (UMH 856) New Testament Reading and Psalm Romans 6:3–11 Psalm 114 (UMH 835) Gospel Reading Mark 16:1-8					

Page 4, The General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, Center for Worship Resourcing; PO Box 340003; Nashville TN 37203-0003 Toll-free Telephone 877-899-2780, ext. 7070; Worship-Preaching-Music Web Site http://www.umcworship.org; Email Address: worshipcenter@gbod.org

Date/Scripture	Theme/sermon title	Music	Visual Environment	Worship leaders	Special Notes/details
April 8, 2012 [White] Easter Day Acts 10:34-43 Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 (UMH 839) 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 John 20:1-18 or Mark 16:1-8					
April 15, 2012 [White] Second Sunday of Easter Acts 4:32-35 Psalm 133 (UMH 850) 1 John 1:1-2:2 John 20:19-31 or Matthew 28:1-10					
April 22, 2012 [White] Third Sunday of Easter Acts 3:12-19 Psalm 4 (UMH 741) 1 John 3:1-7 Luke 24:36b-48					
April 29, 2012 [White] Fourth Sunday of Easter Acts 4:5-12 Psalm 23 (UMH 754 or 137) 1 John 3:16-24 John 10:11-18					

Page 5, The General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, Center for Worship Resourcing; PO Box 340003; Nashville TN 37203-0003 Toll-free Telephone 877-899-2780, ext. 7070; Worship-Preaching-Music Web Site http://www.umcworship.org; Email Address: worshipcenter@gbod.org

Date/Scripture	Theme/sermon title	Music	Visual Environment	Worship leaders	Special Notes/details
May 6, 2012 [White] Fifth Sunday of Easter Acts 8:26-40 Psalm 22:25-31 (UMH 752)					
1 John 4:7-21 John 15:1-8					
May 13, 2012 [White] Sixth Sunday of Easter Acts 10:44-48					
Psalm 98 (UMH 818) 1 John 5:1-6 John 15:9-17					
May 17, 2012 [White] Ascension of the Lord These readings may also be used on the Seventh Sunday of Easter. Acts 1:1-11 Psalm 47 (UMH 781) Ephesians 1:15-23 Luke 24:44-53					
May 20, 2012 [White] Seventh Sunday of Easter/Ascension Sunday Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 Psalm 1 (UMH 738) 1 John 5:9-13 John 17:6-19					

Page 6, The General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, Center for Worship Resourcing; PO Box 340003; Nashville TN 37203-0003 Toll-free Telephone 877-899-2780, ext. 7070; Worship-Preaching-Music Web Site http://www.umcworship.org; Email Address: worshipcenter@gbod.org

Date/Scripture	Theme/sermon title   Music	Music	Visual	Worship	Special
			<b>Environment</b>	leaders	Notes/details
May 27, 2012 [Red or White]					
Day of Pentecost					
Acts 2:1-21					
Psalm 104:24-34, 35b (UMH 826)					
Romans 8:22-27					
John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15					
June 3, 2012 [White]					
Trinity Sunday/First Sunday					
After Pentecost					
Isaiah 6:1-8					
Psalm 29 (UMH 761)					
Romans 8:12-17					
John 3:1-173					

### Twenty-One Questions to Consider for Designing Worship

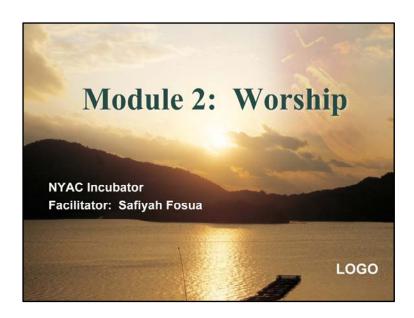
Writing liturgy for the church is not a private affair. Writers and worship planners do not bring only their history and experiences to the task, but as much as possible designers and writers of worship events must try to bring the lives and histories of congregants, indeed of the Christian church since and before its inception until now. I offered the following questions to consultation participants as we sought to write with the whole church—not just the United Methodist communion of believers— in mind. These questions are not arranged in order of importance, as I believe one might start with any one of them to get to profound, grace-filled, godly worship. 1. Is the worship biblically resonated?

- 2. Is the worship theologically sound?
- 3. Is it ritually profound?
- 4. Is worship invitational?
- 5. Is this worship contextually relevant? Does worship reflect the culture(s), lands, and peoples gathered for worship?
- 6. Does the worship open an aperture to the presence of God? Have we created space for God to work and speak and encounter us, and us God?
- 7. Is the worship participatory? Or, are there simply "talking heads" up front that we may "tune out"?
- 8. Does worship pull people from the outer edges into the center?
- 9. Does worship incorporate gifts from the larger church (worldwide) into our local context?
- 10. Does this worship challenge our local context to be a witness of God through the holy, catholic (universal) church? Does the worship "prophesy" a more inclusive reality than the one the congregation currently knows?
- 11. Did we leave appropriate space for stillness and silence?
- 12. Does worship incarnate God in Christ, begging participants to be reconciled to God?
- 13. Do the words of the liturgy bog down and drown out rhythm and mystery of the liturgy? Or, are litanies and prayers easy to enter, with refrains

and rhythms that hold the central message in place? Is there a "heartbeat" (rhythm) worshippers can carry beyond this "thin line" moment?

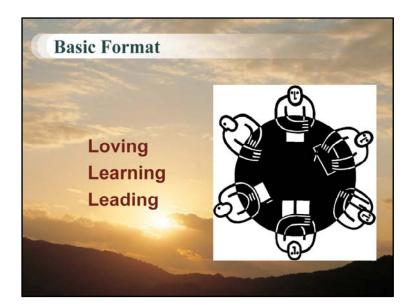
- 14. Is worship hermetically sealed? Does it have one way in and one way out, and is it over when it's over, not carrying worshipers into the world to continue to praise, worship, repent, grow, and work?
- 15. Is worship permeable? Are there several entry points into Divine mystery and is it portable into the rest of the worshiper's life?
- 16. Is worship democratic? Does it allow voices from the center and the margin to commingle in such a way that there is no clear dominant voice? Have we invited the communion of saints from the beginning of the church's existence to the present day to speak? Do we have a word from the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Now Testament? Do we believe God continues to speak?
- 17. Does the music we sing, pray, and dance reflect the reality of more than a "village" God? Are we creating theology by our worship that says God is truly the God of all universes, places, and times?
- 18. Did we use technology wisely and economically? Did we allow the "bells and whistles" to get in the way of the simplicity of grace?
- 19. Is worship visionary and prophetic? Does this worship service point us to God of the whole creation, God who loves diversity in color and sunsets, in temperature and foliage? In mountains and valleys, in rushing waterfall and gentle-flowing brooks?
- 20. Is worship sensory-rich? Does worship use art in ways that God is danced back into the consciousness of people? Do we sing God into the room? Do we vision God into the room with banners and clips? Do we act God into the room?
- 21. Does this worship return us to the miracle of hearing on the day of Pentecost, and to the great celebration around the throne of God when the reign of God is fully and completely realized and we out of every tongue, language, tribe, nation, gender, and age, lift our voices in awesome wonder of God who is majestic, powerful, holy, generous, friend, glorious, wonderful, and worthy of all this worship?

By Dr. Valerie Bridgeman, from the *Africana Worship Book for Year A*. (Discipleship Resources: 2006), pages 23-24. Used with permission.



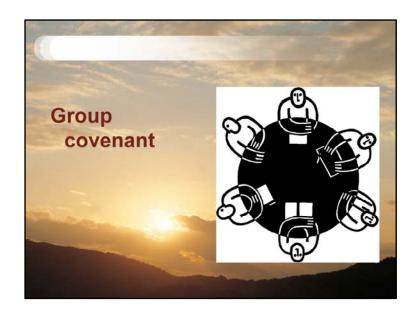
### Reflect on the purpose of worship in the life of congregations Explore aspects of a basic theology of worship Identify specific aspects of worship for further congregational development Develop a strategy for enhancing the quality of worship in the local church setting

By the end of Module 2, participants will have:
Reflected on the purpose of worship in the life of congregations
Studied a basic theology of worship
Identified several key aspects of worship to further develop in their congregations
Developed a strategy for enhancing the quality of the worship experience in their
congregation that names key leaders, actions to be taken, and a timeline.



All modules will follow the format introduced in the first session: **Loving**, **Learning**, and **Leading**.

In the segment titled *Loving*, we will begin our meeting with a period of worship, followed by a time to check in with one another, and conclude with a short biblical reflection. The second section, *Learning*, will focus on the worship life of the congregation. In our final segment, *Leading*, you will be invited to assess the worship that takes place at your church and develop a plan for enhancing your worship experiences.



[9:10 am] **Group Covenant**Read, Review, Adjust and sign group covenant from last session.

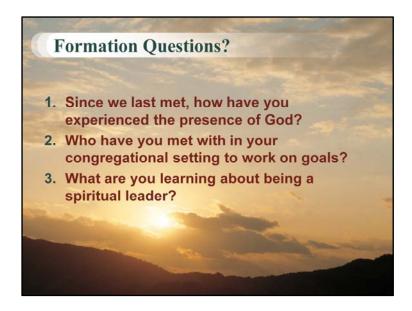


9:25 am



**Description of Check In:** Early Methodism began with a group of college students concerned about one another's spiritual well-being and spiritual development. Their groups soon grew in numbers and they went on to become a spiritual formation movement that changed the face of Protestantism both in England and across the globe. They met weekly and often began their meetings with a simple question like: how is it with your soul? This question served as a springboard to discuss issues like spiritual accountability, progress, temptation, discouragement or even spiritual drought. Through weekly accountability, early Methodists grew in faith and supported one another through difficult times.

These incubators are more than learning groups, they are also designed to be spiritual formation groups, like the early Methodist covenant groups where we care for one another and encourage one another in good times or in bad times. Part of the covenant we have with each other is that sharing is voluntary (not mandatory) and that anything shared with the group is kept in strict confidentiality.



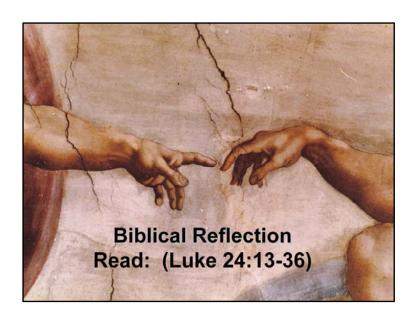
# [9:30 am]

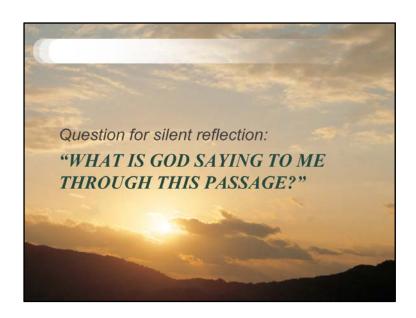
## **Formation Questions:**

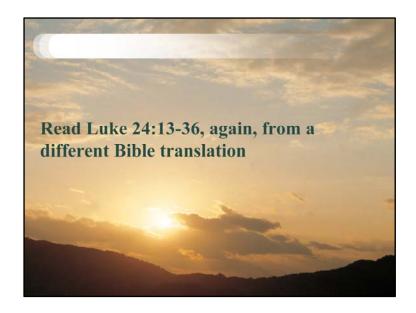
Using mutual invitation, ask one another these questions: Since we last met, how have you experienced the presence of God?

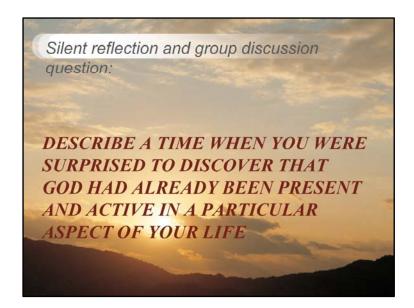
What are you learning about being a spiritual leader?

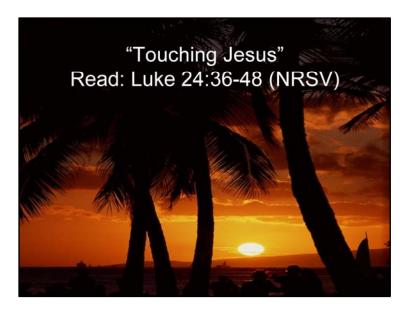
When you are asked, you have two options: you may respond to the question, decline comment by saying "pass," or delay comment by saying "pass for now." When all have finished, close in prayer. [The next time your group meets, you will also ask one another about the progress made in the area of worship.]











[10:40 am transition to worship]

Worship: "Touching Jesus"

Text: Luke 24:36b-48

#### Introduction:

The text you have just heard is a continuation of the text we used during our biblical reflection and takes place on the same day as the Walk to Emmaus reading. What a day it had been! That morning the women had gone to the tomb with spices to do the customary preparations for burial. Instead of a body, they found an empty tomb – but the men had a hard time believing them.

Later Peter and John went to the tomb to verify that it was indeed empty – but an empty tomb could mean many things, a stolen body, a misplaced body – not necessarily a resurrected body!

All of the disciples were in a bad state. The eleven (Judas was missing) were locked up in a room, partly for fear, partly for protection. Two of the other disciples started walking to a little city nearby called Emmaus. While they walked, a stranger with great insight joined them. Later they learned that the stranger was really Jesus. Just as they were realizing who he was, Jesus vanished. So, two very excited disciples ran back to Jerusalem to tell the others what they had seen. While they were talking about this, Luke continues, Jesus appeared again! They were understandably afraid, but Jesus invited them to touch him.



# Touch me and See! The power of touch

We are still trying to understand the power of touch
And why it is that babies thrive on touch
And why certain adults are willing to accept a fist instead of a caress – just to be touched!

And then there's God's touch...

Jesus touched sick people and healed them. Jesus touched fearful disciples on the Mountain of Transfiguration and comforted them. Jesus touched the eyes of the blind and healed them. Jesus touched the lepers (and others who were untouchable) restoring them to health and community. People were familiar with the power and unpredictability of God's touch.

#### Touch me and see

Why not just touch them, Jesus, as you had done before and end the mystery?

Perhaps Jesus did not reach out to touch them this time because the disciples were *overstimulated*. Seriously consider how you or I would react to what they had just experienced:

Less than a week before, things had suddenly turned sour,

A prayer meeting had turned into an arrest and their Lord and teacher had been taken all over town for interrogation.

The worst of horrors followed. Jesus was crucified.

And now, his body was missing!

When Jesus found them, they were behind locked doors for safety reasons – after all they had been part of his crew! Who is this person who just *appeared* in the room? Could this really be Jesus?

Instead of overwhelming them with more than they could handle at the moment, Jesus offered to *let them touch him* on their own terms. It is almost as if the scene implied:

I know that you are frightened and confused. I will not touch you. If you are ready, when you are ready, you can touch me and see…that I am who I say I am….

Our topic for today is worship. What does this text suggest about worship? To begin, we live in a culture that is *overstimulated*. Some who will visit your congregations have seen more killings in an evening of television or video games than the previous generation saw in actual war. We live among people who have been offered too many choices and have more leisure time for recreational pursuits than any previous generation. These are not the only people who are *overstimulated*. Think of others who have been battered and tossed about by the recent epidemic of joblessness and despair. Remember people who are overwhelmed by loss and displacement. And we cannot forget the average person just trying to make it from day to day. All of this in a culture often strongly biased against Christianity. Some of our young people want to believe and are afraid to believe at the same time.

To all of us Jesus says, touch me and see. He who had just conquered death made himself transparent and vulnerable for our sake.

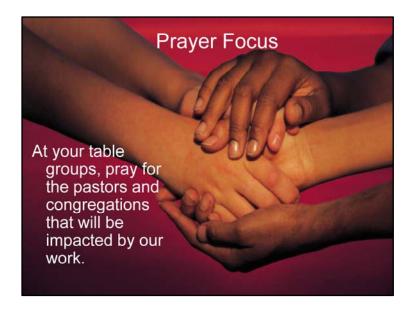
#### Touch us and see!

This raises questions about how we, the Church, relate to the community. Are we imposing, or are we transparent and vulnerable for the sake of those who are already overstimulated and fearful? Think about the place where you worship? Are you welcoming? Are you open to allowing people to experience God in a variety of ways? Or, do you appear to *pounce* on visitors while they are still making up their minds about your *church* and your *Lord*?

These overwhelmed disciples remind us that we each encounter Jesus in different ways. There are times when God is made known to us in explosive, overwhelming ways. But, sometimes people come to worship looking for the healing presence of God in the stillness of the worship space. Some come to be healed by a word they hear that comes from God. Others come to sing their way back to *shalom*. This passage reminds us of the many moods of worship and the need for worship to become a place where newcomers and familiar friends, saints and sinners, young and old may all draw near to God together.

Worship is many things – a time and space set aside for adoration, a place where we encounter God, a place where weary souls may feel welcomed and safe in the presence of God and God's people.

#### Touch me and see.



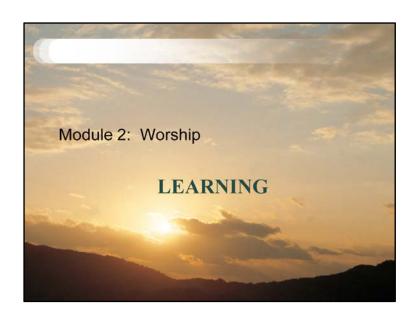
**Prayer time:** In groups of two or three, pray for someone who needs the touch of God and the touch of the local church today.

Optional Background music: "Let Me Touch You" by Kirk Franklin, available as a download from amazon.com <a href="http://www.amazon.com/Let-Me-Touch-">http://www.amazon.com/Let-Me-Touch-</a>
You/dp/B001BKQ0CK/ref=sr 1 1?ie=UTF8&qid=1317593712&sr=8-1

Closing Hymn: "Fix Me" # 655 UMH or another hymn of your choosing.

[Short break.] Return at 11 am]

[11 am]





As we begin to look at worship, I would like to begin with two questions: Why do you go to church? (Why do you think members go to church?)

[Responses from participants)

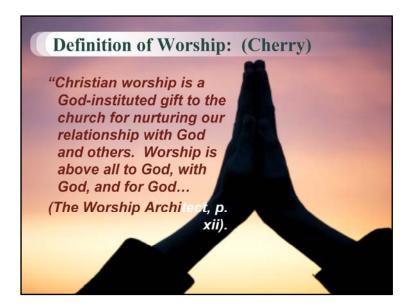
Transition: a quote from James Magaw found on p. 270 of The Worship Architect: "If you ask me why I go to church, I could start with these reasons: ..."

[Read from page 270] ...

"But if you ask me why I worship, you raise the discussion to another plane."

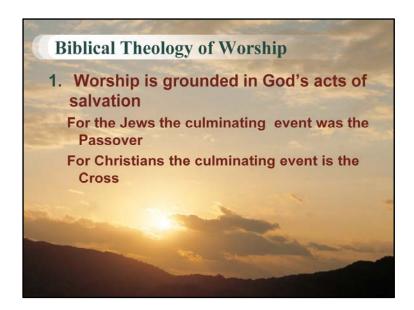


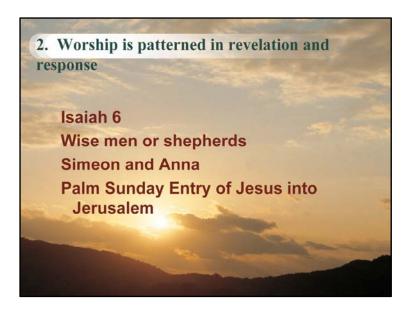
**So now I ask: Why do you worship?** [Responses from participants]



Here is Constance Cherry's definition of worship: "Christian worship is a God-instituted gift to the church for nurturing our relationship with God and others. Worship is above all to God, with God, and for God... (*The Worship Architect*, p. xii).

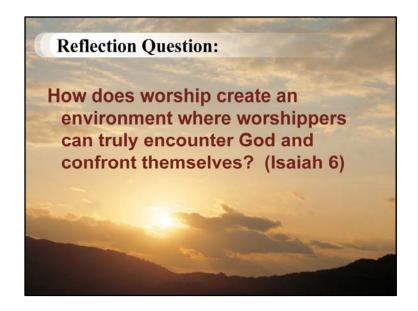
[11:10 am]

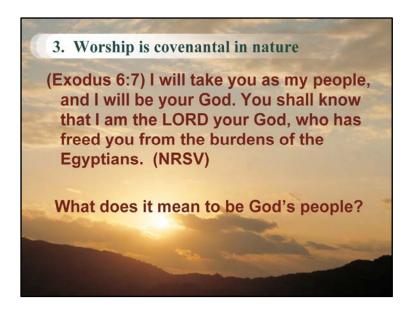




Worship is *patterned in revelation and response*. In worship, God is revealed and we respond to what we have seen and heard from God. This is grounded in biblical precedence:

Isaiah 6 – Isaiah "saw" God and worshipped
Wise men or shepherds – heard from God and worshipped
Simeon and Anna – saw Jesus and worshipped
Palm Sunday Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem – an entire city recognized the presence of the Messiah and worshipped.





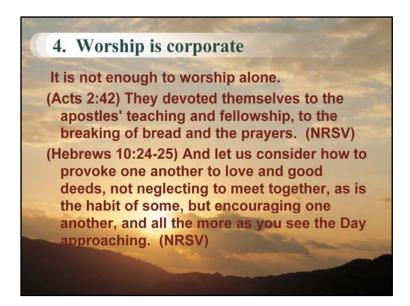
Worship is *covenantal* in nature. In worship we learn about God and we experience the God who keeps covenant with us. In the worshipping community we experience how to *live into* being in covenant with one another and with God.

(Exodus 6:7) I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. (NRSV)

# Worship is a Conversation!

"First, is the worship relevant? I do not by relevant that the worship is personally satisfying to a particular set of worshippers, but rather that the worship meets the criterion of conversation between the culture and the Covenant (the biblical record, and that the volume is "up" on the biblical side of that equation...

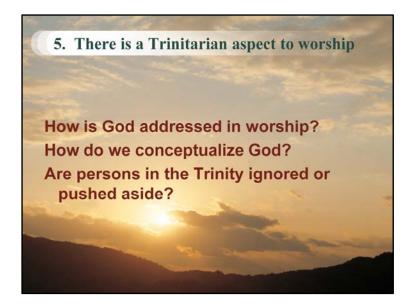
Dr. Valerie Bridgeman Davis, Introduction to the <u>Africana Worship Book</u>



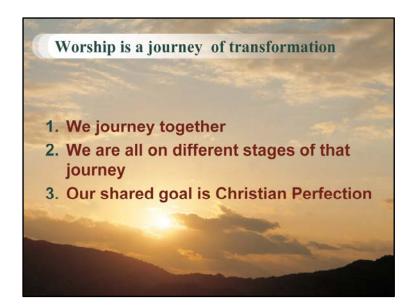
Worship is *corporate*; it is not enough to worship alone. New Testament believers paint a glorious picture of frequent corporate worship in Acts and demonstrate how the Early Church wrestled with the importance of corporate – rather than individual or private worship.

(Acts 2:42) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (NRSV)

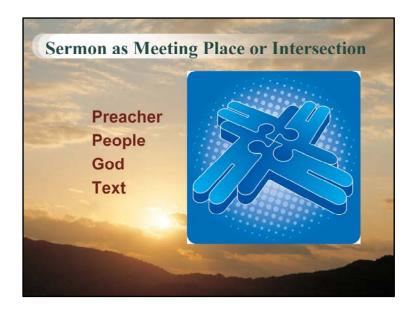
(Hebrews 10:24-25) And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (NRSV)



There is a *Trinitarian* aspect to worship: all of God is involved in worship, all of God is addressed in worship. This Trinitarian involvement is more than invoking the name of the Trinity; it is intentional and conscious involvement with Father, Son and Spirit, (Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer). Some churches address their worship to God as Creator, while neglecting to mention the remaining two persons of the Trinity. Others emphasize the redeeming work of Jesus Christ – almost exclusively. A number of churches unintentionally ignore the presence of the Holy Spirit in worship – perhaps as a nod to rationalism – resulting in expressions of faith that are not open to the kind of interventions or interruptions that accompany the active presence of God's Holy Spirit.



Worship is a *journey of transformation*. We journey together, each on a different stage of the journey, all headed in the same direction toward the *Christian Perfection* that John Wesley spoke of. We do not come together because of habit or obligation, we come to worship and to be transformed by God as we struggle to worship, live and work together in Christian community.



#### 11:30 am

One key element of worship is the sermon. Dr. Barbara Lundblad, of Union Theological Seminary in NYC, invites us to look at the sermon as a meeting place, or intersection, between: the pastor/preacher, the people, God and the text. As preachers and regular church-goers, you may have already embraced the notion that the sermon is a place in worship where our lives intersect with God and the text. Dr. Lundblad's metaphor invites us to think about how God, text, preacher and people intersect through the entire worship experience. Before we look at the ways that the worship experience becomes a meeting place, let us take a look at two significant points on this intersection: the *pastor/preacher* and the *people*.

Why do we accept the call to preach? It is a weighty thing to presume to speak a word that comes from God. It is weightier still to presume that any of us are able to speak for God. It is beyond the scope of this brief module on worship to explore the myriad reasons why men and women accept the call to ministry and why certain of them also accept the call to pastoral ministry that includes weekly preaching. But, perhaps we might gain further insight about this from hearing your stories.

# Discussion Questions: Pastors, why do you preach? Worshippers what do you hope to gain from a sermon when you attend worship?

[Allow time for responses from participants. When pastors are meeting with other pastors, encourage them to share their personal reasons for preaching. When pastors are meeting with their church leaders, it is important for the local church leaders to hear from the pastor why he/she preaches.]



In *Preaching Grace,* Kennon Callahan lists 5 common motivations that pastors frequently have for preaching during weekly worship:

#### God's Compassion

To nurture Christian Community

To **Challenge** church members to deeper discipleship

**Reasonability** – this is where both pastors and leaders attempt to make sense of what we do in church and where logic, data and analysis often compete with compassion and community in making ministry choices. To inspire members to deeper level of **Commitment** (especially as it pertains to keeping the church going!) You could easily substitute the word *loyalty* here.

On the surface, these look reasonable and may even mirror your experiences in pastoral ministry or in the church where you are a member. However, when a church begins to experience trouble, or when a church hopes to grow, Callahan cautions against what could be experienced as a *motivational gap*. For example, a pastor of a church with declining membership may unconsciously begin to lean more toward loyalty and commitment preaching. Key leaders in the church may find this appropriate—or may even encourage the pastor to address critical church management issues from the pulpit. But, grassroots members (those who may attend with regularity but do not take an active part in leadership or leadership decisions) are most likely looking for sermons and worship that communicate the *compassion of God* and *Christian community*. They are joined in these expectations by unchurched visitors and others who may periodically drop in and out of worship. You could end up with the pastors and key leaders seeing the purpose of worship and the sermon one way, while grassroots members and the unchurched, who were in need of something different, eventually drift away feeling that their needs were not met.

These are serious concerns. Visitors are looking for different things from established church members, pastors often have a different agenda from worshippers and in the midst of all this, we Methodists are somewhat at odds with one another!

[Pastors-only section]

So, preachers, this raises several critical issues about what, why, and how we preach.

¶340 of the United Methodist Book of Discipline describes the pastoral duties of elders and licensed pastors in this way:

A fourfold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service

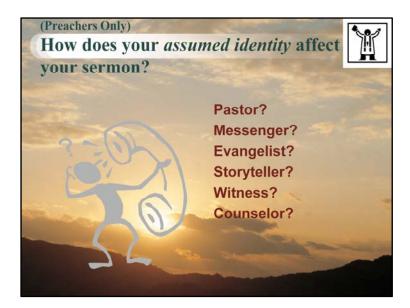
Word – to preach the Word of God, lead in worship, read and teach the scriptures, and engage the people in study and witness.

Sacrament – the United Methodist sacraments are Baptism and Communion. Pastors prepare those under their care and influence to receive the sacraments in meaningful ways that strengthen their faith and shape their discipleship.

Order – we are familiar with the administrative duties of pastoral ministry.

Service – pastors lead the way in servant ministries and teach congregations how to be in service to their community as disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

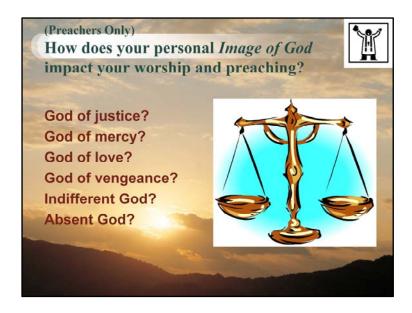
Over the past three years, how has your preaching and the ways that you order worship supported fulfillment of these duties?



Key questions about ministerial identity, and the ways we vision God and our community are crucial as we attempt to understand what informs us as worship planners and what influences the sermons we preach. Let us now take a few moments to explore how personal identity, the pastor's image of God and the pastor's theology of humanity may influence how we plan worship and how and what we preach.

## Identity

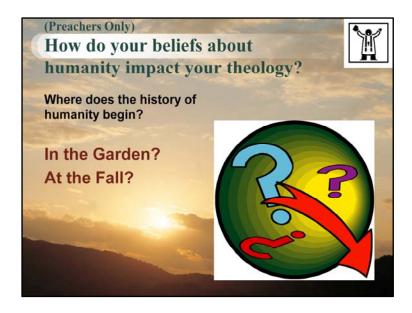
There is a vast difference between *assigned* identity and *assumed* identity. If you have been in pastoral ministry for any time at all you have probably come to experience tensions over the gap between the roles assigned to a pastor and the ones that you have assumed for yourself. Personal identity is a powerful driver and your perceptions of who you are in ministry contribute a great deal to your sermonic outcomes. For example, pastors who have strong gifts in counseling may unwittingly find themselves preaching more than a few 'self-help' style sermons, while pastors who think of themselves as evangelists may tend to evangelize the congregation (again and again). If a pastor does not see herself/himself as a preacher, it is unavoidable that the sermon will be affected. When you stand in the pulpit to preach, what kind of identity have you assumed: pastor? messenger? evangelist? storyteller? witness? counselor?



# **Image of God**

Similarly, your image of God influences the tenor of your sermon. For example, a pastor who has for a lifetime been focused only on the infinite mercy and love of God may find it difficult to preach about the justice of God. We have only to look at the recent controversy with Rob Bell and *Love Wins*, to see potential pitfalls in not embracing the many ways that God deals with humanity. The sermons of a pastor experiencing a period of depression may inadvertently communicate that God is absent or indifferent. What are your sermons saying about your image of God?

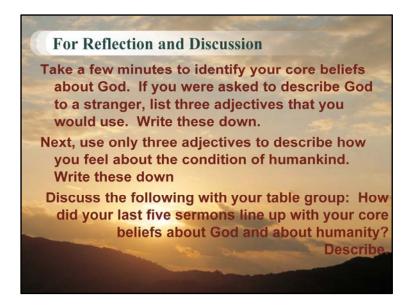
New York Times, Pastor Stirs Wrath with His Views on Old Questions, <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/05/us/05bell.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/05/us/05bell.html</a>



# **View of Humanity**

Another key assumption that bleeds into preaching is the pastor's view of humanity, or *anthropology*. Pastors who see humanity as basically flawed tend to preach one way while those who view people as basically good tend to preach another way. What do your sermons communicate about the estate of humankind?

Most of us would be slow to admit that we have a theological bias but the truth is that core beliefs about God and the estate of humanity strongly influence the way that we think about worship, the weekly sermon and many other ministries of the Church.



#### Reflection

Take a few minutes to identify your core beliefs about God. If you were asked to describe God to a stranger, list three adjectives that you would use. Write these down. [Allow a couple of minutes for participants to write their responses.]

Next, use only three adjectives to describe how you feel about the condition of humankind. Write these down.

[Allow a couple of minutes for participants to write their responses.]

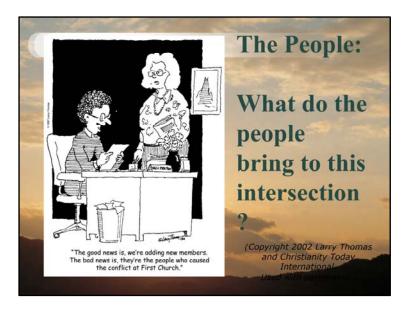
# Discussion the following questions with your table group:

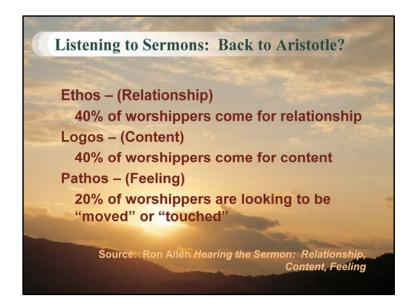
What do the adjectives you used about God suggest about your image of God? What do the adjectives you used about the condition of humanity suggest about your theology of humanity?

What would your last five sermons teach a new member about the nature of God, the ways that God relates to humankind, and about you as a pastor?

[Allow time for discussion. If there is not adequate time to discuss all questions, ask participants to treat them as homework.]
[End of Pastors-only section]

Break for lunch





[1:00 pm]

# The People:

The research of Dr. Ronald Allen, of Christian Theological Seminary in Indiana, offers additional insight about congregational expectations in worship. He uses a construct from Aristotle to describe how worshippers listen to a sermon: *ethos, logos, and pathos*. Allen's research revealed that people listen to a sermon for three major reasons: relationship - a sense of connectedness with the preacher (Aristotle's *ethos*), content (*logos*), and feeling (*pathos*). Allen's research suggests that worshippers of all the ethnic groups included in the survey and from the various socio-economic categories represented in the survey reported in similar ways. You may find the percentages surprising! *Ethos* – (Relationship)

40% of worshippers come for relationship

Logos – (Content)

40% of worshippers come for content

Pathos – (Feeling)

20% of worshippers are looking to be "moved" or "touched"

Discussion question for pastors' groups: Which of these categories describe your last 5 sermons?

OR

Discussion question for pastor/laity groups: What are you looking for in a sermon?



# 1:15 pm

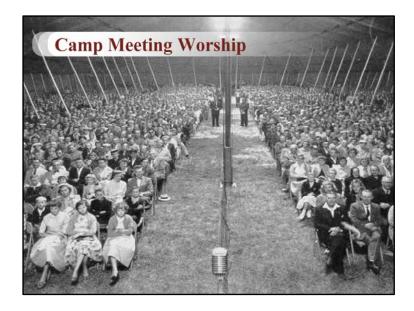
When you start talking about worship it is not long before the discussion drifts to questions about worship *style*. Unfortunately, the whole issue of style has become a battlefield for United Methodists and other mainline denominations. In spite of the current discourse concerning traditional versus contemporary worship, controversy over worship styles is not new. For the past two hundred years, Methodist worship in America has clustered around two major streams:

Liturgical worship (sometimes thought of as *traditional worship*) Evangelicalism and Revivalism



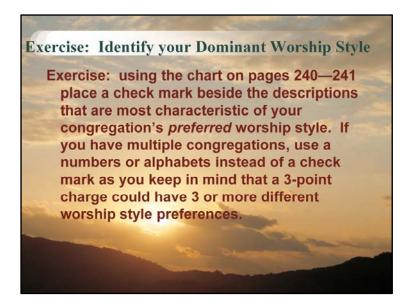
John Wesley was born into an Anglican parsonage and was ordained in the Anglican Church tradition. The church of the early Methodist movement was the Anglican Church, a close cousin to Catholicism. (The Episcopal Church is essentially the Anglican Church on American soil.)

If this is true, why is there such variation in present-day Methodist worship? The tensions we experience today may actually have begun in the early 1800s when America was fermenting with evangelicalism. Evangelicalism emphasized personal piety and personal commitment more than scholarship at a time when religious commitment in America was waning. In the early 1800's the eastern states experienced what some call the Second Great Awakening. Unlike the First Great Awakening of the 1700s -- that had been known for emotional expression considered extreme by some observers -- this was a quieter awakening. In the East, the Great Awakening of the 1800s expressed itself in increased social responsibility. This is when many of the early missionary movements began and the American Bible Society hails back to this period of time.



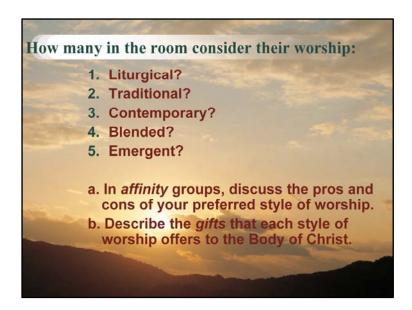
On the other end of the country was the Great Revival of Kentucky that spread through Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio. In August of 1801 the Great Cane Ridge Revival was reported to have had between 10,000 and 25,000 attendees! The Great Revival of Kentucky was much like the First Great Awakening had been in the East in the 1700s – brimming with enthusiasm. It began with extended outdoor meetings initiated by the Presbyterians. The meetings soon became so emotion-filled that the Presbyterians denounced and abandoned them – but the Methodists and the Baptists adopted them and promoted their camp meeting style worship. Some see this as the beginning of our tensions over worship style.

Today, we use a variety of terms to describe our worship tensions like: high church vs. low church, free-church vs. liturgical. Today's conversation includes: liturgical, traditional, contemporary, blended and emergent forms of worship.



## 1:25 pm

Exercise: using the chart on pages 240—241 place a check mark beside the descriptions that are most characteristic of your congregation's *preferred* worship style. Pastors, if you have multiple congregations, use a numbers or alphabets instead of a check mark as you keep in mind that a 3-point charge could have 3 or more different worship style preferences.



#### *Instructions for group discussion:*

After participants have identified their own style(s) of worship, divide participants into small affinity groups (traditional, contemporary, liturgical, etc.) to discuss the pros and cons of their current worship style. Instruct pastors who have more than one worship service or more than one congregation to join the group that represents their newest worship style.

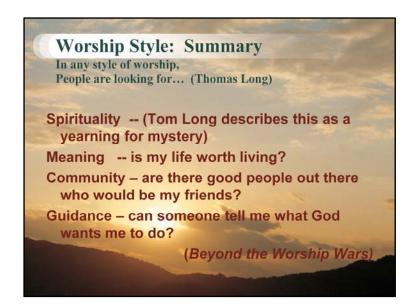
Allow these affinity groups 10-15 minutes for conversation about worship styles. Be sure to address any styles not represented in the talk-back session. Instruct each group to select a spokesperson who will share a summary of smaller-group conversations with the entire group.

#### Affinity Group reporting on worship styles:

After the affinity groups have met, invite a representative from each group to share a summary of their affinity group conversations. At the end of each summary, ask the entire group this question: What gifts do this style of worship offer to the entire church? [For example: liturgical worship offers the richness and mystery of symbols, traditional worship offers the comfort of familiarity and predictability, contemporary worship offers a new language and forms for music and often streamlines the order of worship, blended worship often makes it possible for multiple generations to find meaning in the same worship service, and emergent worship represents a movement back to the richness of symbols and experiential worship that 21st century worshippers of many generations are seeking....]

Note: If you are facilitating an incubator group whose members report only one style of worship, discuss the pros and cons of your current worship style and then explore the contributions of other styles of worship as indicated above.

At the end of affinity group reporting, ask participants:
What have you learned about different styles of worship?
Has this session influenced your feelings about styles of worship different from your own?



Summary: Tom Long, of Candler School of Theology, offers some helpful advice for those who would war over worship. In *Beyond the Worship Wars* Long stresses that people come to worship for several major reasons:

Spirituality -- Tom Long describes this as a yearning for the *mystery* of God and faith.

Meaning -- God, is my life worth living?

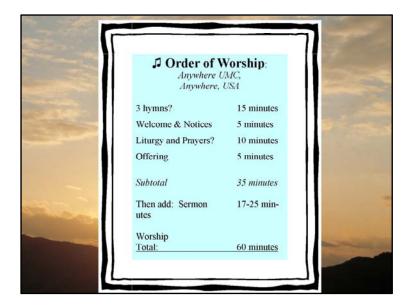
Community – defined as Christian community – even *Beloved Community* [not social club] Guidance – can someone tell me what God wants me to do?

Remember Constance Cherry's definition: worship is directed to God, it is for God and it is with God. If, in worship we are able to direct our worship God-ward while addressing many of these most basic needs that Christians bring to the worship experience, style becomes a side-issue.

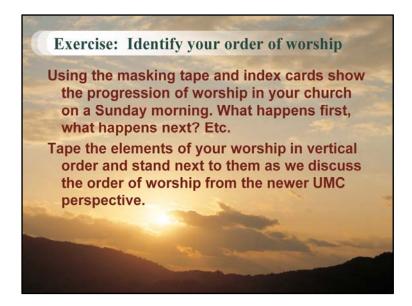
[2:00 pm]





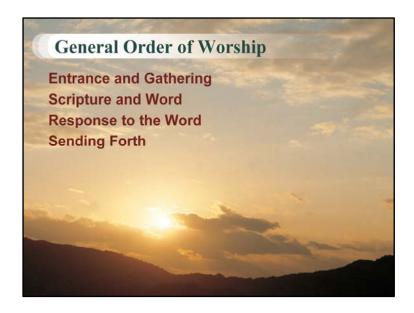


So much to be accomplished, not enough time! The average worship service in the United Methodist Church lasts one hour – and in some places, not a second more. How we structure worship time becomes especially important when we consider the church-going habits of 21<sup>st</sup> century worshippers. Statistics reveal that denominational worship attendance hovers below 50% and attendance at additional church-related groups is significantly less than that! This makes worship an extremely important weekly gathering for the congregation. So, what are you doing in worship?



### 2:10 pm

Using the masking tape and index cards provided by your leader, map the progression of worship in your church on a Sunday morning. What happens first? (write that on one card) Next? (another card) When is the scripture read? (another card) How many times does the congregation sing? (one card for each time the congregation sings) Where is your offering? (card) Do this for each line of a typical worship bulletin for your congregation. Using masking tape, tape the cards that represent each element of your worship on the wall or on the desk in vertical order and stand by them as we discuss the order of worship from the United Methodist perspective.



### [2:25 pm]

### The General Order of Worship

United Methodist Worship has four basic parts: entrance and gathering, scripture and proclamation or *word*, response to the word – sometimes called table, and sending forth. Entrance and Gathering

No matter what our preferred style of worship or cultural preferences we must have a way to gather the people, welcome them and begin worship.

Word

We come together, like people in the Early Church, (and in the synagogues before there was a church) to hear the scriptures read and to hear them explained for daily life. Table (response)

The sacraments are a dramatization of relationship and salvation history. Baptism reminds us of our relationship with God. We are numbered among God's people at our baptism. Communion replete with images of table fellowship both re-presents the sacrifice that Jesus made for us and reminds us that we are fed and nourished by none other than God. This is my body, this is my blood.... There are also many other ways to respond to the Word of God like prayers of commitment or recommitment, altar calls, the offering, invitation to a study group, etc.

Sending Forth

The preferred image is sending, not benediction. A benediction is a blessing, but a sending forth... ah! That is a challenge to go and be good news!

# Analyze your order of worship

- 1. In small groups, determine how closely your worship is aligned with the 4-fold order of worship described in the Book of Worship and the Worship Architect
- 2. Are there unnecessary elements present?
- 3. Are all four of the "basics" present?
- 4. Are there changes that you would like to suggest with your worship committee/staff?

### Analyze your Order of Worship

In small groups, determine how closely your worship is aligned with this 4-fold order of worship described in the *United Methodist Book of Worship* and the *Worship Architect*. Are there unnecessary elements present?

Are all four of the "basics" present?

Are there changes that you would like to discuss with your worship committee/staff?



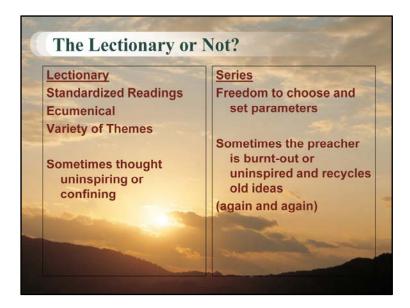
### [2:50 pm]

### **Worship Planning**

In an ideal worship service, scripture and sermon, music and liturgy, liturgical dance, visual art, and drama all support the theme for that week. The problem is that thematic worship services require advance planning. How far in advance should you plan? Some pastors of large multiple-staff churches routinely select preaching themes and scriptures three or even six months in advance. This makes it possible for music ministers and worship committees, liturgists, worship leaders, musicians, soloists, and other worship artists to coordinate their efforts with the general theme of the sermon for each week. "Solo" pastors and pastors of smaller congregations also find advance planning valuable. Volunteer musicians and liturgists often feel more confident when they have scripture readings and music selections several weeks before the worship service. Additionally, advance work on a sermon is a big plus for any pastor who wrestles with a busy, unpredictable schedule.

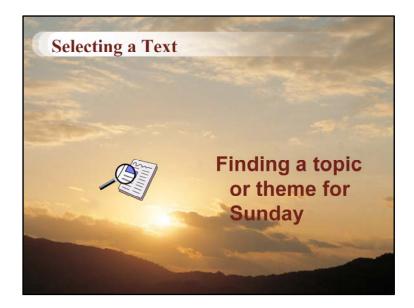
Who has time to do all that planning?

Some pastors find personal planning retreats useful. You need not leave town to do a planning retreat, but you may find it necessary to leave your normal workplace and to reserve your cell phone for emergencies. Think about setting aside two or three working days. Some pastors go to a public or university library for the day. Others, who are fortunate enough to have retreat centers within an hour or so of their homes, make arrangements to use a quiet room at the retreat center during the day.



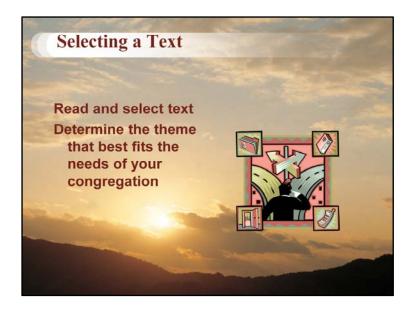
Lectionary – yes or no?

[Discuss: Advantages and Disadvantages of the Lectionary. A PowerPoint slide has been provided to assist in this discussion]



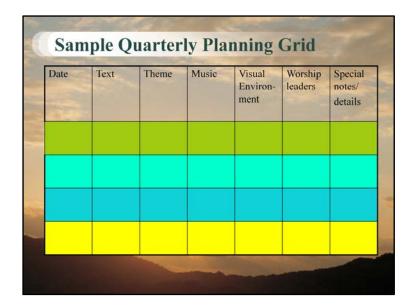
If you are using the Revised Common Lectionary, prayerfully read the lections for each of the thirteen weeks for which you are planning. For those pastors who select their own scriptures, consider two or three series that could be completed within the thirteen-week period. Consider your congregation's mission statement, the context of the community where you worship, or the special spiritual needs of those who worship weekly as you make plans for worship.

Select the texts that will be read or used as a basis for prayers or calls to worship and identify the text(s) that you plan to use for your sermon.



Next, decide upon a general theme for your sermon, like the love of God, faithfulness, or hope. This theme should be written in ways that will provide sufficient information for those who assist you in worship to write bulletins, to select music, or to schedule special visiting worship artists such as liturgical dancers or drama groups. If you are the chief worship planner in your church, make notes for yourself about the hymns, visual environment, or special music to request for that Sunday.

Finally, give your sermon a tentative title -- one definite enough to be published in the church newsletter or the local newspapers before the sermon is finished.

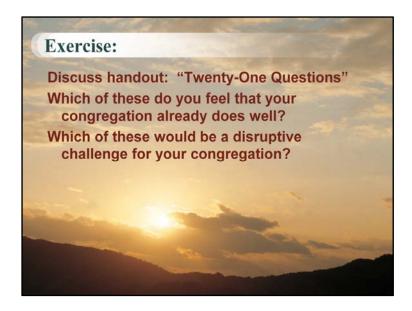


In the course of your preparation, be sure to write down any thoughts that may be helpful to you weeks later when you develop that sermon. A planning sheet, organized around the seasons of the liturgical year is provided in your handouts packet to help you get started. Later, you may find that you need additional columns for items particular to your congregation's worship style.

### Reaping the benefits

Advance planning is good for everyone involved with worship. It allows the person who preaches to know enough about upcoming sermons to keep his or her eyes open for helpful information and illustrations. It allows those who assist in worship to prepare to the best of their abilities and to participate more confidently in worship. And, of course, worshipers benefit from a worship service that has been thoughtfully designed to help them hear one strong message based upon the scripture text.

Handout: Quarterly Planning Grid

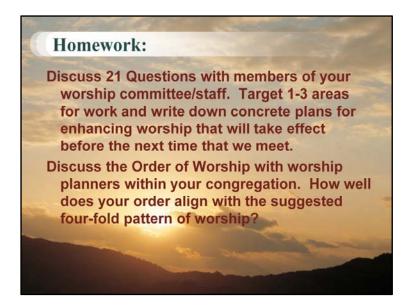


### [3:15 pm]

### **Exercise:**

Discuss the Handout "Twenty-One Questions to Consider for Designing Worship" Which of these do you feel that your congregation already does well? Which of these would be a disruptive challenge for your congregation? Next:

Target 1-3 areas for work in your local congregation. Covenant with your group to begin this work before the next time that we gather. Write down the names of people you will attempt to meet with. Simple things you can do without consultation, and other plans that you have to enhance congregational worship.

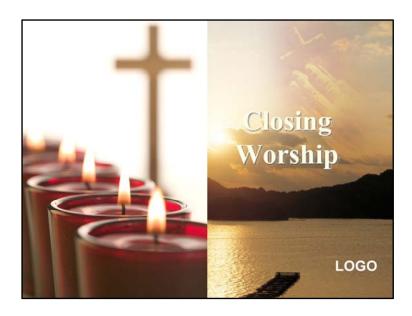


### [3:45 pm]

### Homework:

Using the quarterly worship planning guide, or a similar tool, complete 13 weeks of advance worship planning for your congregation(s).

Discuss the "Twenty-One Questions to Consider for Designing Worship" handout with your worship leaders and/or worship committee and select 1-3 areas to work on in the next months. Come prepared to report on progress at the next incubator meeting.



# Leader: Gracious God, our Savior, we have gathered People: To worship you. Leader: Gathered, People: To renew our faith. Leader: Gathered, People: To remember your wonder-filled

# Litany

Leader: Gracious God, our Savior, we have gathered

People: To worship you.

Leader: Gathered,

People: To renew our faith.

Leader: Gathered,

People: To remember your wonder-filled works.

Leader: By your Spirit
People: You taught us,

Leader: Inspired us,

People: And reminded us,

Leader: That we are the people of God

People: Who worship a Living God

Leader: And practice a living faith.

All: Until you return, may we be one in faithful ministry through our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

# Closing Hymn

"Make Us One" #2224 The Faith We Sing











# Notes

# Notes

# Notes