

Worship Leader Responsibilities

(June 2016)

Introduction

The Worship Leader is an important and cherished role - many would say privilege – in our self-governed church. We are the final coordinators, making sure the service proceeds smoothly and offers every opportunity for various modes of worship and community building. The Worship Committee, in collaboration with the Minister, who is in the pulpit two Sundays a month, chooses Sunday Worship speakers, themes, special events etc. and selects or approves the volunteer (or glad-to-be-asked) Worship Leader for each Sunday. It's wise for Worship Leaders to begin preparing well in advance their service. Some of the more experienced worship leaders expect to spend 5 hours in preparation. Contacting the minister or speaker and thinking about all the details and connections isn't hard, but advance coordination makes it all run so very much better.

The Worship Leader coordinates all arrangements for the worship service and serves as the leader - "the person up front" - of the service.

Below we have a list of tasks, check lists, speaking points and an outline of a typical church service for your reference. This might look daunting, but it is only long because *every* thing we can imagine you *might* need to consider is included. We expect the Worship Leader will be responsible for coordinating all the elements of each service to ensure an apparently seamless and meaningful worship experience for our members and visitors. If any of these are a burden to you, please just ask for help. Some Worship Leaders are more experienced than others; some services require more logistics than others. And we are committed to teamwork for the sake of wonderful services – *so ask for whatever you need.*

Schedule

1. At least one month in advance of the Service – as soon as you know the speaker and have volunteered to be the Worship Leader:
 - a. Contact speaker, introduce yourself and ask what s/he wants to know about the congregation. You might start by talking with whoever made the initial contact with the speaker to determine what has been shared and what remains to be communicated. Things to communicate and consider:
 - Location of our building and what our sanctuary looks like if they have never visited
 - Timing of service – when we meet, for how long, discuss how long s/he will speak. We are committed to being finished as close to 11 as possible, so usually our speakers have 20 minutes. Of course, that can be flexed depending upon how you time all the other elements of the service
 - General order of the service and the various elements therein
 - How much s/he wants to participate in music selection, readings, story for all ages. Some speakers engage fully, others just want to present the sermon.
 - Would s/he enjoy leading a discussion period after the sermon? Sometimes this is very appropriate and effective. Other times it has been dismal.
 - Determine the title and description of the service; obtain a brief bio of the speaker appropriate for both the newsletter and the newspaper (the latter will be an abbreviated version of the newsletter version)
 - b. Submit a service description to the worship committee and administrator
 - Provide to the worship chair the title of the sermon as soon as available.

- Provide to the church administrator the sermon title and a short, inviting (and hopefully *compelling*) write-up about the sermon, and a brief bio of the speaker. This will be needed by the 20th of the month prior to the service you are leading. Earlier submissions are always welcomed
- c. Talk to Special Music Coordinator, Linda Good, about any music that is planned. We have heard the most satisfaction after services where the music complements the mood and message of the service. Special music selections should not be longer than about 3 minutes each.
- d. Begin preparing your welcome, introduction to Joys and Sorrows, Offering, benediction if you will be doing that, any readings, your story for all ages, etc. See the attachment below for suggestions about these details. (Appendix B)

2. At least one week prior to the Service

- a. Stay in touch with the speaker – you are their lifeline to UUCWI. We want them to feel welcomed and as appreciated as we are appreciative of their time spent with us. If s/he needs to be picked up at the ferry, and you do not want to do that yourself, enlist the help of someone in the congregation. And make arrangements for a return to the ferry, too! Many of us are ready to help. If s/he is driving, ensure s/he has directions and is clear about the ferry schedule.
- b. Select your hymns – Which will support the theme of the sermon? If you don't know the music already, Mavis and Eileen can counsel you on the melodies. Select songs “singable” for congregants who may or may not know how to read music. It is good when the opening hymn is child friendly. Advise the accompanist (usually Nola but you should check with Linda Good to be sure) the week before the service which hymns you have selected so she can be well prepared. If there will be a hymn new to the congregation, or one that is more difficult to sing, ask Mavis to introduce and lead the hymn at the service
- c. Decide whether you would like to involve other congregants in the service – perhaps to light the chalice, or do a reading, or tell the story for all ages. Coordinate with them as needed and be sure to instruct them in the best use of the microphone.
- d. Prepare the Order of Service. A template is attached to the end of this note. (Appendix A) The Church Administrator and the worship chair can help, as can other lay leaders. Always ask for help when you want it. We are a team. E-mail the order of service to the Church Administrator no later than Wednesday before your service. Sooner is better. She will proof and format it, ask you any questions that arise and work with you to ensure it reflects your desires. She will print and place the orders of service in the leather box on the desk in the office.
- e. Write out your script in full, including action cues and needed props to assure smooth flow between segments (large print helps) and practice reading it aloud slowly and clearly. Practice, practice, practice is the key to feeling confident and relaxed.
- f. Coordinate with your sound technician the week of your service. If you are designing a particularly complicated service with lots of speakers, it would be wise to work you're your sound tech from the time you *begin* your design! S/he will need your order of service and help you identify sound cues and which microphones will serve your needs the best. This person is a critical ally on the day of the service!

- g. Coordinate with your room set up person the week of your service. The existing team only sets the room in the standard configuration with chairs facing the front of the room, the altar and podium up front. If you want to set a circle, or facing the north windows, or any other variation, it will be up to you to do the set up yourself. And as always, other worship leaders will be happy to assist you! Advise this person, too, of which hymnals are required.
- h. Design your altar: it is up to the worship leader to decorate the altar. When fresh flowers and greens are available, many leaders choose to make a floral arrangement. Others have used shells and precious objects. Feel free to enlist the help of someone in the congregation or worship committee. Remember, we are a team!
- i. Recruit two ushers to distribute the order of service. It is nice to ask people prior to Sunday but many of us do it spontaneously that morning. They should close one of the doors at about 9:58 so folks know to enter and sit quietly. This is necessary for you to be able to start on time. ☺ Ask them to count adult attendees about 10 minutes into the service. Later you can provide that count to the worship chair. The ushers will also collect the offering. Instruct them on how to do that, including starting at the front of the room immediately after the music commences, to wait at the back of the room until the music concludes, and then one of them to return both offering baskets to the altar at the conclusion of the offertory.

3. The day of the service

- a. The first order of business is to relax and enjoy yourself. Yours is the face visitors will remember. A week later they'll recall your smile, the tone of your voice, how well "seen" they felt by you. They may not remember your words; they *will* remember your demeanor. So relax. Make it a gift to yourself.
- b. Arrive at least 30 minutes early to ensure the room is set up to your's and the speaker's specification. This will be your time to work with your sound technician to ensure the microphone set up works as you expect. Obviously if you are picking up the speaker at the ferry you will want to enlist the help of someone else to be there early and oversee the set up. Be sure that:
 - You have identified ushers. If you are doing it spontaneously this morning, be sure to give them full instructions (see (i) above)
 - Offering baskets are on the back chairs
 - Orders of service are at back door
 - Blue ribbons are on the back 2 rows of chairs so people will sit toward the front. Ask ushers to remove the ribbons (or ask someone else) about 2 minutes prior to the start of the service
 - Hymnals are on chairs
- c. You are in charge of arranging the altar – items are stored in closet off the sanctuary. If any supplies are running low please notify the Worship Chair.
 - Arrange flowers or other decorations
 - Check oil level in Chalice (there is a bottle of oil in the sanctuary closet, on the shelving to the right)
 - Light little starter candle for the chalice

- Place bowl of sand and adequate number of candles for joys and sorrows. Think about placement of both so people don't set their sleeves on fire as they move between the chalice to the sand bowl.
 - Provide a glass of water on a shelf on the lectern for the speaker.
- d. Greet the special musicians, ushers, and readers and know who will be playing the hymns, and who is and providing refreshments. You generally want to familiarize yourself with everyone who will be helping to make the service run smoothly.
 - e. If the speaker is arriving on his/her own, greet the speaker, orient him/her to the sound system, the musicians, greeters, early church members – generally make the speaker feel welcomed and embraced. If the speaker wants quiet to prepare remarks and get “grounded” you might try the office or one of the RE rooms.
 - f. Sound system: Coordinate placement of mics with sound technician, do sound check, and rehearse proper mic technique with musicians and all speakers.
 - g. Remember to breathe! Smile! Relax!
 - h. Coordinate with ALL the players – to ensure everyone is ready to start on time
4. After the service Job well done! Congratulate yourself, take a deep breath, and receive the appreciation of all who offer it. Thank the special musician and the speaker, escort them to the refreshments. Make sure that guest minister/speaker and guest musicians receive honorarium. The Treasurer should have prepared any checks beforehand. Some cleaning up will need to be done –there will probably be lots of help. But it is wise for the worship leader to stay engaged until all the work is complete. Return the speaker to the ferry if appropriate.

Appendix A typical Order of Service

The Church Administrator will do the formatting and add announcements. The sequencing of hymns, whether you want to do a reading, responses to the chalice lighting, the offertory and the joys and sorrows are all choices you get to make. What is printed here are only options. Change, add, omit as you desire.

Prelude name of guest musician

Opening Words name of Worship Leader

Welcome and Introductions *(be brief so children get to classes on time)*

Chalice Lighting and Chalice Response

May love reign among us here in this hour of community

***Affirmation** (spoken together)

Love is the spirit of this church and service is its practice.

This is our great covenant; to dwell together in peace,

to seek truth in love, and to help one another.

***Hymn # xxx** *“title of hymn* this one should be fun for the kids to sing

Story for All Ages *(optional name of the story & author if appropriate)* name of story teller if different than worship leader

Youth take the love of our community to their classes as we sing The Gift.

Joys and Sorrows

Offering and Offertory guest musician's name

***Hymn #xxx** *“title of hymn”*

Reading *“title”* and author if appropriate

Sermon Title Speaker's name

***Hymn # xxx** *“title of hymn*

Benediction and Extinguish the Chalice

Postlude

Please join us for Refreshments and Conversation

Optional round-table discussion with the speaker/minister 10 minutes later

Appendix B Outline of Worship Leader's script content

Below are the speaking points you should cover as the Worship Leader. You have poetic license to put these ideas into your own words. Practice. The more confident you are delivering all this, the more the congregants will relax and enjoy themselves. If you forget something somewhere, pick it up later. Your goal is to be welcoming, to convey your conviction that this is the best place any of us could be on a Sunday morning. Some Worship Leaders write a script. You may certainly do so. If you do, try to be so familiar with the content you don't have to read every word, rather you can refer to the script from time to time. Eye contact with the congregants is probably more important than following every word of your script. We are not judging you – we are being welcomed and led by you. And we so appreciate this gift of yourself - your wisdom and your compassion - that you are bringing to us.

There are reference links at the end of this document – a wealth of ideas and inspirations to seed your own thoughts.

Here are some of the considerations you will make as you plan:

- Although nobody expects perfection, the more a worship leader thinks through the service and plans for transitions in advance, the more smooth and effective the service will be.
- Be sure to "walk through" the service so you are prepared for everything that needs to happen. And sometimes things go wrong. The more relaxed you are, the better you can respond to a hiccup when it occurs
- What is the ideal room/chair/podium/music stand/altar arrangement?
- Where will you and other participants sit?
- If the choir is singing, coordinate with the choir director -- there are some limitations on where they can be relative to the piano.
- What microphones do you want and where? There are LOTS of trade-off with mics and the equipment sometimes changes! Your sound technician can help you determine what will work best for your particular service, speakers and logistics
- Will you carry your script or leave it on a stand/podium?
- Do you want other voices in the service – if so whom will you ask?
- Do you want others to light the chalice or say the words?
- If you are projecting visuals during the service, plan all needed equipment (your sound tech can help), positioning, timing and who will do what when.
- Do you need someone to turn lights on/off during the service? If so, that will be the job of your sound tech.
- Things to consider around music specifically:
 - Where should the special musician(s) be positioned ... when they are playing and when they are NOT playing?
 - Do they need microphones? Music stands?
 - Have you confirmed hymn numbers and signals for being ready to play?
 - Will musicians play during transitions? If so, what signals are needed?
 - Agree on tempi and feel of the music
 - Do you need song leaders to help with new/unfamiliar hymns, rounds, etc?
- Do YOU need quiet time before the service to gather your thoughts and become mentally prepared to lead worship?

Ideas for content. Please note that you will not say EVERYthing in here – these are just points to consider including :

OPENING WORDS: something relevant and inspiring to the theme today – your choice

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS – your goal here is to create an ambiance of warmth and welcome, to create a community of people worshipping together rather than a room full of individuals sitting in isolation from each other:

- Welcome everyone
- Thank musicians
- Tell people where they are – UUCWI
- Introduce yourself as Worship Leader
- Tell folks we are served by our minister Rev Dennis Reynolds
- If Dennis is present, introduce him
- If Dennis is not present, share when he'll be back next
- Introduce today's speaker, relevance of his/her topic to UU principles and if appropriate the month's theme
- Make a special welcome to visitors – invite them to introduce themselves, as they are willing, to the congregation; ask their hosts to introduce guests
- Invite people new to UUCWI (if any in the crowd) to the back of the Order of Service to read our principles
- Invite visitors to register for information and our newsletter – signup sheet should be on the table in the foyer
- Invite people to greet their neighbors – pay attention to people in the back who might be isolated so they are greeted as well
- Encourage everyone to stay for refreshments after the service
- Point people to the announcements printed in the Order of Service
- Ask them to turn off their cell-phones or put them in airplane mode. This is NOT an optional point. It is critical we do this every week.
- Optionally you may want to ring the bell to call us to sacred celebration or to worship

CHALICE LIGHTING : something relevant and inspiring – your choice

- This is an opportunity to invite someone from the congregation to participate – again this is your choice. It's also a place where we can involve our youth. Perhaps you even invite an entire family to do the chalice lighting.
- There are ideas at the UUA web site: www.uua.org/worshipweb/main.html
- See the back of our hymnal for more ideas, starting at 447
- You might provide an optional chalice response. Some options:
 - *May love reign among us here, in this hour of community.*
 - *We light this chalice to remind ourselves to treat all people kindly because they are our brothers and sisters, to take good care of the earth because it is our home, and to try to live lives filled with goodness and love because that is how we will become the best men and women we can be.*

AFFIRMATION

- invite people to stand in body or spirit and join you in the unison affirmation printed in the Order of Service and to remain standing for the opening hymn. (otherwise folks have a stand up-sit down-stand up- sit down experience ☺)

OPENING HYMN: select one here that is especially accessible for our youth and children. Invite people to stand in body or spirit and join you in singing

STORY FOR ALL AGES

- the story will set the theme for the sermon – it is a preview of the whole service
- If you are not doing the story yourself, introduce the story teller
- Invite youth to the front of the room to join the story teller
- As much as you are able, tell the story instead of reading it. That engages both youth and adults much more effectively. Remember, this is a story for everyone, not just the children. You want to keep the adults just as engaged as the children.

CHILDREN DEPART – your goal here is to make the youth departure ceremonious and special

- Some Worship Leaders say the words: *The youth will now take the light of our community to their classes*
- sing The Gift. It is printed inside the covers of both the grey and teal hymnals

PERSONAL JOYS & SORROWS – your goal here is to further build a sense of shared commitment to each other through sharing what is happening in our lives, worrying us, filling us with sorrow and/or celebration. This is a sacred time

- Say something that invites people to come forward
- You can also invite silence first so people can decide whether they want to speak
- Explain candle ceremony
- Ask people to introduce themselves and use the microphone
- Finish by lighting a candle for the unspoken joys and concerns we hold within
- You may or may not want a congregational response to the joys and concerns. It's your discretion depending on how long the service will run. One we have used from time to time:
 - *May the joys and concerns spoken here this afternoon*
And those which remain unspoken, known only to those who hold them close
May all these joys and concerns be enfolded in the warmth of this community

And may that warmth extend in sympathy and compassion to all who are hurting in our wider world.

HYMN invite people to stand in body or spirit and join you in singing. Selecting hymns that support the theme of the service contributes to a more coherent service

OFFERTORY:

- say some words to create a space for generosity
 - there are many ways to contribute to the life of this congregation & we are grateful for all of them
 - invite people into a point of view that sharing of our money is a sacred act too
 - acknowledge that some folks pay monthly by mail – invite them to hold the basket for a moment and receive a prayer of appreciation
- invite them to enjoy an interlude with our musicians
- the ushers should return the offering to the altar after the music concludes. Say some words of acknowledgement and gratitude for their generosity. Your intention is to continue to make money sacred in this context

READING – this is optional and will be determined by you in consultation of the speaker. Think about what it will contribute to the flow, intention and spirit of the service

- this might be a responsive reading from the hymnal or an insert in the order of service
- it might be a reading the speaker has chosen
- it might be a prayer
- it might be given by the speaker, the Worship Leader, another congregant

SERMON

HYMN

BENEDICTION AND EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE you may do this, or the speaker

POSTLUDE

- remind people to join us for refreshments
- especially invite visitors so we can further welcome them
- if there will be a post-sermon discussion group, advise them when and where (suggest at least a 10 minute pause between the service and commencing the discussion)
- invite people to be seated and to enjoy one last musical interlude by our special musician

Resources for opening words, chalice lighting, joys and concerns, offertory, benediction:

- Our UUCWI Hymnal
- Mavis has a couple books on worship for brief loan to worship leaders
- Dennis has a library of poems and materials in his office
- The Unitarian Universalist Association has lots of material suggestions:
www.uua.org/worshipweb/main.html
- Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow have been collecting “best practices” from UU churches they have visited all around the country and offer them to us all on their Great Story web site: <http://www.thegreatstory.org/UU-practices.html>

Resources for stories: we encourage you not to read a book... you can paraphrase it, simplify it, tell it as a story

- Local library – the librarians will even help you find a story for a specific theme
- Mavis has a personal library of stories. Others who love stories are Terra, Dennis. Our retired school librarians – Joann, Camille, Joan - may have suggestions
- Consider a myth from other cultures
- Aesop’s fables
- Folktales of the Native American by Dee Brown
- Treasury of Classic Stories for Children by Eric Carle
- 33 Multicultural Stories from Other Lands by Pleasant de Spain
- Wisdom Tales from Around the World by Heather Forest
- Her Stories – African American folktales by Virginia Hamilton
- Just So Stories by Rudyard Kipling
- Echoes of the Elders by Chief Lelooska
- Illustrated Myths of Native America by Tim McNeese
- Favorite Folktales from Around the World by Jane Yolen
- Stories adapted for church by Rev. Ricky Hoyt, a UU minister for Santa Clarita:
<http://www.revricky.com/writing.html>
- stories sorted by monthly holidays and seasonal celebrations:
<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/OlcGood.html>
- Another story source on the web – some stories written here, others referenced:
<http://www.story-lovers.com/index.html>