

Worship Together: Gathering (Page 1)

Read for background before worship begins.

Worship begins, in a way, from the moment the community starts to gather in the space. What we see and hear are parts of worship: the way we are greeted, the way we say hello to each other, when we begin to settle into our places and get ready to listen and participate. The gathering time is when the community gathers to worship God, and when we gather our thoughts and hearts and minds to worship God. It's a time of preparation as well. During some seasons of the year, this is when we pray a prayer of confession. *In our worship order, this is everything that happens before the Children's Time.*

What happens during the gathering time? Look for these things...during worship, take notes.

- **Music:** Music might prepare us for worship (a prelude); or set the theme for the day; often the hymns have words that praise God and celebrate what God has done for us, and say something about why we are gathered here.

notes from worship:

- **Welcome:** Sometimes this is part of the pre-scripted liturgy; sometimes it's even the announcements about who is leading worship and what might be happening in worship. All of these are part of making people feel welcome and comfortable worshipping here. In fact, even the person greeting you at the door could be considered part of worship!

notes from worship:

- **Confession and Forgiveness:** We prepare ourselves for worship by taking this moment to make ourselves right with God and with other people. While we believe that God has always already forgiven us, we also believe that it's important for us to have time to talk to God about what's gone wrong in our lives, and to hear, over and over again, that we are forgiven. Sometimes we use a traditional Christian song, the Kyrie, as part of the confession and forgiveness.

notes from worship:

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- **Prayers:** Prayers during this opening part of worship often praise God; set the theme for the day; ask for God's presence as we worship.

notes from worship:

- **Gloria:** A traditional part of Christian worship, in which we praise God for being present in the world as Jesus Christ.

notes from worship:

After Worship, answer these questions together with your mentor.

What was the opening Hymn this Sunday? Why do you think this Hymn did (or did not) fit with the scripture texts we read today?

What was your favorite part of the gathering time today? Why?

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What would you change about the gathering time today? Why? How would you change it?

Work together to write a “prayer of the day”, following the examples and instructions below. It’s often related to the lectionary Bible texts for the day.

directions	example	your prayer
<i>Open by addressing God and saying something about who God is</i>	God, who created the earth,	
<i>we ask God to help us in some specific way</i>	may we care for all of your creatures,	
<i>why we want this help from God</i>	so that we might love everything you made the way that you do.	
<i>a conclusion,</i>	We ask this because of your great love, Amen.	

Worship Together: Word (Page 1)

Read for background before worship begins.

Each week, we hear God's Word proclaimed in church. We have a three year cycle of Bible texts called "the lectionary" (a group from various churches has worked together since the 1960s to come up with this cycle of readings....meaning that many churches are actually reading the same Bible passages every Sunday!). *In our worship order, this is everything that happens from the children's time until the hymn after the sermon.*

What happens during the time when we hear the Word? Look for these things...during worship, take notes.

- **Readings from the Bible:** We usually read more than one passage from the Bible. Sometimes these passages are related to each other, sometimes not. It's also important to us that the Bible is read by the pastor who is preaching and by someone from the congregation because the Bible is for us all!

notes from worship:

- **Sermon:** Preaching is not just supposed to be a lesson, but also something that helps us understand how the Bible applies to our lives. Our children's time is often related to the sermon, a good reminder that preaching is supposed to be for everyone's lives.

notes from worship:

- **Music:** We sing the Alleluia or another short song to praise God for the gift of the Bible (and of Jesus, who we sometimes also call "the Word"). There is usually a hymn after the sermon that reminds us of something that was said in the sermon.

notes from worship:

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After Worship, answer these questions together with your mentor.

What was the Children's Time about today (one sentence)?

What is the one thing that you will remember from the sermon today?

Look through the hymnal and pick a different hymn for the hymn of the day. Why did you pick this hymn? How does it match the Bible and the sermon from today?

Worship Together: Response (Page 1)

Read for background before worship begins.

After we've heard the Word (Bible readings and sermon), how do we respond? Think about: some of the things the Bible tells us are pretty dramatic. For instance, at Christmas, we learn that God loves us so much that God became human and was born and lives among us. That's a lot of love. What would we do in response to that? Obviously, the hope is that what you hear in church will change your whole life. But there are some little things we do in worship that show that we are ready to respond to what we've heard. The things that we do right after hearing the sermon are part of our response. *In our worship order, this is everything that happens after the hymn of the day until the Offering Hymn.*

What happens during the response time? Look for these things...during worship, take notes.

- **Prayers of the People:** One of the things we almost always hear in a sermon and in the Bible readings is this: God loves us very much, and cares about what's happening in our lives; God cares not just about us but about the whole world. Because of this, we pray for our world and ourselves.

notes from worship:

- **The Peace:** Worship isn't just about us and God, but also the community God has gathered. This is not just saying, "hello" to each other, but also about reminding ourselves that we are loved by God, and because of this, we are brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. (Think of the words we use: "The Peace of Christ be with you.")

notes from worship:

- **Announcements:** Announcements aren't exactly an interruption of worship. They're about the things going on in the church, the ways that we can respond to what we heard today in the Word.

notes from worship:

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- **Offering:** The offering is about giving money to the church because we are grateful, but by doing it during worship, we have a physical reminder that we are called to give our gifts (not just money) to God. (Think of this: even the music during the offering is a gift.)

notes from worship:

After Worship, answer these questions together with your mentor.

What was your favorite part of the response time during worship today? Why?

If you could change anything about how we do the response time in worship, what would you change? How would you change it?

Imagine that you could give everyone who attended worship this week an object to take home as a reminder of what they may have learned or been moved to do? What would you choose? Why? (Examples: if there was a sermon about the parable of the mustard seed, and everyone was given a mustard seed; or if everyone was reminded that God will always be there when they need comfort and everyone went home with a small teddy bear.)

Worship Together: Meal (Page 1)

Read for background before worship begins.

Our congregation celebrates the sacrament of Holy Communion every week. It's part of our response to hearing the word, but it's also more than that. We believe that we meet God at the communion altar or table, just as Jesus told the disciples at the Last Supper to continue eating the bread and drinking the cup, as a way that we might be united with God and be Jesus' body in the world. *In our worship order, this is everything that happens from the offering prayer to the prayer after communion.*

What happens during this time? Look for these things...during worship, take notes.

- **Prayers:** Many of the prayers and things that are said during the celebration of Holy Communion are versions of prayers that have been used by the Church for generations, even right back to the time to Jesus.

notes from worship:

- **Music:** We sing several pieces of music during the celebration. The "Holy Holy," and the "Lamb of God," are similar to the songs that sung in other churches all over the world, and going back very far into history.

notes from worship:

- **Movement:** In our congregation's tradition, we go forward to receive the bread and the cup. As you watch this during worship, think about what it might represent that people go forward to receive communion.

notes from worship:

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After Worship, answer these questions together with your mentor.

What part of Holy Communion is most meaningful to you? Why?

**If you could change one thing about Holy Communion, what would you change?
How would you change it?**

**Look up the section of hymns for Holy Communion. Which one is your favorite?
Why?**

Worship Together: Sending (Page 1)

Read for background before worship begins.

We don't want to put worship in a little box that's completely separate from the rest of our life. In this part of worship, we connect our time in church to the rest of our lives. There's a blessing, a reminder that God is faithful to us and goes with us into the world. It's not just a time when we are told what to do, but when we remember that God is always with us, and God's grace is working in us to help us do God's work in the world. *In our worship order, this is everything that happens after the Prayer After Communion.*

What happens during this time? Look for these things...during worship, take notes.

- **Music:** There's usually recessional hymn (the last hymn we sing, when the pastor and other who were leading worship walk out following the cross). Think about what it means that we turn to face the cross as it goes out of the sanctuary. The postlude music isn't just pretty music, but often related to other things that happened in worship, a reminder of things we heard during worship. And the postlude music can also set a feeling for how we leave (joyful, hopeful, sad, serious?).

notes from worship:

- **Blessing:** The Pastor gives a blessing, often something that quotes from the Bible. There's no right answer to this, but think as you listen: is God blessing us? Is the pastor blessing us? Are we blessing each other?

notes from worship:

- **Dismissal:** We have the same words of dismissal every week, a way to remind us to take what we've done in church out into the world.

notes from worship:

Worship Together: Sending (Page 2)

After Worship, answer these questions together with your mentor.

When the pastor gives the blessing, what do you think is happening? (Is the pastor blessing the congregation? God blessing the congregation? Are the people blessing each other? Something else? Explain?)

Why do you think the recessional hymn for today was chosen? What did it connect to that happened in worship today?

What's another thing you can think of that we could do at the end of worship to remind people that God will still be with them when they leave the church and go out into the world for the rest of the week?