

# WELCOMING WORSHIP



*A Seminar on Worship and Outreach*

By

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# Who is Worship for? — A Bible Study

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*Bad Grammar; Good Question.*

**C**hristians gather together on Sunday morning in a church building and spend an hour there in a spiritual activity. Which of the following words best describes what happens? List your reasons under each.

## ***Worship***

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- 
- 

## ***Service***

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- 
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On Sunday morning, who is the audience, the object of what happens there?

Germans described that Sunday morning spiritual activity with the word *Gottesdienst*, which means Service of God. What makes that such a good, Lutheran term for what we do on Sunday morning?

## **Colossians 3:16-17**

*<sup>16</sup>Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

## **Explore**

*3:16*

1. What is the center of public worship for Christians?
2. Who is the audience at worship? Why does Paul use the term “dwell”? What does that picture language teach you about worship?
3. What does it mean to “dwell in you *richly*”?
4. Why does Paul tell us that worship includes teaching and admonishing?
5. What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom? What is Paul’s point here?
6. What does it mean that the songs of worship are to be “spiritual”? What is the implication then about these songs? What then, is the primary means to evaluate songs for worship?
7. God speaks; God dwells; we respond. How?

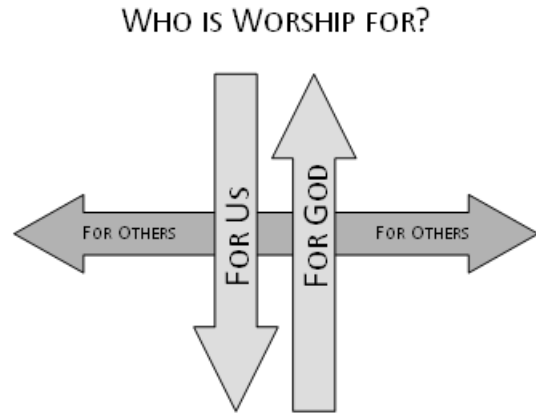
3:17

8. Agree or Disagree? Worship is a corporate function of the Church. (see Romans 12:1)
9. How does the name of Jesus give us the power and motivation to respond to God?
10. How do we give thanks to God the Father through Jesus in public worship?

## Apply

11. Circle the arrow that shows the primary purpose of worship. Why is that the primary purpose? Draw a box around the secondary purpose. Which is the third? Why?
12. How do those worship priorities help us evaluate forms, songs, and other choices for public worship?
13. Identify the dangers of losing that primary emphasis: *(Can you think of examples of each of these?)*

- What if we thought worship was only about my praise to God?
- What if we thought worship was only about God serving me?
- What if we thought worship was only about us serving others?



### A DEFINITION OF LUTHERAN WORSHIP

God speaks and his people respond. God serves the congregation and the congregation serves God. (Tiefel 1993)

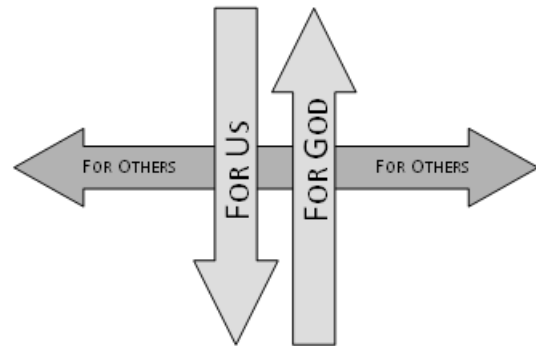
# First Things First

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**D**iscussing the relationship between worship and outreach is often like talking politics at a dinner party. There are many opinions, but very few agreements. Let's start by taking a look at some of the principles of worship and outreach and see how they interact with each other.

## Worship and Outreach

- Agree or Disagree? The Sunday morning service is not the proper place for outreach.
- Who are the "OTHERS" listed in the figure to the right?
- What makes worship a hard place to do outreach?



Lutherans believe these two statements:

1. God's Word works. God's Word is the tool the Holy Spirit uses to call people to faith. Nothing we do makes the Word work better.
2. God commands us to be faithful stewards of the means of grace. We will seek to use them in the best possible way.

How do those statements at first seem contradictory? How do you resolve that contradiction?

How will each statement guide your church's outreach and worship planning?

**Discuss:** Give examples of how your church already does this well.

## Who are we welcoming?

Who are the people that we're talking about at this workshop today? Who are the visitors that walk through our doors for the first time?

How would you define these terms? Which of these groups is the most frequent visitor at your church?

1. Unbeliever
2. Unchurched
3. Dechurched

Evaluate each of those groups in the following way:

- What are their expectations regarding worship with you?
- What are their fears regarding worship with you?
- What assumptions can you make regarding their worship with you?

**Discuss:** Worship is a great point of first contact for any of those three groups. (unbeliever, unchurched, dechurched)

## What Worship Can't Do

**Evaluate** this statement:

*Is it possible that we have tried to make worship do too much? The evangelism program of the congregation is nonexistent, so we dump the liturgy, turn the Sunday experience into an evangelism event, and call it worship. (Huebner 1999)*

**Discuss:** Worship can evangelize the unchurched, but we don't design worship for the unchurched.

How does the purpose of worship help us in knowing where to draw the line?

**Evaluate** the worship change listed below on the basis of our opening Bible study.

*A church marketing newsletter described a campaign developed to attract new visitors for Easter. The article suggested that the cross be removed from the altar. They thought that a new generation of churchgoers would consider the cross too "churchy." One pastor interviewed for the article gave his wholehearted endorsement. He said, "We are going to attempt to concentrate on the resurrection, and not the death of Jesus."*

Today we are not going to talk about ways to make God's Word work better. We are going to talk about being good stewards of the means of grace. How can we do that in our culture, in our time, in our church? How can we faithfully share the Gospel with the unchurched that God brings into our services? How can we make worship a welcoming experience for the unchurched, that they might hear God's powerful word and hear about their powerful Savior?

# First Impressions

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**H**ow important are first impressions? Ask the young man who flubbed the first meeting with his future in-laws. Ask the human resource department after a candidate's initial interview. Ask yourself the next time you go to a restaurant, a theater, or a new friend's home. First impressions are important because they color all the interactions that follow.

What are the first impressions that your church is giving to visitors? How do they color your future interactions?

Our goal is to be good stewards of the means of grace by making a good first impression with new visitors. To accomplish that goal we look at facility, friendliness, and following worship.

**COME AGAIN?**

What the congregation *gives* to the visitor is of prime importance. How the congregation *treats* the visitor is of secondary importance. The gospel is more important than the atmosphere in which it is proclaimed. Yet there is a correlation between the two...

A congregation that knows it exists not just for itself, but for all in the community who need to hear the message it is proclaiming, will strive to make every visitor feel welcome. (Valleskey 1995, 193)

## Facility

Think of the way you would prepare your house for each of these situations:

- Your best friend is dropping in as he does about once a week.
- Family is coming to vacation with you.
- The homeowners' association welcoming committee is coming to welcome you to the neighborhood.

Which one best applies to how your church prepares for Sunday morning? How does that affect your ability to communicate the Word of God to people?

## Exterior Items

- Appearance of grounds and building
- Adequate parking spaces
- Visitor parking spaces?

- Parking visible from the road?
- Signage
- Do visitors know where to enter? Is a sign needed to indicate the main entrance?
- Your current members know all about the church; the externals listed here don't matter nearly as much to them. But what first impression are you giving to a visitor? Could that impact your opportunity to share the Gospel with them?

## Interior Items

- Are directional signs needed? (Sanctuary, Nursery, Preschool, etc.)
- Seating—When are you full?
- Sit in front/Park in back
- Acoustics
- Lighting
- Personal PA system
- Audio/Visual piped to gathering area, cryroom, nursery
- Information kiosk/table/tract rack

## Building Design

- Gathering Area
- What can be done to improve people flow?
- Accessibility for handicapped and elderly

## Friendliness

Unchurched visitors consistently rank “friendliness” as a significant factor in their first impression. But how can a church foster a friendly attitude?

### To Greet or Not to Greet?

Discuss the benefits or drawbacks of these strategies for a friendly welcome:

- **Greeter teams:** There are two people assigned to be greeters for the Sunday. They put on name tags and act like Wal-Mart Greeters. Their job is to welcome visitors and help them find their way.
- **Secret greeters:** Greeters are assigned for each Sunday, but they don't wear “Greeter” name tags. They know that their job is to greet new visitors without being seen as a “greeter.”



- **Everyone's a greeter:** Encourage the whole congregation to welcome new visitors. Teach them the importance of first impressions.
- **Evangelism team:** Meet periodically with your evangelism team and ask them to be role models in greeting new visitors.
- **Hybrid:** One greeter is in the parking lot, or outside the building that gives people directional help. Inside, the congregation or evangelism team takes on the role of greeting people.
- **In the Service:** Visitors are welcomed by the pastor and by the members sitting near them during the "Greeting Time" incorporated into the service.
- **Other plans?**

#### GREET THE VISITORS. Now!

An unchurched visitor wrote: "A designated greeting time was very short—clearly a formality. People seemed to know it, too, and were perfunctory in their greetings—it didn't seem genuine at all." (Outreach Magazine 2006, 98)

## Following Worship

Discuss these strategies for making a good first impression with visitors immediately after worship:

- **Three-minute rule:** The church leadership consistently reminds the congregation during Bible class, etc., that they should spend their first three minutes after church talking to someone they don't know. Then, go and talk to people they know.
- **Food:** Have some kind of food after church every Sunday. Coffee and doughnuts or juice and fruit.
- **No one stands alone:** The congregation commits that it will not leave someone standing alone in the gathering area, looking like a transfer student on his first day in the high school cafeteria.
- **Pairing People:** The person greeting seeks to introduce them to someone else with similar roots, work, family, etc.
- **Faithful follow-up strategy** that takes advantage of the great opportunity for outreach that God has placed in front of the congregation. (See *Faithful Follow-up*, p. 12)
- **Other ideas?**

### WHAT GOOD ARE FIRST IMPRESSIONS?

The efficacy of the gospel is not dependent on the friendliness of a congregation, the upkeep of the property, the availability of parking, a church nursery, or other such externals. It is true, however, that congregations demonstrate concern and love for visitors not only in the message they offer, but in the way they offer the message.

First impressions count. Negative impressions discourage visitors from returning. Positive impressions do not guarantee that a visitor will be won for Christ, of course, but they may bring a person back to hear the Gospel a second time. Who can know on which visit the Holy Spirit will work his great work of conversion? (Valleskey 1995, 196)

## Huddle Group

### *Through the Eyes of a Visitor*

Ask yourself, "What would a visitor see as they come to our church for the first time?" Evaluate your strengths and weakness. Develop some short and long term goals.

Short term goals can be completed within 12 months. Assign people/groups to begin work on these items.

For long term goals, assign the appropriate planning group and articulate how these goals will be communicated to them.

# Huddle Group: First Impressions

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## *Report Form*

**E**valuate the first impressions that your church is giving to visitors. How can we build on our strengths? What can be improved? Identify your proposed action items. Assign responsibility to the person or group able to implement the items; select a due date for the item.

### **Facility, Exterior and Interior**

Action Item	Person/Group Responsible	Due Date

### **Greeting**

Action Item	Person/Group Responsible	Due Date

### **Following Worship**

Action Item	Person/Group Responsible	Due Date

# Faithful Follow-Up

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Everything in your outreach program worked: the unchurched family was found, contacted, and invited to come and see their Savior. Then, an unbelievable thing happened: an unchurched person came through your church doors. He heard the Gospel preached; he met the people of God gathered there; he saw a foretaste of heaven. What a huge victory over sin and Satan that God just won! How will we celebrate that victory? Will we let that fertile field lie fallow?

Faithful follow-up on the worship visitor is the grateful response that Christ's Church gives to its Lord who brought this new visitor into your house of worship. Our response will seek to continue to cast the seeds of God's Word into that fertile field God placed before us.

## FAITHFUL FOLLOW-UP MEANS FINDING MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH THE UNCHURCHED VISITOR

### Goals:

- Clearly communicate how Christ's Church feels about them
- Look for opportunities for the congregation to have further contact with them
- Schedule a pastoral call, or a second-level follow-up visit

## Evaluating Follow-up Strategies

There are many good ways to achieve that goal and objectives. Evaluate the following follow-up strategies. Judge them based on:

- |                            |                                                |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| ➤ Opportunity for outreach | ➤ Cost                                         |
| ➤ Time                     | ➤ The impression or reaction of the unchurched |
| ➤ Manpower                 |                                                |

How does each program help achieve the goal and objectives of faithful follow-up?

**Program A** The pastor/church writes a personal letter to each first time attendee who signs the guest book. The letter thanks them for coming and invites them back.

**Program B** The pastor/church sends a visitor packet that provides information about services, programs, and other events that the first time attendee might be interested in.

**Program C** The pastor/church drops off a thank you package to the first time attendee's home within two days. The package includes a brief note of thanks, informational pamphlets about the church, and a small gift.

**Program D**            The lay members of the church drop off a thank you package to the first time attendee's home within two days. The pastor makes a second visit to their home within a week of the first visit.

**Program E**            Other ways that groups at the workshop are using...

## **Develop a plan for follow-up**

Remember the goal. Work toward the objectives. Bear in mind the evaluations of various strategies. Then develop a plan for worship follow-up.

### **Getting the information**

A new family comes into your church for the first time. A few of your families greet them and show them around. The visitors' names are Bill and Melinda; no one heard their last name. After church, the pastor thanks them for coming and invites them back. They walk out the door and are gone. Google is not going to find them. The phonebook isn't going to help. Follow-up can't be done if the visitors can't be found.

Faithful follow-up seeks the best way to obtain the visitor's contact information.

### ***What information should we gather?***

Everyone asks for Name, Address and Phone.

Which of the following should we also ask of them?

- Email
- Present church affiliation
- No church home at present
- Interested in pastoral visit
- Interested in membership
- New resident to the area
- Children's names
- Friend of/Visiting with

### ***What method will we use to gather the information?***

**Evaluate** the following methods to gather information:

**Guest book:**            This is the old WELS standby. The guest book located in the narthex with a fancy pen holder. It usually has spaces for Date, Name, Affiliation, Interested in pastoral call.

**Visitor Card:**            A 3 x 5 card either inserted in the bulletin or in slots attached to the pews. Some cards have "Visitor" information on one side, and

“Member” information on the other. It can be used as a record of both visitor and member attendance. The cards are placed in the offering plate or handed to an usher.

***Tear Sheet:***

This is a section of the service folder that is perforated. The visitor or member fills out the information, then tears the perforated section out of the service folder and places it in the offering plate.

***Friendship Register:***

This is a book handed out to each pew. Families fill them out and then pass them to the next person in the pew. The book is then picked up after church by the ushers.

***Other ideas:***

***How should we track the information gathered?***

Failure to track visitor information hinders faithful follow-up. Track the visit date, family information, other items marked, and any pertinent conversations. Track the follow-up work that the congregation does. Note return visits to church.

Integrate the worship visitor follow-up information into whatever tracking tool your congregation is using for the rest of its outreach program. If your congregation needs a program to track prospects, there are numerous commercial applications you could buy. You can also use the free open source database called Prospect Management by Jonathan Schroeder.

It is downloadable at: [www.georgiafaith.com/pm.htm](http://www.georgiafaith.com/pm.htm)

**The Follow-up Package**

Review the goal and objectives of faithful follow-up. How will your thank-you package help you to achieve them?

- A form letter isn't enough.
- Attractive package
- Personal note
- Informational
- Thank-you gift
- Other thoughts?

**The Follow-up Team**

***Follow-up Coordinator***

This person may be your Evangelism Coordinator, or a Council member, or any member with the talents and interest. Their job is to coordinate four things:

1. The gathering of visitor information. They would gather the sheets after each service and pull out the sheets that are pertinent.

2. The preparation of thank you packages. The coordinator wouldn't put the packages together but would ensure that there are enough packages for the calling team.
3. Distributing home visits among the follow-up visit team.
4. Recording the information. The coordinator would ensure that someone enters the visitor information and records the thank you visits that have been made.

### ***Package person***

This position would be great for someone who can't go on outreach calls but wants to be active in the outreach work of the church. This person assembles the thank you packages and ensures that there are always enough on hand for the next week's work. This person also notes when thank you package materials need to be ordered.

### ***The Visiting Team***

This shouldn't be the pastor. Thank you visits are perfect visits for a team of lay members to make. Consider the impression that a member home visit makes on the unchurched prospect. How is it different from the impression if the pastor makes it?

### ***Recruiting the Visiting Team***

1. ***Explain the process.*** "We are looking for people to drop off a thank you package to people who have visited with us. The packages will be prepared for you. We'd like you to fill out a thank you card for them, and put it into the thank you package. We need these packages dropped off at their homes within two days. You can leave the package on their door if they're not home."
2. ***Give them permission not to go inside the door.*** This is a boon for recruiting follow-up visiting team members. Tell them that they are not permitted to go inside the home, even if invited. They are to say, "Thanks, but you weren't expecting me. I just wanted to drop this off. But my pastor would like to stop by and visit with you." If people know that they aren't expected to do anything more than drop off a package, it is much easier to recruit members to make these home visits.
3. ***Recruit teams from different geographic areas.*** If the Visiting team lives near the homes they are to visit, it's much easier for them to complete their assigned visits. This leads to timely follow-up and long term service by the team members. Divide your target area into quadrants. Try and recruit visiting team members from each quadrant. The Follow-up Coordinator each Sunday assigns home visits to the teams based on where the prospect lives. Each team keeps several packages at their homes. The team can make the visits easily and quickly since they already have the materials and the visits are close to home.

### ***The Follow-up Call***

The prospect came to church; they wrote down their contact information and marked "No church home." The package is ready. The follow-up team is recruited. Now what?

- ***Timing:*** Make the visit ***within two days***. This helps achieve the objective of clearly communicating how Christ's church feels about the prospect. Let them know

that we noticed they were there. Go at a time when you would expect them to be home.

- **Dress:** Remember that the visiting team represents the church. But also remember what people think when they see two men wearing ties at their front door.
- **Not home:** If no one is home, just leave the bag at the door. Yes, a face-to-face is better, but there is a personal note in the thank you package. Leaving the bag will ensure timely delivery; it also prevents visiting team burn-out.
- **Say:** Just say, “Thank you.” That’s the purpose of the visit. Thank them and give them a verbal or written invitation to come back again. Some churches use this as an opportunity to get feedback on the worship experience—just make sure that it doesn’t come across as the main purpose of the visit.
- **Respond:** They might have questions. Answer them if you can. Perhaps an even better idea is to use their questions as an opportunity for a follow-up visit from the pastor. “You know, I’m not sure of the answer to that, but I know that my pastor would. He said he’d like to talk with you. Should I tell him to give you a call?” The goal of follow-up is to find more opportunities to share the Gospel. Here’s an excellent opportunity!
- **Record:** Track the visits in detail so that the future follow-up team members are aware of what happened. Keep track of who made the visit, when, what was left, and any pertinent conversations. Then put this person on the pastoral follow-up list.

### **The Next Step—Pastoral Follow-up**

The Next Step—Pastoral Follow-up is crucially important. Here is where the goal is realized. Here is the opportunity to share the Gospel with a family that has attended, indicated interest, and has received a lay thank you call. Talk about a prime visit for pastors to make!

- **Timing:** This visit should be made either the week of the lay visit or the week immediately thereafter. Do you see advantages to one or the other?
- **Scheduling:** Should this visit be scheduled with the people in advance or should the pastor just drop in?
- **Say:** Thank them for coming. Question them about their experience. Invite them to come to other opportunities. Find an opening to share the message of salvation. Seek the chance to do a Law/Gospel presentation.
- **Record:** Put the visit information into the tracking database. These families are top priorities for continued outreach follow-up visits.



## Working the Plan

### An example

#### ***Sunday, 10:30 AM***

On the first Sunday in Advent, there are three new families in worship. During the offering, while the ushers are passing the plate, two children go down the center aisle and pass out a friendship register to each pew. Everyone signs the friendship register, both members and guests. The three new families each fill out their information in turn and leave the friendship register in the pew.

#### ***Sunday, 11:45 AM***

Scott, the outreach coordinator, collects the sheets from the friendship register. He brings them to the pastor and confirms that the three families he didn't recognize were new. He then sits down and enters the three families' contact information into Prospect Management.

#### ***Sunday, 3:00 PM***

Scott notices that one of new families is in Sharpsburg and two are from Peachtree City. He checks his Follow-up Visiting Team list and sees that Mary Beth is in Peachtree City, and the Picketts live close to Sharpsburg. He calls them, "Would you drop off a thank you package to Bill and Melinda, who live at..."

#### ***Monday, 6:00 PM***

The Picketts grab one of the thank you packages that they keep on hand. There's no need to run back to church to grab one. They take two minutes to write out the Thank You card.

*Dear Bill and Melinda,*

*Thanks so much for joining us at worship this past week. We hope you enjoyed our service and meeting some of our church family. Please join us again soon.*

*Jim and Lorene*

#### ***Monday, 6:15 PM***

It's a short trip to the home; Scott always makes sure to give them visits close by. They knock on the door. Melinda opens it, and Jim and Lorene thank her for being at church on Sunday. "We just wanted to drop off this package to thank you for being with us." Melinda asks, "Would you like to come in?" "No," they say, "you weren't expecting us. But our pastor was hoping to visit with you..."

#### ***Tuesday, 6:00 PM***

Scott entered the visit information into Prospect Management. He notes that the Picketts talked to Melinda, who really wants to ask Pastor some questions. He emails a copy of the notes to the pastor.

Dawn noticed that she needed to make up some more thank you packages. They'll be ready by Sunday so the visiting team can pick up more.

### ***Wednesday, 7:00 PM***

The pastor pulls into the driveway for a great meeting with those new visitors. The objectives were accomplished. Now he's about to get a chance to fulfill the goal: Share the Gospel.

***React and discuss*** this sample plan for follow-up.

## **Huddle Group – Faithful Follow-up**

### **Evaluate your Current Plan**

- How do we get visitor information?
- What materials do we use for follow-up?
- What is the visiting process?
- What do we use to track our visits?

Strong Points

Need Revision

Weak Points

### **Develop Your Revised Plan**

- What ideas could we try?
- Information gathering
- Recruiting
- Materials/packages
- Calling process
- Tracking
- How would these ideas impact our pastor's schedule? Would he need to be relieved of other duties to work the plan we devise?

On the following page, put together a plan to implement some changes. List action items and persons responsible. Give deadlines for the action items.

# Huddle Group: Faithful Follow-up

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## Report Form

**E**valuate your congregation's follow-up strategy. How can we build on our strengths? What can be improved? Identify your proposed action items; assign responsibility to the person or group able to implement the items; select a due date for the item.

### Getting Visitor Information

Action Item	Person/Group Responsible	Due Date

### Materials (Informational and Follow-up)

Action Item	Person/Group Responsible	Due Date

### Follow-up Calling Process

Action Item	Person/Group Responsible	Due Date

# The Worship Experience

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**C**an we make our worship accessible to the first time visitor without compromising the purpose of public worship? How can we be faithful stewards of the Means of Grace throughout the public worship experience?

## What to do with the Children?

In the last century, children were to be seen, but not heard. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century children are to be seen, heard, and obeyed.

**Evaluate** each of the following strategies by asking: What impression does it give the visitor? How does it help the church carry out its mission?

- Cry Room
- Staffed Nursery
- Children's Church
- Children's Sermon – Object lesson, themed to the service, age appropriate.
- Other ideas

## The Service Folder

How does an organization's printed material affect its ability to communicate? What does your service folder say to the first time visitor?

### Form

- Clean copies; crisp lines
- This will require a good digital imager; get one that collates and saddle staples.
- Consider the additional cost of installing a printer board in your imager to get higher quality output.
- Saddle staple every time there is more than one page.

### Format: **Print out your entire service every week.**

Yes, this is a lot of work. Yes, it costs more money. Yes, it involves stapling. And yes...it is worth it. Why?

- Going from page 17 in the front of the hymnal to Psalm 85 on page 97, to hymn 370 in the no page number section of the hymnal, back to page 19 for the Creed, is nearly impossible for a first time visitor without pedantic instructions at every step of the service.

- Address that problem by printing the entire liturgy in the service folder every Sunday: all the words, all the responses, all the canticles appear in full. With this format, no one has a problem following the service. No one is lost.
- Put a hymnal in the hand of every worshipper for two reasons: because it shows we are part of a body larger than our congregation, and because the hymnal has great benefit as the prayer book of the people. So the order of service is in the service folder in its entirety, but the hymns are sung from the hymnal.
- Printing the entire service every week allows for great variety in an accessible format. A gathering rite for Advent can be seamlessly brought into the service. Adornments of the liturgy that incorporate congregational sung responses are handled in their place in the service without any page flipping.
- This format provides the opportunity to explain the words, the actions, and the symbolism of liturgical worship to worshippers new to the faith and old. Footnote and explain the history and the content of the *Te Deum*. Footnote and explain the seasons and festivals of the Church Year. Teach some and remind some of the meaning of *Maundy*, and *paschal* and *Agnus Dei*. Explain the advent wreath, the farewell to Alleluia, the reasons we do what we do.
- Printing a full service, multipage service folder costs an extra \$10 a week for a congregation that makes 175 bulletins. Can you get a better bang for your outreach buck?

## Resources and Copyrights

- Scanner, and some knowledge in how to use it
- Soft copies of the canticles (New Service Settings comes with electronic edition)
- [www.Onelicense.net](http://www.Onelicense.net) -- A copyright management site that allows you to duplicate copyrighted materials in your service folders for a small fee. Reporting is online and easily done.

## Announcements

This was an announcement at one of our churches. Evaluate its impact on visitors.

*This Tuesday is that last day for the LWMS to bring in their mite boxes. That includes the LGP!*

## Service Themes

Themed services are welcoming to visitors and members alike. Every service should have a central theme that the whole experience revolves around. Liturgical worship greatly aids in presenting a cohesive, themed service. Every Sunday, the liturgical calendar and pericope ensure a central idea for the day, usually expressed in the Gospel Lesson and the Prayer of the Day.

**Discuss:** What was the theme for worship in your church this past Sunday? How did the lessons and hymns fit? What was the greater context of the Church Year?

**Discuss:** How can we do a better job of communicating the themed nature of our services?

**Discuss:** How can such themed services be welcoming to visitors?

**Discuss:** How can we use themed services to build an outreach program around the invitational nature of worship?

## Hymn Selection

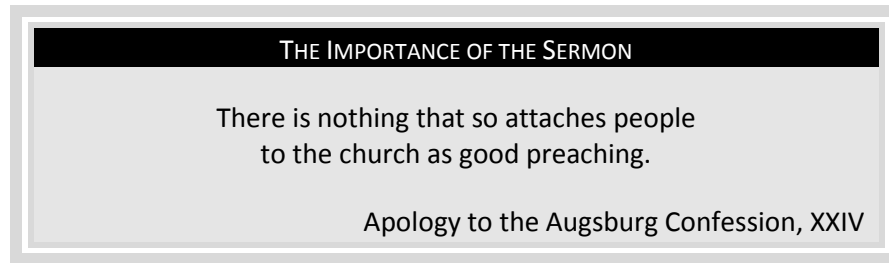
Unchurched visitors are unlikely to sing any song that is chosen for worship, whether it's out of *Christian Worship* or off of the local Christian radio station. However, unchurched visitors absolutely notice whether or not your congregation is singing.

Some ideas to help congregational singing:

- Build a congregational repertoire.
- Use seasonal repetition.
- Focus on the text of the hymn, because we know the purpose of worship.
- Understand that not all hymns can be used in your congregation.
- Watch for the new *Christian Worship Supplement* that will add 100+ new hymns
- Replace the carpet in the sanctuary with acoustically live materials.

## The Sermon

Surveys of church visitors consistently show that visitors consider the sermon the most important part of their worship experience.

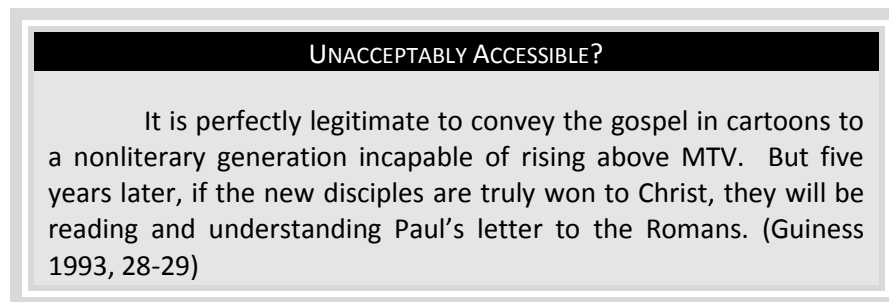


God brings an unchurched person into our church to hear the Gospel for the first time. What a privilege! God wants us to be good stewards of the Means of Grace. How can we do that with our sermons?

Sermons that welcome visitors...

- Preach Law and Gospel in a very specific way. What does God's Word say about me?
- Are relevant. What does this mean for our day, for these people, in this place?
- Are accessible. If a visitor can't understand the point, will the seven year old member child? Luther once wrote: I preach to the milkmaids and the doctors are edified. What do you think he meant?

What's the difference between Luther's words and the caution given in the box below?



- Are personal, pointed, practical.
- Use Bible stories to illustrate, but don't just refer to them. (With the growing Biblical illiteracy among our members, this is seems good advice for the cradle-to-grave WELSers, too.)

Here is a list of topics that a recent adult confirmand asked about, because she had not heard of them before:

- Abraham
- Noah
- The Ark (of the covenant or the boat)
- King David
- Lent
- The Temple

The list could go on and on. These terms can certainly be used, but wouldn't it be of benefit to everyone to give a thumbnail sketch?

- Don't use theological shorthand, but explain the concepts in everyday English.
- Are the product of a great deal of work. This is the pastor's most time consuming project each week. It is also his most important for the faithful flock and for the lost who might wander in.

**Discuss:** How could we give our pastor more time to spend on the sermon, his most important task of the week?

**Discuss:** How can we aid our pastors in their professional development? Do we provide a budget for:

- Continuing education (e.g., the Seminary's Summer Quarter)
- Books
- Subscriptions
- Conferences

## The Offering

Here comes the plate! The number one misconception that most unchurched people have about churches is that all we're concerned about is money.

**Evaluate** this service folder announcement:

*The members of this congregation have joined together to do the Lord's work in this community and around the world. Visitors need not feel obligated to participate in this offering which supports our ministry.*

Other ideas?

## Doctrine of Close Communion

God said, "A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread or drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body and blood of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28-29). What God tells us is very clear. But does that mean that close communion must be a barrier to welcoming worship?



**Discuss:** How does your congregation communicate close communion during the service? Are there other ways to accomplish it? How can the congregation be faithful to God's Word and still maintain a welcoming stance to visitors?

What's the goal of a communion announcement? How can it become an avenue for meaningful discussions with visitors?

**Evaluate** the following service folder announcements regarding close communion:

- None
- Trinity Lutheran Church practices close communion. We ask that only members partake of the sacrament.
- Through the Apostle Paul Jesus gives us specific instructions about this special Supper. He says, "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). So that this Supper remains a blessing and not a harmful thing to those who partake of it, and so that it is the statement of a unity of belief that God says it is – we feel a loving responsibility to properly instruct and train all who wish to receive this Supper prior to their participation. If you haven't had the chance to receive instruction offered in this congregation or one of our sister congregations, we request that you please meet with Pastor before taking part in this special celebration. Pastor is eager to meet with you. Please make an appointment with him after the service today!

**Evaluate** this proposal, remembering the purposes of worship that we studied.

*We should celebrate the Sacrament at a time other than Sunday morning worship. That will ensure that visitors aren't offended by being excluded them from the Supper.*

**Discuss:** Have you found anything helpful in communicating this loving doctrine to worship visitors?

# Huddle Group: Worship Experience

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## Report Form

**W**hat are some ways that we can maintain the strengths of our worship program, but yet make it welcoming to first time visitors? Where are areas we can build on our strengths or rectify weaknesses? Develop a list of action items with responsible parties and due dates.

### Children at worship

Action Item	Person/Group Responsible	Due Date

### Service Folder/Service Planning

Action Item	Person/Group Responsible	Due Date

### Close Communion/Offering

Action Item	Person/Group Responsible	Due Date

# Rite Worship for Outreach

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**T**he way we worship: does it help or hinder outreach? For nearly two thousand years, the Church has worshiped God using the texts of the liturgy. But now we live in a post-literate, post-modern, and increasingly post-Christian country. Can we really hope to have any relevance when our worship paradigm is rooted in the pre-literate, pre-modern, pre-Christian world? Is liturgical worship the right worship form for outreach? Or must we adopt contemporary worship forms to reach the lost?

## The Liturgy: Rite worship for outreach

### What is liturgical worship?

- What it's not:
  - Liturgical worship does *not* mean slavishly doing page 15 and page 26 out of *Christian Worship*.
  - Liturgical worship does *not* mean music at least 150 years old.
  - It does *not* mean simply having an order of service or following a pattern of Word then music, Word then music.
- What it is:
  - Simply put, liturgical worship uses the ancient songs of the Church, the seasons and readings of the Church Year, the vestments and patterns of worship inherited from our Christian forefathers. Liturgical worship uses the great texts of the Church (*Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Te Deum, Sanctus, Agnus Dei*, etc.) as the basis for its praise, and uses the Life of Christ and the Teachings of Christ as expressed in the liturgical calendar as the basis for its proclamation. It is the product of twenty centuries of Christian worship.
- Liturgical worship at its simplest is composed of three parts
  - The great texts that repeat each Sunday
  - The texts that change every Sunday
  - The Sacrament
- Style or instruments do not make worship liturgical or contemporary.
  - In our circles, discussions of liturgical versus contemporary worship fail to gain traction because they inevitably degenerate into a debate regarding style of music. This misses the point entirely. The difference between liturgical and contemporary worship comes not from style but from texts. Liturgical worship could be a music minister strumming his guitar, accompanied by drums, electric bass, and four singers up front with fuzzy

microphones and the lyrics PowerPointed on the jumbo screen. Style and instruments do not make worship liturgical or contemporary. The texts, or lack thereof, do.

## The strengths of liturgical worship in outreach

### Gospel Content

The strength of liturgical worship for outreach lies in the fact that by design, it proclaims *Christ for us*, from beginning to end. The repeating texts of the liturgy (the Ordinary) have been chosen by centuries of Christian worshippers precisely because they so clearly communicate the message of salvation.

**Consider and discuss:** How do you see the central doctrine of Christianity, justification, presented in liturgical worship each Sunday?

#### REACHING OUT WITHOUT DUMBING DOWN

Many churches who want desperately to attract people to Christ miss the point by offering worship so shallow that not enough of Christ is proclaimed to engender lasting belief. (Dawn 1995, 280)

How could this become a danger for our church? How do we guard against it?

### Stability

- Liturgical worship provides a stability to our worship forms that lends itself well to outreach among the lost in our rootless society. These generations stricken by marketing fads look for authenticity, historicity, and time-honored practices in worship.
- Our liturgical worship forms have that; they are the living faith of the dead who have gone before us. They express the unity in the Holy Christian Church that we share with believers around the world.
- Worship forms penned at the pastor's desk on Tuesday night may certainly praise Christ and feed the flock. They cannot, however, lay claim to share the taproot of the liturgy that reaches through time and space to connect our worship to the past, the present, and the future worship of Christ. They cannot claim the pedigree of the living faith of the dead who have gone before.

## Accessibility

- Liturgical worship is child-friendly. There is a reason why Children's Church sprang out of non-liturgical churches. What were the children to do? However, when you have the stability and repetition of the liturgy, even the little children are part of the body of Christ joined in worship.
- Liturgical worship is also accessible to new Christians. Unchurched worship visitors are not Lutheran. Often, they are not Christian. But the accessibility of the liturgy allows them to quickly become participants in worshipping their newfound Savior. One woman, new to faith, commented when the musical style of the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) was changed, "But Pastor, that's the only song I know."
- Critics often deride liturgical worship for its repetition and its sameness. Those very aspects can serve as powerful tools to help assimilate new believers into the worshipping assembly.

## Variety

- However, this stability and accessibility does not mean mindlessly repetitive worship. Within its stable framework, liturgical worship allows for a great variety of style and form and genre.
- Example of variety in style and form and genre within the stability of the liturgy:

A recent service of evening prayer was held at a mission church in our synod:

*The service of vespers retained its historic stability; this service and its texts have been used by Christians since at least the sixth century, with its roots dating as early as the fourth century. But after the opening versicles, familiar to many liturgical Christians, the forms and styles of the rest of the service varied.*

*As the Church has for 1500 years, they sang Psalm 141, words inspired by God millennia prior, but with music written in 1990. They sang the Magnificat, composed by Mary two thousand years ago, but the melody used was barely 20 years old. The Verse of the Day was historic, but it was accompanied by an acoustical guitar.*

- Why does this serve outreach? Simply put, liturgical worship appreciates the old and the new, the tested forms and the emerging gifts of the church. It serves the faithful with familiar forms and varied styles. It incorporates the new believers into the living faith of twenty centuries of Christian worship. It shows a rooted worship, vibrantly adapting the new to the old and the old to the new.

There are a great number of strengths inherent to liturgical worship. However, many have perceived drawbacks as well.

**Discuss:** What are some of the perceived problems with liturgical worship?

## How can we address the problems without losing the strengths?

### Know it

- If people think that liturgical worship is merely “just the way we’re used to doing it,” why are we surprised when they want to abandon it for the flavor of the month? How many of our people, or even worship leaders, know that the Prayer of the Day, used in our liturgical churches on Sunday, Pentecost 9, is a prayer written in the 5th century that has been prayed by Christian churches on that Sunday for 1600 years?
- How many of our people know that the words of the Preface spoken before communion (“The Lord be with you./And also with you. Lift up your hearts...” ) are not merely tired words that came from the old hymnal, but are the most ancient and unaltered words of worship and praise that we have from the early Church? By using those words we stand at the end of two millennia of worshippers greeting each other before the Supper in this way.
- As worship leaders, study and understand why twenty centuries of Christian wisdom in worship have brought us here.

### Adorn it

- Liturgical worship that is a testament to static sameness does not well represent the vitality of our faith. Let your worship be rich and deep and varied.
- The organ is rightly called the king of instruments. But it is not the only instrument.
- Utilize the musical talent latent in your congregation. How many of your teens play an instrument for the band?
- Experiment with new styles and new instruments. Remember what makes worship liturgical: the texts.
- Here are some great ways for any size congregation to adorn the liturgy with variety:
  1. *Cantor Book of Gospel Acclamations*. (GIA) This great book provides proper Verses of the Day (the Alleluias we sing before the Gospel) for every Sunday. They are easy to learn, can be led by a cantor, utilize congregational response, and work well with a variety of instruments.
  2. Christian Worship New Service Settings: *Agnus Dei*
  3. CWNSS: *Sanctus*
  4. CWNSS: *Te Deum*
  5. CWNSS: *Venite*
  6. Lamb of God, by Kosche to replace *Angus Dei* (GIA)
  7. Chepponis, *Melodic Gloria* for a *Gloria* replacement (GIA)
  8. Chepponis, *Magnificat*, to replace *Magnificat* in Evening Prayer (GIA)
  9. CW # 265 *This is the Feast of Victory* to replace the *Gloria* during Easter season
  10. *Celebration Series* Psalms Vols. 1 and 2 to provide psalm variety (GIA)

Each of these examples has been used well in small mission churches and large established congregations. They provide a wide range of variety in instrument, style, and genre, while retaining the strengths of liturgical worship. There are huge amounts of great materials. More suggestions can be found in the resource materials.

## **Explain it**

People need to understand the reason for a ritual if it is to have impact. People understand the ritual of removing their hats and holding their hands over their hearts during the Pledge of Allegiance. It is not a ritual they tire of, because they understand the rationale behind it. In fact, parents teach the ritual to their children.

How well do our people understand the reason for our ritual of standing for the Gospel Lesson; for saying farewell to alleluia for Lent; for lighting the paschal candle at Easter, baptisms, and funerals?

After “Knowing it” comes “Explaining it.” What are the best places to explain the reasons we do what we do?

- Service folder
- Bible Class
- Sermons
- Adult Instruction Class
- Examples:

***A Note on the hymn, “Lord, Keep Us Steadfast”*** – This hymn was written by Dr. Martin Luther in 1541 because of a grave and growing threat. Militant Islam was on the move. Seeking to conquer the West and force conversion, the armies of Islam conquered much of the Mediterranean world. They won victories right up to Vienna, the gateway to Europe. A service of prayer for the safety of Christendom was held in 1541, and Luther wrote this hymn for the boys’ choir. It is a prayer that God preserve his people regardless of the evil aims of this world.

***A Note on ringing the bell during the Lord’s Prayer*** – For 500 years it has been the widespread custom of the Lutheran Church to ring the church bell three times during the Lord’s Prayer. Rung at the beginning, middle and end of the prayer, it allowed even the sick and absent across the countryside to join the Church in praying the “Our Father.”

***A Note on Lent*** – The word “Lent” comes from an Old English word for spring (“lengten,” the time of year when the days grow longer). The Church celebrates the season of Lent as a 40-day journey of repentance and renewal in preparation for Holy Week and Easter Sunday.

## Excel at it

Nothing impresses our society quite like excellence. Nothing is more welcoming at worship than an excellent service. What does it take?

- Passion
- Time
- Effort
- Development of people

Is it any surprise that the area of ministry where a church spends its greatest resources tends to be its best program? How much money is budgeted for worship in your annual budget? How does that compare to other areas of ministry? What causes your church to prioritize worship in this way?

**Resource:** Huebner, James R. "Excellence in Worship," WELS National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts, 1999.

**Resource:** Schroeder, Jonathan. "Rite Worship for North American Outreach," Keynote Address, WELS National Convention on Worship. Music and the Arts, 2005. (Schroeder 2005)

For a collection of these and more resources go to:

<http://www.wels.net/evangelism>



# Huddle Group – Worship Experience II

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## Report Form

**W**hat are some ways that we can maintain the strengths of our worship program, but yet make it welcoming to first time visitors? Where are areas we can build on our strengths, or rectify weaknesses? Develop a list of action items with responsible parties and due dates.

### Sermons/professional development

Action Item	Person/Group Responsible	Due Date

### Liturgical Worship (Know, Adorn, Explain, Excel)

Action Item	Person/Group Responsible	Due Date

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