

CEB EDITION

THE UNITED METHODIST

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PLANNER

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PLANNING WORSHIP IN ALTERNATIVE STYLES

Mary J. Scifres

Various forms of nontraditional worship have become increasingly popular in the last thirty years, mass labeled as “contemporary.” These alternative styles of worship may be foreign to the experience of traditional worship planners. Nevertheless, the popularity of modern music and public events, the increasing diversity of today’s culture, the growing comfort with informal approaches to worship, and the high energy of young people may encourage you to use contemporary resources and alternative styles in one or more of your worship services.

Planning alternative worship provides an exciting opportunity for church staff members and volunteers to work together as a team. Such planning can also provide a vehicle in which worship committees find new opportunity for ministry.

If alternative or contemporary worship is new to you, spend time in prayer and planning long before your first service. Know your own gifts and those of your congregation, and observe what other churches and worship leaders are doing around your community and around the country. If you’re beginning an added worship service, build the necessary groundwork to support this new mission of the church by recruiting leadership from within your congregation, advertising the event before it happens, and setting a goal for this mission. If you are integrating new elements into an existing worship service, include your current leadership alongside young adults and new leadership in planning for the changes. As you embark on this new venture, be careful not to abandon your current worshipping congregation or set up a competition between existing worship services and new ones. As you explore the possibility of new worship styles, be open not only to contemporary praise music and alternative Christian music, but also to global praise music or quieter forms of contemporary worship using folk music or Taizé music. Secular resources and music may also be of help in developing new styles of worship. With these things in mind, you are ready to begin the planning process.

As you design your alternative worship service, several decisions need to be made:

- Whom do you want to reach (traditions, faith backgrounds, ages, theology)?
- What type of worship experience shall you start or improve? (You may want to consider blending styles.)
- How much are you willing to spend?

With those decisions in mind, you are ready to build your planning team. “Team?” you may ask. “Our pastor does all

the worship planning!” If that is the case, this is the perfect opportunity to explore a new model of planning worship. Contemporary expressions of worship are foreign to many pastors and musicians. Increasing the number of planners will expand the diversity and creativity of ideas—important elements of alternative worship! With this resource, we hope that many pastors, musicians, and worship leaders find encouragement and assistance planning worship in advance and in cooperation with one another.

Planning team members may include musicians, artists, organizers, writers, and pastors. All members of the worship planning team meet regularly, at least biannually. Some worship teams find weekly, monthly, or seasonal planning meetings helpful, but even two meetings a year can improve communication and coordination efforts immensely. Planning meetings are necessary, common, and often frequent in alternative worship planning.

However often one plans, pastors need to know the time requirements for planning music and other artistic elements of worship. Each pianist or song leader can communicate to the pastor the average length of time needed to pick new songs, order the music or songbooks, obtain copyright permissions, and rehearse the songs prior to Sunday morning. Each drama coordinator can decide the length of time needed to write or find a vignette to illustrate the Scripture or sermon topic. Visual coordinators can let worship planners know the time needed to locate photographs, develop altar displays, or prepare electronic slide shows for worship. Finally, musicians and artists can communicate with the pastor their visions for music and art ministry in the context of worship.

Pastors, likewise, need to inform musicians of special needs for musical and visual support. Some pastors establish cues to alert the musician that light background music is needed during an unexpected situation in worship. A pastor can tell artists of expectations regarding worship leadership roles (e.g., listen attentively to the sermon, smile during the opening songs, stand or kneel during the prayer). Additionally, pastors can communicate their visions for the music and worship arts ministry of the church. These initial communications are essential when worship planners begin to work together and when there are personnel changes in the worship planning team.

Many models for the actual planning might be used, but we offer one model to help a team in starting integrated planning. In order to use this model, the team needs several copies of this *Planner* (particularly for Scripture readings

Zephaniah 3:14-20

¹⁴Rejoice, Daughter Zion! Shout, Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem.
¹⁵The LORD has removed your judgment;
he has turned away your enemy.
The LORD, the king of Israel, is in your midst;
you will no longer fear evil.
¹⁶On that day, it will be said to Jerusalem:
Don't fear, Zion.
Don't let your hands fall.
¹⁷The LORD your God is in your midst—a warrior bringing
victory.
He will create calm with his love;
he will rejoice over you with singing.
¹⁸I will remove from you those worried about the appointed
feasts.
They have been a burden for her, a reproach.
¹⁹Watch what I am about to do to all your oppressors at that
time.
I will deliver the lame;
I will gather the outcast.
I will change their shame into praise and fame throughout
the earth.
²⁰At that time, I will bring all of you back,
at the time when I gather you.
I will give you fame and praise among all the neighboring
peoples
when I restore your possessions and you can see them—
says the LORD.

Isaiah 12:2-6

²God is indeed my salvation;
I will trust and won't be afraid.
Yah, the LORD, is my strength and my shield;
he has become my salvation."
³You will draw water with joy from the springs of salvation.
⁴And you will say on that day:
"Thank the LORD; call on God's name;
proclaim God's deeds among the peoples;
declare that God's name is exalted.
⁵Sing to the LORD, who has done glorious things;
proclaim this throughout all the earth."
⁶Shout and sing for joy, city of Zion,
because the holy one of Israel is great among you.

Philippians 4:4-7

⁴Be glad in the LORD always! Again I say, be glad! ⁵Let your
gentleness show in your treatment of all people. The LORD is
near. ⁶Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of
your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with
giving thanks. ⁷Then the peace of God that exceeds all under-
standing will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

Luke 3:7-18

⁷Then John said to the crowds who came to be baptized by him,
"You children of snakes! Who warned you to escape from the
angry judgment that is coming soon? ⁸Produce fruit that shows
you have changed your hearts and lives. And don't even think
about saying to yourselves, Abraham is our father. I tell you that
God is able to raise up Abraham's children from these stones.
⁹The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree
that doesn't produce good fruit will be chopped down and
tossed into the fire."
¹⁰The crowds asked him, "What then should we do?"
¹¹He answered, "Whoever has two shirts must share with the
one who has none, and whoever has food must do the same."
¹²Even tax collectors came to be baptized. They said to him,
"Teacher, what should we do?"
¹³He replied, "Collect no more than you are authorized to
collect."
¹⁴Soldiers asked, "What about us? What should we do?"
He answered, "Don't cheat or harass anyone, and be satisfied
with your pay."
¹⁵The people were filled with expectation, and everyone won-
dered whether John might be the Christ. ¹⁶John replied to them
all, "I baptize you with water, but the one who is more powerful
than me is coming. I'm not worthy to loosen the strap of his
sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷The
shovel he uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in his hands.
He will clean out his threshing area and bring the wheat into
his barn. But he will burn the husks with a fire that can't be put
out." ¹⁸With many other words John appealed to them, proclaim-
ing good news to the people.

Primary Hymns and Songs for the Day

- 121 "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" (Isa) (O)
H-3 Chr-195; Desc-102; Org-179
- 2132 "You Who Are Thirsty" (Isa)
- 2196 "We Walk by Faith" (Isa)
H-3 Chr-21
- 396 "O Jesus, I Have Promised" (1 Cor)
S-2 #9. Descant
- 413 "A Charge to Keep I Have" (1 Cor, Luke)
H-3 Desc-19; Org-14
S-1 #46. Choral Harm.
- 127 "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" (Isa, 1 Cor) (C)
H-3 Hbl-25, 51, 58; Chr-89; Desc-26; Org-23
S-1 #76-77. Desc. and Harm.

Additional Hymn Suggestions

- 124 "Seek the Lord" (Isa)
- 339 "Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast" (Isa)
- 340 "Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy" (Isa)
- 343 "Come Back Quickly to the Lord" (Isa)
- 350 "Come, All of You" (Isa)
- 375 "There Is a Balm in Gilead" (Isa)
- 510 "Come, Ye Disconsolate" (Isa)
- 629 "You Satisfy the Hungry Heart" (Isa)
- 2282 "I'll Fly Away" (Isa)
- 3167 "Feed Us, Lord" (Isa, Pss, Comm.)
- 3169 "You Feed Us, Gentle Savior" (Isa, Pss, Comm.)
- 381 "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" (Pss)
- 475 "Come Down, O Love Divine" (Pss)
- 498 "My Prayer Rises to Heaven" (Pss)
- 506 "Wellspring of Wisdom" (Pss, 1 Cor, Luke)
- 2117 "Spirit of God" (Pss)
- 2216 "When We Are Called to Sing Your Praise" (Pss, Lent)
- 2267 "Taste and See" (Pss)
- 2001 "We Sing to You, O God" (Pss, 1 Cor)
- 361 "Rock of Ages" (1 Cor)
- 410 "I Want a Principle Within" (1 Cor)
- 649 "How Shall They Hear the Word of God" (1 Cor)
- 416 "Come Out the Wilderness" (1 Cor, Luke)
- 519 "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (1 Cor, Luke)
- 357 "Just as I Am, Without One Plea" (Luke)
- 378 "Amazing Grace" (Luke)
- 438 "Forth in Thy Name, O Lord" (Luke)
- 577 "God of Grace and God of Glory" (Luke)
- 2060 "God the Sculptor of the Mountains" (Luke)
- 3155 "The Lord of Life, a Vine Is He" (Luke)

Additional Contemporary Suggestions

- M159 "All Who Are Thirsty" (Isa)
- M32 "Holy and Anointed One" (Isa, Lent)
- WS3004 "Step by Step" (Isa, Pss, Lent)
- WS3093 "Fill My Cup, Lord" (Isa)
UM641 refrain only
- WS3099 "Falling on My Knees" ("Hungry") (Isa, Pss, Lent)
- WS3092 "Come, Holy Spirit" (Isa, Pss)
- WS3094 "Come to Me" (Isa, Pss)
- M189 "Your Love, Oh Lord" (Isa, Pss)
- UM143 "On Eagle's Wings" (Pss)
S-2 #143. Stanzas for soloist
- S2025 "As the Deer" (Pss)
- S2144 "Someone Asked the Question" (Pss)
- S2159 "Jesus, Draw Me Close" (Pss)
- M29 "Draw Me Close" (Pss)

- M158 "Eagle's Wings" (Pss)
- M262 "Desert Song" (Pss)
- S2066 "Praise the Name of Jesus" (1 Cor)

Vocal Solos

- "There Is a Balm in Gilead" (Isa)
V-3 (1) p. 29
- "Maybe the Rain" (Isa, Lent)
V-5(2) p. 27
- "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" (Isa, Lent)
V-5(2) p. 31
V-8 p. 323
- "My Heart Is Steadfast" (Pss)
V-5(2) p. 40
- "Wondrous Love" (Lent)
V-6 p. 47

Anthems

- "I'm Going on a Journey" (1 Cor, Baptism)
Arr. Mark Hayes; AEC-1 p. 27
Unison or 2-part and piano, opt. flute (bit.ly/AEC-1-27)
- "That Priceless Grace" (Luke)
Arr. John Helgen; AEC-1 p. 64
Unison with piano, opt. descant (bit.ly/AEC-1-64)

Other Suggestions

Visuals:

- O** Water, wine/milk/honey, money, listen, Isa 55:6a
- P** Desert, lifted hands, food, bed, Ps 63:7b, wings
- E** Water/food, larger rock, bread/wine, baptism
- G** Fig branch or tree, figs, axe, cross

Introit: S2132. "You Who Are Thirsty" (Isa)

Greeting: BOW332 (Isa, 1 Cor)

Opening Prayer: BOW459 (Isa, Pss) or WSL17 (Isa, Pss, 1 Cor)

Canticle: UM125. "Canticle of Covenant Faithfulness" (Isa)

Call to Confession: S2138. "Sunday's Palms Are Wednesday's Ashes," stanza 3 (Lent)

Confession: BOW528. A Prayer of Susanna Wesley (Lent)

Sung Prayer: S2134. "Forgive Us, Lord" ("Perdón, Señor") (Pss)

Prayer: WSL28 (Isa, Pss)

Prayer: UM268. Lent (1 Cor) or BOW336 (1 Cor, Luke)

Prayer: BOW530. A Prayer of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Isa, Pss)

Prayer: UM423. Finding Rest in God. (Pss)

Litany: UM106. God Is Able (1 Cor)

Blessing: BOW564 (Pss) or WSL18 (Lent)