

Dynamic Lay Led Worship Presenter Notes
New England Regional Assembly 2017
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WELCOME

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

Who's here – by state
What made you choose *this* workshop?

CARTOON CHURCH by Dave Walker

Which person do you think represents Unitarian Universalists in this picture?

As a people, we have some challenges when it comes to worship:

We tend to be

- suspicious
- overly rational
- reluctant to submit our own personal power to anything/anyone, even in worship
- not sure we love the idea of worship leaders and pulpits and robes and (gasp) prayers
- or anyone telling us what to do and when to do it

We also tell ourselves a story that as a faith we can't agree on what has worth, much less agree on a process to give shape to those things. In short: We're the skeptical lady on the right.

But we're also the guy on the left.

- Freedom to be creative in worship;
- lay voices are a valued part of our communities
- Resurgence of spiritual practice and an increasing willingness even to use religious language.

We're positively loose! We know that worship can happen anywhere, perhaps especially outside of church -- even at bus stops.

This is only one of the tensions we hold when creating worship with and for our people.

Let's take a step back and get some common language about what worship is. First – Old English derivation - worthiness; religious; giving shape (meaning making); I can't tell you what good worship is, but I know it when I see it! – true for you?

Basic human needs of the human heart and mind: making meaning, being with other people. That's religion. That's worship. We know that, we bring that here with us.

The kind of worship we're talking about today is the kind of worship that happens in church -- what happens when we're worshipping together. Will be Sunday mornings for most of us.

Let's add to that word, Liturgy

Not a word we tend to associate w/ UU congregations

Other denominations have liturgies & lectionaries, not so much UUs

Here's a definition:

It has roots in Greek language – the roots are two words, meaning people and work.

Liturgy has then been understood either as The PEOPLE's work and also as work *for* the people/public good.

Not the minister's work, Not A person's work. The peoples' work. Our work.

Our liturgy is not denominationally prescribed – no lectionary – but our OOS-es serve as our congregational liturgies, – dependable, expected form of our worship services, AND also - flexible – for us, we can have some flexibility in how we use different elements of worship that others may not be able to do.

So there we have it: Worship

Assumption: this definition is same for EVERYONE. All ages, all stages of life. This workshop will focus on what is true for ALL worship in our congregations.

AND Not all of it is for everyone. Does every worship service you attend move you to tears and have a transformational effect on your life? No. But have you ever had that experience? Is it possible that worship that didn't shake you to your core was actually transformational for someone else?

We'll talk more about this as we talk about different worship elements, but please do not set out to make 100% of your congregation happy with your worship; it's neither possible nor desirable.

Another what question – what makes a good topic for worship?

Remember worship is a way for us to **Give Shape to Things of Worth**

When I ask people what is of worth to them, these are some of the answers we hear... (wonder, inspiration, seeking, faith, peace, authenticity...)

Other ideas of good themes/topics for worship?

What might be less ideal topics? Stay away from too narrow a niche, the history of reiki – not relateable enough; or from trying to impart knowledge or prove your point – not the time to lecture about why a 2-state solution will never work – **don't confuse teaching for preaching**; or why dogs are better pets than cats (or vice versa) – doesn't reach the 'worthiness' level

How do we know if the WHAT we are thinking about as a worship topic is appropriate? Try the 'So What?' Test

- Does it lift up something universal?
- Does this make space for the things people are carrying in their hearts today?
- Does it do justice to the depth of people's longing for connection to others and to the divine/spirit?
- Does this take seriously the sacred trust of the pulpit?

These things may seem obvious, but if you are helping to equip other congregants who are inexperienced in the pulpit, these might be of service. And even those of us with experience do well to return to the basics as often as we can

Consider the infinity symbol - cannot be unraveled. It has edges, but no corners. It has no beginning, and no end.

Represents the power of what's being expressed in worship, in what our worship is for:

- **it's for Spirit,**
- **it's for each other,**
- **it's for the world,**
- **and it's also for us.**

The crossroads of all these planes -- their utter **interconnection** -- is where worship's power lies.

Good worship reflects and amplifies all these planes. Leave any out, and the connections are disrupted. Overemphasize any one and the balance is busted.

Before moving into worship elements, let's talk for a minute about the myths and realities of multigenerational worship

Or Not!

WHOLE CONGREGATION WORSHIP

Kim:

- When was the last time you were at an intergen worship? (trick question)
 - Good worship is good worship
 - Story for all ages – sends the message that the rest of the service is not for the youngest of us – why would they start attending as they grow older?
 - What it really means (“the kids are here”)
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Now let's get into some of the building blocks of good worship. Here it is helpful to remember that we all take in meaning and information in different ways – Multiple Intelligences

Linguistic

Those who are strong in this category glean meaning from words. The sermon may be the highlight, the most instructive moment in the service for them. Our society has put a higher value on this kind of intelligence, but we do not all fall into this category.

Musical

This category includes people who come to church for the music. They hear the message and are inspired by the music. It doesn't necessarily mean they have extraordinary talent, but they have a high appreciation for it.

Logical-Mathematical

When there is a theme that is evident and grows in the service from the beginning to the end, logical-mathematical people are greatly satisfied. They like a logical progression of ideas and can notice even the subtle references and similarities between the parts of the service.

Spatial

Environment is very important to spatial people. They notice their surroundings and glean meaning from visual, worship centers, and diverse placement of readers and musicians. An environment that never changes is monotonous to them.

Bodily – Kinesthetic

Actions are important in this intelligence. These people might prefer a body prayer. The act of embodying the words is valuable, and dramatic interpretations are also very satisfying for them.

Intrapersonal

Mystery, awe, silence, and meditative reflection are what feel holy and reverent for strongly intrapersonal people. If they don't have a chance for reflection in the service, it may not feel like they have worshipped.

Interpersonal

Fellowship with others is highly important for people in this category. They like the time for joys and concerns. A more communal and warm style of worship is their preference.

Becoming aware of your particular "intelligence" or preference, and the fact that others have different kinds of communication styles can help us tolerate the parts of the service that do not apply to us directly. This knowledge may even release folks to enjoy this gift for others because they can trust that their preferences will also be recognized and valued. We may even be able to become a more caring community, concerned that ALL are being strengthened in their faith.

Applies to all of congregational life. It's another way to look at and balance the needs of the individual and being in community.

Tools of worship

Words

Music

Visual space

Community

Connection(s)

Flow of worship

Beginning (where we are now), Middle (invitation to move through, transformation),
End (comfort & call)

Internal to external

Personal to universal

What is real to aspirational ideal

But let me take a moment for - - - announcements!

Here are some resources to check out
and books

Do you see what I did there??

What just happened to the flow of the workshop when I broke into it with some
announcements not related to the theme?

What lesson might you take from that?

Back to Beginning Middle End paradigm:

Beginning

For: centering, calling in, reminding us who and where we are, setting tone

Elements may include: prelude, opening hymn, chalice lighting, opening words, call
to worship

Middle

For: transformation, moving from personal to universal, take us from where we are
toward where (who) we want to be; acknowledge limitations and name possibilities

Elements may include: reading, story, meditation/prayer, musical interlude/anthem,
hymn (praise, sorrow, seeking) sermon

End – for: rededication, clarity of expectations/call, send off with hope, building
community

Elements can include: joys & sorrows, offering (make manifest our commitment to
gathered community) extinguish chalice, benediction (sending us out into the world
fortified and fed)

So we have these puzzle pieces
(elements & multiple intelligences)

these are ours to *choose from* as we are planning worship experiences. Don't have
to use every piece every time. Choose those that you feel most comfortable leading
– remember there will be others in attendance who will be bringing their own
experiences to whatever you share.

Be prepared to let go of an element, even if it means losing something you worked hard on (if Joys & Sorrows is especially full, let go of a reading, or a couple paragraphs of your sermon...)

There's an alchemy when all this comes together with a dash of Grace...
Reflect on most memorable worship experiences you've had – what made them so?

(if there's time - TO DO AND TO DON'T LIST)

BENEDICTION SLIDE