

Worship Planning Worksheet

Let these questions help guide your work as a team.

Worship often begins with an idea: the theme of the month, an interesting concept we hear on the radio, or an image we encounter online. These “aha” ideas may hold the potential for great and dynamic movement, exploration, or transformation – but by themselves, they’re essentially inert unless they speak to the senses. Just as salt and other spices turn a bland food into a zesty meal, your theme needs story, music, images and movement to come life. To bring worship to life is to have a clear sense of purpose; to meaningfully engage the congregation’s context, struggles and successes; and to invite your people to go beyond what they imagine for themselves.

What is the work you want your service—and the story/stories in it—to do?

Begin your work by articulating what you want the congregation to understand from the worship. Not just the theme, but how you want your congregation to engage with it.

- What is your personal experience of the theme/idea and why do you want to share it? What brings it “alive” in your imagination? _____

- What feelings do you hope to inspire in the congregation in the wake of the service? Is there anything you want the congregation to *do* after their experience (short term or long term?) What are your hopes? _____

- Imagine a congregant telling a friend about the service afterward. What pieces of the worship can be “sticky” and can carry the meaning of the worship beyond its time? _____

Tend to the Senses

Every transformation we experience, no matter how big or how small, begins by meeting our senses.

- Brainstorm as a team what images come up for you as you think about your theme. Don’t be afraid to include the outlandish in your list, alongside the familiar. Once you have a list, narrow it down to include only the items you think will resonate with the congregation. Which images might be paired with story and music in a way that enhances the theme?

- Develop your images. What might they sound like? Look like? Taste like? Feel like? Smell like? Remember that your congregants bring their whole bodies to worship. Is there a way one of your images might be evoked through movement? Sound?

- Looking over your list of images (no more than two or three!), how will you use them throughout your service to weave together a rich tapestry of meaning? Photos in a powerpoint? Props for your story? Items on the altar? Sermon illustration? Order of Service art? Familiar item greeting congregants as they enter the space? Be brave!

Cooks in the Kitchen

We sometimes think of worship as a meal where the sermon, story, music, and ritual are all different dishes, served on the same Sunday morning plate. But when a cohesive team works collaboratively to create a single, integrated worship, the difference is noticeable. Discuss these issues with your team to better weave your work together.

- ❖ Ask each team member to do the work that aligns with their skills and expertise. Have high expectations. Trust each other. When difficulties arise, address them directly.
- ❖ Share source material. Are there particular books, movies, or artists that have inspired your work on this service?
- ❖ Identify any regular patterns in your own or team members' work process. Are you excited to begin worship planning but find insecurity creeps in around Friday? Do you have a difficult time starting, but pull everything together quickly under pressure? Do you like to have everything done well in advance? Encourage team members to be open about their personal processes so that the team can do their best work together, each knowing what to expect of the other.
- ❖ Be clear about expectations. What is needed from each team member and when? What time and space constraints are important?
- ❖ Encourage each other. Check in occasionally to see how the work is going and offer creative assistance.