

**Worship Planning for the Whole Community of Faith with Rev. Billy Kluttz**  
Bi-District Training Day - January 18, 2020

Song: Walk in the Light by George Elderkin

*Walk in the light, beautiful light*

*Walk where the dew drops of mercy shine bright*

*Shine all around us by day and by night*

*Jesus the Light of the World*

Introduce yourself

-Say that this is a participatory class and that is non-negotiable

-Overview of the course: theology / methodology conversation, how-to, practice session<sup>1</sup>

-Tell folks you have your lesson plan for them to take at the end

-Have people sit in four groups of roughly the same size and ask them to not sit with people they know

-We don't have a lot of time and we've got a lot to do, so please forgive me if I move us along during the session

QUESTION: Tell me about how worship planning works in your congregation (quickly)?

Theology of collaborative worship planning

If liturgy is "the work of the people" that gives us an ethic for the entire worship cycle: inspiration - planning - practice - reflection

If liturgy is "the work of the people" then each step of this process should be communal and participatory, modeling diversity, equality, and shared leadership

The problem is the typical committee structure does not support this

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<sup>1</sup> The worship planning event model that I am offering you today was first introduced to me by my former colleague Rev. Ashley Goff. She is pastor at Arlington Presbyterian Church in Arlington, Virginia. Follow them for great ideas regarding liturgy, music, and community engagement!

It is not egalitarian (committee structures are part of a hierarchical organizational model) and it most often does not reflect the diversity of the congregation and does not encourage the participation of the congregation in the full worship cycle

How many of your worship committees have lots of teenagers and 20-year-olds on them?

Lots of working parents on your worship committees?

That's why we are going to consider the model of regular worship planning **events** today. These are not a new committee structure and they don't even necessarily mean that you have to disband your worship committee. Instead, they are a tool for engaging the larger congregation in the leadership of the entire worship cycle. Worship planning events are a method for worship data collection

#### Anatomy of the Worship Planning Event

A worship planning event is a gathering of a cross-section of your congregation for relationship building, spiritual discernment, reflection upon scripture, and brain storming of possible worship contours (sensory-rich, detail-poor outlines) for an upcoming season or span of time.

This allows the ideas for the upcoming worship season to come from the community and be led by the community. The worship planning event doesn't end with us having a script or a set of hymns, but rather images, questions, and themes that the community has identified for the upcoming season. From there, staff or a worship committee can do the detail work of selecting music, writing liturgy, and delegating.

Necessary components of a worship planning event include: building the team, spiritual centering, textual reflection, pattern building & affirmation

**Building the team:** Because this is not a committee, we need to build relationships and trust before we begin our work together. The goal of these exercises should be to build relationships between folks and establish an atmosphere where there are no experts and there are no bad ideas

Possible practices:

Setting intentions/ground rules

Introductions

Games

Improv - MaryAnn McKibben Dana's book God, Improv, and the Art of Living contains an entire section of improv activities that are perfect for church settings

**Spiritual centering:** Once we have built trust and created an open environment, we want to prepare ourselves for God's inspiration and leading. These practices should continue to emphasize that all of us can receive God's inspiration and guiding; we are all spiritual knowers.

Possible practices:

Songs - Learn a new song together; choose one that might work for the upcoming season

Liturgy

Meditation

Breathing exercises

Prayer

**Textual reflection:** Divide up participants in small groups and ask them to read one or two passages of Scripture from the upcoming season (give groups different texts). Ask them to discuss the texts in an open-ended way. We want to know what patterns and themes they noticed, questions they had after reading the texts, sensory connections (did the text stir a feeling, sound, smell, taste, sight for you?). Ask them to be ready to summarize each text very briefly to the larger group and summarize (more lengthily) their reactions, questions, patterns. They might write this on a large sheet of paper for the group or they might take notes.

After the small groups are done, return to the large group for presentation and discussion. After the small groups present, have the large group reflect on patterns they noticed concerning themes, questions, and sensory connections. Our goal is not to plan all the worship services, but rather to come away with an angle or hook for our next worshipping season.

Possible practices:

To keep the discussion open, you might want to have the groups use the Godly Play questions to guide their discussions (or create your own):

- I wonder which part of the story you like best?
- I wonder which part of the story is the most important?
- I wonder which part of the story you like the least?
- I wonder if there is a part of the story we could leave out and still have all of the story?
- I wonder which part of the story is most about you?

**Pattern Building & Affirmation:** in this section, we want to continue noticing patterns in our responses to the texts; we want to begin asking what this might look like for our community of faith; and, we want to affirm the work of the group as spiritual knowers and worship leaders so that they leave feeling empowered and will continue to grow as spiritual leaders in the community of faith

Possible practices:

Move around: ask people to move around the room individually and read the notes from each group. Have a space for people to respond to “what might these patterns look like in our community?” by drawing or writing (always have at least one non-verbal option)

Prayer

Singing

Liturgy

Affirmations: have everyone say something they are taking with them from this event/ something they're grateful for from their experience today

**After the worship planning event(s):** If you have a worship committee, they can take these patterns and begin to create liturgies and worship services from these ideas. Alternatively, I would recommend creating workgroups for specific elements that arose from your worship planning. For example, you could use the ideas and senses from your event to ask a small group to create a new sanctuary decoration/design, a new communion liturgy, and a new meditation practice for the upcoming season. These workgroups should be time-specific and focused on a specific task. Delegate authority and not just the workload.

Best Practices to Make This Model Work:

Make clear that participation is a one-time, commitment free engagement  
They are not signing up to be part of an ongoing committee or task force  
Send invites  
Each event should have different people (or rotate)

Beware of “expertise”

Who is a knower? Who can do theology? Who can lead worship?  
Be careful how “expertise” can silence (especially) lay participants,  
and other staff, as well

Beware of positive/negative judgement statements about worship practices: “I like/don’t like...”

Alternative evaluative questions:

What did you notice? What did you wonder about? How did this make you feel? What did this remind you of? Where did you notice God in ...?

Let’s try it out!

We’re going to have a brief, practice worship planning session for Lent 2020. I’ll divide you into groups, you’ll decide how to lead your section, we’ll do the shortened worship event together, and (if there is enough time) we’ll reflect on it.

Resources for further leadership, liturgy, and music inspiration:

The Work of the People: What We Do in Worship and Why by Marlea Gilbert, Stephanie Perdew, Christopher Grundy, Eric T. Myers

The Worshiping Body: The Art of Leading Worship by Kimberly Bracken Long

The Equipping Church by Sue Mallory

The Teaming Church: Ministry in the Age of Collaboration by Robert Crosby

God of the Sparrow - <https://www.godofthesparrow.com>

Next Church - [www.nextchurch.net](http://www.nextchurch.net)

Music that Makes Community - [www.musicthatmakescommunity.org](http://www.musicthatmakescommunity.org)

Like Water Music - <http://www.likewatermusic.com>

### **About Billy -**

I work as Associate Pastor for Community Music & Arts at Church of the Covenant (PCUSA) in Arlington, Virginia and lead Immanuel in the Evening (5:30 pm on Sundays) at Immanuel Presbyterian Church (USA).

I love leading workshops, classes, and retreats for churches. I have also worked alongside worship staff and lay leadership one-on-one to equip them for worship leadership and new projects. If you would like me to work with your church please reach out and we can design something together!

Contact -

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### Billy's recent publications -

"Billy Kluttz on Paperless Liturgy and Music." Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. January 9, 2020. Co-authored with Joan Huyser-Honig. <https://bit.ly/2tJU3zE>

**Featured:** Huyser-Honig, Joan. "Intergenerational Worship Model Based on Scripture and Story." Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. January 6, 2020. <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/intergenerational-worship-model-based-on-scripture-and-story>

"Call to Worship and Paperless Liturgy." *Next Church Blog* ([nextchurch.net/blog](http://nextchurch.net/blog)), January 9, 2019. Co-authored with Elizabeth Pruchnicki.