

MODULE 7

Worship Planning and Management - working together.

This module aims to cover the following topics:

1. What are we aiming to achieve in worship?
2. Who needs to be involved?
3. The range and diversity of worship
4. The shape of the worship
5. Using the sacred space of the church building – and beyond!

Before starting work on this module, prepare the following work:

In your own ministry or local church situation, reflect on these questions:

How is the worship planned and by whom?

What opportunities are there to reflect on, review and revise the worship?

1. What are we aiming to achieve?

The preface to *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, reminds us of the challenge of leading worship that “proclaims the faith afresh in each generation.” It goes on to describe why the services contained within the Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship need to be so rich and varied.

“They encourage an imaginative engagement in worship, opening the way for people in the various circumstances of their lives to experience the love of God in Jesus Christ in the life and power of the Holy Spirit. In the worship of God the full meaning and beauty of our humanity is consummated and our lives are opened to the promise God makes for all creation – to transform and renew it in love and goodness.” [Preface ix]

Worship not only strengthens Christians for witness and service, but also is in itself a forum in which Christ is made known. Worship is for the whole people of God, who are fellow pilgrims on a journey of faith, and those who attend services are all at different stages of that journey. Indeed, worship is itself a pilgrimage – a journey into the heart of the love of God.

The preface continues:

“Just as *Common Worship* is more than a book, so worship is more than what is said and sung; it is also what is done, and how it is done... it is when the framework of worship is clear and familiar and the texts are known by heart that the poetry of praise and the passion of prayer can transcend the printed word. Then worship can take wing and become the living sacrifice of ourselves to the God whose majesty is beyond compare and whose truth is from everlasting.”

This is an awesome challenge to those who plan and lead the public worship throughout the land, and the integration of music into this framework is never to be underestimated.

The integration of music in worship does and should not always and only rest with those who direct its use or performance in church; in many situations it involves consultation between clergy and parish musicians, organists and choir directors. Increasing use is made of worship sub-committees of the PCC or leadership team, which include other members of the congregation as well as those with liturgical or musical expertise. Circumstances vary from place to place, but a healthy church should have no difficulty in achieving a proper balance between those who "do" music and worship and the rest of the worshipping community.

The rest of this module seeks to encourage good practice in preparing and planning music in worship so that it may glorify God's name, build up and nourish the Body of Christ, and send out God's people into his world to serve and proclaim his love in the power of his Spirit.

2. Who needs to be involved?

Consider who is involved in the conduct of the worship in your church - make a list of those who take on a role, or conduct part of the service. **Who from this list do you think should be involved in the planning, and who needs to be informed about their role so they can rehearse?**

Your list might include those who lead the worship, clergy, intercessors, preacher, organist/choir leader and lesson readers. For those major events and festivals you might have included junior church/Sunday school leaders, sidesmen and women, Churchwardens, and even the Bishop's Chaplain, if the Bishop is to preside at a service!

There will obviously be a need to establish one process for planning and preparing for routine acts of worship week by week, or month by month, and another for those other events which are less frequent but more complicated by the nature of the service or occasion.

A regular meeting of a "core" team who come together to plan worship is one way of attending to this process. This may need to be augmented on occasions, but care should be taken not to allow the planning group to become elitist or exclusive.

This planning group needs to effectively disseminate the information which has been agreed to all those who are to take a role within the service; poor communication is an obvious area for potential conflict between those responsible for leading worship.

3. The range and diversity of worship

There has never been a wider range of liturgies available to congregations than those on offer today. The Book of Common Prayer, Common Worship and the wide range of additional liturgies from around the world, and communities such as Taizé and Iona, offers a vast collection of texts, and templates within which liturgy can be set.

You should be able to identify the range of worship resources your congregation uses. Try to categorise the list into a number of headings:

Services of the Word [Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Family Worship, etc];

Sacramental services [Eucharist, Baptism, Confirmation];

Pastoral Services [Marriage, and Funerals].

Think about those occasional seasonal services [Mothering Sunday, Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday etc].

Each heading will require some common thinking in preparation, and will offer a range of opportunities for creative planning. Some key principles will apply to each service and some services will offer much more flexibility.

Some of the key principles will include the questions:

- what is the main priority for this act of worship?
- who will the congregation be?
- is the focus going to be nurture or evangelistic?
- do we have a season or theme for this service?
- who will lead or preside at this service?
- what resources do we have available?
- what opportunity is there for the congregation to offer feedback?

In answering these questions we begin to prepare and plan our worship.

4. The Shape of the Worship.

Liturgy is simply engaging a gathering of people into the story of God and his people. Like any good story, each act of worship should have a beginning, middle and an ending.

Music should also help the gathered people engage with the story – assisting them in the journey of life, as well as a progression from the gathering to the dismissal. The choice of music and hymns and songs, needs to be taken in the light of the evolving shape of the act of worship. Sometimes it will emphasise the season of the year, or the focus on the Gospel of the day, or the Baptism family.

But often we don't allow for a crescendo in the liturgy. Is it the consecration of the elements at the Eucharist, or the final challenging words in the sermon, or the sending out of the Body of Christ at the Dismissal? How will the music reflect this evolving and changing shift of focus?

Look at the sample services in *New Patterns for Worship* (p.318), and explore where you would want to place particular emphasis, and what factors might affect your choice of music, and how that music will support the shape of the worship? What feelings or atmosphere would you wish to create? Where will the silences speak louder than words or music?

5. Using the Sacred Space of the Church Building - and beyond.

The church building is not simply a covered space within which members of the congregation perform their worship. The building itself will speak of the glory of God, and a symbol of the presence of God among the community. It is also an expression of the local church and how the worshipping community orders and uses the space and its furniture and fittings will reflect their understanding of God, and his relationship with that community. Different people will feel different theologies of space within a church - from the awe and wonder: the "otherness" of God, to a sense of God beside me: the incarnate and nearness of God.

How the space within the building is used is integral to the whole act of worship. Movement, procession and focus are essential to allow the drama to unfold amongst the people. Procession in and out; moving from the ministry of the word, the readings, Gospel and sermon [the focus of proclamation]; the movement from the font [the womb and tomb of the church] to the altar [the focus of unity and communion]; and the people to the place to receive communion, all speak of pilgrimage and journeying which is so much a part of the story of the people of God.

What are the implications for music, choirs and musicians, if the building is to be used fully to tell this story? What limitations or compromises might need to be considered?

See '[Repitching the Tent](#)' by Richard Giles.



6. Last things.

Finally we need to remember that what we offer is to be the best, for God, on behalf of the wider community and ourselves. Our music and worship combine into a cocktail of emotions and thoughts as we all struggle to make sense of our calling and response to become disciples of Christ.

Who is it for? To the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Spirit. But we must always ask ourselves who are we? The nature of our congregation; its size, age-range, commitment, their relationships and expectations must be taken into account if we are to give them every opportunity to engage with the worship and allow God to speak through the worship.

Give us, Lord, we pray,
the Spirit to think and do always
those things that are right:
that we who can do no good thing without you
may have power to live according to your holy will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Use one of the following questions as a basis for written work for this module:

What would need to be taken into account to meet the needs of a diverse congregation?

What would you consider in arranging music for a service with people beginning their Christian journey?

Useful planning publications:

[Sunday by Sunday](#) is published by the RSCM and contains useful articles and lists for each Sunday giving suggestions for Psalmody, Hymnody, music for choir and organ.

[Music and Liturgy](#) is the journal of the Society of Saint Gregory and contains a very useful pull-out Liturgy Planner.

Further Reading:

[New Patterns for Worship](#), Church House Publishing, 2002. ISBN 0 7151 2060 3

[Elements of Rite](#), A handbook of Liturgical Style, Aidean Kavanagh, Pueblo Publishing Co., 1990. ISBN 0 8146 6054 1

[Leading Worship that Connects](#), John Leach, ARM, 1999. ISBN 1 9014 4317 5

[Repitching the Tent](#), Richard Giles, Canterbury Press 2004. ISBN 9 7818 5311 5714

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