



Worship and Liturgical Resources

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Freedom and Flexibility

Leader's Guide

Revised: 5/2010

Format

These modules were prepared by the churchwide worship staff and have been reviewed by a variety of reviewers around the church. Some of the sections have been carefully worded in response to ongoing debates about worship in the ELCA and comments and questions that are regularly fielded by the worship staff. Therefore, conversation with the worship staff about the content of the module is strongly advised, especially where there is confusion or disagreement with the assertions of the text.

This module is available in two formats: one that focuses on the use of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW) (this one) and one that takes a broader approach but still uses ELW for examples.

A full text is provided. For the most natural and engaging presentation, you may choose to use the script as a guide putting the points into your own words. Take some time to consider your leadership and presentation style. You may decide to create a PowerPoint presentation for visual support of the module.

Throughout the module, there is opportunity for the participants to discuss in small groups. Be prepared to assist people in forming those small groups and prepare for the movement between the large group and small groups when you set up the room.

Handouts have been developed that coordinate with the presentation. Be aware that some handouts are formatted for legal-size paper (pages 41-43 of this document). Be sure to make enough copies for all participants.

The modules include frequent examples based on hymns or liturgical music from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Consider an invitation to a musician who can lead participants in singing those musical examples. If no musician is available, be sure to use hymns or songs that can be easily sung without musical accompaniment.

Physical arrangement

The best arrangement will be a meeting space with moveable seating that facilitates the formation of small groups for conversation. Ideally the room will not feel cramped nor overly large. A comfortable temperature and ventilation are helpful to aid concentration and participation.

If projection will be used, make sure that the projection can be seen by all participants.

Group discussion

Group discussions work best in small groups of 4 to 8 people. It may be beneficial for the same group to meet together throughout the event. If there are people from multiple congregations, encourage people to be in conversation with people from different congregations. You may decide to “count off” by the number of groups and then have like numbers gather together.

Be prepared to facilitate times of “reporting” from the small groups. Some groups may need encouragement to stay on task and focus their comments on the question at hand.

Fielding Questions

Before leading the module, take some time to reflect about how you will respond to questions from the participants. Questions about decisions made in the development of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* are best directed to the churchwide worship staff at worship@elca.org. Feel free to provide that e-mail address during your presentation.

Be prepared to stop unhelpful conversations in a way that validates diversity and redirects back to the topic at hand. A good strategy for responding to ideas from the participants is to encourage other participants to comment, balancing both the positive aspects and challenges presented by the idea.

Resource Review

Before facilitating this module, it may be helpful to review the following resources:

The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament (1997) available online at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Learning-Center/The-Use-of-the-Means-of-Grace.aspx>

Renewing Worship 2: Principles for Worship (2002) available online at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Learning-Center/Principles-of-Worship.aspx> or for \$15.00 at www.augsburgfortress.com. The *Use of the Means of Grace* is an appendix in this volume.

Central Things: Worship in Word and Sacrament by Gordon Lathrop (2005). Available as part of the Worship Matters series for \$9.99 at www.augsburgfortress.com.

The Lutheran World Federation's Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture (1996). Download at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Learning-Center/LWF-Nairobi-Statement.aspx>

Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship: The Sunday Assembly by Gordon Lathrop and Lorraine Brugh (Augsburg Fortress, 2008). In particular, it may be helpful to read the opening foundation chapters.

"Notes on the Services" in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Leaders Desk Edition* (2006), pages 9-52.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship

This module often refers to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW). Participants should be urged to bring copies of ELW to the module. Alternatively, copies of ELW may be made available for use by the participants.

Fully Anticipated Questions/Concerns from the Participants

"Traditional," "Contemporary," and "Blended" Worship Labels

Although these terms are commonly used, they can be divisive and have varying definitions. All worship contains a mixture of elements that are both ancient and timely making all worship "traditional," "contemporary," and "blended" to varying degrees. Participants will most likely come with emotion-charged stories from their experience often centered in these terms. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that these terms be avoided. The module intentionally uses the language of the introduction to ELW which is based on our Lutheran confessional language: unity but not uniformity. As much as possible, guide the conversation toward uncovering the unifying elements that support Christian worship but that may be expressed differently in each unique context.

It cannot be emphasized enough that this module does not offer simple answers to complex worship questions. The emphasis is not on sharing the next "big thing" in worship. Rather, the emphasis is on studying one's own congregational context, knowing the essentials, becoming familiar with the resources, and trying out something new in your community for the sake of ongoing worship renewal.

The Location of "the Peace"

Some may note that the location of the "peace" in the liturgy moved from the beginning of the "Meal" to the end of the "Word." The sharing of Christ's peace in the liturgy is best understood as a transition point in the liturgy between the "Word" and the "Meal." The sharing of the peace is both in preparation for the community's feast at Communion and in response to the gospel proclaimed recognizing Christ's peace in the midst of the community.

Ecumenical Worship Texts

The ecumenical worship texts commonly used in Lutheran worship include the Kyrie Eleison, Gloria in Excelsis, Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Sursum Corda (Great Thanksgiving dialogue), Sanctus and Benedictus (Holy, Holy, Holy), Agnus Dei (Lamb of God), Gloria Patri, Benedictus (Song of Zechariah), Magnificat, and Nunc Dimittis (Song of Simeon).

These texts underwent their most recent language update in 1988 by the English Language Liturgical Consultation (www.englishtexts.org). The ELCA reveals its commitment to the visible unity of the whole Christian church by using these texts in ELW and other worship resources. For background on these texts and their translation issues, see the document “Praying Together” which is out of print but available as a pdf at <http://www.englishtexts.org/text.html>.

Questions

If you have questions about the content or presentation of this module, contact The Rev. Jennifer Phelps Ollikainen, Associate for Worship Resources, 773.380.2577, Jennifer.Ollikainen@elca.org.

Presentation Outline

(Opening introductions and worship)

Introduction

The Things We Hold In Common

Patterns

Words

Actions

Songs

Freedom and Flexibility

<<Break>>

Patterns, Words, Actions and Songs in Gathering, Word, Meal, and Sending

Gathering

Word

Meal

Sending

Overarching Considerations

Conclusion

(Closing devotion)

Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Freedom and Flexibility

Presentation Text

Introduction

In the next three hours, we will explore worship.

A lot is at stake:

In worship, we are drawn by the Holy Spirit into the very presence of God.

In worship, God is predictably present.

In worship, we are shaped and formed by Jesus Christ, our savior.

Worship deserves careful and intentional planning

so that whatever we do, we don't get in the way of what is at stake.

Today, we will talk briefly about what is at the core of worship:

the essentials,

the central elements,

that which makes Christian worship, worship.

Then, once we have a framework of central elements,

we will explore what it means to exercise our freedom and flexibility

in small ways, and, perhaps, in more daring ways.

Imagine any given Sunday.

Christians are gathered together by the Holy Spirit for worship.

You might format this in a way so different participants could read the following examples highlighting the different people/different context assumptions

In one setting,

The gathering time begins with seven rings of the steeple bell and the people of God stand, turn toward the entrance of the church where the processional cross begins its journey down the aisle and the organ music swells with the first hymn.

In another setting,

The gathering time begins as the worship leaders invite the people of God into energized singing songs of praise led by the praise team that includes guitars, bass, vocalists and a drum set.

In still another setting,

The people of God gather informally around a baptismal font located just outside the entrance of the worship space where they will remember their baptism with water and prayer before entering the worship space and taking their seats.

In another setting,

The people of God gather in silence, kneeling in reflective prayer before being gathered by the worship leader with “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” and then the prayer of the day signaling that worship has begun.

All of these communities of faith – regardless of their particular worship practice,
all of them are gathered with the church across time and space
by one Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Or, if we come at it from another direction:

The Christian community values the identity of each individual by virtue of their baptism over any other trait as described in Galatians 3:27-28:

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”
(NRSV)

How is that brought to expression in worship by the community?

In one setting,

worship leaders wear long, flowing, white garments
to cover class and gender identifying street clothes
These albs identify the wearer primarily as a baptized child of God.

In another setting,

all are greeted as they come into worship not with names,
but with “brother” and “sister.”

These family titles highlight the relatedness of each member of God’s family.

In still another setting,
the new large baptismal font with flowing water
is located immediately inside the entrance of the church
so all have to pass by the water before entering the worship space
thereby gathering the community together in baptism.

Or imagine how different settings might recall
how their Christian life is shaped by the public proclamation of the Bible.

In one setting,
the Bible readings
are surrounded by song and joyful acclamation
where people stand and sing and dance and clap.

In another setting,
the Bible is brought into the center of the worship space
with great solemnity and ceremony and read in the midst of those who are gathered.

In still another setting,
the biblical symbols and stories are illuminated by artwork
seasonally on banners,
permanently in the stained glass windows
and projected onto a screen according to the reading for the day.

Our primary question for today is:

How can we exercise freedom and flexibility around the central core elements of our Christian worship?

That is,

How do we intentionally and responsibly shape

worship that welcomes everyone who is hungry for God's grace?

How do we live out the fact that worship is not about personal preference?

How do we intentionally and responsibly shape

worship that brings to expression the

joys and the challenges of the good news of Jesus Christ?

We are not here to find that one worship secret that will absolutely work for everyone.

Nor will there be a fail-safe prescription for creativity in worship.

Rather, today we are deepening our thought about worship

in order to make appropriate decisions about what we do in worship.

The things we hold in common

Begin with a personal story about your experience of feeling at home in the central elements of worship in a worshipping assembly that was new to you.

(I don't know about you, but I have moved around a lot in my life

I've moved into communities where I did not know anyone.

I was taught to find a safe place in the community of the church.

And so each new place I went,

I sought out the local Lutheran church.

Attending worship,

I always felt at home in the predictable shape of worship:

prayers, songs, Bible readings, the meal, the sending.

No matter where I went,

I was instantly part of the community as I responded to the phrases I knew so well.

The Lord be with you. And also with you.

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. Thanks be to God!)

If we are to be about the flexibility and freedom of a worship resource,
we begin with an underlying foundation and structure.

By definition, flexibility assumes a starting place,
a place from which to reach, and stretch, and adapt.

If you were going to bake a cake,

You would first learn the basic vanilla cake recipe

to learn how flour, sugar, eggs, and baking soda work together.

Then, based on the foundational recipe

you might get creative adding flavorings and fillings and more.

When you need a cake, you would also then gauge how fancy a cake you need –

Something simple – or something elaborately decorated.

For so long in our worship life as Lutherans

we have considered our book as containing all there is.

If we wanted to do something different,

we jumped out of the containing walls of one book

to something completely different.

Now, we talk about a core.

That is, we tear down those walls
and reach and stretch from the center, the core.
Some may be most comfortable really close to that core
others may tolerate a lot of stretch.

The introduction of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* helps us get to the common things:
“Worship takes place in particular assemblies within particular contexts. Yet every assembly gathered by the Holy Spirit for worship is connected to the whole church. Worship unites the people of God in one time and place with the people of God in every time and place. **We use patterns, words, actions, and songs handed down through the ages to express this unity and continuity. . .**” (ELW page 6)

The patterns, words, actions and songs that we hold in common
express our unity throughout the church today
our continuity with the church that has come before
And the church that is yet to be.

These common things are the things that point out
that this gathering of people is Christian worship
and not people gathered for
a show, or a sporting event, or a town meeting, or a class, or something else.

Patterns, Words, Actions, Song:

Turn to pages 92 and 93 of ELW where the pattern for Holy Communion is illustrated.

Four main headings shape this pattern,

Gathering
Word
Meal
Sending

Each heading is described in bold, italicized statements that form a basic pattern of worship:

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.
God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.
God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.
God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

(A visual representation that captures the movement of the order of servant would look like:

	<i>Word</i>	<i>Meal</i>	
<i>Gathering</i>			<i>Sending</i>

The gathering leading into the “twin peaks” of the Word and Meal and then leading out through the sending.)

The order can be seen to follow a biblical pattern, a gospel pattern.

Think about the gospel narratives:

At the start, Jesus is baptized.

Then there are stories upon stories of God’s work in Jesus Christ
Word made flesh coming to expression.

Then there is the meal, the passion, and the resurrection.

And finally there is a command to the disciples to “go and tell”
disciples who have been transformed
by their interaction with the risen Christ.

For centuries, Christians have followed this gospel pattern in their gatherings.

Entering the Christian community through the waters of baptism,
they are formed by the Biblical witness

publicly proclaiming those stories of God’s work in the world
and responding to that witness in the here and now.

They are fed at the table of the Lord

and so nourished are sent out of the assembly
to serve and proclaim the very good news they know to be true.

And then they are drawn back to recall the beginning again –

To encounter the living Christ and to go and tell.

Only to be drawn back again together in worship.

And so today, we continue this pattern in worship

even when the pattern is uniquely adorned from place to place.

ELW introduction to Holy Communion states:

“The basic pattern of this service – gathering, word, meal, sending – is a structure that allows for freedom and flexibility. . . The whole people of God are joined by the same gifts of grace, for the sake of the mission of the gospel, into the life of the one triune God.”

We will focus on the Holy Communion pattern today –
but keep in mind that the church has handed down a number of patterns
that can be examined in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

We don't have time today, but at some point,
I commend to you to read through these patterns in ELW.
Patterns for Baptism, Lent and the Three Days,
Life passages (Healing, Marriage, Funeral), and Daily Prayer (Morning, Evening,
Night, and Responsive Prayer).

Each pattern serves as a guide, that basic recipe that can be fleshed out or kept simple
depending on the setting and the situation.

Patterns, Words, Actions, Song:

There is a unity in the words and language
that we use when the Christian community gathers together.
Primarily, the words of Scripture shape the gathering and its language.

The Word of God as it is written in the Bible is proclaimed
any time the Christian assembly is gathered.
The Christian assembly is a place where that word of God finds a place to be proclaimed.
And the word of God shapes the assembly as it gathers.

Think of the difference of two actions and the words that accompany them:
*While shaking hands with someone say: "Good morning." Then shake the hand of
another saying, "The peace of Christ be with you."*

What is the difference between the two?
*(You may choose to encourage responses from the group. Anticipate that someone may
state that "good morning" is thought to be really special. Also anticipate that
participants may have difficulty succinctly articulating why the scriptural reference
makes something different happen.)*

Using the words of scripture and recalling the words of Jesus Christ
profoundly shapes an interaction - a simple gesture
with the fullness of the word of God.
Just as Jesus came to the disciples in that locked room described in John 20:21,
so Jesus is present in this moment in worship.

This simple handshake with those words from a scriptural
make this not just between you and me –
but about something more.

With those words – the peace we share is not ours – but Christ’s.

With those words – we are the presence of Christ to one another.

With those words – we are not just a bunch of folk – but the community of Christ.

The words we use in worship profoundly shape who we are
both as individuals and as the whole community of Christ.

Words are an essential part of our lives as human beings –
spoken, written, sung, or enacted

They are also essential in our worship
communicating the stories and reality of God’s love for us in Jesus Christ and
describing the mission to which we are called.

Repetition of the language that shapes us
transforms reality and helps us understand who we are.

*(How many of your lives been shaped by the repetition of a word or phrase? Which
repeated phrases? For example, my 5 year old will not let me leave his bedroom at night
without saying “‘Night ‘Night, sleep tight. I love you.”)*

And on the other hand,
fresh words have the power to help us see something new.

Words can point us to a new point in the story, a new perspective of grace
with a fresh turn of phrase.

For example, seasonal changes in the language of the confession and absolution
can help us to understand our sin and Christ’s forgiveness in a different way.

So there is a balance at work.

On the one hand,
words that are repeated shape us – they get into our bones.

There is a gift in the liturgical language as we come to know it.

And on the other hand,
fresh language, things said in new ways,
has the power to help us come to a fresh realization.

Repetition and change are to be in balance.

Patterns, Words, Actions, Song:

Tell a story about when you recognized the actions in worship even when the words, patterns or language may have been different.

*(When I was in seminary,
I went to Guyana, South America on a cross-cultural immersion trip.
On that trip, we traveled far into the interior of the rain forest
Where electricity and plumbing were unpredictable at best.
We were in the village of Kwa-Kwani on Sunday,
And went to worship at the Lutheran church.*

*Worship did not have a set starting time –
Rather, in a gesture of profound hospitality
that didn't come easy to me, a clock-watcher,
worship began when everyone arrived
(Even if that was an hour later than we expected!)*

*When worship began,
I did not know exactly what was coming next,
But I understood that this was worship based on the shape I knew –
Prayer, The reading of scripture, the Lord's Prayer, the eating of the meal.
So much of this Christian worship was strange and new
but it was still clearly worship.)*

Christian worship encompasses a set of actions,
actions that are oftentimes rooted in scripture
actions that through the history of the church have shaped who we are.

As we think about actions,
we are really thinking about how words are received by the assembly
and how the whole assembly is active in worship.

When our bodies participate in the service,
the assembly comes alive as the presence of Christ.

Although they are not necessarily exclusively Christian actions,
the actions have a character that proclaims something more than the action itself
in the Christian assembly at worship.

Think of baptism,
when you get down to it, baptism is a simple action of washing with water.
We use common things for the washing that happens in Christian assembly –
water, oil, light,
But the simple action is transformed and proclaims something more
together with the word of God.
when done at the command of Jesus Christ.

In worship, the action of washing is given meaning
as baptism which gives forgiveness and new life in Christ.

Although different settings may enact this washing
in a large pool or a natural body of water or a small bowl
The action of washing is common.

There are other actions that gather us together as Christians at worship
and communicate our unity in Jesus Christ.

*What other actions define us as a Christian assembly at worship? i.e. crossing self,
kneeling, standing, eating, handshakes, anointing, clapping, dancing, etc.*

*Patterns, Words, Actions, **Song**:*

So often we think of music in its multiple variations and its polarities:
classical and popular, sacred and secular, country and folk (What else?)
When we want to “change” something about worship –
we often examine the music first.
We change the hymns to praise songs,
the accompaniment from organ to praise band.
Music is so often a point of divergence
that we often overlook the commonalities.

All people, all cultures share some kind of musical expression.
As human beings, we hold song in common with one another.
As human beings in relationship with God,
music has been almost always been a vital part of Christian worship.

For thousands of years,
 those who worship God have sung the psalms
 when they gathered together in worship.
Christians carry on the presence of song in worship
 singing particular texts in particular ways throughout the years.

Lutheran Christians, in particular, celebrate the presence of music in worship.
In song, the assembly, as a whole proclaims the gospel.
After the reading of scripture and preaching,
 in most Lutheran churches, the assembly then has its turn together.
We join in the hymn of the day – a time to proclaim the word of God in song.

In worship we believe that singing is participatory
 even when that belief is counter-cultural.
When we gather for worship, we join our voices together to sing.
We don't simply listen to a performance,
 rather, something happens when we sing together as a group.
We are invited to be a part of the people of God – not abstractly –
 but with body and breath and sound.

Different communities will gravitate toward a different repertoire of songs of the faith,
But, right now, we hold a single book in our hands.
The fact that a variety of songs, hymns, and liturgical music
 can be found in one resource speaks to our unity.
But this book cannot possibly contain every possibility for every community.
It is core – but not self-contained.

Freedom and flexibility

Share a story of something unique to a setting of worship that worked in the context but that may not work in another time and place.

*(I once led worship at the close of a women's retreat.
The theme of the retreat was based on the story of the woman at the well in John 4.
We used small river stones during the retreat
 To symbolize and visualize the sin that weighed us down.
So at the beginning of this closing worship service,
We remembered our baptism – but in an unusual way.
To symbolize the forgiveness and freedom we have in baptism,
 We dropped our stones in the font*

After a thanksgiving for baptism that spoke of fountains of living water (from the John 4 text)

*We were sprinkled with water and we sang Alleluia.
It worked in that moment, at that situation -
But in other places, it might have simply seemed strange.)*

What “works” in worship
is different from setting to setting
even as we share the essential elements.

The introduction to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*
is helpful in reminding us what is at stake.

After its discussion about the unity we share in worship, the introduction says:
“The Christian assembly also worships in the midst of an ever-changing world. And because the worship that constitutes the church is also the fundamental expression of the mission of God in the world, worship is regularly renewed in order to be both responsible and responsive to the world that the church is called to serve.” (ELW 6-7)

That is, in worship, our freedom and flexibility has a central purpose:
to be both responsible and responsive
to the world the church is called to serve.

Worship is necessarily in relationship with the world
-with the people who are inside the worship space
and outside the worship space.

Worship is an intersection point with the world.

Worship speaks in the world in ways that can communicate the love of God.

Being responsive to the world assumes that we know our world.
It means that we examine and describe ourselves and our community
that we listen to it, support it, and even sometimes critique it.

Whatever our context,
We tend to think of it as normal
- the way that things are supposed to be.

However, the church is so much broader than our individual contexts.
The Gospel is for all – not just those in the pew at the moment.

The Gospel pulls us out and sends us outside of our comfort zones
for the sake of God's love for the world.

We need to be aware of our assumptions and our comfort zones
in order to be truly responsive to the whole community.

Let's take a few moments to really look into our own contexts.

Reflection/discussion:

In pairs, take turns describing the context of your church and community (pair with someone who is not from your congregation!) Think as descriptively as possible and fairly broadly about the community within the walls of the church and outside of the walls. What do the people look like? Do they all look the same? What are their ages? Where are they from in the world? What is the landscape? Socioeconomic status? Political status? Church backgrounds? And talk briefly about how all of that descriptive information shapes your usual worship.

Being responsive and responsible is a balance.

On the one hand, we are responsive to the world for the sake of the world.

On the other hand, we are responsible to not be consumed by that world.

So we need to be careful to be always reflecting about
what we are doing, why we are doing it, and how we are doing it.

For example,

In some settings, worship is shaped

to include silence, reflection, and long periods of time listening.

Think of worship in a retreat setting, for example,

where the community is intentionally carving out space for reflection.

But if this was the only Sunday gathering of a community,

the stillness and quietness could lead to discomfort and exclusion.

Think of how it might be for families with small, wiggly, not-so-quiet children.

The quiet of the service may serve to bring attention to those children

in a negative way rather than celebrating

the inclusion of everyone in the community.

The congregation may want to consider

shaping some parts of the worship service

to be more hospitable for those families and children.

Maybe there needs to be times of movement,
or an invitation for children to participate in proclamation
perhaps by ringing a bells in the gospel acclamation
or something else. (*What else?*)

Again, authentic, meaningful worship in one community
does not necessarily transfer to another community.
In order to be responsible and responsive within our worship communities
we are intentional and careful with our planning.

We need to get to know the community that is already in worship
and imagine the community beyond that God is calling to be included.
And then we need to be intentional and careful about our planning.

(This is a good time to take a break.)

Patterns, Words, Actions and Songs

in Gathering, Word, Meal, and Sending

(This part may be a bit long. Be mindful of your time and edit as necessary.)

We will now spend some considerable time
walking through the shape of the Holy Communion service,
highlighting where there is flexibility and freedom within the shape.

Pass out the list of Holy Communion rubrics.

This is a list of all of the rubrics within the settings of Holy Communion in ELW.
The crafters of the language of the rubrics worked hard
at the wording of these rubrics so that within them there are options,
ways of adapting the service according to the context,
ways of stretching from the core of the service as it is laid out.

There are three markers within the language of the rubrics
that intentionally invite freedom and flexibility:

1. Many rubrics use the word “may.”
In Confession and Forgiveness: “The service may begin with confession and
forgiveness or with thanksgiving for baptism.”

2. Notice where it says “in these or similar words” or “a similar prayer.”
Third bullet in Confession and Forgiveness: “One of the following or another confession is prayed.”
3. And finally, notice where there are options with song.
Canticle of Praise: “One of the following or another canticle of praise may be sung by all.”

As we walk through the flow of the Holy Communion service,
We will keep in mind the four categories we talked about earlier:
Pattern, Words, Action and Song
even when things aren’t neatly separated into categories.

Gathering

At the beginning of the worship service,
God gathers us together,
bringing us into the presence of God.
We make a transition into worship and are formed as a community in this time.
The things that we do at the gathering time
reflect the movement of that transition.

There is a lot of freedom within the gathering time of worship
– probably the most of all sections of the liturgy!
It can be shaped in a variety of ways –
but always leads toward the principal parts of worship yet to come:
Word and Meal
Let’s look at the elements that are commonly included.

There may be a preparatory action by the assembly:
Confession and Forgiveness or Thanksgiving for Baptism.

Confession/Forgiveness:
a preparatory act of confessing our sins and hearing words of forgiveness,
in community, we are accountable for our sins
and we are gathered together by the forgiveness
we all share in Jesus Christ.

Within that confession,
Worshippers may be encouraged to participate in the action
by making the sign of the cross either on their forehead or their upper body
recalling their baptismal identity.

The assembly may kneel in a posture of humility and prayer
or may stand.

We may use the words crafted for long term use.

Or, we may use another confession like the seasonal options
offered in the Sundays and Seasons resources.

Or, a prayer of confession may be crafted with the particular context in mind.

For example,

Here is an example of a confession that was written

For worship with young people in the streets Brooklyn, New York.

Congregation:

“Merciful God,

We confess we have sinned against you and our neighbor.

We have not done right by you.

We have not done right by other people.

We are sorry.

We want to change.

Remember Jesus, your son.

Have mercy and forgive us.

From now on, may we try to do what you want

To the glory of your name. Amen. Word!

Presider:

It’s cool! God forgives you.

It’s a done deal.

(From the Hip Hop Prayer Book, [citation?])

The language used in this confession may be more understandable
to young people on the streets of Brooklyn than the language in ELW.
Some may object to the lack of a reference to the death and resurrection
of Jesus Christ in the absolution.

This may have been a choice made with the violence of the streets in mind.

It may also be an intentional omission assuming that the content of the rest of worship
makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the source of forgiveness.

It may also be an unintended oversight by the writer of the confession.

When considering changes in language,

you’ll want to consider how often you are changing words and what to change.

You'll want to consider how you keep the balance between teaching the language that has formed the church over time and using timely language for the moment.

Some things may change weekly, seasonally, or less often.

You will also want to make sure the content and intent of the words suits this particular portion of the service so that the shape of the confession (or whatever portion of the service) is maintained even if the language is different.

(What are some principles for language you might use? You might encourage replies from the participants.)

In the time of absolution, there are times when the assembly can come forward for the laying on of hands. as is a suggestion in Maundy Thursday liturgy.

In the service music section, there is music to accompany this action (i.e. ELW #221 – *if there is time and you have the capability for musical accompaniment, you may have people turn to the page and sing.*)

Evangelical Lutheran Worship also offers the option of preparing for worship by giving thanks for the gifts of baptism remembering and giving thanks for that which makes us a community: our baptism in Christ Jesus.

This could also be a time when a baptism might occur highlighting baptism as an entrance rite into the church.

The thanksgiving for baptism may be led from the Baptismal font, thereby making the connection of this thanksgiving to the action of baptism.

Water may be poured into the font during the thanksgiving as an audible reminder of water.

A child may even be asked to do that pouring, thereby including all ages in the leadership of worship.

Depending on your context,
perhaps there is a particular way of talking about water in the thanksgiving
that may work and makes sense.
Perhaps you are near the coast or in the rural plains
you might add in the names of local bodies of water
or acknowledge the thirst for water in a dry spell on the plain.

The whole assembly might tangibly participate in the remembrance of baptism
by coming in contact with the water itself.

The assembly may be sprinkled with water from an evergreen branch
Or folks may approach the font dipping fingers into the water –
especially if all have gathered around the font and will now move to their seats.
It may also be possible for people to come forward to the font one at a time
paralleling the community's practice at communion.

Song is usually part of the pattern for the gathering
whether we use a medley of music
or the kyrie and "This is the feast"
There is a kind of movement in the song
whereby the community calls upon the presence of God
recognizes that presence in the community
and celebrates Christ's victory over sin and death.

Gathering songs may include hymns/songs, psalms, the kyrie and/or canticles of praise.

In the kyrie
the community is in dialogue calling on the presence of the Lord
simply (Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy)
or with an extended litany.

We are not limited by kyrie that is in place in the liturgy
The service music section contains a number of options (#151-158.)
*(If you have time and a musician, you may sing through an option that will be new to
folks. For example, the Kyrie from South Africa, #153 might be used to highlight that our
local worship is connected throughout the whole world.)*

There may be psalm in the gathering following an ancient Christian practice of gathering.
This psalm may be sung in any number of ways
from psalm tones to musical settings.

There are so many possibilities to explore in the singing of the psalms –
you can imagine rhythmic, spoken responses
rap forms of the psalms
and more!

A canticle of praise celebrates and recognizes of the presence of God in our midst
The song of the angels from Luke, “Glory to God in the Highest,” . . .
When we examine the theological weight of the words,
we see that it is especially appropriate in incarnational times of our church year
for example, Christmas or Epiphany.

“This is the Feast” is also a possibility as a canticle of praise
as it highlights the victory of Christ over sin and death
with texts from Isaiah and Revelation.

This is not a direct correlation with the “feast” of communion –
it is that – but also more.

The theological theme of resurrection is particularly appropriate for those festivals
centered in the resurrection like Easter, Transfiguration, or All Saints.

Or – another canticle of praise, hymn, or song might be used
as an appropriate celebration of Christ’s victory over sin and death

In the service music section, there are many possibilities.

(Again, if you have time and a musician, sing one of these. One that is easy to sing a cappella is #164 Glory to God, Glory in the Highest. Otherwise, point out the section between #151-167.)

And there are any number of seasonal songs and hymns
that might function as a canticle of praise.

(i.e. vs. 1, 7, and 8 of #362 At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing at Easter, #275 Angels,
from the Realms of Glory during Christmas, or #406 Veni Sancte Spiritus at Pentecost.
Choose one to point out and turn to, reading through the words of the verses.)

Again, take the time to explore the possibilities

and think through the shape of the service at this point in the gathering.

Songs or hymns serve as very practical times for movement within the gathering.

Processions to and from the font

Into the church with the processional cross which symbolizes Christ in our midst

Children in procession with red ribbons for Pentecost

Dancers with palm fronds on Palm Sunday

(Other ideas from your context?)

At some point in the midst of the preparation and song in the gathering time
at an appropriate time (which means it may be at different times),
the presider greets the assembly in the triune name of God
using the words of Paul as found in 2 Corinthians 13:13.

In this greeting,
the assembly and leader name the one who calls us together in worship.

And finally, there is always prayer.

The prayer of the day collects the assembly together in prayer
sets the tone for worship, possibly sets the themes of the day,
and transitions into the time of the Word by anticipating the readings for the day.

In all of these possible parts of the gathering, there is a basic flow – one to the other
Preparation,
Recognition and celebration of the presence of God
Gathering the assembly together in greeting and prayer
And moving forward to the readings for the day.

But how you do that – the possibilities are many.

And they will be determined by any number of factors:

including the context, the day, the season, other things going on in the church

*Hand out the chart that includes a number of possibilities within the pattern set next to
each other like a synoptic gospel book.*

This chart gives us a starting place to think

about what the possibilities are for structure and pattern.

It shows just how flexible we can be in this gathering time.

(Go through the chart.)

A – This example is for a Sunday after Epiphany. There might be a
confession/forgiveness, hymn/song with process, the greeting, the “Glory to God” which
highlights the incarnation of Christ in our midst, and the prayer of the day.

B – This example reflects the more penitential nature of the season of Lent when we
often reach toward more simple forms of worship. The confession/forgiveness is
followed by a kyrie, the greeting, and the prayer of the day.

C – This example begins with a Hymn/Song when worship leaders would process to the font for the Thanksgiving for Baptism. Because baptism joins us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is especially appropriate during the Easter season. The thanksgiving for baptism is followed by “This is the Feast,” a celebration of Christ’s victory. Worship leaders can move to their places from the font during the music and then offer the greeting and prayer of the day.

D – This example for a service with music leadership by a praise band begins with a series of music. The music would be carefully chosen with regard to content and flow of the gathering portion of the service. At an appropriate time, the leader would offer the greeting and the gathering time closes with prayer.

E – This example is, perhaps, the simplest of all the examples. Worshipers gather in silence, are greeted by the leader, join in a responsive psalm, and then prepare for the Word with prayer.

F – Again, this is a more simple arrangement whereby worship begins with a hymn/song and immediately prepares for the Word with the greeting and prayer of the day.

G – Finally, this example shows how a baptism might be included in the gathering time. The baptism occurs at the very beginning, followed by a hymn/song. The greeting and prayer simply conclude the gathering.

It is important to remember that in all of our options,
there is still a movement and flow to the gathering time
from gathering the community, to praising God for Christ’s presence and grace, to
preparing for the word and meal to come.

Here are resources to help flesh out the options:

Particularly useful is the The Leader’s Guide to ELW, “Notes on the Services” pages,
The Musician’s Guide to ELW which tells you more about each
And the first of three books in a series, “Using ELW: The Sunday Assembly.”
(*the other two forthcoming volumes are listed on the resources page.*)

Again, it is important to ask of any of our choices,

What does this do?

What is the movement of the service at this point?

How will that work best in our community?

(Questions? If participants bring up options, it may be wise to ask the group for feedback leading the conversation to highlight how the suggestion points to central things and possible dangers/distractions.)

Word

When we get to the “Word” portion of the service,
we have reached the first of two peaks (Word and Meal).
Here we are proclaiming and responding to the Word of God
as it is found in the Bible.
Therefore, the texts themselves are not as flexible
as the patterns and actions that surround them in worship.

The ELW service of Holy Communion
follows the pattern laid out by the Revised Common Lectionary,
a three-year cycle of biblical texts shaped by an ecumenical community.
Our pattern in worship follows an ancient pattern
that helps us attend to the readings
and offers opportunity to reflect on those readings:
The pattern moves from
Text to sung response,
text to sung response and back to text.

For each Sunday,

The first reading is generally from the OT,
except during Easter season when it is from Acts

It is followed by a Sung response,
usually a psalm appointed by the lectionary in relationship to the other readings
We already talked about the possibilities with psalms in the previous section.
Once again, we’ve only begun to imagine the possibilities.
This response may also take the form of a hymn or song that is a psalm paraphrase
For example, the psalm suggested for Lent 5A is Psalm 130.
ELW #600 Out of the Depths I Cry to You is a paraphrase of this psalm
and could be sung by the choir or congregation at this time in the service.

The second reading is an Epistle reading
that is often part of a through reading of an epistle
extended over a number of weeks.

Then there is a sung acclamation leading to the Gospel.

The assembly stands to welcome the gospel, using this acclamation, a sung alleluia, or another appropriate song.

Other sung alleluias can be found in the service music section –

Or, maybe (what??? A seasonal one – any suggestions?)

Dance – not to loosen up up-tight individuals

but moving as a body together with simple steps

to gather around the presence of Christ in the reading of the Gospel.

(For example, a community can do this simple dance: Gather in a circle with each person facing to the right, each person places their right hand on the shoulder of the person in front of them. To four slow beats all do the following four steps: step forward with the right foot, step forward with the left foot, step forward with the right foot, step back with the left foot. You can do this while singing ELW #171 Hallelujah. Each step happens on the half note. As the community sings, it moves as one around the center where the Gospel will be read.)

The Gospel readings are on a yearly cycle:

Year A is Mark

Year B is Matthew

Year C is Luke

and John is interspersed

There is quite a bit of freedom with how a community presents the biblical texts. Texts may be memorized and told like a story.

Different voices may be heard in the texts

Different voices may be in different languages

based on the community

or to highlight the connectedness of the church around the world

for example, Pentecost reading

or during the week of Christian unity in January.

Children can read the lessons –

particularly if children are part of the story.

As with any reader, a child should be well trained and rehearsed with amplification.

A few well-chosen, intriguing images may be used and projected in the worship space to amplify the movement and important points in the story.
for example, the lesson feeding of the 5,000
 an image of a hilly, desolate place.
 an image of bread
 an image of many different faces.

Watch for the edge between creative and gimmick –
The point of any freedom and flexibility
 is to focus attention to the biblical text, not to distract away from it.

For example, in one church,
Children were encouraged to bring a stuffed animal forward
 during the Easter Vigil reading of Noah's ark
It was meant to be a way to include children in the proclamation of the Bible story
However, after a few years (when it became a tradition)
 it turned gimmicky when it became about the stuffed animals
 rather than the action of God.

It is important also to consider space and location when talking about the Word.
As Christians, scripture is central to the assembly.
And one of the ways that is made clear is by creating a focal point for the word.
Like the table is the focal point of the meal,
 oftentimes, a reading desk, an ambo, a lectern, or a pulpit
 serves as the focal point for the proclamation of the Word.

Therefore, when a congregation chooses to read the gospel in the center of the assembly
It is important to ask how this action connects with that focal point of the word.
You might imagine that the procession
 begins from the reading desk
 and is stretched into the midst of the assembly by the procession.
Thereby in the action that moved away from the reading desk,
 it was still connected both to the focal point –
 and to the midst of the assembly.

Or, if a Bible reading is read by different people in the assembly
 for example, the passion reading on Palm/Passion Sunday
 or the many languages on Pentecost

The narrator may read from the lectern
while others read from the midst of the assembly
Or perhaps those other locations are marked as well in a way
that connects them to the central place
For example, one setting used single alcohol burners for Pentecost readings
around the sanctuary with two prominent flames next to the reading desk.

The readings are then proclaimed for us today through preaching.

In the preaching –

There is a lot of room for creativity

The nature of task means that it usually falls on one person: the preacher.

There is no real rubric for the sermon in the Holy Communion service

You might find that the rubric for the Evening Prayer meditation

might offer some inspiration for that freedom and flexibility

even though the nature of the scriptural reflection in Evening Prayer

is different than the preaching task on Sunday – but it can be helpful as a spark

It states,

“Other forms of reflection may also follow, such as brief commentary, teaching, or personal witness; non-biblical readings; interpretation through music or other art forms; or guided conversation among those present.”

Can you imagine a sermon where the preacher:

Asks the congregation to take the time for silent reflection?

Or asks for responses to well chosen questions?

Or includes a video of a faith story of a shut-in?

Or uses fine-art images to draw the congregation into the proclamation?

After the sermon,

the assembly proclaims the word through singing the Hymn of the Day.

Therefore, words of this hymn or song need careful theological attention.

We may or may not respond to the proclamation of the word by confessing the faith
of the church with the ancient creeds.

Perhaps on a weekday Holy Communion Service you may choose to omit the creed.

In trusting response to God’s work in the world,

the assembly prays for the needs of the world.

The rubric state pretty clearly that the prayers are prepared locally

for each occasion using the form listed there.

A group of assisting ministers could be trained and mentored
in writing prayers of intercession for the assembly.

ELW offers an outline that is helpful for crafting the Prayers of Intercession (page 105)

“Prayers reflect the wideness of God’s mercy for the whole world –

For the church universal, its ministry, and the mission of the gospel;

For the well-being of creation;

For peace and justice in the world, the nations, and those in authority, the
Community;

For the poor, oppressed, sick, bereaved, lonely;

For all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit;

For the congregation, and for special concerns.”

Short of crafting something new each week,

A congregation may choose to use a resource like Sundays and Seasons

where prayers are suggested for each week adapting them to the community.

Because of the nature of publishing,

these prayers are crafted up to two years in advance

and cannot anticipate current events.

Therefore, the Sundays and Seasons prayers must be edited

taking seriously that line that says “Add other intercessions here.”

For example, in response to the recent cyclone in Myanmar,

and given the S&S petition:

“O God, holy comforter, anoint the suffering with a spirit of healing. May the sick,
the mourning, the sorrowful, and the dying be sustained by your saving breath.

God of life, hear our prayer.”

You could add a sentence at the end:

“Especially we pray for the people of Myanmar. God of life. . .”

Or you could craft another petition using the form of the petitions:

“O God, holy wind, relieve the suffering of the people of Myanmar in the wake of
destructive wind and water. May there be hope and restoration. God of life. . .”

For this you are simply paralleling the sentence structures,

opening addresses and closing language.

If your congregation wanted to be more flexible in the time of the prayers, the responses to the prayers might be sung.

For example, on the Sunday between July 24-30 year A?

The new testament reading is Romans 8:26-39

“The Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.”

On that Sunday, the sung prayer response might be ELW 180.

(Other options include ELW 178-180, and 751-752 which are longer options)

Or, there may be very simple prayers with ample silence.

“we pray for the church. . . (long pause)

“we pray for the sick. . . (long pause)

Ending with an open bid: “People of God, for what else do we pray?”

There are many Christian traditions of the posture of prayer

some contexts might highlight the community aspect of prayer by holding hands

- a gesture that might be overly intimate in other settings.

other contexts kneel emphasizing humility in prayer through posture.

others may suggest to the whole community that all open their hands

in an orans posture – an ancient posture of humility used in the church

(Model orans posture of outspread arms with open hands, palms up.)

And then, in a transition moment between the Word and the Meal,

the peace of Christ is shared in the community

in response to the Word and in preparation for the meal that is to come.

Gestures of peace are often determined by the context

different communities do different things: hug, handshake, bow, kiss, etc.

(You may want to refer folks to the Lutheran article from March '08 on the issues and deep feelings about the passing of the peace.)

Again, there is a flow throughout the Word portion of the liturgy

and we should be mindful of that flow in our planning.

Meal

The meal is the second “peak” of the Holy Communion service (Word – Meal)

This section has probably the least amount of flexibility

because it is grounded in biblical, historical and ecumenical patterns.

In this section, freedom and flexibility

is really about supporting what is already there

rather than changing things too much.

The pattern begins with the collection of the gifts of the assembly
a collection for the poor, the hungry, the mission of the church.
This collection makes a connection between the word that is proclaimed in worship
and the mission and service of Gospel in the world.
The prayers of intercession began the move from worship space to world.
The offering is yet another step
that will continue through the meal
to the blessing and dismissal from the assembly into service in the world.

Note that in the rubrics for the offering, there is a lot of freedom.
“Assembly song or other music may accompany or follow the offering.”
There is a wide variety of practice across the church.
In some settings, the choir or musical group offers music at this time.
It may or may not be necessary to sing anything more.
Perhaps instead of, or in addition to an ensemble or solo piece,
a hymn or song could be sung.
Ideally, the text of anything sung at this point will focus
on either the offering of ourselves to God
Or the gift of God’s grace to be received in the sacrament to follow.
The season, day, the assembly, and the musicians
are all factors in what you do at this time.
An example of a seasonal hymn verse appropriate for this time is
ELW #490 “Let All Mortal Keep Silence”, stanza 2:
“King of kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth he stood,
Lord of lords in human vesture, in the body and the blood,
he will give to all the faithful his own self for heav’nly food.”

Actions at the time of the offering are also a consideration.
Some settings will have an elaborate process and ceremony at this point
bringing forward the bread, wine, offerings
And setting the table.
A longer hymn might be appropriate.
For others, the movement could be only a few steps to the altar table.
In this case, a single stanza, if anything at all might be appropriate.

You might also think about connecting the offering in worship
to the mission and ministries of the church.

For example, if your Sunday school is collecting school supplies,
those offerings may be brought forward by a few children –
or the whole Sunday school in a procession
or by the whole congregation who were encouraged to bring in school supplies
at the urging of the children.

Offering a prayer of thanks is appropriate,
but in such close proximity to the Great Thanksgiving, it is not necessary.
An assisting minister may lead the prayer on behalf of the assembly.
Three prayers are given in place,
but this is a place where “a similar prayer” may be offered.

For example,
I know of a congregation that prays
the first verse of the hymn ELW #686 “We Give Thee But Thine Own”
at this time in their Saturday evening service.
 (“We give thee but thine own. Whatere’ that gift may be.
All that we have is thine alone. A trust, O Lord, from thee.”)

Again, the flexibility around the time of the offering
takes careful consideration and planning
Think through the songs, words, and actions
so that they proclaim what is going on here:
we are offering ourselves to the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Hand out “A Guide to Giving Thanks at Table”

The pattern for the meal that follows is summarized on this page.

There are 11 different Thanksgivings at the table in ELW.
four in place in settings one and two
and the others in the front of the book beginning on page 65.
There are suggestions about which ones to use in particular seasons.
They also vary in length and congregational response –
even when the general outline is the same.

Perhaps your community might not change the words
But sometimes, highlighting what you already do makes a big difference.
Some of the thanksgiving give the opportunity for verbal participation by the assembly.
The presider may encouraging hearty responses from the assembly.
The responses may be sung.
Perhaps the congregational responses may be accompanied by bells rung by children.

How we eat the meal may vary from time to time.
We may encourage our congregation to stand to receive the meal
during the Easter season –
boldly receiving the promises of the resurrection.

If the architecture permits,
the community may gather around the table
thereby seeing the community together at the meal.

Even how the words are said to each worshiper as they receive the bread and wine
can make the meal feel slightly different.

The words don't have to be dour, whispered, or personal.
Saying them in a bold voice for those around to hear
highlights the participation of the whole community.
This presence of Christ isn't just for the individual – but for all.

The music during the distribution of Communion is a time of flexibility.
A setting of the “Lamb of God” is one option.

In the Easter season, a congregation may choose to sing something like
“Blessing, Honor, Glory” (ELW # 433) as an appropriate hymn that uses “Lamb of
God” language and celebrates the resurrection”
“Blessing, honor, glory to the Lamb.
Holy, righteous, worthy is the Lamb.
Death could not hold him down, for he is risen!
Seated upon the throne, he is the Lamb of God!”

Using uplifting music during the distribution of the meal
may challenge the piety of some –
but it is a way to emphasize the celebratory aspects of this meal.

Or there can be silence.
Again, that may challenge some folks,
but it is yet another way to highlight something different –
in this case, the silence supports meditation and prayer.

After the meal is finished,
there may or may not be a table blessing according to the tradition of the congregation.

Song after communion

The “Nunc Dimittis” (Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace. . .”)
may be sung after communion.

This extends this time of the service
and is not necessary, especially if there will be a closing hymn.

The prayer after communion is a hinge point in the service
where we give thanks for the meal we have shared
and begin our journey out of the worship space and time.

Sending

After the meal,
the assembly is rather quickly sent out
joined together in the mission of Christ.

Everything in the sending is pointed in the direction of the world.

There is the option of sending of communion to those of the community
who are not able to be present

With this practice, those who are not present are brought into worship in prayer
and the meal that is brought to them is clearly seen
as an extension of the primary worship service of the community.

Announcements may be made at this sending time of the service.

Moving announcements here to connect sending to church’s participation in Christ’s
mission to the world.

It serves the worship service well to keep them short
continuing the flow of worship out into mission.

The assembly is blessed and dismissed.

Like the greeting, this blessing is not a wish or hope for the grace we don’t already know
but a recognition of the grace we already know and have seen in worship.

There are four dismissal suggestions
that have a certain balance and ring to them
and that may be varied according to season, or context.

Easter – share the good news

Lent – feed the poor

When the dismissal takes place at the back of the worship space
after the recession of the leaders,
the location reinforces the mission that lies
beyond the doors of the worship space.

We have come to the end of the service –
but not to the end of the real work of shaping worship in your local communities.
Next, we turn to how to pick and choose some ideas
and how to responsibly introduce something new in worship.

Some overarching considerations

Now that you are filled with ideas
and are even overwhelmed, perhaps, by all of the options,
It is important to talk a bit about process in the congregation:
How do you make decisions about worship?
How much do you change at a time?
How do you decide what will “Work” in your own community?
How do you decide where to challenge your community
to stretch and grow?

Unfortunately, there is not a concrete plan to follow –
but there are considerations
so that you can be in conversation in your community about these issues.

First,
Don't go it alone.
Discuss, reflect, and plan for worship with a representative group of the
congregation and community.
This takes some careful consideration about the community and intentional
invitation to those whom might not simply respond to an open invitation to talk
about worship.

If your community is serious about including all ages in worship:
Invite a parent of a young child
A person who is older
A young person.

If your community is to be intentional about including ethnic groups
invite those who are part of those ethnic groups.

If your community is to be intentional about welcoming those new to the faith as
well as they welcome those who are well-churched,
make sure that you invite those who are new to the faith to the conversations about
worship.

Having a range of voices in the planning
takes work, takes time, takes education
But ultimately, this is an opportunity to explore worship
and deepen our thinking about it beyond
what song we are going to sing and which prayer to use.

Keep yourselves accountable to the essentials and the community.
Evaluate and dream at the same time.

Begin by looking at what you do – and where you are at
Look at the gifts your community has
(not what they are doing down the street!)

Ask -
What is appropriate in your place – where do you need some critique?

Of something you are already doing - ask
Is this something authentically unique to your context
or a practice (habit)?

Is what we are doing clearly proclaiming what God is doing here?
i.e. whispering communion words
or dismissals from the communion rail.

Before you start something new
establish a way of reflecting on what you've done.
Ask questions, be open to feedback,
remind yourself again and again of the essentials.

As you discern, and evaluate, and plan,
know that ritual patterns are established quickly.

When we try something new – indeed, whatever we do in worship
we ought to have a process in place
to examine and evaluate worship practices.
before and after.

When you do something new,
begin it with the expectation that it will be reviewed –
and that it may be a “keeper” or it may never happen again.

(Pass out handout)

This handout contains a list of questions
that may be helpful as you think through worship in your context
and plan for any changes.

The list is not exhaustive.

It is not a checklist.

It is simply a tool to help think through worship.

(Going through the handout:)

Is this going to help or hinder the congregation’s sense of God’s presence?

That is, is whatever we are thinking of doing
pointing directly to God’s presence in worship.
Will it distract?

Is this inclusive of the whole community of God?

Will this unintentionally leave some folks out? How can we be prepared?

For example,

Foot washing I once led with a group of 9th graders from around the synod.

We didn’t think through all the possibilities in our planning.

One of the participants wore leg braces and special shoes that she could not remove.

Another participant, a young man from a tough part of the city,

Refused to take off his sneakers.

They were the only thing of value that he had –

And he guarded them with his life.

Kids in his neighborhood at the time got shot over their sneakers!

We were unprepared for these two young people

And a bit blinded by our ability to participate.

(Or, share your own example.)

You can't prepare for everything.

but you can intentionally think through as much as possible.

In the case of something like a foot washing –

communicate well in advance

(so ladies don't wear pantyhose that day!)

find ways to gracefully include people in creative ways.

Designate someone to be watching what is going on

who will be prepared to help in any way they can.

Will this change the feel of the whole service, or parts of the service? Does it “flow” one thing to another, leading?

Think through the shape of the liturgy.

It is not four distinct chunks,

but a flow from one thing to another.

Watch for connections

be intentional about knitting things together.

Is the meaning of this clear and well-communicated? Will people know what to do and why they are doing it? How can you explain without impeding the flow of worship?

If you are doing something completely new,

you will want to be really clear about why you are doing it

and also how you are doing it.

Keep instructions to the point and as clear as possible.

For some,

that may mean scripting the instructions to make sure

you say what you want to say in as few words as possible.

Do you need to communicate that this is something to try and evaluate rather than a permanent change? How will you be positive and encouraging with the community?

This question goes with the next one.

Is this something that people will readily participate in or will there be a high level of discomfort and resistance? How will you encourage participation and diffuse resistance?

If you introduce something by saying,

“OK, now, this is going to be difficult, but. . .”

you are preparing people for a negative experience.

Instead, try to be encouraging and positive.

Connect theology – the mission of Christ – with what you are doing.

“Jesus called people to new ways of thinking and doing things for the sake of the gospel. Today, we will be trying something new in worship. Any time we do something new, we are all pulled out of our comfort zones. It is OK to feel a bit strange while we do this. After worship, let’s be in conversation about how we experienced the presence of God in something new and whether we might do it again.”

Afterwards, evaluate and ask questions, too.

Did this help or hinder the congregation’s sense of God’s presence?

Another way of asking is:

Did it proclaim what was intended? Were there unintended things going on?

Sometimes in the zeal for trying something new,
we lose our focus on what is really important.

Example? (Anyone have a really good example of this?)

Is this something to repeat with full knowledge that rituals are established quickly in the community? What changes might we make for next time?

Is there an emotional connection going on –

does it have anything to do with the gospel?

How can you reinforce the intent of whatever you are doing the next time?

(remember the story of the stuffed animals at the Noah reading. . .)

How do you keep reminding folks what is central in worship?

Conclusion:

In God’s word and song, in water, bread and wine,

Jesus Christ is present among us in worship.

It is that presence that joins us together as Christians throughout space and time.

Since Jesus Christ encounters the assembly in the word and the sacraments,
worship is itself God’s mission.

Ultimately, when we are connected to the core essentials of worship

we can be responsive and responsible in our worship.

We hold each other accountable to what is at stake in worship:
and we can hold each other accountable to the local community:
 listening and responding in order
 to find out how best to worship in that time and place.

We do this by being intentional and careful in our planning.
We do this by reflecting on worship beforehand and afterwards.
We do this by thinking through things, planning ahead, and carefully crafting
worship.
We do this by talking with the leaders of our worship –
 What we decide to do involves everyone –
 musician, ushers, pastor, readers, acolytes, and more.
We do this by being in conversation with all involved in worship about worship
 (which really means the whole worshipping assembly!)

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Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Freedom and Flexibility

Holy Communion - Setting One

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

The service may begin with confession and forgiveness or with thanksgiving for baptism. Either order may be led at the baptismal font.

- *The assembly stands. All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*
- *The presiding minister may lead one of the following or another prayer of preparation.*
- *One of the following or another confession is prayed.*
- *The assembly kneels or stands. Silence is kept for reflection.*
- *The presiding minister announces God's forgiveness with these or similar words.*
- *The assembly stands.*
- *The service continues with gathering song.*

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

The service may begin with confession and forgiveness or with thanksgiving for baptism. Either order may be led at the baptismal font.

- *The assembly stands. All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*
- *The presiding minister addresses the assembly.*
- *Water may be poured into the font as the presiding minister gives thanks.*
- *The service continues with gathering song. As a reminder of the gift of baptism, the assembly may be sprinkled with water during the singing.*

GATHERING SONG

The time of gathering song may be brief or extended, and may include one or more of the following: hymns, psalms; a Kyrie; a canticle of praise.

- *During this time, the presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.*
- *A Kyrie may be sung in dialogue between an assisting minister and the assembly.*

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

One of the following or another canticle of praise may be sung by all.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The presiding minister leads the prayer of the day.

- *A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*
- *After the prayer the assembly responds: Amen.*
- *The assembly is seated.*

FIRST READING

- *The reading may be announced:*
- *The reading may be concluded:*

PSALM

The Psalm for the day is sung.

SECOND READING

- *The reading may be announced:*
- *The reading may be concluded:*



GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The assembly stands to welcome the gospel, using this acclamation, a sung alleluia, or another appropriate song.

GOSPEL

- *The gospel is announced.*
- *The gospel concludes:*

SERMON

The assembly is seated. Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

HYMN OF THE DAY

The assembly stands to proclaim the word of God in song.

CREED

The Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed may be spoken. The Nicene Creed is appropriate during Advent, Christmas, Easter, and on festival days; the Apostles' Creed during Lent and at other times.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion, using the following pattern or another appropriate form.

- *An assisting minister invites the assembly into prayer with these or similar words.*
- *Prayers reflect the wideness of God's mercy for the whole world—
for the church universal, its ministry, and the mission of the gospel;
for the well-being of creation;
for peace and justice in the world, the nations and those in authority, the community;
for the poor, oppressed, sick, bereaved, lonely;
for all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit;
for the congregation, and for special concerns.*

Additional prayers may come from the assembly.

Prayers of thanksgiving for the faithful departed may include those who recently have died and those commemorated on the church's calendar.

- *Each portion of the prayers ends with these or similar words:*
- *The presiding minister concludes the prayers with these or similar words.*

PEACE

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.

- *The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words.*

The assembly is seated.

OFFERING

An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

During this time, the table is set. Assembly song or other music may accompany or follow the gathering of the offering (#181-188).

After the offering is gathered, the assembly stands. Bread, wine, money, and other gifts may be brought forward.

OFFERING PRAYER

After the table is set, the assisting minister may lead one of the following or a similar prayer.

DIALOGUE

The presiding minister greets the assembly and invites all present to give thanks.



PREFACE

The presiding minister continues:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

The presiding minister continues, using one of the following or another appropriate form.

LORD'S PRAYER

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

The presiding minister may address the assembly in these or similar words.

COMMUNION

*When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say. . .
and each person may respond. . .*

- *The ministers commune either after or before others commune.*

COMMUNION SONG

"Lamb of God" may be sung.

Assembly song and other music may accompany the communion.

SONG AFTER COMMUNION

After all have returned to their places, the assembly stands.

*The presiding minister may say a table blessing; the assembly responds **Amen**.*

The assembly may sing the following or another suitable song.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

The assisting minister leads one of the following or a similar prayer after communion.

SENDING OF COMMUNION

Communion ministers may be sent to take the sacrament to those who are absent. The presiding minister may lead this or a similar prayer of sending.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brief announcements may be made, especially those related to the assembly's participation in God's mission in the world. Affirmation of Christian Vocation may be used here.

BLESSING

The presiding minister proclaims God's blessing.

SENDING SONG

If "Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace" was not sung at the end of the communion, it may be sung here, or another sending song may be sung.

DISMISSAL

The assisting minister may send the assembly into mission.

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Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Freedom and Flexibility

A Guide to Giving Thanks at Table

The thanksgiving is introduced with the following dialog or with a simple invitation to prayer.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The presiding minister begins with praise for our salvation and redemption, possibly referring to a theme suggested by the season or festival. These sentences may conclude with a vision of the church in all times and places united in singing God's praise. This is particularly helpful as a cue to "Holy, holy, holy":

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The minister continues the prayer by citing the reason for our praise, recalling God's love, faithfulness, and grace as shown in creation as experienced by the people of ancient Israel as revealed to us in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

OR

If a brief prayer is appropriate for the occasion, the minister recalls the saving purpose of God's revelation in Christ.

The minister proclaims the words of institution:

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

The minister remembers the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, praying that the salvation always present in Jesus may now be present and active among us.

The minister prays for the transforming, renewing, and healing power of the Holy Spirit in this sacrament.

The minister concludes the prayer by praising the glory of the triune God.

*The assembly says Yes to the prayer of thanksgiving by speaking or singing: **Amen.***

All pray together the Lord's Prayer.

(Holy Communion and Related Rites. Renewing Worship, vol. 6. Supplemental Materials. Page 74.)



Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Freedom and Flexibility

Evaluating Worship Practices

Before

1. Is this going to help or hinder the congregation's sense of God's presence?
2. Is this inclusive of the whole community of God?
3. Is the meaning of this clear and well-communicated? Will people know what to do and why they are doing it? How can you explain without impeding the flow of worship?
4. Is this something that people will readily participate in or will there be a high level of discomfort and resistance? How will you encourage participation and diffuse resistance?
5. Will this change the feel of the whole service, or parts of the service? Does it "flow" from one part of the service to the next?
6. Do you need to communicate that this is something to try and evaluate rather than a permanent change? How will you be positive and encouraging with the community?

After

1. Did this help or hinder the congregation's sense of God's presence?
2. Did it proclaim what was intended? Were there unintended things going on?
3. Is this something to repeat with full knowledge that rituals are established quickly in the community?



Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Freedom and Flexibility

Resources

Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Leaders Desk Edition. Augsburg Fortress, 2006. Available at www.augsburgfortress.org.

Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship: The Sunday Assembly by Gordon Lathrop and Lorraine Brugh. Augsburg Fortress, 2008. Available at www.augsburgfortress.org.

Musicians Guide to Evangelical Lutheran Worship. Augsburg Fortress, 2007. Available at www.augsburgfortress.org.

Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship: The Christian Life, Baptism and Life Passages by Dennis Bushkofsky and Craig Satterlee. Augsburg Fortress, 2009. Available at www.augsburgfortress.org.

Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Keeping Time, the Church's Year by Gail Ramshaw and Mons Teig. Augsburg Fortress, 2009. Available at www.augsburgfortress.org.

The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament adopted for guidance and practice in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at the 1997 churchwide assembly in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Download at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Learning-Center/The-Use-of-the-Means-of-Grace.aspx>

Principles for Worship, Renewing Worship volume 2. Augsburg Fortress, 2002. Includes chapters on language, preaching, music, and worship space. Download free at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Learning-Center/Principles-of-Worship.aspx> or purchase at www.augsburgfortress.org.

Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture (The Lutheran World Federation, 1996) is available at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Learning-Center/LWF-Nairobi-Statement.aspx>

Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity. Lutheran World Federation Studies 1/1996. ISBN 3-906706-25-7 (includes the Nairobi Statement and a 29-page bibliography on Worship and Culture). See <http://www.lutheranworld.org/Essentials/LWF-Publications.html> to order copies of LWF publications.

Online

Watch the worship website at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship.aspx>

Subscribe to WorshipNews, an electronic newsletter at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/WorshipNews.aspx>

Articles available in pdf format online at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Resources/ELCA-Worship-Books/ELW.aspx>:

“Introducing Children and Youth to ELW,” “Introducing New Music,”

“Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship in a Contemporary Setting,” “Narrative Holy Communion”



Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Freedom and Flexibility

GATHERING – Possibilities within the pattern

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
<i>Example for a Sunday after Epiphany</i>	<i>Example for a Sunday in Lent</i>	<i>Example for a Sunday in the Easter season</i>	<i>Example for a service with music leadership by a praise band</i>	<i>Example for a Holy Communion service in the middle of a contemplative retreat</i>	<i>Example for a weekday Holy Communion service</i>	<i>Example for a service that begins with a baptism</i>
		Hymn/Song [Procession to the font]				
Confession/Forgiveness	Confession/Forgiveness		Song	Silent Prayer	Hymn/Song	
		Thanksgiving for baptism	Song			Baptism
Hymn/Song with procession			Song			<i>(Within the baptism, the assembly may respond with one of the following, a sung alleluia, or another acclamation ELW #209-213)</i>
						Hymn/Song
Apostolic Greeting			Apostolic Greeting	Apostolic Greeting	Apostolic Greeting	
				Psalm sung responsively		
“Glory to God”	“Kyrie”	“This is the Feast”	Song			
	Apostolic Greeting	Apostolic Greeting				
	Prayer of the Day	Prayer of the Day	Prayer of the Day	Prayer of the Day	Prayer of the Day	Apostolic Greeting
Prayer of the Day						Prayer of the Day

