

A Crash Course in Worship Planning

Calvin Institute of Christian Worship
September 2004

Module 1. Four Levels to the Worship Conversations

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

	Your Worship Committee	Your Typical Car Ride Home from Church
M		
S		
F		
P		

Barna Study: "Most of the church people who fight about their musical preference do so because they don't understand the relationship between music, communication, God and worship. Church leaders foster the problem by focusing on how to please people with music or how to offer enough styles of music to meet everyone's tastes rather dealing with the underlying issues of limited interest in, comprehension of, and investment in fervent worship of a holy, deserving God." Barna also stated that although music is important in the worship process, it is often elevated beyond its rightful place in the worship effort. "Music is just a tool meant to enable people to express themselves to God, yet we sometimes spend more time arguing over the tool than over the product and purpose of the tool." The Barna study discovered that among the key worship issues is that church-going adults and Protestant Senior Pastors do not share a common perception of the most important outcome of worship. Congregants were most likely to understand worship as activity undertaken for their personal benefit (47%) while Senior Pastors described the purpose of worship as connecting with God (41%) or experiencing His presence (30%). Only three out of ten church-going adults (29%) indicated that they view worship as something that is focused primarily on God. One out of every five attenders admitted that they had no idea what the most important outcome of worship is.

PROVERB: Broad (lay) participation in worship planning and leading can be fabulous, provided there is provision for training, learning, growth, and a shared commitment to the deep meaning and purpose of Christian worship. Worship planning requires more than good intentions.

Goal: build learning into every process

Strategies

1. annual worship planners/leaders retreat
2. monthly worship committee discussions re article, book, video
3. weekly worship planning discussions re article, book, video
(recommend James Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace*, Intervarsity, 1997; articles from *Reformed Worship*)
4. common presentations in adult *and children's* education (we learn when we need to teach)
5. attend a worship conference with your whole worship committee—as many as this week

Module 2: Worship as Enactment of a Covenant Relationship

In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears. (Ps. 18:6)

Be still, and know that I am God (Ps. 46)

Moments in worship where we “talk” to God:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Moments in worship where we “listen” to God:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

“Scale 1”:

Scriptural Invitation to Prayer

Prayer

Scriptural Promise

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AS NEW COVENANT RENEWAL

COVENANT IS AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING BIBLICAL VISION OF THE GOD-HUMAN RELATIONSHIP

- Brevard Childs concludes, "regardless of the age and circumstances lying behind the Deuteronomic covenant formulation, its theology became the normative expression of God's relation to Israel and served as a major theological category for unifying the entire collection comprising the Hebrew scriptures."¹
- George Mendenhall and Gary Herion, in their recent *Anchor Bible Dictionary* article, simply declare: "'covenant' in the Bible is the major metaphor used to describe the relation between God and Israel (the people of God)."²

LINKS BETWEEN COVENANT AND "LITURGY" (WORSHIP AS EVENT)

a. covenant renewal liturgies/ceremonies

A covenant is sealed by ritual ratification. The common pattern for covenant ratification has been described most thoroughly by Klaus Baltzer.³ Six elements are common to the ratification ritual: an account of a history of any previous relationship between covenant partners, a summary of the intended future relationship, further details about that relationship, an invocation of gods to witness the covenant, and a pronouncement of curse and blessing. Accompanying such a covenant statement may be a ritual meal (Gen. 31:54, Exod. 24).⁴ Relatedly, the covenant is also frequently ritually *renewed* in a pattern resembling covenant ratification (Ex. 34, Deut. 31:9-13; Jsh. 24; 2 Kgs 23; 2 Chr. 15; Neh. 9-10; Ezra 9-10).

b. other uses of the term 'vow'

PS 22:25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my **vows** I will pay before those who fear him.

PS 56:12 My **vows** to you I must perform, O God; I will render thank offerings to you.

PS 66:13 I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will pay you my **vows** . .

PS 116:14 I will pay my **vows** to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

c. Psalm-song texts as enactment of a relationship, as the script of a conversation

The psalms themselves are often scripts of conversations. Often they express prayer to God, words to God. At times, they depict proclamation, words from God. Petitions alternate with oracles. Psalm 12, for example, begins with the plea: "Help, O LORD, for there is no longer anyone who is godly," which soon is interrupted by an oracle: "Because the poor are despoiled . . . I will rise up, says the Lord." This pattern of alternation depicts what Raymond Jacques Tournay has called the "prophetic liturgy of the temple."⁵ Thus, the psalms teach us, to use Walter Brueggemann's phrase, that "**biblical faith is uncompromisingly and unembarrassedly dialogical.**"⁶ This, in turn, reflects the larger pattern covenant reciprocity that is prominent in the Deuteronomic history, and undergirds large portions of both Old and New Testaments.

PSALM 81 (one of scads of examples)

→ Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob.

Raise a song, sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. . .

↓ I hear a voice I had not known: "I relieved your shoulder of the burden;

your hands were freed from the basket. In distress you called, and I rescued you;

I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah.

Hear, O my people, while I admonish you; O Israel, if you would but listen to me

¹Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, 419.

²George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, "Covenant," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 1, 1179. See also "Covenant and Canon as Context," which is part two of Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 135-216.

³See also Paul Kalluveettil, C.M.I., *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982).

⁴Gillian Feeley-Harnick, *The Lord's Table: Eucharist and Passover in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

⁵Raymond Jacques Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms: The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

⁶Walter Brueggemann, "From Hurt to Joy, From Death to Life," in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, 68; "Report of the Liturgical Committee," *1968 Acts of Synod* (Grand Rapids: CRC Board of Publications, 1968), and in *Psalter Hymnal Supplement* (Grand Rapids: CRC Board of Publications, 1974), 70-75.

d. Institution narratives of Lord's Supper

Perhaps surprisingly, each of the New Testament accounts of the Lord's Supper refers to the concept of covenant. The Lukan and Pauline accounts speak of "the new covenant in my blood" (Lk. 22:20, I Cor. 11:25), hearkening to the famous prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the "new covenant" that the LORD would make with the people of Israel (Jer. 31:31).⁷ The Matthean and Markan accounts, in one of the more significant departures from the earlier Lukan/Pauline tradition, record Jesus speaking of "my blood of the covenant" (Mt. 26:28, Mk. 14:24), recalling both the covenant ratification rite described in Exodus 24, which also had its "blood of the covenant" (Ex. 24:8), and a messianic prophecy (Zech. 9:11).

SOME DEFINITIONAL FUN WITH THE COVENANT METAPHOR

Christian worship is

<i>a renewal</i>	<i>of the <u>new</u> covenant</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>have with God in Christ.</i>
<i>an enactment</i>	<i>of the promise-based relationship</i>	<i>the church</i>	" "
<i>an expression</i>	<i>of the marriage vows</i>	"	" "
<i>a dialogic conversation</i>		"	" "

THE COUNTERCULTURAL NATURE OF THIS UNDERSTANDING

In our culture, we go to events

- To be entertained (a sporting event)
- To be inspired (perhaps a Christian music concert)
- To learn (a lecture)
- To experience community (a potluck supper)
- To support someone else (a wedding of a co-worker)

Worship doesn't fit squarely with any of these categories. Worship is so much more profound! We are constantly tempted to reduce worship to one of these categories.

Perhaps only once in our life (perhaps never) do we go to an event to make a vow—our wedding day. But that is the closest analogy to what we do in the worship-event. Getting inspired, learning, experiencing community, etc. are *byproducts* of worship. And when they become the main goal, things almost always go a little (or a lot) haywire. . .

One of our biggest pastoral challenges is not only to lead the mechanics of a worship service, but to lead people into an understanding *and experience* of worship that is this rich, deep, profound . . . and . . . altogether fabulous.

(For the record, let it be said that this is one of life's grandest privileges!)

Antonyms of Covenant Renewal. . .

Worship that is:

- a) not relational between God and gathered community. . . merely horizontal.
- b) one-way conversation.. God to us
- c) one-way conversation .. us to God
- d) not covenantal, but contractual (think of a bad marriage).
- e) covenantal. . but not between God and *community*. . .

⁷The Lukan text does present some vexing textual issues. Verses 19b-20 do not appear in all the earliest manuscripts. See Heron, 5-6, for summary of the wealth of literature on this topic.

Model 3: Relational Habits, Relational Moments

1) _____

- *sincere emotional connection—on the same wavelength
- *often spontaneous, unplanned, profound
- *sometimes (often?), we don't have the emotional capacity for them
- *can't be engineered—but rather are gifts

2) _____

- *things you do anyway, no matter what you feel: birthday cards
- *not necessarily insincere—but key ingredients to keep things going

- *other places we learn them

Choir or dance _____
Rehearsing _____ *when learning to play violin or piano.*
Passing and shooting drills in _____

Worship needs both!

Barbara Brown Taylor tells of her own experience as a little girl, learning ballet. She remembers all the time she had to spend practicing the dance moves: “It would have suited me to spend the whole hour admiring myself in front of the mirror, but my teacher kept insisting that I come away from there to learn the basic positions essential to ballet. Under her tutelage, I learned to bend my feet this way and that, sometimes straining so hard I feared my knees would pop from their sockets. [I arched my back, I held my head up, I made perfect O’s with my arms. I stretched and sweated over the positions until my bones ached and my muscles yelled out loud]. Then one day I got to put them all together, bending and rising and sweeping the air like someone to whom gravity no longer applied. I got to dance.

And then she adds: “That memory sustains me in worship, where I practice the basic positions of faith. They are called *kyrie, gloria, credo,* and *sanctus* [or praise, confession, thanksgiving, and dedication]. Each one requires my full attention and best efforts; each one teaches me a particular way to move, so that when God invites me to put them all together, I may jump with joy to join the dance” (*The Preaching Life*).

Sample habits in a good relationship

1. *Love You.* _____
2. *Sorry.* _____
3. *Why?* _____
4. *Come again? (I'm listening)* _____
5. *Help.* _____
6. *Thank You.* _____
7. *What Can I Do?* _____
8. *Bless You.* _____

How can we anticipate and prepare for _____ even as we practice _____?

Module 4 Planning Worship Like a Jeweler

Of every particular element in worship, be able to name

1. *Love You.*
2. *Sorry.*
3. *Why?*
4. *Come again? (I'm listening)*
5. *Help.*
6. *Thank You.*
7. *What Can I Do?*
8. *Bless You.*

Possible cues:

1. how it is printed
2. how it is projected
3. how it is introduced
4. what precedes or follows it

PROVERB : In all aspects of worship, make sure there is a balance of familiar things and things that will stretch the congregation.

An entire service of unfamiliar music will not enable the congregation to participate. An entire service of overly familiar or often-used examples can lead worship to become cliché. It's too easy then to have worshipers go on automatic pilot. Balance is the key!

PROVERB: Start and end strong.

Every service will probably have some unfamiliar things in it. But those can be disconcerting if they are placed at the beginning or end of the service. A sturdy congregational song to start and end the service is the first step toward encouraging greater participation.

Module 5 Planning Templates and Jazz Music

Worship planning—in ANY style!—requires a solid, balanced template or default pattern. Without it, congregations are subject to the whims of a single leader, to endless innovation, and to a likely imbalance of worship actions. Let spontaneity and improvisation arise out of form and discipline—just like in good jazz music. A good template: a) Features a balance of worship actions (praise, penitence, dedication, prayer, scripture, etc.), b) features a pattern that alternates between God’s words to us and our words to God (and helps us experience each for what it really is—not just as another nice song), and c) may exist in greater detail than appears in a printed bulletin.

Major “movements” in worship	<u>Worship Bulletin: Congregation A</u>	<u>Worship Bulletin Template: Congregation B</u> (minimalist bulletin—but still with all the actions in column A)
Gathering	<p><u>Praise</u></p> <p>↓ Call to Worship (scripture)</p> <p>↑ Acts of Praise</p> <p>↓ Greeting (scripture)</p> <p><u>Confession</u></p> <p>↓ Call to Confession (scripture)</p> <p>↑ Prayer of Confession</p> <p>↓ Assurance of Pardon (scripture)</p> <p>↔ Passing of the Peace</p> <p>↑ Response of Thanksgiving</p>	<p>Call to Worship and Songs of Praise</p> <p>Confession of Sin, Declaration of God’s Grace, Exuberant Thanksgiving</p>
Proclamation	<p>↑ Prayer for Illumination</p> <p>↓ Old Testament Reading</p> <p>↓ Psalm</p> <p>↓ New Testament Reading</p> <p>↓ Sermon</p>	<p>Scripture Reading and Sermon</p>
Response to the Word	<p>↑ Song or Hymn of Response</p> <p>↑ Creed and/or Testimonials</p> <p>↑ Prayers of Intercession/Pastoral Prayer</p> <p>↑ Offering</p> <p>↑ Offertory Prayer</p>	<p>Responses in Prayer, Testimony, Offering</p>
Lord’s Supper	<p>↓ Invitation to the Table (scripture)</p> <p>↑ Great Prayer of Thanksgiving</p> <p>↓ Words of Institution (scripture)</p> <p>↑ Prayer of Consecration</p> <p>↓ Communion</p> <p>↑ Thanksgiving</p>	<p>Lord’s Supper</p>
Sending	<p>↑ Song or Hymn of Dedication</p> <p>↓ Call to Service (scripture)</p> <p>↓ Blessing/Benediction (scripture)</p>	<p>Call to Service in God’s World and Blessing</p>

Module 6 Thematic Planning Inside Templates

Worship planning should begin with a scripture text; therefore, worship planning begins with the preacher. But naming the text and theme are not enough. Neither is finding a hymn that refers to the text. Happy are they who involve all worship planners in textual study. We need to ask questions like: What action will sermon inspire? What act of confession is appropriate to the theme? How will we pray differently in light of this theme?

	<u>Sample 1</u>	<u>Sample 2</u>
Text	Genesis 1	John 15
Theme	The power and imagination of divine creation	Sending of the Spirit
Related Texts: Psalms	8	104
Related Texts: Texts from other testaments	Hebrews 1: 1-4, John 1:1-4	Ezekiel 36, 37
Other texts the sermon will refer to	Proverbs 8	Romans 8
<u>Particular Approaches to Aspects of Worship</u>		
Praise/Thanksgiving	God as creative, all-powerful	God as triune
Penitence	Confess our spoiling of the environment	Confess our presumption, our seeking to live on our own power
Intercession	Prayers for the restoration of all creation	Prayers for the sending of the Spirit
Dedication (action to which the sermon calls us)	Praise—a deep awareness of the immensity and pervasiveness of God’s created power	Discernment—learning ways of discerning the spirits of the age; refusal to limit our vision of what the Spirit might be doing
Lord’s Supper	Highlight notion that bread and wine are gifts of creation that bear spiritual blessing	Highlight notion that the Spirit is the main agent in our communion with Christ—not our own power of imagination or the strength of our own piety

Module 7 Resources: Texts, Music, Visuals

Module 8 Using the *Worship Sourcebook*

Module 9 Transitions

Worship leaders are the main guides that lead the congregation on their journey through the service. The words that lead from one part of the service to the next are key tools that help in this task. To be honest, many worship leaders don't spend much time at all considering the words they will use. Some refuse to because they react against anything too planned or canned. Some have simply never thought about doing it.

But the words we speak have the power to inspire or frustrate. They can make a visitor feel welcome or unwelcome. They can lead the congregation to focus on the purpose of worship, or get everyone bogged down in mechanics. Many times, when we don't think about the words we say, we end up communicating some inaccurate, dangerous, or hurtful messages. The following are actual lines spoken by worship leaders.

- "Men and women sing the first line together. Men sing the second with the children. Women sing the first and the third. Then everyone finishes it up."
- "Well I guess that now we have to have the confession of sin."
- "Well, I didn't really prepare for this next part of the service."
- "We really haven't had time to rehearse this, but oh well."
- "Ok? Let's see what is next. Well, next we will say the creed."
- "Isn't this more fun than in a traditional worship service?"
- "Wasn't that song great? I'll bet they don't sing that way at the church across the street!"
- "Well, our secretary messed up again, and the song number in the bulletin for this part of the service is wrong."

Often, without intending it, worship leaders say something very different than what they mean. They are utterly confusing. They suggest that worship is routine. They mock another church. They signal that worship is not all that important. They blame someone else for a mistake. None of these comments focuses on the meaning or purpose of what is happening. They are barriers rather than enablers of worship.

To avoid transitions like these, ask the following questions: Are my instructions about the mechanics as concise and clear as possible? Does the transition link two acts of worship, showing how they are related? Does the transition avoid being pedantic or preachy? Is the tone of the transition warm and inviting or cold and inhospitable? Are there especially poignant lines in a song or hymn that you could highlight in your introduction?

Consider these examples:

- "Some of us gather for worship this morning with great joy. Some of us gather with tears. Our opening song is based on a Psalm that expresses both joy and honest pain."
- "Next, we state precisely what we believe, using the words of the Apostles' Creed. These words are printed in your worship folder. If you are visiting with us today, we would be happy to explain the joy we have because of these statements. Simply ask one of the greeters at the door at the end of the service."
- "The sermon ended with a call to confession. Our song of response enables us to just that."

Consider writing out your transitions ahead of time—even if you don't refer to your notes in the service. Even if you speak extemporaneously, you'll do better if you've worked out a written version ahead of time. Then after the service, go back and listen to a recording of what you said. Work together with other worship leaders in your congregation to think about ways to improve the hospitality in your spoken transitions.

CICW Publications Based on the Covenant-Renewal Worship Model

In Print

1. *The Worship Sourcebook (Faith Alive)* and *Prayers of the People (Faith Alive)*
2. *Sing! A New Creation (Faith Alive)*
3. *Sunday Morning Live (Faith Alive)*
4. John Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding* (Baker Academic, 2003).
5. Sue Rozeboom and Neal Plantinga, *Discerning the Spirits: A Guide to Thinking about Christian Worship Today* (Eerdmans, 2004)

Forthcoming

5. L. Van Dyk, *A More Profound Alleluia: Worship and Theology in Harmony* (Eerdmans 2005)

In Early Development

6. *Multi-Media Uses and the Fundamental Habits of Worship*

THE LAST PROVERB: The nuts and bolts are a means to an end, not an end in themselves.

Hone the ability to work hard, and then to set aside worry, to engage in worship, to enjoy and glorify God:

“We have stuck to founding, building singing, ringing, to vestments, incense burning, and to all the additional preparations for divine worship up to the point that we consider this preparation the real, main divine worship and do not know how to speak of any other. And we are acting as wisely as the man who wants to build a house and spends all his goods on the scaffolding and never, as long as he lives, gets far enough along to lay one stone of his house.”

—Martin Luther (E. Plass, *What Luther Says*, Concordia, 1959, vol. 1, p. 302).

“We have stuck to Powerpoint, sound systems, children’s messages, drama skits, and seekerfriendliness up to the point that we consider this all the real divine worship, and we do not know how to speak of any other. We are acting as wisely as the one who wants to surf the internet, but spends all available resources on a big monitor, and so has none left over for internet service, and thus never has the chance to actually get online.”

—anonymous, January 2001

Evening Prayer

OPENING

Jesus Christ is the light of the world.
The light no darkness can overcome.
Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening.
And the day is almost over.
Let your light scatter the darkness
And illumine your church.

Quiet

PSALM

Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand by night in the house of the Lord!
Lift up your hands to the holy place, and bless the Lord.
May the Lord, maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion.

Quiet

SCRIPTURE

God has shown you what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.
-Micah 6:8

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Quiet

PRAYER

Send your peace into our hearts, O Lord, at the close of this day,
that we may be contented with your mercies of this day,
and confident of your protection for this night.
Give our bodies restful sleep and bless the work we have done in this day.
By your Spirit, give us grace to pray in hope and confidence:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Quiet

BLESSING

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.
Bless the Lord.
The Lord's name be praised.