



EQUIPPING FOR... **WORSHIP**

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Part Two: Let's Be Radical and Worship Together!

*“O Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.”*

— Psalm 95: 6-7

What are we doing when we worship? Why do we gather on Sunday morning to praise God? How can the whole community that gathers be drawn into worship? The last issue of *Equipping for Worship* encouraged reflection and discussion about the way we worship and how we might be “radically inclusive” of all age groups in our worship practices.

This edition of *Equipping for Worship* will go one step further by providing concrete examples of how we can involve children in all aspects of the worship service so that they too can experience the magnitude of what takes place when the faithful gather to worship God.

Invited by God

Each person gathered in church on Sunday morning will have a different reason for being there and a different understanding of what is happening. Some will come for comfort, others will come for tradition, some will come to praise the living God and some will not attend at all because something else has come up.

In today's world, where choices are many and distractions are manifold it is all too easy to lose sight of the incredible thing that happens during worship.

We gather on Sunday morning, the first day, to worship God because we have been invited by God. God calls us into God's presence so that we can learn to see God more clearly: so that we can learn to live more gratefully and generously; so that we can grow in deeper relationship with God and the community we are called to serve.

Our pattern of worship helps us to understand this process and, ultimately, to understand who we are and who God is. Isaiah's vision of God's glory in the Temple (Isaiah 6:1-9) traces the movement of worship from adoration, confession and absolution through to listening to God's word and, finally, to being commissioned to service. This trajectory, which provides the foundation of our order of worship, allows us to explore how each piece of the worship service draws us to experience God's presence and to be transformed by God's story.

The invitation into God's presence is extended to all who gather. As worship leaders it is our responsibility to ensure that the way we craft the service encourages all to accept this invitation. Throughout this issue there are boxes describing how children and younger members of the congregation can be engaged in all aspects of worship.

Order of Worship

by Sarah Travis

While there is no one way to worship, there are some ways that do a better job of teaching, telling the story of God, and helping us to have an encounter with God. Each congregation has different habits for worship and different orders of worship. The following is a hypothetical order of worship. I describe

each major section of the worship service and how each element fits into the worship service as a whole. These elements might not be present in every service, and might not be in this order. (For worship services that include the Sacraments of Baptism and/or Communion, see *The Book of Common Worship*.)

We Approach God

(We respond to God's invitation with adoration and confession. God offers us forgiveness)

In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

*'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.'*

"The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!' Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: 'Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.'" – Isaiah 6: 1-7

Greeting

The greeting is a brief welcome. While you might choose to say “good morning”, you might also choose to give a special Christian greeting such as “The Peace of the Lord Jesus be with you.” This might also be a moment to welcome visitors, or give brief instructions about some aspect of the worship service.



Involving Children as Worship Leaders

- Hand out bulletins and greet worshippers with their families or other adults.
- Carry in candles, crosses, bread and cup or the Bible into the sanctuary in processions.
- Pantomime biblical stories as they are read or act them out with simple puppets

– From Carolyn Brown in “Ten (and more) ways for children to be worship leaders”
worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.ca



Involving Children in the Worship Service Right from the Beginning

- Identify the key theme word for the day near the beginning of worship, helping children write it on a page, and urging them to draw or write ideas about that word they think about during the worship.
- Take a few moments before each part of the service to introduce what is happening and why the service follows the order it does. This background information will help the whole congregation experience worship more deeply.

– From Carolyn Brown in “Worship art” worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.ca

✠ Call to Worship

This may be spoken by the worship leader, or spoken responsively by leader and congregation. It is an invitation to worship Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It may be a few verses of scripture, or thoughtful words that remind us of who we are and why we worship.

♪ Hymn

About music

Singing and instrumental music is a very important part of worship. There are endless possibilities when it comes to choosing praise songs, choruses, hymns and other worship music. Each congregation has its own habits and preferences when it comes to music. The music director or organist may be able to help choose appropriate hymns and songs. The choices can support the scriptural theme of the service (and sermon), as well as being appropriate for the part of worship in which they are used. For example, songs used at the beginning of the service can support an atmosphere of gathering, and help the gathered community prepare to worship. The closing hymn can help prepare worshippers to be sent out into their daily lives. Songs can be used as prayers, or to provide reflection upon scripture or the sermon. Note that the *Book of Praise* has several indexes at the back which can help you find hymns that relate to a particular theme or scripture.



Involving Children in Music

- Children love to sing and church is one of the few places where children can sing in community. Music is a great way to connect kids to what is happening in the service and to make them feel part of the congregation.
- Start a children’s choir or have the Sunday School class prepare a special musical piece to share during worship.
- Encourage children to share their musical talents – get them singing, playing instruments or singing with the adult choir.
- Ask children about what kinds of music are meaningful for them. Incorporate their style of music into the service.

✠ Opening Prayer

This prayer generally has two main purposes: to praise God and to confess our sins. It is often called the Prayer of Adoration and Confession. As with all prayers, it may be spoken by the worship leader on behalf of the gathered community, or some portion of it may be spoken in unison by the congregation. The prayer begins with naming our praise and awe for the work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The prayer then turns to the ways that we as individuals and as a community have sinned against God and against one another.



Involving Children in Prayer

Prayer is an important part of each and every person's life. While we are wired for prayer, prayer is not always an easy thing to do. Just as Jesus' disciples were taught how to pray so too we must learn how to pray. Here are a few ideas about how adults can learn alongside children about prayer and thanksgiving.

- **Prayer Sheets**

Give each member of the congregation four pieces of coloured paper. On each sheet they are invited to write or draw the following:

- Yellow – something they are thankful for

- Green – a person or situation they would like to pray for.

- Blue – something they would like to say sorry for

- Pink – something they would like God to help them with

Allow time for each person to write or draw their prayers on each sheet. Gather the sheets up in four labeled bags, one for each colour – collecting the sheets would be a great job for the kids – and then read a selection of the prayers during the prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession.

- **Gratitude Show and Tell**

Ask the children to bring in objects that represent the things in their life that they are grateful for, for example a card from a grandparent, a beloved toy given to them by an aunt or uncle, an invitation to a friend's birthday party, a rock found at one of their favourite places. Prepare a special table near the front of the church where they can place their objects. During the service ask the children to describe the meaning of their objects. Weave their descriptions into a prayer of thanksgiving.

- **Tactile Prayers**

Give each member of the congregation a piece of modeling clay as they walk into the sanctuary. At the beginning of the service invite the congregation, both children and adults, to make something with the modeling clay during the times of prayer. The clay can be used to create shapes that represent what they want to thank God for, what they would like to pray for or things they would like to say sorry for.

– From Karen Holden in “Simply Creative: Ways to Involve Children in the Worship Service”
ministrymagazine.org/archive/2009/05/simply-creative

✚ Assurance of Pardon

In the Reformed Tradition, confession is usually followed by an assurance that we are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ. The worship leader speaks this assurance, sometimes using words of scripture, to confirm God's forgiveness and grace.

✚ The Peace

The peace may be offered verbally when the worship leader says, "The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you." In some congregations, the people are invited to exchange a sign of peace by shaking hands or giving a hug or kiss. This ritual reminds us that we are reconciled to God and to one another in Jesus Christ.



Involving Children in Passing the Peace

- The people of God are called to live peaceably in a close community. The passing of the peace is an important symbol of this call and is a wonderful way to connect the generations. Devote a children's time to explaining passing the peace. Then have children go around the sanctuary exchanging a word of peace with congregation members. This is a wonderful experience for everyone involved and helps foster closer relationships between different age groups.

We Listen to God's Word

(We hear God's Word)

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying..." – Isaiah 6:8

🎵 Hymn

About music

"Years ago I had a fight with a music director about a prime piece of time. He wanted it for a children's choir. I wanted it for a kid's club. He finally said, '...These kids are going to grow up, probably disappear from church for a while at some point, and hopefully come back. And where will they come? They will come to the sanctuary. And, if they have been in my choir and learned the ways of the sanctuary, it will feel like coming home and they will stay.' He is right, of course, and that is why it is so important that during their elementary years we welcome children to the sanctuary and intentionally find ways to help them grow as worshipers there among God's gathered people.

– From Carolyn Brown in "Why Children belong in the Sanctuary"
worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.ca

Prayer for Illumination

This prayer may be communal or spoken by the worship leader. It is a prayer that the community will be enabled by God to understand the Word, and formulate an appropriate response.

Scripture Readings

Depending on the custom of the congregation, several scriptures may be read including selections from both testaments. There might be a reading from the prophets, a psalm, a letter from the epistles, and a gospel reading. Some congregations elect to read four scriptures each week.



Involving Children in Scripture Reading

- Choose a Scripture reading several weeks in advance. Separate the Scripture reading into different lines and assign each child a line appropriate to their reading level. Have parents and Sunday School teachers practice with the children before they share the reading in church to ensure they are comfortable.
- Hand out a bible passage that will be read in church to each child in the congregation. Ask the child to read the passage with their parents and to talk about its meaning. On the Sunday that the passage is read encourage children to share their ideas about what the passage means with the congregation.

– From Karen Holden in “Simply Creative: Ways to Involve Children in the Worship Service” ministrymagazine.org/archive/2009/05/simply-creative

Sermon

The sermon interprets and reflects on the meaning of God’s word in scripture, as it relates to our life in God’s world.

Hymn



Involving Children in Sermon Time

Sermons are probably the most challenging time for children who stay in the sanctuary during the service. Here are a few ideas to get children to remain focused and attentive during that time:

- Use stories about children as the examples in the sermon. Children are naturally curious about stories that involve other kids.
- Have the preacher prepare some special questions for kids to listen for the answers to in the sermon.
- Prepare a word search featuring key words that will be in the sermon (or use pictures for younger children). Find out how: worksheets.theteacherscorner.net/make-your-own/word-search

We Respond to God

(We are commissioned to live as disciples of Christ in the world)

*“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, ‘Here am I; send me!’
And [God] said, ‘Go and say to this people...’ – Isaiah 6:8-9*

✚ After the Sermon

We are invited to respond to scripture. The congregation might be invited to sing together, or recite the Apostle’s Creed or a section of *Living Faith*, or even remain silent for a few moments. Some sermons end with a time of prayer.

✚ Prayers of the People

Part of our response to the Word of God is to bring our prayers of gratitude and intercession. We give thanks for God’s action in the world, and ask for God’s help, mercy and protection for our world and ourselves.

✚ Offering

Our money, time and talent belong to God. When we present our offering in worship, we are offering God a small portion of all that God has given to us. It is appropriate to introduce the offering, and invite the congregation to respond to God’s grace by sharing their material possessions, as well as recommitting their time and energy to God’s mission.

About worship prayers

You may choose to write prayers, or use traditional prayers, or borrow prayers from other resources. You may also choose to pray spontaneously, without notes. The latter is only recommended if you have developed the skill of praying extemporaneously, and can use it effectively. A rambling prayer is as much of a problem as a rambling sermon. Remember, when you pray in public worship, you are speaking for the gathered community. The prayer is not yours, it belongs to all. That reality should guide your words. – Sarah Travis



Involving Children in the Offering

- Try something really creative and get kids to participate in a noisy offering! One church gives the children tin cans one Sunday a month to collect a special offering for their Sunday School program. On those Sundays adults are encouraged to bring lots of change!
- Have a basket filled with objects representing non-financial ways that people can respond in gratitude to the blessings in their lives. Get children involved in brainstorming what kind of objects can be placed in the basket. Here are a few ideas: *Heart* – to represent being loving; *Band-aid* – to represent taking care of someone; *Leaf* – to represent caring for our world; *Cleaning cloth* – to represent taking responsibility; *Books* – to represent learning; etc.
- During the offering children are invited to choose an object that represents how they will give back to God by sharing the gifts they have to offer.

– From Sarah Walker Cleaveland in
“9 Creative Ways to Engage Kids in Worship to Respond to God”
sarahwalkercleaveland.com/engage-kids-in-worship

✚ Prayer of Dedication

This prayer gives thanks for the gathered gifts, and dedicates them to God's work in the world.

🎵 Hymn

✚ Benediction

This is a blessing that sends people out into the world. We go with the blessing of God: Creator, Son and Holy Spirit. A benediction literally means "a good word." In the Presbyterian tradition, worship services usually end with a blessing, a good word, spoken by the minister or worship leader.



Involving Children in the Blessing

- Heritage Green Family Church in Stoney Creek, Ontario invites all members of the congregation including children to share in the blessing by laying hands on each other and joining to speak the blessing in one voice. This is a powerful act that serves to bind the community and families to each other.

Resources about worship

Weekly Worship Planners follow this trajectory and are available to download at presbyterian.ca/worship.

Visit presbyterian.ca/worship or tune into PCC's *Take it Up Tuesdays* Facebook posts for more great worship resources and ideas. facebook.com/pccconnect

Canadian Ministries wants to hear from YOU!

What parts of this resource are most useful? Share your story of inclusive worship. Recommend a resource! Make a suggestion or ask a question!

Contact us at canadianministries@presbyterian.ca or call 416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301 Ext. 290. Find more great ministry ideas through our weekly Facebook post *Take it Up Tuesday*. Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/pccconnect.