

Thoughts on Preparing an Order of Worship

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Liturgy

At FRBC, we typically follow two standard orders of service - (put crassly) a three-part song-set, and a two-part song-set. Organizationally, the three-part set differs only by adding some singing prior to the Welcome and Announcements. However, it's actually more internally involved than that.

There are specific "elements" that we believe should be included in the worship service, like -

*Adoration... Confession... Assurance... Thanksgiving... Petition... Instruction...
Charge... and Blessing...*

I also like to think of the worship service as following and recapitulating the major elements of a Christian worldview - the arc of redemptive history -

Creation... Fall... Redemption... Restoration...

In general, we include most of these elements through the songs that we sing. The service usually begins with songs of Adoration and Praise to God - what can also be called the "Praise Cycle". Then the service (almost) always includes a song or statement of Confession (confession of sin, confession of need for God) and a song and/or statement of Assurance (objective hope in the Gospel) - what can be called the "Renewal Cycle". Finally, we include a song preparing for the sermon, calling ourselves to faith and commitment to follow what God says - what can be called the "Commitment Cycle".

Procedure

Here are the steps I recommend in preparing an order of worship -

1. Begin in prayer, asking for God to glorify Himself through the worship service and to give wisdom and guidance in its preparation.
2. If possible, keep in mind what the Preacher is preaching and what was preached the previous Sunday. These themes may give direction to your preparations. Brainstorm if any songs or hymns related to these themes come to mind that might be included. Possibly check the topic guide at the back of the hymnal for ideas. (The order does not and should not revolve around the sermon topic, but around the Gospel. But the sermon topic can guide some thought.)
3. Go through our church's repertoire table of contents. Make an initial list of songs (unordered) that you may want to use. (Make a note of when these songs were last used, but don't put too much weight on that criterion.) Also, make a note of the number and key for each song.
4. Check the Songs to be Refreshed list, Songs to be Learned list. Add any appropriate to the list.

5. From this list, begin putting together an order (following either a 3-set or 2-set order). It might be helpful to re-organize your list - songs that fit in the Praise Cycle, songs that fit in the Renewal Cycle, songs that fit in the Commitment Cycle. When putting songs together, keep in mind song style-genre, keys and transitions for smoothness. Also, keep in mind song-length.
6. Add a congregational reading where appropriate.
7. Evaluate your order -
 - *Content* – Is there a thematic flow to the order? Is the overall arrangement driven by content? Is the emotional effect warranted by the content? Is the Gospel presented adequately as the foundation to our worship? What’s the overall diet - thematic, mood? Is there content-overload? Are there elements that need to be added to round out the content? Objective Gospel-centric?
 - *Music* – Do the songs transition well musically? How are transitions going to be done? Is there an overall musical arc and flow to the order?
 - *Repertoire* – How does this order fit with recent orders? Are new songs being refreshed? Are there enough established, familiar, easy to sing songs on the order to make it accessible to our congregation...to our children...to visitors?
8. Present the order to the pastor and collaborate on final form.