

Listen

Hearing that Still Small Voice and Finding Your Own

Overview of the worship scripts from Dr. Marcia McFee

This Lent series is designed to give you everything you need–all words, hymn and song suggestions, choral and band suggestions, leader introductions, etc. But also please know that if you want to adapt to fit your current order of worship, you can easily lift any of the suggested material and place it in a more familiar structure.

Please note that I have decided to vary the order of worship a bit more than usual for this series so that we start in a very contemplative way and move to more energy at the end. Discern for yourself if your congregation is ready to receive something very different and if so, do your work to articulate that the changes are to serve the message of this series. I have still used the ancient four-fold pattern of Christian worship *(Gathering, Proclaiming, Responding and Sending Forth)* but they are called by different labels *(Listen, Find, Reflect, Prepare to Listen in the World)*. Likewise, the parts of worship are typical *(Invocation, Scripture, Sermon, etc)* but the labels are unique for this series to evoke the theme.

This overview will give you a sense of what's included each week in the order of worship. The package also includes ideas for Visuals and Media, Small Group Resource ideas and individual prayer practices to complement the series. The Ash Wednesday and Holy Week services
have a little different order of worship, as you might expect.

The order of worship is the same each week. This goes with the concept I teach that repetition is a good thing and a solid foundation is necessary in order to be creative within it. Doing series can give you the opportunity to try on a slightly different order of worship for a season but keep it the same during that season, therefore offering some sense of familiarity and a rhythm. An additional component exists for Lent 3, where I give you a full communion prayer script. If you do communion weekly, adapt my scripts by using Week 3 as a model for the other week's communion prayers. Then add a communion station to the "Appointment with God" time.

The Worship Guide (what I call a bulletin) plays an interesting role in this series. I propose that you create a booklet with all the services in it. There are specific places for people to doodle or write during prayer time. The Worship Guides will not be taken home each Sunday (except for extras for one-time visitors), but will be rotated around the sanctuary so we might see the reflections of others–listening to their wisdom. Preparation of these guides will be an especially fun project for the artists and "doodlers" in your midst.

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LISTEN

A sign at the doors of the worship space invites people to enter differently this season… in quiet contemplation. Recorded music and/or nature sound effects are playing until time for the Prelude.

Music for Settling

Commonly known as the “Prelude,” this part is at the discretion of your musicians but it will be important to stress that the mood is contemplative. At the end of this music, a singing bowl-like sound and other gentle random percussion like a rainstick or chimes begin to play around the sanctuary perimeter as the people are invited to stand and turn and watch the light/acolyte coming in from the back. This intentional “turning” is part of the spiritual practice of the series–turning our listening ear toward God.

Evoking the Mystery

A “threshold moment” is a concept I teach that introduces people to the journey and the theme of the day at the beginning of the service so that everything is seen through that lens. For this series, we have used one of our original sung refrains (“Come and Rest, Come and Listen”) that will repeat every Sunday with a leader part introducing a synopsis of the message. The first Sunday the choir or band will sing the refrain and then the congregation will be invited to join on the second Sunday when it feels more familiar. Listen to an example of this threshold HERE.

Silent Rest

The theme song fades out into a time of silence. Depending on the familiarity of your congregation with silence, you will want to start with a shorter time of silence and lengthen it incrementally through the season. There is a short poem in the Worship Guide for those who need something to focus their attention in the silence.

Examen

The “examen” is a particular prayer practice developed in Ignatian spirituality in which we review our actions. The worship utilizes the concept of this practice, but not the full form, as a way of examining/confessing/bringing our lives before God:

For that which–then–I thought was right…
have mercy, God.
[pause]
For that which–now–I regret…
forgive me, God.
[pause]
For that which–hence–I know not what to do…
guide me, God.
[pause]

Pastor:
Come and rest, come and listen.
Know that grace, forgiveness and guidance are available to you
at each and every moment we turn to receive them.
Thanks be to God.

Opening Hymn/Song

We have chosen hymns (for more “classic” worship) and songs (for more “modern” worship) as suggestions. But you can also feel free to adapt our suggestions, using something more beloved by your congregation if you choose.

FIND

Children’s Discovery Time

Each week children will get to explore one the prayer stations set up for the series.

The Psalmist’s Prayer

Each week includes a reading selection from a Psalm. The congregation will read responsively with a repeated sung refrain woven throughout (there are lots of simple musical “punctation” refrains in this series so that we get plenty of contemplative singing–the experience of singing as prayer. The scripts have all the “rubrics” (such as “the piano continues to play under the next reading”) so you can practice what I call “layering” which is a way of creating a more sensory-rich experience where the art forms (in this case verbal and musical) get to play together. Again, we give you the suggested song references but you can also feel free to choose something else.

Seeking the Word

The second scripture reading is done as an abridged *lectio divina* (a tradition of contemplating scripture). It will be read once, then the “Music for an Inward Journey” will happen, followed by the scripture being read once again.

Music for an Inward Journey

This is what you can consider the “slot” for a choral anthem, ensemble piece, instrumental or band song. We make some suggestions but again, feel free to adapt based on the talent in your church.

Homily

I’m calling the “sermon” a “homily” on purpose for this series because I think it should be shorter than usual and powerfully to the point, leaving more time for prayer and reflection. You will be able to choose to draw from three incredible resources to help you if you like (all sold separately): actual sermons on these topics from Eric Elnes, videos based on this series from Darkwood Brew, and the book, “Let Your Life Speak” by Parker Palmer that inspired me as I wrote this series. These resources are so full of wonderful inspiration, you will not find it difficult at all to bring a transforming word based on these resources as well as your own exegesis and experience.

REFLECT

Appointment with God

This section, named after a kind of worship service developed by my musical collaborator Chuck Bell, takes the place of prayers of the people, pastoral prayer and offering, giving you enough time for people to move to several prayer stations (including communion for Week 3 or every week if that is your practice as well a an offering station every week). The pilgrimage to stations is introduced each week with another original sung refrain, “Meet Me Here.” If you have too small a worship space to do all six stations every week or want to keep your tradition of prayer or offering instead of spending time for multiple stations each week, you can choose the option to do only the one featured prayer station each week:

Week 1: Kneel (or touch the water in the baptismal font)
and make a prayerful commitment to spend time listening for God
Week 2: Light a candle for whatever prayerful purpose
Week 3: Journal about or draw an insight you have gained
Week 4: Write a prayer request for yourself or someone else
Week 5: Write something you need to let go of and dissolve it in water
Week 6: Ring a chime as a prayer for clarity

Music will accompany this and the time of pilgrimage to stations will conclude with a short prayer and Lord’s prayer.

PREPARE TO LISTEN IN THE WORLD

Connecting

This is very uncharacteristic of my worship designs but I didn’t want to start worship for this series with announcements. So after the time of prayer, lights come up (if you have had the flexibility of dimming them for the service) and visitors are welcomed and opportunities for fellowship and service are announced (I would still try to keep these short and to the point) and people are encouraged to the small group or individual prayer practice suggestions.

Hymn/Song for Moving On

The energy is more bright and less contemplative at this point you’ll notice our choices are a bit more energetic than at the beginning of worship. Again, always adapt to your context as needed.

Benediction

I’ve written a benediction that I hope pastors will endeavor to commit to memory so you can say this as you walk down the aisle toward the door, following the light and looking into the people’s eyes as you go.

Benediction Song of Thanks & Passing the Peace

The refrain from Christopher Grundy's "Listening Now" song is easy and your congregation will be humming this slow gospel-feel melody to themselves in no time. After the song, people are invited to pass the peace as they prepare to leave.

I hope this helps you get an at-a-glance feel for the scripts!

See the synopses for every worship experience in the series HERE

If you haven't purchased the series yet (free to WDS members), click HERE

Small group and individual prayer practice suggestions include:

Small Group Video resource from DarkwoodBrew.com based on the series

Small Group Book Study of Parker Palmer's "Let Your Life Speak"

40-day journaling based on Parker Palmer's writings - good for individual practice

Give folks choices for forming their own groups/partners or individual practice of:

Examen
Lectio Divina
Bible Journaling
Praying in Nature/Walking/Running
Praying in Color
Prayer Beads



I hope you will join Worship Design Studio churches for this Lent series!
- Dr. Marcia McFee