

Overview of the Worship Scripts
from Dr. Marcia McFee

I have traveled my entire life. A daughter of an airline pilot, I had the great fortune of being introduced to the wider world at a young age, including church mission trips. As a young adult with a career in professional dance, I got to dance on the stages of the world on just about every continent. In my 30's, I lived and worked in London, Paris, and Naples. And since beginning this freelance worship ministry over 25 years ago, I've had the great privilege of seeing so many of you right where you live across the US and Canada–getting to you by plane or in my RV. I have been in love with the road, the world, and its people my whole life.

I've been a Rick Steves fan all along my adventures. I remember the first time I ate at a restaurant he had recommended in one of his guidebooks. I looked at the folks at the table next to me and they had Rick's book open, no doubt scoping out their next outing in whatever city we were in. We waved and laughed, feeling this moment of community inspired by the "Rick Steves connection." But what really touches me about his influence on travel in the last few decades is his philosophy that imbues the values of his travel company and how they lead people on adventures. It is steeped in respect, humility, and love for the world as well as delight and growth through the eye-opening eureka moments that adventure and exposure to new things can inspire. This is why I so resonate with Rick. Whether it is a trip to the next town or to the other side of the world, I am instantly shifted into "discovery mode" with my awareness heightened and the meaning-making part of my brain fired up. This act of opening and discovering is a very important part of our spiritual journey and I would venture to say that the survival

and cooperation of the species to sustain the planet and safeguard all people depends on this opening and discovering. It is why this next chapter of my life includes “Spiritual Adventures” with small groups to amazing places I have come to love in my travels and studies.

So when I attended the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (United Methodist Church) webinar with Rick Steves, I contacted Tammy Gieselman immediately to begin a collaboration for a worship series drawing on the ideas presented in this conversation. I’ve had the pleasure of leading worship for the GBHEM over the years and believe strongly in any denomination’s work to make education a priority–not just for pastors but for lay persons as well. I think that your congregation will benefit greatly from this focus that elevates our awareness of our place in the global family–the “Kin-dom of Love” as I call it throughout the worship scripts.

Even for those who will never be able to venture beyond their immediate locales, there are so many ways to “travel” and learn about other cultures and religions. The main point of the series is not so much *where* or *how* you “travel," but *that* the act of expanding our horizons and challenging our preconceived notions is essential to our journey of faith. This is the “travelers mindset” and it can also happen right at home.

As always, my worship series are meant to be adapted for your context. If you want to include more scripture readings in your worship, or different ones, please always feel free to do so. Add creeds/kyries or particular texts from your tradition for elements such as confession/assurance. Substitute my music choices for ones more familiar to your community. Use the visual, media, and ritual action ideas that will resonate with your community and simplify by leaving out what isn’t quite right for your context. Lift out liturgy and leader parts and simply import them into your usual order of worship if you wish–whatever is useful for you. I am honored to be a spark of thematic inspiration. You are the co-creator of the final version in your place of worship. My prayers are with you! Have a great adventure!

Peace & Passion,
Dr. Marcia McFee
Creator and Visionary,
Worship Design Studio



My happy place

The Series Materials

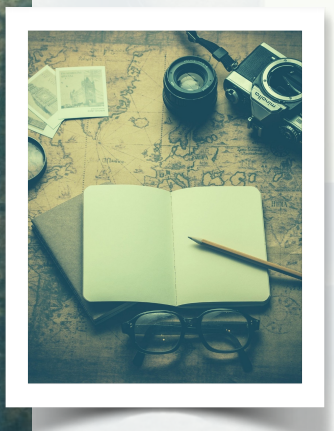
This 4-week series is designed to give you everything you need—all words, hymn and song suggestions, leader introductions, etc. If this is your first time to use our materials, please know that we expect that you will adapt this to fit your context. Not all ideas will work everywhere, and you will change our wording to fit the way you speak, making it your own. You may need to fit this to your current order of worship–you can easily lift any of the suggested material out of these scripts and place it in your more familiar structure.

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, scripts for children's moments, small group suggestions, an original theme song for the series, a prayer song by guest expert Christopher Grundy, and a video trailer you can use for publicity (or call it "evangelism" if you want).

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 or a different way of doing an element of the service for a season but keep it the same during that season, therefore offering some sense of familiarity and a rhythm. We have included a communion prayer separately from the scripts so you can fit that in whenever you have communion. If you do communion weekly, adapt that script according to the theme each week. As always, adapt the communion prayer to fit your tradition.



The "Anchor Image" (main metaphor) for the series is a travel journal (see a collection of Rick Steves' travel stories he has journaled throughout the years in his book, *For the Love of Europe*). This symbol invites us to engage in reflection as we encounter new things, new places, new people. Integrating our experiences into our spiritual practices is what can make a "regular" outing transformative or a trip a pilgrimage of the soul, not just a see-the-sites sprint. How you use graphic arts to design your Worship Guide (what I call a "bulletin") will be evocative, seeing worship as a spiritual journey of travel to the center of our hearts, companioned by the Holy Three-in-One. Many more ideas for visual installation in your sanctuaries are included in the series materials.



In preparation for your planning, read through this Overview as a way of understanding the inspiration behind the design. Then you'll be "off and running," as we say!

The Order of Worship

WE GATHER

Entering the Journey: Threshold Moment

This concept of a “threshold moment” that I teach 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. The theme song will be an ear worm immediately, with a repeating tune and slightly revised words each week. It surrounds what I call a “synopsis” that helps us to orient ourselves to a different aspect of the overarching theme from week to week. Here are the words of the theme song for Week 1 (we are pleased that this song is arranged by WDS Trainer David Horton, who happens to be the music director at Rick Steves’ Lutheran church in Seattle!):

Leaving home, we set our seeing,
on a quest for deeper meaning.
What we find can change us for the love of all
the creation and its beings.

Opening Prayer

A short collect prayer naming the “Sojourner God” who travels with us leads into the Opening Hymn/Song.

Opening Hymn/Song

We have chosen hymns for more “traditional/classic” worship and songs for more “modern/contemporary” worship as suggestions. But you can also feel free to adapt our suggestions if you choose. Just look at the hymns/songs we have chosen and try to find something that keeps the “essence of the message” but may be something more beloved by your congregation. Please refer to the music document to see all our song suggestions and notes about how to incorporate the original music included.

Confession, Assurance and Peace

In the scripts, I suggest that you make the baptism font front and center in your space for this series. If yours is not portable, create a beautiful bowl of water that can stand in as this symbol. The waters of this earth connect us all, touching all our shores, raining on us all. In this way the promise of renewed life and relationship is connected to our desire to renew life and relationship for the planet and all its beings. The confession portion of this prayer is a verbal “thread”–it remains the same each week. The Assurance is tweaked a bit for each week. If you need to adapt the wording for your tradition, please feel free to do so.

The peace starts with familiar words, but then I suggest that you find various greetings from around the world to embody. We've provided a link to learn some.

WE PROCLAIM

Children's Time of Unpacking

The time with children is inspired by a song by Marty Haugen, "Kingdom of God." Each verse references the Gospel texts in which Jesus compares us to salt, light, seed, and "pilgrims." Each week will feature a variety of things from around the word that goes with each of those verses, coming out of a backpack (one of Rick Steves' favorite travel items). Rick's website is a treasure trove of educational video clips that we will suggest that directors of children's ministries can incorporate outside of worship or hand on to parents for viewing at home. This time in worship concludes with a "repeat-after-me" prayer:

We've got our packs…
we've got our load…
We're ready now…
to hit the road…
Be with us, God…
around the bend…
Help us to make…
strangers, friends…
Amen.

First Reading

We have chosen a reading from the Hebrew Bible that deepens the theme of the week. If your congregation usually follows a lectionary and needs to maintain a reference to that, feel free to replace this reading with one from the lectionary you use for that week.

Anthem/Song

As usual, we make multiple suggestions to get you going on a choice for your choir, ensemble, or band. And as always, check out our choices, choose one that feels appropriate or replace with something else, if you prefer.

Second Reading and Sermon

The scriptures for this series are not chosen from a lectionary because churches will be doing this at various times of the year. We have created a Sermon Fodder document that unpacks the thinking behind their selection and some starters as you begin to develop your sermon. We have also included some Rick Steves clips that could be incorporated (yes, we have received permission for these to be shown in worship, even if you are live-streaming or posting worship online). **Don't forget, there is a lively community on the Worship Design Studio website that shares sermon ideas!**

WE RESPOND

Reflecting on the Journey

After the sermon, there is a time to write in a "travel journal." You could create small journals for people, or include some space in your worship guide for journaling (we have created some examples of worship guides with journaling space in the downloads to inspire your own creativity). The main metaphor, or anchor image, of a travel journal invites us to not only *have* experiences, but to be intentionally *mindful* of the implications of those experiences on our spiritual growth. We have suggested some questions for each week, but feel free to come up with your own journal prompts.

Please note that we have also included a separate guided reflection journal featuring video clips from Rick Steves and question prompts to inspire deeper reflection. This journal can be used by individuals who want to deepen their solo journaling practice during the week or with others as a small group study.

Prayers of the People

Worship Design Studio Guest Expert, Christopher Grundy, has a song that I have loved for quite some time. It is especially appropriate for this series, and so we have made arrangements for the music to be included in your downloads. "Stepping In" weaves through the time of journaling above and then leads us into our prayer time.

My recommendation in this series is that you formulate your prayers in a way that feels familiar to your congregation. However, I want to call attention to the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Prayer Cycle and the amazing resources there. I'm hoping you will be inspired to include a special prayer focus for the countries listed for the weeks you are doing this series… and perhaps beyond.

Offering

Each week we suggest a way to incorporate the theme for that week into the call for offering. For instance, for Week 1 (“Leaving Home”), the suggestion reads like this: “highlight ways that your church contributes to sustain those who left home under duress (refugees, domestic abuse), those who are unsettled still (immigrants or economically insecure) or those who are without a home.”

Communion

This is the place where you could insert the communion script I have written on the weeks when that is appropriate for your tradition. Again, please adapt what I have written, especially if you celebrate this sacrament weekly.

SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

The closing song is an exclamation point on the theme for the day.
Again, always adapt to your context as needed.

Benediction

We have designed some postcards for you to print out on card stock if you so choose, that highlight the message each week. Before the Benediction, you could introduce those if you have not already utilized it in your sermon. The language for dismissal into the world varies slightly for each week but ends with this same blessing:

And may the Creator continue your unfolding,
the Christ accompany your deeper knowing,
the Spirit enliven your growing,
until one day we all gather in the Kin-dom of Love.
Amen.

Benediction Song Reprise

The theme song refrain for the week is repeated here or go right into a Postlude.



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

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

If you'd like to get access to ALL our series, check out a Worship Design Studio subscription HERE