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Supplement

CATALYST

GLORIFYING GOD: Working together to create a worship service

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At St. Andrew's Church we strive to glorify God and encourage the faith community by designing and providing worship services that are biblically sound, spiritually uplifting, culturally relevant, intellectually stimulating, appropriately inclusive, and meaningful for all ages.

Have you ever wondered how a worship service is created, or what goes on behind the scenes to prepare for a major communion or a special service involving guest participants? In this article we'll take a look at many of the interconnected activities involved in developing and conducting a worship service.

The Book of Forms, which sets out the approved practice for Presbyterian Churches, specifies that "as the executive of the presbytery, the minister is responsible for the conduct and content of public worship" [Sec. 111.] While the minister bears the overall responsibility, whether it's a regular Sunday morning service, a mid-week half-hour communion service in the chancel, the 48th Highlanders Annual Church Parade, the yearly Christmas pageant or a summer service with a visiting minister, creating a worship service is a complex endeavour involving the collegial cooperation of a remarkably large group of people. It's very much like creating and choreographing a stage production—every week! The weekly worship service is also like a heartbeat pulsing steadily in the midst of the ebb and flow of the church calendar...pulsing steadily while we respond to less predictable events such as illnesses, funerals, tragedies, major current events and large fundraising activities.

Advance Planning

First, let's look at the big picture. Our Senior Minister, Will Ingram, develops a schedule for the upcoming year, taking into consideration the official Church Year list of special church dates, the congregational special events calendar, the schedule of communion services developed by the Session, and the secular calendar of special holidays. He reviews the schedule with Dan Bickle, our organist and Director of Music, and shares it with Church School superintendent Mary Maiden, the Worship Committee, Session, with me in my role as Administrative Assistant and with our Church Manager, Doug Pearson. Will and I determine when to contact outside parties such as the 48th Highlanders Regiment, the IODE and the St. Andrew's Society to begin the in-depth planning necessary to ensure that we attend to the many details inherent in those special services.

Behind the Scenes

In the background, members of the Worship Committee regularly attend to recurring features of the worship service that involve participation by volunteers. Ruth Darling recruits adults and youths to serve as Lay Readers, and Susan Goodwin enlists members of Session to serve as Greeting Elders at the end of each service. Each of them maintains a roster and sends me an updated schedule monthly. Hugh Lloyd and Eric Reynolds coordinate teams of ushers to greet worshippers and receive our weekly offerings. Ruth Dicerni and Beverly Graham plan and arrange the lovely floral arrangements

that grace the chancel every week. Clerk of Session Lori Ransom or her designate, usually former Clerk Grant Farrow, enlists elders to serve the elements (i.e. the wine and wafers) at communions.



A pulpit fall.

Support staff members Jim Callan, Arnaldo dos Santos and Stewart Moracen clean the sanctuary, ensure that falls of the correct colour for the liturgical date are placed on the pulpit, lectern and chancel organ stall, and order supplies such as candles and the elements.

In the office, I set up files for two or three months' services at a time, enter relevant reminders in my electronic calendar, and begin to consider whether supplies such as special inserts need to be ordered from the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCIC) *Book Room*. I also contact the Lay Readers well in advance to provide them with the scripture passages they will be reading and to give them directions about the Little Entry (bringing the Bible to the pulpit).

Creating a Worship Service

Now let's look at the process of developing an individual service.

The first step is to identify the type of service and thus the specific Order of Service and liturgy to use. The following questions must be considered: *Is a communion service scheduled? Will we be receiving new members or celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism? Is there a church, congregational or public "special event" to be incorporated or celebrated?*



The final movement of a worship service that included celebration of a traditional communion.

If a communion service is scheduled, which type of communion will it be? At St. Andrew's Church we have three types of communion services: *Traditional*, served in the pews, *Intinction*, served at the front of the nave, and *Chancel* communions, which are served in the chancel. Traditional communions are held five times a year at Advent, the first Sunday in February, Easter, Pentecost and World Communion Sunday. Intinction communion services are held on the first Sunday of each month provided a Traditional communion is not scheduled for that day, and at both of the Christmas Eve worship services. Chancel communions usually occur

on the third Sunday of every month following the worship service and weekly on Thursdays during the noon hour. The communion schedule was developed by the Session, which must approve any deviations in advance.

If we will be receiving new members or celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism, the Senior Minister will have previously met with the participants to provide instruction, and he will have ensured that Session has granted approval. Will or I will have purchased illustrated Bibles and Heather Dalzell will have arranged to obtain roses to be presented to the parents of children being baptized. Will also writes letters to each of the children, which are copied into their gift Bibles.

Once Will has determined the appropriate liturgy, he refers to the Revised Common Lectionary to identify the scripture passages for the week in question and to select the passage on which he will base his sermon. This lectionary, used by many denominations around the world, is a list of scriptures and psalms to be used at worship services for each week of the year. The listing for a given week includes a reading from the Hebrew scriptures, a responsive Psalm, a reading from one of the Epistles, and a Gospel reading. The lectionary specifies scriptures in a logical pattern and also contains selections appropriate to special church occasions. In addition to the list of scripture passages, the lectionary notes the liturgical date (e.g., the Second Sunday after Pentecost, the Third Sunday of Advent and so on) and the liturgical colour.

After developing a theme for his sermon, and in consultation with Dan Bickle, Will selects four hymns that complement the service. He also gives consideration to their suitability for the liturgical date in question and their familiarity to the congregation. We try to balance the desire to sing old favourites with introducing the congregation to less well-known yet equally wonderful hymns. Dan selects the musical pieces for the Introit and the two Anthems. He bases his choices on the lectionary readings, the topic of Will's sermon and the musical skills of the choristers who will be participating in the service. If necessary, Dan also "points" the responsive Psalm to ensure it works well with the chant he has selected and then he sends the revised version to me so I can update our computer library and ensure that the revised version is used in the bulletin insert. Dan also selects the appropriate version of the closing Gloria chant to accompany the Psalm.

Will then composes or selects the prayers used in the service: the Opening Responses, Prayers of Approach, Children's Prayer, Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession and the Benediction.

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Meanwhile, I prepare an Order of Service bulletin document based on a standard template for the type of worship service in question. I update the heading and enter the scripture passages, as per the lectionary, and the titles of the Introit and Anthems. I email this document to Will, who enters the text of the prayers, the hymn numbers and the title of his sermon. He emails it back to me for printing. Then Will focuses on writing the sermon.

My next step is to format the bulletin insert, which contains the text of the scripture passages and anthems, the responsive Psalm, the words to the anthems, the weekly calendar of church events and the announcements. Often I need to prepare a special insert to announce an upcoming event.

I proofread the bulletin and insert, cross-checking to ensure that we have the correct information in both documents before printing. Then I fold them, using our high-speed automatic folding machine. I also make about ten copies in large print format for people with low vision. The final step involves placing the inserts inside the bulletins and bundling them for distribution. At about this time Jim Callan updates the numbers on the hymn boards in the sanctuary.

If we are holding a traditional communion service we need to use a different Order of Service bulletin. Will and Dan review the template for the proposed liturgy and make any necessary changes, then send it to me for printing and assembly.

The overall process is similar when we're preparing for the Thursday Chancel Communion worship services. An important aspect of our mission to reach out to residents and workers in the downtown core, these services are intimate and often quite touching. Attendance now ranges from 20 to 45 people. Will selects a responsive Psalm and a scripture passage, often from the lectionary, and he prepares a ten-minute meditation. He decides which Order of Service liturgy to use, and often designs new liturgies so he can more carefully tailor the services to the time of year. He also recently implemented the opportunity for participants to make a voluntary offering, which has resulted in significantly increased funding support for our Out of the Cold program, the Boarding Homes Ministry and Parish Nursing. He also welcomes everyone to participate in our other church activities. Many participants now receive our weekly newsletters.

Setting the Stage

Every Friday afternoon Jim and Arnaldo tidy up the pews. They straighten and align all of the hymn books and Psalters, and replace missing pew cards. Before every service they check the microphones, set up the CD recording system, light the candles in the chancel and set

out the offering plates. If a special parade entry is involved, they place bulletins in the pews reserved for our guests, since colour guards and other parading guests can't pick them up at the door. If we are serving communion, Heather Dalzell, Robert Sheng, Lori Ransom or another member of the Chancel Guild set out the elements on the communion table.

Shortly after 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings, the members of the choir assemble in Dan's office on the third floor of the East tower for choir practice. Since all of them are professional singers, this is the only practice they hold.

At about 10:00 a.m. the team of ushers gathers at the King Street doors to greet worshippers and distribute the Order of Service bulletins.

Getting Ready

Approximately five minutes before the beginning of a Sunday service the minister, the lay reader and the choir gather in the Vestry hall where the minister says a short prayer. After the prayer, half of the choir members make the trip through the hidden passage to the opposite side of the chancel while the lay reader starts the Little Entry by taking the Bible to the pulpit. Then Dan begins playing the Gathering Hymn. The choir members enter the chancel and begin their processional. Worship has begun!

Commemorative Services

When we are having a special worship service such as the Christmas pageant, or are honouring the work of outside organizations such as the 48th Highlanders, the IODE, St. Andrew's Society or other agencies, considerably more preparation is involved. The dates for these services are set well ahead of time.

Members of the Treen family delighted the congregation with their amazing unicycle camels for several years. We will miss these performances!



The **Christmas pageant** service involves careful planning with the Church School volunteers and Dan Bickle, and it requires a special bulletin. The caretakers check and clean the manger scene props and make any necessary repairs. Once the pageant has been presented the Flower Committee swings into action and finishes decorating the sanctuary for the Christmas season. Poinsettias are put in place in the chancel and evergreen garlands are strung along the gallery.

Annual services celebrating the work of the IODE and the St. Andrew's Society usually involve a planning meeting between one or two dignitaries and Will Ingram to review the proposed Order of Service and to clarify details such as the names of visiting lay readers and who will be responsible for booking a Piper. We usually prepare a special bulletin or insert.

Planning for the **48th Highlanders Annual Regimental Church Parade** starts about two months in advance. This service is highly choreographed, with each step taken by the colour guard and other ceremonial members of the regiment itemized in 15 pages of official 'parade orders'. We start by arranging a rehearsal date and identifying the names of major participants. Since the Regimental Band plays during the service, Dan Bickle liaises with the band leader. Will and I liaise with the commanding officer and the regimental chaplain to attend to many of the details. The bulletin must be ready earlier than usual so that we can forward it to participating members of the regiment for review prior to the rehearsal.



Rev. Greg Bailey, Chaplain of the 48th Highlanders Regiment of Canada, Rev. Will Ingram and Commanding Officer L. Col. Andrew Paterson rehearse the ritual of turning a page in the Book of Remembrance while a ceremonial officer observes.



Left: Pipe Major Iain Lang practices before the June, 2008 Annual Church Parade. Right: Commanding Officer Andrew Paterson reading the Scripture Lessons.

Vacations

Another of the minister's duties is to arrange for an alternate minister to conduct services when he is absent. Usually one of our associate ministers, George Vais, Iain Nicol and Rodger Hunter, performs, but occasionally we have a visiting minister. I liaise with these ministers to prepare the bulletins, and I send visiting ministers a detailed choreography of the service so they will feel comfortable with our relatively traditional service.

Dan Bickle arranges for guest organists to play when he is on vacation, and, since the choir is on hiatus, he also arranges for soloists. The soloists select musical pieces for the Introit and Anthems that are compatible with the scripture passages specified in the lectionary for the weeks they will be singing, and suitable for their individual musical abilities.

A Collective "thank you!"

As you can see, it takes the cooperation of many people to develop and conduct a worship service of very high calibre every week. We have been blessed with many wonderfully skilled and highly dedicated people who are willing to work diligently in this ministry. A huge "thank you" to all of them!

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