

Liturgist Training Guide – August 2022

Thank you! Your leadership makes such a huge difference for our congregation when we gather for worship.

Pragmatic Things, i.e., Watch Your Inbox!

We have an online sign up so that we don't have to constantly recruit liturgists. Watch your inbox!

We may need to recruit for Sundays when no one has signed up. Watch your inbox!

You will get a copy of the bulletin on Thursdays (usually). Watch your inbox!

A Bit of Background

Liturgy is NOT just reading, but leading the people in worship.

There are things we can do to make it more possible for our liturgy to be meaningful, powerful.

Be prepared. Lead and read well. Lead with grace. Expect the Spirit to show up.

Sometimes your leading will be a profound experience of the Spirit, for yourself or for someone in the congregation, BUT, most of the time you're just leading a Call to Worship or Scripture. That's OK! It's not all mountaintops!

Being Prepared

Read your parts ahead of time, and read aloud several times so that you understand as much as you can what is being read. Know literary type, know the context (read before and after!), know the original audience, etc. Find the mood and emotional moment that is happening in Scripture.

Ex.: A letter from Paul will be read differently than a parable from Luke, and a Genesis story of the ancestors will be read differently than a Psalm. A Psalm of lament will be read differently than a Psalm of thanksgiving.

Public Leading & Reading

Bring life to the readings, prayers, liturgy but don't 'perform' it. Don't use character voices, don't be overly dramatic.

Remember: Scripture, for most of its history, was primarily heard in public, not read silently/privately.

Pauses & Pace: Let people's attention catch up to you! Be ready, but there is no need to rush. A few seconds of silence can make a huge difference in connecting with the congregation. You cannot lead if they're not ready to follow.

Read slower than you normally would, but don't drag, Use pauses in reading to let hearers process information, imagine the scene, connect the words.

A print out in larger font can be helpful.

Before Scripture reading – Begin the reading with something like “This morning’s [first/second] reading is from [book] in the [Xth] chapter. Listen now for the word of the Lord.

Ex.: “This morning’s first reading is from the Gospel of Luke in the 17th chapter. Listen now for the word of the Lord.”

After Scripture reading – We will often include a blessing, something like “The word of God for the people of God.” These will often be responsive and included in the bulletin.

Possible blessings when there is not a congregational response

May the Spirit breathe life into this reading, and may this reading speak into our lives.

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. [Use for a Gospel reading only, of course!]

Let to those who have ears to hear, hear.

May God bless the reading and hearing of this word.

Pronunciation: There are sometimes complicated names for people and places. No need to try and make them more “Hebrew” or “Greek” with your pronunciations. Many are already adaptations into English (Moshe, Shlomo, Yeshua). Be consistent with names, ask the preacher if you have a question, and read with confidence.

If/when you mess up a reading or prayer: It happens! It’s OK. A big apology and/or explanation isn’t usually needed. Simply stop, correct the mistake and carry on. On RARE occasions an explanation may be helpful, e.g., “I’m sorry. I was reading the wrong passage.”

A Liturgist Script can be available if you ask Clay. The Script would include the readings as well as the prompts and responses for the liturgy.

A word about translations: NRSV is probably the most faithful widely-available English translation. NIV opts for simpler English. The Message is not a translation, can be helpful, but often loses some of the subtlety. If you are interested in reading something other than NRSV or NIV, please ask the preacher.

Other Parts of the Service

SIGNPOSTING – Giving people simple, clear directions so they know where to go and what to do. This may be the most helpful practice to develop for leading worship. It’s an act of hospitality for people who are new in worship and it’s a helpful way to corral the congregation and keep everyone together.

Ex.: “Please join me in the Call to Worship [printed in our bulletins/on the screens]. I’ll read the regular font and I invite you to read the bold font.”

When asking people to stand: “Please stand as you are comfortable” is preferable to “...as you are able.”

Welcome and Greeting – “Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.” “The grace of peace be with you this morning.” “In the name of Christ, welcome to our worship service.”

The relaxed, off the cuff welcome is great – genuine, warm, real.

Announcements – Usually ONE announcement that affects the majority of LOUMC folks. Clay or Pam may have a suggestion. We don't HAVE to have an announcement.

Call to Worship – This is often taken from Scripture or a theme related to worship. It is a way for the Body to invite itself to be ready to meet Christ. It can set expectation and tone for the service. Often the mood is joyous and uplifting, although sometimes it is more solemn, penitent, or even grief-laden.

Prayers – We may have a corporate prayer for the Liturgist to lead. Leading a prayer is similar to other parts of the liturgy – read it beforehand, find the right pauses, invite people to join.

Invitation to Generosity – Can be a specific invitation to an offering or a collection of goods, or may be a general invitation to living and giving generously. This is a new and evolving practice, and Clay will often give the liturgist specific language.

On the morning when you are leading: **Please arrive at least 15 minutes before worship to do a sound check, to see if there are any changes or additions to the worship service, and to be relaxed and ready to lead.**