

Notes from Classes on Worship Planning
SEJ Music Week
Lake Junaluska, NC
June 20 - 25, 2004

Planning Energized Worship

Daily words of emphasis:

Monday

Purpose

Process

Payoff

Participation

Tuesday

Concerns

Commitment

Consensus

Clarity

Wednesday

Systems

Strategies

Synergy

Strengths

Quote for the day:

Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts.

Albert Einstein

Words that describe our worship:

Emotional, responding, healing, giving, confessing, pardoning, sharing, learning, thanksgiving, mystery, together, glorifying God, praising, listening, participating, God centered, gratitude, proclaiming, musical, spiritual, joyful, prayer

Words that describe our values related to worship:

Communion with God, family time, sacred, reassurance, Sabbath, renewal, revelation of God's Word, service, community, relevant, calling to mission, spiritual refreshment, truth, spiritual growth, integrity

Issues that impact our worship planning process:

Communication, assimilation of ideas before implementation, setting ground rules for group process, developing knowledge of available resources, respect for different modes of thinking, intentional use of varied styles of thinking and relating to each other, knowing the congregation, giving time for team work to work, having maturity in all team members, having rapport with members of the team, taking things personally

Hugh's comments about what makes a contemporary service work:

Don't call it 'contemporary', unify everything in the service with the theme, schedule it for mid-morning on Sunday, hold it in a space unique to this kind of worship, hold to a high quality standard, get buy-in from everyone (congregation, staff, leaders, Sunday Schools, etc.), the senior pastor should preach at all services (very important!)

The group was sub-divided into groups of 5-6 each and given instructions to find two or three things that everyone had in common and to write them down on 3x5 cards provided. The next day two groups of 10 were chosen with each group divided into two lines of 5 people each. The two lines faced each other in two straight lines. The objective was to support a long pole by placing fingers under the pole, not on top and gradually lowering the pole to the ground as a team. (When returning to the big group, the following question was asked with the responses recorded.)

Observations on the PROCESS of coming to group decisions and working as a team:

One person led, all agreed
Ideas suggested were rejected
One person first suggested ideas, then others joined in
Everyone talked at once
All asked questions
The group relearned what works
There was no consistency in method or pattern
The process was as good as the weakest participant
There were clear, measurable objectives
There were differences in perception
There was an effort to start cooperating
There was some legalistic interpretation of ideas suggested
Several leaders emerged as the process continued
Blame was placed for the pole not going to the ground immediately (it went up)
A single leader emerged

We then looked at how this gave us insight into the dynamics of teams working together. The following topic was explored:

Challenges for Planning Teams (especially Worship Planning Teams):

Knowing your congregation
Making last minute changes vs. long range planning
(it was suggested that this happens with both ministers and musicians)
Clear objectives with clear, complete communication
The team is composed of strong leaders (a power issue)
The pressure of informal power in the church (strong opinions of members)
A cooperative spirit and effort
Opinion of what music goes with the message
Different preference of worship styles
Remaining focused (and on task)

Potential solutions were conceived for the first 4 issues:

Strong leaders compose the team (power issues)

Awareness of preferred communication styles
Respect other's strengths and opinions

Define specific responsibilities and roles
Understand the other's perspective and opinion

Know the congregation

Know who the problem makers are and get to know them (visit?)
Identify sources of information within the congregation
Visit every family over a two-year period
Get input from those who attend on Sunday morning (survey?)
Develop 'focus groups' to be educated and respond

Late changes vs. long range planning

Develop a team covenant (include "no planning surprises")
Hold regular, scheduled planning sessions (long and short term planning)
Commit to a common goal
Meet on Sunday morning early to check in and clarify

Clear goals and communication

Require effective preparation
Allow full participation
Encourage "humble listening"
Engage in long range planning
Secure the services of an outside neutral facilitator (I did NOT prompt this one!)

The session on Wednesday was devoted to working on a real project for the Haymount United Methodist Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina. This church was planning to begin a new contemporary worship service in the fall. The project outline follows:

Planning a New Worship Service

Project Objective

To develop a comprehensive plan for a new worship service at Haymount UMC

Deliverables of This Session

Identify members for the Planning Team
To Define the Service Style and Leadership
To identify major challenges and concerns
To develop a plan of action for the new service

Off Limits for This Session

To dwell on past failures
To discuss the fine details of the new service

Background (generally accepted facts about the situation)

The kick-off date for the new service is Sept. 12
Preachers will be: Sr. Pastor, Youth Pastor, Assoc. Pastor
Preachers will rotate weekly
The new service will be at 9:50 or 10:00 a.m.

The service will last 40 minutes
Coordinator is spouse of staff member (Youth pastor) and seminary student
Duties of the coordinator have not been fully defined
There are existing services in the sanctuary at 8:30 & 11:00 a.m.
The new service will be held in a new location (Gym)
There are existing youth & adult praise bands
The Sunday p.m. praise service has been discontinued (low attendance)
There is a plan to start Sunday School classes at 11:00
The Sr. Pastor is committed to this service
One goal is to reach the “unchurched”
It will be a band led worship service (no choir, no organ)

Define Awesome, Energized Worship

Lives are changed
Creates hunger for servanthood
Increases discipleship
Promotes spiritual growth
Members become more active
Salvation
Attendees are inspired
Members are bonded
God is pleased with our worship
Membership increases
There is a hunger for more
Giving increases
Members attend faithfully
The service is organized thematically
The music is joyful
It is relevant (dance, drama, visuals, etc.)
Every service is well rehearsed and well planned
It begins and ends on time!
The equipment works (check regularly)
Talented key tech team
There is a critical mass in attendance

Select Members for the Planning Team

Minister, music director, worship chair, youth minister, lay leader, associate pastor, altar guild chair, representative from other fine arts disciplines, Christian Education representative, finance committee chair (7 – 12 members)

Define the “Ground Rules” for Planning Team Meetings

Treat each other with respect
Stay focused on meeting objectives and goals
Listen more than talking
Consider the idea that there are no bad ideas – all ideas are heard
Honor the agreed upon time line

Give each member an opportunity to talk
 Limit air time (no long speeches or stories)
 Commit to all meetings and full project time line
 Define ways to celebrate the final success of the project

Barriers in Our Way (obstacles to getting service started)

A “one church” image needs to be established
 Defining the Christian Education needs for this congregation
 Finding space and time for extra rehearsals
 Negative opinions from others
 The current name for the space (gym) might cause confusion
 Congregation needs to learn new songs
 Naming the service
 Funding the budget for the service
 Finding extra parking
 Finding extra planning time
 Finding sufficient child care workers

GAP ANALYSIS

Where We Are

Concept for new service

Major Actions

Build small group support
 Plan to relay new ideas
 Identify target attendees
 Get buy-in for financial support
 Promotion: give reasons to go
 Educate cong. about need
 Research costs
 Secure seed money
 Train worship leaders
 Train tech team
 Secure seed group attendance
 Marketing & Communication plans
 Dedicate the space

Where We Want to Be

Energized worship

ACTION PLAN (only partially completed: for demonstration only)

Tasks to Pull it Off

Responsible Person

Completion Date

Research costs & build budget
 Identify funding sources
 Recruit tech personnel
 Ask member to commit to come
 Identify worship leadership team
 Identify worship design team
 Identify promotional messages
 Plan for coffee, etc.

Items not addressed (to be addresses next time)

Design action plans for barriers

Define who will produce the service

Clarify staff assignment issues

Plan Sunday School schedule and recruit teachers

Insure that this service is compatible with church mission statement

Develop connections and plan for continuing member spiritual growth

Develop connections and plan for “unchurched” spiritual development

Lessons Learned with this Exercise

Sunday School issues need to be addressed early

The new service effects everyone

Hugh's additions:

The group discovers more ideas than one person can do alone

The team builds enthusiasm by planning the service

The team develops ownership for the service

The planning process begins to build community

The resource list expands with the combined wisdom of the team