

Guidelines for Worship Services

One of the many delightful characteristics of community life on Muldrew Lake is the open-air, ecumenical worship services held on Sunday mornings at Memorial Pines. Historically, these services were led by early cottagers who were clergy. Today a mixture of clergy and lay people lead the services.

Memorial Pines has been an incredible place for services. Here, even the clergy have felt free to experiment with the structure or the themes of the service. It has been a place where the newest and least experienced lay person has been welcomed onto the preaching roster and where less experienced lay people have gained an increasingly competent grasp of how to structure a service and how to create a compelling message.

A number of experienced leaders are available to offer guidance as necessary. As well as that support, here are some guidelines for services for prospective leaders of the worshipping community.

Creating a Worship Service

- It is helpful if the whole service has a focus or theme. Then all the elements, from music to children's story to sermon to prayers, can relate in some way to the theme.
- The power of linking the theme to the scripture should not be underestimated.
- The service should be no longer than one hour for a number of reasons. Children are often present and they (and sometimes their parents) get restless when the service goes on too long. If a baptism is to be included, then the rest of the service needs to be shorter to accommodate this. As well, the immediate neighbours are aware of the need to minimize boating noise during this hour, and we don't want to inconvenience them by making the service any longer.
- Consider using a children's story or some kind of experiential or interactive element. This can be one of the hardest parts of the service to bring off well. The children who come are not always the right age for the planned activity, or they may not give you the expected responses. However, this part of the service is often one that even the adults remember many years later, so it's worth the effort.
- Normally, sermons should last no more than about 15 minutes. Choose a topic which fits with your overall theme. Telling people your structure and the main points makes it easier for the listeners to follow your thought. For each element or section of the sermon, try to give an illustration or very brief story.
- Most of us appreciate an abundance of music in the service. The hymn book we use is Voices United, and our community knows many of its hymns well. It is perfectly acceptable to teach a new tune or one not in the hymn book, but it's wise to limit this to one new tune per service. Singing music that is familiar is a unifying and healing experience, and while our community is open to learning new things, it's important to balance the new with the old.
- Some people are completely comfortable leading hymns and others are grateful for assistance. Some people who are used to leading hymns may appreciate not having to think about that when they are doing a service. For help in starting the hymns and leading the music, or even in choosing the hymns, you can ask

Don Gillies, Esther Ewing, or Peter Scovil among others. If they are around, these folks are usually very happy to oblige.

- There are other resources you might find helpful in planning your service in the back of the Voices United hymn book, such as prayers and service structures. As well, if you are interested in following the lectionary, there are specific readings for each Sunday in this section, together with suggested hymns to go with the readings.

Useful Material in Voices United

If you are not familiar with music edition of Voices United, the hymn book used at Memorial Pines, it has a lot of useful information at the back to help with service planning. For example, the lectionary (a list of Bible readings used each Sunday in a number of denominations throughout the world). It is found starting p. 998. However, the part that includes our summer services starts on p. 1005. The lectionary follows a three-year cycle. In 2015 it is Year 'B' (i.e., the second column). If it helps you please use the readings corresponding the date of the service you are leading. The short forms of the Bible books are not found in the hymn book so you will have to puzzle that out for yourself.

You are not obligated to use all or any of these readings or the hymns associated with them. Sometimes speakers use them, and sometimes they are led in a different direction. However, it is a good place to start when planning a service, as sometimes a theme emerges that fits in with what you may have been thinking about already. Or sometimes if your mind is blank, it gives you a kick start! The hymn suggestions may give you ideas on hymns you would not have otherwise thought of.

If you choose other readings, or want other hymn suggestions than those listed, look on p. 1013 and following to find suggestions to fit various Bible passages. A topic or theme index starts on p. 1023. Look around the back of the hymnal. You'll find lots of useful ideas.

If you want a copy of Voices United, feel free to borrow one from Memorial Pines if you're up before you do the service. Please coordinate getting a copy with the Director responsible for the services as they are in a locked cabinet.

We don't know if the 'words only' book has all this useful stuff in it. We suspect not.

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