

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Annual church meeting after the service today

Sunday 04 August - 10:30AM. Lance Owen speaking

Sunday 11 August - 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking

Sunday 18 August - 10:30AM.

Sunday 25 August - 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking

Sunday 8th Sept: 'Thank you' service for those who serve

Saturday 14th Sept: AIM UK&I - "Family Life"

Sunday 15th Sept: Congregational vision workshop

Sunday 29th Sept: 10:30 AM. Speaker Bruce Miller

Sunday 17th Nov: 10:30 AM. "Safeguarding Sunday"

Saturday 7th Dec: AIM UK&I - "World Views"

Guidance For Those Hosting Parts of Sunday Worship - Part 2

Today, we continue a multi-part series exploring why we do what we do at a Sunday gathering. Last week, we introduced the concept of 'hosting' to frame the role of those leading us in public worship. We examined some New Testament examples and teachings on collective worship. Finally, we considered the aims of collective worship.

This time, we will examine general guidance for leaders of worship, including context, attitude, connection, themes, overloading, and preparation.

Guidance. What follows is guidance—not rules—and applies now, 2024, for us here in Watford. These guidelines will doubtless need to be updated in the future. They can and should be changed as needs dictate. No local practices are permanent - only the Word of God never changes!

"All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever." (1 Peter 1:24-25 NIV11)

Context. What you do and say should be affected by the time of year (Christmas), special days (Remembrance Sunday), visiting speakers and unexpected events (outbreak of war). Paul's lesson in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16-47) is very different from his presentation in Athens (Acts 17:22-31). Why? Because the cultures and religious contexts of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) and Greece were very different.

Attitude. In general, those speaking on a Sunday will want to have the attitude of a host. The early church met in homes most of the time. It was natural for the head of the house to be the host. For example, "Gaius, host to me and the whole church, greets you." (Romans 16.23) Good hosts do not make themselves the centre of attention but have the interests of their guests in mind and do their best to ensure things run smoothly so that people are not distracted from the purpose of the gathering.

Connect. When it is your turn to speak, do your best to connect with what has just happened and what will happen next. For example:

"That song helped me to.....and now Sarah will lead us in prayer."

"Thank you for the lesson, Charl. Your sharing about.....helps us as we approach taking the Lord's Supper because....."

Connections help avoid a disjointed service.

Themes. It is good practice for people leading parts of the service to find out in advance if there

is a theme for the service that day. If so, it helps if we fit our sharing/praying, etc., into that theme. For example, let's say the theme is 'The mercy of Jesus'. If the welcome, prayers, lesson and songs are all connected with mercy, we will all go home thoroughly 'drenched' in that Biblical theme and Christlike characteristic. Elements could include songs like, 'You are merciful to me'; a prayer themed on "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions." Psalm 51:1; and a lesson on the demoniac - "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." Mark 5:19.

Overload. Perhaps you have experienced church services with several 'lessons' - one in the welcome, one from the sermon, another in the HOPE talk and a further 'lesson' in the communion talk. Occasionally, one of the prayers turns into a 'lesson'. The problem, no matter how sincere each person has been in delivering their lesson, is that the hearers go away confused and overloaded. So many lessons in such a short time cannot all be absorbed. As a general habit, it works best when the sermon or equivalent is the *main* lesson and the other parts of the service support or augment that lesson.

Preparation. There is a balance between informality and formality or between spontaneity and preparation. We will not lay down a rule, but let us reflect on one point. It is based on this passage:

"When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation." 1 Corinthians 14:26 NRSV

Here, we see that members of the Corinthian church had prepared what they were bringing to the service. While this passage is descriptive, not prescriptive, it speaks to the value of thinking about what we will say (or sing) in the days leading up to the service. Preparation is no

barrier to spontaneity or informality. When you get up to speak, you can add to what you have prepared or change it, but some preparation is wise. If nothing else, you can more fully participate in the worship before you speak. If you are prepared, you can relax, listen, pray or sing wholeheartedly before it is your turn. Indeed, you will find it easier to incorporate anything relevant that has happened before you step up to speak. That being said, preparation is no barrier to spontaneity, and we must always leave room for the Spirit to redirect us as he sees fit.

Next time, we will consider the details of preparing and presenting various parts of the service.

Please tell me your thoughts on these ideas.

God bless, Malcolm

Watford Contribution Details

Church bank account: Three Counties churches of Christ HSBC

Sort Code: 401915

Account Number: 04759613

Watford Media

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watfordchurchofchrist6708>

Podcast: <https://www.podbean.com/pu/pbblog-aiinq-1aef90>

