

## **GUIDELINES FOR LEHIGH PRESBYTERY MEETINGS AND WORSHIP** **Approved September 25, 2007 (Revised May 6, 2014)**

### **I. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS**

#### **1. WORSHIP AND MISSION**

The church participates in God's mission to the world through its ministry and worship. Worship presents the reality of the divine rule which God has promised in Jesus Christ as the final renewal of creation. The worshiping community in its integrity before the Word and its unity in prayer and Sacraments is a sign of the presence of the reign of God. The church in its ministry bears witness to God's reign through the proclamation of the gospel ...<sup>1</sup>

God calls the church in worship to join the mission of Jesus Christ in service to the world. As it participates in that mission the church is called to worship God in Jesus Christ, who reigns over the world.<sup>2</sup>

Governing bodies shall worship regularly and shall order that worship in accordance with the principles of this directory. Each governing body should establish a group charged with responsibility for and oversight of its worship. It may also adopt guidelines for the planning and conduct of worship at its meetings.

In governing bodies above the session, provision is to be made for the regular reading, proclaiming, and hearing of the Word, and for the regular and frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper.

#### **2. WORSHIP IS AT THE HEART OF THE PRESBYTERY**

*"Worship is at the very heart of the church's life," as the opening line of our Book of Common Worship rightly states. All that we do as a presbytery—as a whole, and as the congregations and individuals that together form the presbytery—flows out from God's gifts of grace given through Word and Spirit that we encounter most centrally in worship. In our encounter with God in worship, our visions of God, of our identity, and of our mission are shaped, and we are empowered in our corporate ministry as we offer ourselves in return as "living sacrifices to God" (Romans 12:2).<sup>3</sup>*

### **II. MEETINGS**

#### **1. THE PLANNING OF WORSHIP AS A HOSPITABLE ACT TOWARD THE HOST CHURCH.**

Hospitality toward the host church means, among other things, observing the order of the day for the common meal. As worship generally precedes the meal, it should also be identified as an order of the day. The timing of business and sidebars, generally forty minutes, can be adjusted as necessary.

#### **2. HOSTING**

Churches and other presbytery-related entities will be afforded the opportunity to host presbytery meetings on an annual basis, via the Stated Clerk. If two entities request the same date, the one with the longest time since hosting will be given precedence. Every effort will be made to hold meetings in different areas of the Lehigh Presbytery, but as the Presbytery is invited to a church, this can only be ensured by potential hosts.

---

<sup>1</sup> Book of Order W-7.1000-.1002

<sup>2</sup> Book of Order G-1.0200

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from *A Vision and Guidelines for our Corporate Worship as a Presbytery* Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Those churches whose space limitations make the hosting of presbytery unmanageable will be contacted by the Council to determine their interest in hosting one of its occasional off-site meetings.

Those churches whose primary constraint is the preparation or service of food might consider hosting the November or February meeting, which does not include a meal.

### **3. THEME**

The theme, or primary focus, of each presbytery meeting will be determined by the Presbytery Lead Team or authorized body. This theme will help to define other persons who might speak on the floor of presbytery without business to present. (See the Sidebar Policy.)

The Presbytery Lead Team should develop the proposed theme and structure of a particular meeting well in advance, communicating these to the host congregation so they have the possibility of opting out and choosing a different month if there is an objection to the content or style. Please bear in mind, however, that (a) unexpected matters arise at times too late to change venue; (b) while we are grateful for a church's hospitality in hosting a meeting, it is the Presbytery Lead Team's responsibility to determine the agenda; and (c) change in location on short-notice is difficult to achieve.

### **4. COMMUNICATION**

In order to assure proper communication, the body responsible for worship planning should contain at least two Presbytery Lead Team members, and the team preparing for a particular presbytery meetings' worship should include the host pastor.

The Presbytery Lead Team, through the Stated Clerk, will communicate thematic information to the presbytery and host churches. It is also the clerk's responsibility to communicate this worship policy to all churches which agree to host a presbytery meeting.

### **5. WHEN CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES ARE ANTICIPATED**

The host pastor should be informed as soon as possible that a controversial subject is anticipated.

The mealtime should be considered a time of fellowship rather than an opportunity to debate the issue, unless that time has been designed for such a purpose. When necessary, trained facilitators within the presbytery will be asked to participate. Appendix 1, "Mutual Invitation," provides a format for ensuring different views on such subjects is heard.

### **6. NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY**

Flexibility is a must as the Presbytery tries to live into this new vision for both meetings and worship.

## **III. WORSHIP**

### **1. PARTICIPANTS**

#### **a. The Presbytery Lead Team**

Presbytery worship is an act of the Presbytery, not the host church. It is therefore the responsibility of the Presbytery Lead Team to approve the theme and worship of the presbytery meeting.

The Presbytery Lead Team is to act on recommendations of site, theme, and structure made by the appropriate party, and, through the Stated Clerk, to communicate this information to the presbytery and host churches. This policy should be made available to all churches which agree to host a presbytery meeting.

#### **b. Presbytery Worship Planners**

The worship planners are responsible for communication with the preacher and host pastor for worship beyond the initial material provided by the Stated Clerk. The worship service should optimally be developed in conjunction with the host congregation beginning at least two months in advance of the meeting.

c. **Host Church Participation**

An effort should be made in planning the worship service to include representatives of the host congregation, particularly incorporating the church's musicians and members.

d. **Host Pastor**

Host pastor(s) may expect to participate in the liturgy of the service, but not to preach (see below), with special attention if s/he has particular gifts to share. The host pastor(s) should be asked to participate in worship planning.

e. **Preacher**

The preacher at each presbytery meeting will be determined by the Presbytery Lead Team upon recommendation of the authorized body, in concert with theme as determined by the Presbytery Lead Team (see above). This person will be recommended based on his/her ability to communicate on the theme of the day. This person may also have other responsibilities regarding the service, including presiding at the Table or finding additional leadership.

**The Lehigh Presbytery currently has 34 worshipping communities (including fellowships), many of which are not able to host presbytery meetings because of space or kitchen limitations (see II.2). At the same time, there are nearly ninety ministers of Word and Sacrament. Because of this imbalance, giving priority to host pastors to preach would reduce the opportunities for those specialized ministers or those whose congregations are unable to serve in that capacity.**

**Moreover, having someone other than the host pastor preach reinforces the theological position that presbytery worship is of the presbytery rather than the congregation.**

**For these reasons, the host pastor will not ordinarily be asked to preach.**

The outgoing moderator should be invited to preach at his/her last meeting in November.

f. **Participants/Liturgists**

Elders in neighboring congregations, or persons from the wider presbytery may be invited to serve as liturgists, reflective of (a) our being one body; (b) a particular connection to the theme of the day; (c) in recognition of a significant event in their lives (for example retirement, transfer, significant anniversary.)

*Given our desire to reflect in our worship that the body of Christ values the gifts that each member offers in their particularity and diversity, we ask that those who plan worship call upon the gifts and talents of those within our Presbytery so that the gifts of all the people of God are valued and utilized. We also ask that provision be made for accessibility for sight, hearing, and mobility impaired persons.<sup>4</sup>*

**2. SERMONS**

For presbytery meetings, sermons should be approximately ten minutes in duration. This should be communicated by the worship planners well in advance. At the same time, creativity is encouraged and altering sermon length, service format, or other elements of worship can be discussed with the worship planners.

**3. MUSIC**

All music in worship should represent the best God's people have to offer and is not to be for mere entertainment or artistic display.

*...we desire our worship together as a Presbytery to an example of peacemaking and hospitality to all times and cultures. To offer worship that is pleasing to God and authentic to who we are as a church and the variety of tastes and cultures we represent, we will purposefully draw from the best of tradition and with an openness to contemporary words, music, and styles from our cultures as well as others. Within each service and/or throughout the year we will use silence and singing, guitars and*

---

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from *A Vision and Guidelines for our Corporate Worship as a Presbytery* Presbytery of Lake Michigan

*organ, simple and symbolically rich styles, including artistic expressions of music, art, and dance to praise our God.*<sup>5</sup>

4. **CREATIVITY** is encouraged. It may be decided that a particular theme or person warrants a more creative approach. The host church will be consulted for its expertise and experience regarding space and design issues that may arise.

5. **THE EXCHANGE OF PEACE**

As Christ has broken down the walls that divide us, it is good and appropriate for the Presbytery to include the exchange of peace in its meetings. The placement of this act in the service will be the decision of the worship planners.

6. **THE OFFERING**

*Grace and gratitude belong together like heaven and earth. Grace evokes gratitude like the voice of an echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder lightning.... The two belong together...*  
Karl Barth

An offering will be taken at each presbytery meeting during worship. Ushers will be requested from the host church, or invited authorized persons prior to or on the day of the meeting. While the canned food offering will be given to a food bank or pantry in the host church's area (if one is supported), the financial offering will be collected annually, and then divided into thirds for contribution to designated food banks and pantries.

7. **LANGUAGE**

Language in the service should reflect the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s commitment to the use of inclusive language and sensitivity to cultural diversity.

*Hospitable and Inclusive Language: As a matter of Christian hospitality and as a reflection of the changes in the use of language within our culture as a whole, we ask that those who lead in worship use inclusive terms in reference to human beings. Also, we seek to draw from the fullness of biblical terminology in its variety of references to God, recognizing that God is beyond being male or female.*<sup>6</sup>

8. **INSTALLATION OF NEW MODERATOR AND VICE-MODERATOR**

Upon the installation of this elected leadership, a stole will be presented for use during their term of service, and for the moderator, the gift of a cross will be presented.

9. **REAFFIRMATION OF THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT**

One worship service of our Presbytery each year should include a reaffirmation of baptism.

10. **THE NECROLOGY**

The remembrance of those ordained persons of the Presbytery who have died in the previous year will take place at the November meeting, in accord with the observance of All Saints Day. The Stated Clerk will bear responsibility for acquiring the names from the congregations. These names will be read in the midst of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, as per *The Book of Common Worship*.

11. **WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND PRESBYTERY MEETINGS**

Other opportunities are being developed with the worship life of the Presbytery's pastors in mind. These include, but are not limited to Pastors' Retreats. These offer not only additional times for pastors to worship, but also for those who do not have the opportunity to preach and/or preside on a regular basis, including those in specialized ministries, the honorably retired, and commissioned lay pastors.

---

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from *A Vision and Guidelines for our Corporate Worship as a Presbytery* Presbytery of Lake Michigan

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from *A Vision and Guidelines for our Corporate Worship as a Presbytery* Presbytery of Lake Michigan

The intention behind these additional worship opportunities is to provide interested pastors with worship on a monthly basis, including stated meetings of the Presbytery.

#### **IV. CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

In the spirit of St. Augustine's dictum, "Be what you see and receive what you are," the Lehigh Presbytery commits itself to corporate worship and the celebration of the Lord's Supper at each of its meetings. As John Calvin described it, the presbytery is the pastors' church, an opportunity for those who so often give to receive, Word and Sacrament alike.

##### **1. PRESIDING AT THE TABLE**

When a minister of Word and Sacrament is received into the presbytery, the invitation to preside at the Table shall be extended for a time that is mutually acceptable to both worship planners and that person. Those in specialized ministry who do not have many opportunities to preside will also be given priority.

##### **2. ELEMENTS** will be provided by the host church unless otherwise arranged

##### **3. DISTRIBUTION** will be through intinction, unless otherwise indicated.

##### **4. GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

We encourage use of the Eucharistic prayers in the Book of Common Worship (which includes guidance for free style prayers), and careful planning for ways to serve the bread and cup to all in a way that both is meaningful and makes efficient use of the worship space and time available. Responses may be read responsively or sung.

Those presiding are encouraged to embed the prayer of supplication and intercession within the Great Prayer, both in keeping with the liturgical tradition (see the *Book of Common Worship*), and to be mindful of time constraints. Every effort ought to be made to identify persons by first name only, trusting the words of the Psalmist, "Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely" (Psalm 139:4). This is a theological position and not simply for the sake of expediency, but at the same time also reflective of a person's need for prayer and desire for privacy. At the same time, for the sake of clarity other decisions may have to be made, for example, in the case of a common first name.

Appendix 1

**MUTUAL INVITATION**

**Objectives:** To facilitate sharing and discussion in a multicultural setting.

**Type of Group:** Any.

**Size of Group:** 4-15.

**Setting:** Participants should sit in a circle.

**Materials:** newsprint and markers.

**Time required:** depending on the size of the group. A good way to tell how much time will be required for each round of sharing is to multiply the number of participants by five minutes.

**How to Proceed:**

- A. Let participants know how much time is set aside for this process.
- B. Introduce the topic to be discussed or information to be gathered or question(s) to be answered. Write this on newsprint and put it up on a wall so everyone can see it.
- C. Introduce the process by reading the following:

In order to ensure that everyone who wants to share has the opportunity to speak, we will proceed in the following way:

The leader or designated person will share first. After that person has spoken, he or she then invites another to share. Whom you invite does not need to be the person next to you. After the next person has spoken, that person is given the privilege to invite another to share. If you don't want to say anything, simply say "pass" and proceed to invite another to share. We will do this until everyone has been invited.

If this is the first time you use this with a group, it will be very awkward at first. The tendency is to give up on the process and go back to the whoever-wants-to-talk-can-talk way. If you are persistent in using this process every time you facilitate the gathering, the group will eventually get used to it and have great fun with it. A good way to ensure the process goes well the first time is to make sure there are a couple of people in the group who have done this before and, as you begin the process, invite them first.

**Problems to Anticipate**

This process addresses differences in the perception of personal power among the participants. Some people will be eager for their turn, while others will be reluctant to speak when they are invited. If a person speaks very briefly and then does not remember to invite the next person, do not invite for him or her. Simply point out that this person has the privilege to invite the next person to speak. This is especially important if a person "passes." By ensuring that this person still has the privilege to invite, you affirm and value that person independent of that person's verbal ability.

From *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community*, by Eric H.F. Law. Chalice Press, 1993. Appendix A