

Guidelines for Scheduling Guest Preachers and Lay-led Worship— Received by Session December 19, 2006

Introduction

During the past two years the Worship Committee has had many discussions about the worship life of the church. In the Fall of 2005, the Worship Committee and the Interim Steering Committee co-sponsored a "worship forum" and invited members of the congregation to express their interests in and goals for worship. The ISC conducted surveys soliciting people's opinions about worship. The worship committee also discusses worship on an on-going basis during its regular meetings.

During this time, there have been a wide variety of recommendations from the congregation. Some would like longer services while others prefer hour-long worship. Some have asked for more joyful and enthusiastic music for the congregation to sing. Others want more traditional hymns. Some would like to see a greater variety of worship styles; others say they get confused when the worship format changes from week to week.

One area that we have discussed extensively during the interim period is lay participation in worship and guest preachers. Lay worship participation is a core value for TPPC. Each worship service includes a lay liturgist as well as a clergy leader. Elders, and now deacons, always serve Communion. *"In Jesus Christ, the Church is a royal priesthood in which worship is the work of everyone,"* says the Book of Order. In fact, the word "liturgy" comes from a Greek word meaning "work of the people."

We also have a lively congregation with many causes, enthusiasms and interests. It is natural for many people and interest groups to want to develop those issues and concerns into special worship events. The worship committee supports and encourages lay participation in worship, and believes that strong lay participation is important for us in being a spiritual community.

The number of special services and groups that have participated in worship is evidence of just how important lay participation is to this church. Groups that prepare worship or invite guest preachers at least once a year are the Jinocua/Kairos Committee; Adult Education; Peacemaking; Youth; Choir and Deacons. There have also been special occasions tied to CASA de Maryland and Silver Spring Interfaith Housing. Special Sundays throughout the year also have attracted lay planning and/or guest preachers, such as More Light and Martin Luther King Sunday.

At the same time, the pastor and worship committee need to exercise their own responsibilities, as per the Book of Order, in worship planning. The session must make provision for regular preaching, prayer and celebration of the sacraments, and it is in charge of the worship space and all worship materials such as Bibles and hymnals. Session usually delegates most of its worship responsibilities to the worship committee.

The pastor is ultimately responsible for preaching and worship planning, and may invite another minister to preach, with concurrence of the session.

Until now, the worship committee has never adopted a process for how lay participation (and inviting guest preachers) is supposed to happen normally. This has created some problems in the past. On the one hand, sometimes people don't propose anything because they don't know how they are supposed to do this, or don't know that the worship committee would welcome such requests. On the other hand, sometimes groups have announced to the worship committee that they want to take over worship entirely on a specific date and that they have already picked out a guest preacher they would like for that day.

Neither of those kinds of situations works very well.

We hope that these guidelines will spell out a process whereby the worship committee will encourage lay participation in worship, and try to provide opportunities for occasional guest preachers, while at the same time being able to exercise its responsibilities for planning ahead for worship services and for achieving the type and variety of worship services that the committee believes the church should have.

Like everything at TPPC, we understand these guidelines to be flexible and not take the form of never-to-be-violated or hard-and-fast rules. The worship committee would also expect to revisit this guidance after the new Pastor, Rev. Mark Greiner, has been here for a while to determine whether it is working or needs further change.

Guidelines

1. When any group within the church would like to be involved in leading worship, the worship committee invites them to contact the committee no less than six weeks before that date to make its proposal or request. Even more notice would be better. In special circumstances, the pastor and worship committee can make exceptions to this schedule.
2. If a date is agreed upon, that group will work with the worship committee and the pastor to develop and conduct the worship service. During this process, the worship committee and pastor will exercise their responsibilities as contained in the Book of Order, including any changes to be made to the preaching schedule.
3. If the worship committee agrees to a proposed guest preacher on a certain date, that person shall not be issued a formal invitation until the proposed guest preacher has been approved by the pastor with concurrence of the session.