

When We Gather: An Exploration of Christian Worship, History and Practice

(Spring semester 2021) Maine School of Ministry,
Maine Conference, United Church of Christ

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Course Description

Sunday morning worship is essential to the life of the Christian congregation. In this class we will take a closer look at what happens when the community gathers for worship. We will explore why we gather (looking at Biblical models of worship, history of worship, and the liturgical year) and how we gather (considering multi-sensory worship, our role as worship leader, and special worship services). We will focus on practical worship leadership skills and participants will have a chance to design a lead a worship service for the class.

Class Objectives

1. Explore the biblical and historical foundations of Christian worship
2. Critically examine the parts of worship and their function
3. Develop and lead a short worship experience
4. Consider our role as worship leaders and develop practices that will nurture our own spiritual growth.

Meeting Times/Dates

Class will meet via ZOOM from 1-4pm over four Saturday/Sunday afternoons (February 20-21, March 20-21, April 17-18, May 15-16)

Required Resources

- *Worship for the Whole People of God (2nd edition)* by Ruth Duck
The second edition will be published soon and is set to ship from Cokesbury on February 1st. Cokesbury seems to have the best price and earliest shipping I've found.
- *Let the Whole Church Say Amen: A Guide for Those who Pray in Public* by Laurence Hull Stookey ©2001 Abingdon Press
- *The Worshiping Body: The Art of Leading Worship* by Kimberly Bracken Long ©2009 Westminster John Knox Press
- Digital Subscription to *Reformed Worship* (reformedworship.org)
This is so you can access all of the articles I've chosen for this course. There is a "digital only" subscription that will grant you access to everything you need.
- Free Account in the Worship Design Studio (worshipdesignstudio.com)

Recommended Resources

- A copy of your denomination's book of worship. *If you don't have one of these, you might ask a local pastor to borrow one for the class or if they would make copies of a few of the resources for you – It will be particularly helpful to have copies of the communion, baptism, wedding and funeral services.*
- A hymnal that is used in your denomination. Most local churches will have extra hymnals you could borrow for the semester (especially now that most are not meeting in person). Many hymnals have additional worship material in them (e.g. the New Century Hymnal), and these will be helpful for this class if you have them.

Course Assignments

- Please read/watch/listen to all assigned resources before class and be prepared to participate in discussion. Note there are particular questions to consider listed next to some of the reading assignments. These don't need to be formal reflections, but your own notes that will help you participate in discussion.
- **Prayer writing exercises** from *Let the Whole Church Say Amen* should be done in advance of class. We will share them in small groups each time we gather.
- **Worship Reflections** – Students should plan to attend 3-4 worship services in between each class and reflect on the elements of worship that you observe using the reflection questions for each week. We will share our observations in small groups each time we gather.
- **Group Worship Project** – work with 2-3 others to plan a 20-25 minute worship experience that will be shared with the class during our last session. More details will be provided at our first gathering.

Suggested Schedule and Assignments

NOTE: The assigned chapters for Ruth Duck's book are taken from her first edition. I will revise the chapter assignments when I see what changes have been made in the second edition. I may also add articles as I find them, but the primary texts will not change and I will notify you of any additions I make.

February 20 – What is Worship?

Welcome and Introductions

History of Worship

Required Pre-work:

1. Unlocking Us Podcast w Priya Parker on the Art of Gathering

<https://brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-with-priya-parker-on-the-art-of-gathering/>

2. Worshipping in Unprecedented Times UCC webinar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-u4XWRO8ats>

As you listen to both of these recordings, make notes about what is important about worship/gathering to these people.

February 21 – What is Worship?

Biblical Models of Worship / Four-fold model (Gather, Proclaim, Respond, Send)

Required Reading and Pre-work:

1. Duck Chapter 1, Chapter 4 (p.67-76)
2. Stookey – Exercise 1,2,3,4,5, Interlude A
3. Long – Chapters 1,2
4. Reformed Worship articles

<https://www.reformedworship.org/article/march-2004/festival-envy-syndrome-four-contexts-worship>

<https://www.reformedworship.org/article/june-2015/worship-sacred-time-home-and-fiesta>

<https://www.reformedworship.org/article/march-2017/heart-worship>

5. Together-Apart podcast episode

<https://www.stitcher.com/show/together-apart-2/episode/how-is-this-night-different-than-all-other-nights-68669840>

6. From the Worship Design Studio

Story Tellers to Story Dwellers article

<http://marciamcfree.com/index.php/from-story-tellers-to-story-dwellers/>

(or find it under the Free Blog Posts resource in the Worship Design Studio)

7. Bring your Bible and your denomination book of worship (if you have one) to class.

March 20 – Shaping Worship

Liturgical Year /Lectionaries

Planning in Series/ Congregational Participation

Required Reading and Pre-work:

1. Duck, Chapter 2,8
2. Long, Chapter 3,4
3. Stookey, Exercise 6,7,8, Interlude B
4. Explanation of the rise of “new” lectionaries
<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2013-10/what-s-text> -
5. In the Worship Design Studio
webinar about the rhythms and themes of the liturgical year -
<https://worship-design-studio.mn.co/posts/free-video-lessons-w-dr-marcia-whats-up-creating-meaningful-worship-with-dr-marcia-mcfee>
webinar about creating in series and the design process:
<https://worship-design-studio.mn.co/posts/free-video-lessons-w-dr-marcia-easy-as-1-2-3-webinar-on-worship-design-with-dr-mcfee>

Resources that may be helpful this week:

1. Written Summary of Liturgical Year themes –
<https://worship-design-studio.mn.co/posts/free-think-like-a-filmmaker-book-guide-chapter-1-bonus-materials> (Look for “More About the Liturgical Year”)
2. Links to Lectionary Readings
 - *Revised Common Lectionary* - <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/>
 - *Narrative Lectionary* - <https://www.workingpreacher.org/home-narrative-lectionary> (this page has many narrative lectionary resources; the readings for the 2020-2021 lectionary year are linked under the “NL Resources” heading)
 - *The African American Lectionary* <http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/>
(It looks like this is now an “archived” project that is not producing new resources, but you can review the four year cycle and see how this lectionary cycle differs from the others).

March 21 – Worship Arts

Sensory Rich Worship and Multiple Intelligence Theory

Exploring verbal, visual, and music arts in worship

Required Reading and Pre-work:

1. Duck chapter 5
2. Stookey – Exercise 10,11
3. In Worship Design Studio:
Todd Pick visual worship interview –
<https://worship-design-studio.mn.co/posts/free-think-like-a-filmmaker-book-guide-chapter-3-bonus-materials>

The “Foundational” articles for each worship art –

<https://worship-design-studio.mn.co/courses/2260152/content>

April 17 – Sacraments – Baptism and Eucharist

Required Reading and pre-work:

1. Duck chapters 9,10,11
2. Stookey – Exercise 13,15, Interlude C
3. Long – Chapters 5,6
4. Reformed Worship Article:

<https://www.reformedworship.org/article/june-2008/names-lords-supper-lords-supper-liturgies>

5. Review your denomination’s baptismal liturgy and table liturgy
Take note of where these liturgies fall in the larger service of worship. Does the order of worship include any notes about who may/may not participate in the ritual?

April 18 – Other Special Services

Funerals, Weddings, Services of Healing

Required Reading and Pre-work:

1. Duck chapters 12-13
2. Reformed Worship Article –

<https://www.reformedworship.org/article/june-2019/difficult-funerals>

3. A copy of your denomination’s order of service for weddings and funerals
As you review the order of worship, note which elements of the four-fold pattern of worship are present and which are missing. What other differences or similarities do you notice between a Sunday service and these services?

May 15 – Worship Leadership /Navigating Worship Conflict

Tending to our spiritual selves as worship leaders

Tending to the sources of conflict in worship

Required Reading and Pre-work:

1. Long – Chapter 7
2. Sacred Ordinary Days Podcast:

<https://sacredordinarydays.com/pages/podcast>

Scroll down to “Season 1: Journeying Through the Liturgical Year”

Listen to at least one episode, making note of how the themes/ideas of that liturgical season can shape a spiritual practice for the season. Have you ever tried a “seasonal” spiritual practice? How did it affect your experience of that season? If not, what ideas from the podcast sparked your curiosity? Come to class prepared to share in a small group.

3. Articles from Reformed Worship

<https://www.reformedworship.org/article/march-2005/sabbath-keeping-lead-worshippers-sustained-hospitality-requires-learning-rest>

<https://www.reformedworship.org/blog/experiencing-god-through-worship>

4. Webinar from Worship Design Studio

<https://worship-design-studio.mn.co/posts/free-think-like-a-filmmaker-book-guide-chapter-9-webinar>

May 16 – Blessing and Sending

Student worship services and feedback

Class Evaluation

Closing worship