

## Liturgist's Instructions:

Since we have so many new liturgists, I think it's worth writing down a few pointers that might help make your job easier and more effective.

1. Before the service have a copy of the printed service (sent via email) plus the bulletin in hand. Compare the printed out version with the bulletin to insure that there are no discrepancies. The office has worked hard to avoid differences between the sheet that I send out and use and what is printed in the bulletin. Sometimes we miss and it is best to learn this when you're not in front of a congregation. Reading unison prayers off of the bulletin insures that you will be doing exactly what the congregation is doing.

2. Read through the entire service to insure that there are no unfamiliar words. This is especially important for the scripture readings. This site might help:

[A PRONOUNCING AND PHONETIC DICTIONARY OF BIBLICAL NAMES \(non-reverse / reverse\)](#)

In general: bring energy to your task. The content of many of the liturgist's prayers is quite triumphant and glorious. Your deportment and voice should reflect the content of what you are presenting.

3. Use the microphone sparingly. It is a mistake in our sanctuary to pull the microphone to your mouth and then to lower your voice. Why? Because the system introduces unpleasant sounds and distortions. Our biggest problem isn't that worshippers can't hear anything. There's lots of sound in our sanctuary. They can't distinguish the words coming through the system and echoing around in the sanctuary. Use your natural volume as much as possible and then rely on the microphone to give you just enough boost to be heard comfortably. I have listened to liturgists who are practically indecipherable when at the lectern and perfectly understandable when standing at the communion table. My practice is to speak to the people in the back pew and to push the microphone as far away from my mouth as it goes.
4. Avoid dead time in the worship. Worshippers--especially young ones--are television watchers. They see a new frame every two or three seconds. If the worship leader takes five seconds to start speaking after the last thing has ended, the service seems to move at a glacial pace. Accordingly, move to the lectern as or before a song or whatever is ending. Begin speaking within one second of the last thing's ending.
5. Give instructions sparingly. Try to avoid reading the bulletin entry as in "Let us remain standing for the Prayer of the Day...let us pray together" I think that's too much information, all of which is printed in the bulletin and is the weekly practice of most of the people present. How about: "Let us pray..."

Worshipping is an activity that needs to have a sense of movement. Anything that slows the movement is suspect. Someone observed that we aren't really dancing when we still need to look at the footsteps painted on the floor. If your sense is that staging instructions aren't necessary try leading without providing them.

6. Be the leader. The congregation will relax and focus on its task of worshipping when it feels that it is in the hands of a competent leader. In the unison parts, the congregation still needs to hear the leader's voice above their voices to give pacing and clarity to what is being read. Sometimes liturgist, wanting not to dominate the congregational parts, will start off a prayer or reading and then fade into the rest of the voices. When this happens the voices get out of synch and the content of the words becomes unclear.
7. When you make a mistake behave as if what you did was planned and move as efficiently as possible to correct it. One common mistake is to omit the Opening Prayer and move directly to the prayer of confession. Should this happen it is usually (although not always) better to simply move forward with what you are doing out of sequence than to stop in the midst of something and re-start somewhere else in the service. If you catch a mistake very early, treat it as you might a misspoken word. It is an extension of a mistake to call attention to it or to joke about it or to be alarmed about it. If you make a mistake and efficiently correct it or continue to move forward it will be forgotten in a minute. If you make a mistake and then say something awkwardly "funny" about it, people will still be talking about it on Tuesday. On the other hand, if you make a mistake and say something truly funny about it, it will be a grace-filled moment and they'll be talking about it on Tuesday. So, between the time you goof and the time you deal with it, you have some pretty creative thinking to do.
9. Meet with the pastor at 8:15 a.m. to go over the service.
10. Communion: the communion portion of the service begins immediately after the finish of the sermon. Usually the liturgist brings his or her papers to the communion table and shares them with the minister so the leaders aren't cluttering the table with two sets of papers. At present, the choir is handling its own distribution and will send two officers to the table to receive one bread and one cup tray. As for passing out trays, mirror the pastor's moves and distribute trays to officers on your side of the table.