

**CHURCH CONFERENCE WORSHIP FOR 2007:
“Giving Our Gifts: Shaping Our Faith”**

**BACKGROUND FOR USING CHURCH CONFERENCE AS WORSHIP:
*From “Legislation to Participation”***

Rationale: From Michael Foss’ Power Surge,

“The annual meeting in a discipleship congregation is shaped to serve the mission and vision of the community of faith.” [p. 148] “Annual meetings in a discipleship congregation are concerned with much more than approving budgets, receiving reports, and electing officers. First and foremost they are about the spiritual life of the church. Worship, therefore, is first on the agenda at the annual meetings of discipleship congregations.” [p. 148]

The Heads Up!

Pastors and congregations should **complete the “business” of the Church Conference ahead of time.**

Foss suggests: *“The budget and significant ministry issues should be frankly and carefully discussed in multiple open forums scheduled at times when as many worshipers as possible can attend. This opens the process to the entire congregation, not just to those who have an axe to grind or who are single-issue constituents. By [doing this] in the weeks before the annual meeting, it is more likely that anything important that congregational leaders may have missed is caught. After these forums have given people ample opportunity to hear and be heard, the annual meeting can focus on the business agenda in a way that will truly serve the mission of the church.” [p. 149]* **The finalized Clergy Compensation Package will be discussed at the S/PRC immediately before the Church Conference.**

Instructions to Pastors:

Please announce the “Church Conference” as per the requirements of the 2004 Book of Discipline. Do not announce it as “Charge/Church Conference.”

AN ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR A CHURCH CONFERENCE

The entire conference will take no more than two hours.

No refreshments please *unless meeting over the noon hour after a Sunday morning church service or prearranged with your District Superintendent.*

SMALL CHURCH --FOR CHURCHES with under twelve in attendance at church conference: Church Conference will be held around a table with all seated together. The communion elements (single loaf of bread and cup), candle and Bible will be placed in the center of the table during worship.

MEDIUM CHURCH—FOR CHURCHES With between 12 and 30 present for church conference. Please set up your fellowship hall with a table for the DS and the secretary in front and rows of chairs curved around the main table. During worship, the communion elements (single loaf of bread and cup), candles and a Bible will be placed on the table.

LARGE CHURCH—FOR CHURCHES with over 30 in attendance, please meet in your sanctuary. Place the single loaf of bread and cup on the communion table and light the altar candles as worship begins. You may use a written bulletin or not as you wish.

ADAPTATIONS– This order of worship suggests that the “business” of the church conference is part of “the work of the people” (liturgy). It is “worshipful work” and as such, placing the items for the church conference in the context of worship is appropriate as a response to the Word proclaimed and before we recommit ourselves to community, hospitality and service through the celebration of Holy Communion. If the combining of worship and worshipful work does not resonate with some cultural contexts or communities, and if you believe that using this order will restrict contributions to the work, the church conference work may be extracted and placed before the service.

NOTE: Instructions are in blue and are not to be included in your bulletin if you use one.

“GIVING OUR GIFTS: SHAPING OUR FAITH”

GATHERING

WELCOME

Printed materials are passed out or projector is readied to project this information and/or the dvds.

Pastor welcomes District Superintendent and District Lay Leader, welcomes those present and shares any announcements.

District Superintendent opens the Church Conference and a secretary is elected.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor, Worship Leader or two or more individual's voices could read the unbold lines.

The blessing of God
Rests on our shoulders.

The love of God
Dwells in our hearts.

The word of God
Inflames our speech.

The compassion of God
Stirs us to care.

The call of God
Invites our gifts.

The word of God
Compels us to sing.

The mystery of God
Leads us to worship.

During the following music, have volunteers from your church bring and place a candle, the Bible (other items may be included such as a cloth, flowers, baptismal bowl) on the table we are meeting around or on the altar.

HYMN **“The Gift of Love”** **UMH #408**
Or, another hymn or song on the theme of gifts may replace this one.

OPENING PRAYER-

“Thanksgiving for God in All Things!”

Response to each prayer: **Give thanks to God who is in all things!***The DS says something like:*

*“Everything is a gift from God and therefore can reflect something of God to us.”
I invite you to look in your purse or pocket or bag to find an ordinary object. I have found [e.g. eyeglasses]. These will become part of our prayer. [Wait until they have done this.] With [these eyeglasses], I pray that [e.g. God will help us see clearly]. What is your prayer? How can the object you have chosen reflect a prayer for the church or for the world? After each person has shared, respond by saying, “Give thanks to God who is in all things!”*

*[Other examples for the DS to use in the modeling:**keys: I pray that God will open the doors of our hearts;**lip balm: I pray that God will soothe our fears**or create your own example]*

If the group is a large one, have 3 or 4 people share with each other in small groups to manage the time this takes. In this case, people do not place their objects on the table or altar.

*The DS closes this activity with a short wrap-up prayer.***SUNG RESPONSE****“Spirit of the Living God”****UMH 393****PROCLAMATION****GOSPEL LESSONS****“God’s Gift of Our Daily Bread”****Luke 11: 1-10***While this scripture is read, the bread for communion is brought to the altar or table.***“God’s Gift of Jesus Christ”****John 3: 16- 17***While this scripture is read, the cup of juice for communion is brought to the altar or table.***The word of God for the people of God.****Thanks be to God. Amen****THE MESSAGE****“The Lord’s Prayer”***Play the DVD or act out/read the script if you have persons who have prepared this ahead of time. The script is at the very end of this document.***REFLECTIONS***The DS invites people to a time of inward reflection. After each question is read by the DS, a time of silence is kept. Please allow enough silence for true reflection (at least 30 seconds or more).*

What gets in the way of recognizing our daily bread?... That all comes from God?

Silence

What gifts of God are you thankful for in your life? Who has been a gift of God to you?

Silence

What gift is God calling you to share in this church community?

Silence

Depending on the size of the group and the time, you may choose to invite testimony here.

**RESPONSE TO THE WORD SHARED:
God Has Gifted Us So That We Might Give Ourselves in Christian Leadership**

The District Superintendent leads this portion of the service either from his or her seat at the table or from the pulpit if holding church conference in the sanctuary. They may transition into this “worshipful work” by reminding the people that the work we do as church comes as a response to having heard the Word proclaimed and answering the call to discipleship (or other language).

1. ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

In accordance with the polity of the United Methodist Church and the laws of this State, these persons present themselves to be the stewards of the church properties and grounds and to execute their responsibilities in a manner befitting the people of faith. Their names are before you on the Lay Leadership Report. If you would elect them to this ministry, please signify by saying “yes.” Opposed, “no.”

2. ELECTION OF LEADERS

You have been called by God and chosen by the people of God for leadership in the church. Ministry is a blessing and a serious responsibility. It recognizes your special gifts and calls you to work among us and for us. In love we thank you for accepting your obligation and challenge you to offer your best to the Lord, to this people, and to our ministry in the world. If you would affirm this slate of leaders, all of whom are listed in the Lay Leadership Report, please signify by saying “yes.” Opposed, “no.”

3. REAFFIRMATION OF CANDIDATES FOR MINISTRY, CERTIFIED CHURCH LAY SPEAKERS, LOCAL CHURCH LAY SPEAKERS

Pastor introduces them.

Today we are happy to recognize you and celebrate your continuing certification as Church Lay Speakers and/or Candidates for Ministry. We also recognize those who again are received as local church lay speakers. If you will affirm them, signify by saying “yes.”

4. AFFIRMATION OF NEW CANDIDATES FOR MINISTRY, CERTIFIED CHURCH LAY SPEAKERS, LOCAL CHURCH LAY SPEAKERS *Pastor introduces them*

If you will affirm them, signify by saying “yes.”

5. REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES: Board of Trustees

Any bequests to be received?

Church Incorporation Status?

6. CHURCH AUDIT: Finance Committee

If you will approve the church audit, please signify by saying “yes.” Opposed “no.”

7. CLERGY COMPENSATION REPORT: S/PR Chair

Clergy Compensation; Housing Exclusion Allowance; and Section 125 Plan.

If you approve the above, please signify by saying “yes.” Opposed “no.”

District Superintendent prays for the pastor(s).

8. MEMBERSHIP REPORT AND INACTIVE MEMBER REPORT

The names on the two year inactive list have been read aloud, if you support their removal from the active membership roll please signify by saying “yes.” Opposed “no.”

The entire membership report is now before the church conference for approval. Please signify your approval by saying “yes.” Opposed, “no.”

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS?

10. AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE YOUTH and YOUNG ADULTS OF YOUR CHURCH

Four minute DVD on annual conference trip to Taizé to help recruit pilgrims for summer 2008. You may let people know that the song (or songs) that will be sung as we receive communion will be songs from the Taizé tradition.

THANKSGIVING: The Lord’s Supper

Invitation to Confession in Music

“With Gifts that Differ by Your Grace”

TUNE: ST. ANNE (“O God, Our Help in Ages Past)

First two verses can be sung by a soloist or small ensemble or the entire group. Or you may simply recite the words to this hymn. If your church musician has “Circles of Care” Songbook, this hymn with its original tune by Ruth Duck can be used instead of this more familiar tune.

With gifts that differ by your grace your Spirit fits us all,
that Christians in each time and place may answer when you call.

You strengthen some to take a stand, to prophesy or preach,
while others give with open hand, or heal the sick, or teach.

And yet, because our faith is frail, we bury gifts you give.
Afraid to risk, afraid to fail, we are not free to live.
At times we use your sacred gifts for only selfish ends.
Our purpose fades, our focus shifts, and conflict soon attends.

Music continues to play softly under the following prayer of confession:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Pastor: “Let us join in the Prayer of Confession.”

Men: Lord, forgive our dullness of spirit and flabbiness of soul,

Women: our underdeveloped imaginations and unused powers,

Men: our shortsightedness, and our failures of nerve,

Women: our becoming so practical as to be impoverished in spirit,

Men: our failure to claim the promises of new life in Christ.

**All: Stir up the gifts that are within us
and set us free to become the gifted and giving persons
you made us to be in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

WORDS OF ASSURANCE *Pastor*

God gives us new opportunities every day to start fresh and new. Through God’s Spirit we are empowered to celebrate life fully and to appreciate all the gifts of life, especially family and friends. God, in this moment, says to start over. Begin again, all is filled with hope.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Amen

The song continues (vs. 3) with all the congregation joining:

**Come, Spirit, build your church anew, that all may do their part,
together finding life in you, diverse, yet one in heart.
So may your people seek your will, transformed in all our ways.
We offer body, mind and skill, a sacrifice of praise.**

THE PEACE

Greet one another with the words: “You are a gift from God. Thanks be to God.”

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

[Communion Setting FWS #2257-a OR speak the following:]

The Lord be with you!
And also with you!
Lift up your hearts!
We lift them up to the Lord!
Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you. You are a God of justice and peace. You are a God of mercy and compassion. You are God, living and true. We worship you, we give you thanks. We praise you for your glory!

Praise, thanks, and glory be to you, O God!

In the beginning, you moved upon the water. In the beginning, you raised us to life. You turned night into day. You changed our tears into dancing. You formed us, flesh and bone, in your own loving image.

Praise, thanks, and glory be to you, O God!

We are blessed and challenged, O Gift-Giver.
We are the heirs of your everlasting covenant.

Praise, thanks, and glory be to you, O God!

United in you, prophets of your Word, we shall not be silent. We join in the great hymn of creation.

[“Communion Setting: Sanctus” 2257-b OR speak the following:]

**Holy, holy, holy Lord
God of power and might
Heaven and earth are full of your glory
Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest!**

In your loving-kindness, you have not abandoned us but forged, through Jesus, a bond that can never be broken. In your loving-kindness, you have not

condemned us but have shown us, through Jesus, your saving love. In your loving-kindness, you continue to call us, through Jesus, into a life of community and love. And you call us to give our love to the world, especially the hurting, the lonely, the hungry and the frightened.

We pause to remember those who need our prayers—either silently or aloud.

In this moment now, we open our eyes to the wondrous gifts you have given us in this bread of unity, this cup of love. We celebrate the gifts you have poured out upon us, the freedom you have given us. Gathered here, we remember the love you have shown us. We believe the promises you have made to us.

We remember, we celebrate, we believe.

We remember the witness Jesus gave. How, on that last night, he took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying, “Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you.”

We remember, we celebrate, we believe.

We remember the witness Jesus gave. How he took the cup of blessing, the cup of deliverance, the cup of memorial, blessed it, and gave it to the disciples saying, “This is the cup of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink of it, in remembrance of me.”

We remember, we celebrate, we believe.

With faithful hearts we stand *[pause to do so]* join hands *[pause to do so]* and bind ourselves in everlasting covenant to be one people. And so, we proclaim the mystery of faith.

[“Communion Setting: Memorial Acclamation” 2257-c OR speak the following:]

Christ has died. Christ is risen! Christ will come again!

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. We pray that through Christ, we will be one in ministry to the world. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory are yours, almighty Creator, now and for ever. **Amen.**

[“Communion Setting: Great Amen” 2257-d, if applicable]

BREAKING THE BREAD

Because we are one loaf,
We, who are many, are one body,
For we all partake of the one loaf.
The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

COMMUNION

The people receive communion as they sing songs from Taizé. Depending on the size of the group, you may need fewer selections than those below.

“Ubi Caritas” (Live in Charity) FWS # 2179

“Come and Fill Our Hearts” FWS # 2157

“Jesus, Remember Me” UMH # 488

CLOSING HYMN “In The Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful” FWS # 2195

SENDING FORTH

The District Superintendent officially ends the Church Conference.

This responsive benediction is from “God of Creation,” a song from Christians in India.

God of creation, send us with your love.
Child of salvation, send us with your grace,
Spirit of communion, send us with your peace.
Alleluya, alleluya, alleluya, amen.

Worship notes:

Call to Worship from *Homiletics Online*, adapted.

Opening Prayer activity from Marcia McFee, *The Worship Workshop: Creative Ways to Design Worship Together*, 2002.

The Lord’s Prayer DVD, Tom Long [source], 1982.

Confession and Assurance from *Homiletics Online*, adapted.

“Gifts That Differ By Your Grace,” Ruth Duck, from Circles of Care Songbook.

“God of Creation (Benediction),” Global Praise 1

Worship Design: Vivian L. Rodeffer and Marcia McFee

LORD’S PRAYER DIALOGUE *

(Person sits, center stage, with hands folded and head bowed in an attitude of prayer. GOD’s voice is heard offstage. Throughout the script, where the name “Linda” is used, substitute the real name of the actor playing the part.)

PERSON: Our Father, who are in heaven...

GOD: Yes, what is it?

(Person glances around, not sure who is interrupting.)

PERSON: Uh ...please. I’m praying.

GOD: Hello, I’m here.

PERSON: *(pausing to look around again, still a bit puzzled)* Could you wait till I’m done?

GOD: You called me.

(Person suddenly realizes to whom she’s talking. She looks up slowly and focuses on a point above and in front of her.)

PERSON: I did?

GOD: Yes. You said “Our Father, who art in heaven...”

PERSON: Oh... I was just reciting the Lord’s Prayer.

GOD: And I was answering.

PERSON: Ah...

GOD: Go ahead. I’m listening.

PERSON: Uh...right. O.K. *(She bows head again.)* Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name...

GOD: You really think so?

PERSON: *(looking up)* Think what?

GOD: That my name is hallowed.

PERSON: Hallowed?

GOD: Yes...you know, holy. Do you respect my name?

PERSON: Well yeah. I guess I do.

GOD: How about yesterday on your way to work...when you got behind that slow bus?

PERSON: (*embarrassed*) Oh that. Hey, I didn't mean what I said then.

GOD: How would you like it if everybody went around shouting “Oh Linda!” every time they hit their thumb with a hammer or got held up in traffic?

PERSON: Sorry.

GOD: I forgive you.

PERSON: Look...this is gonna take forever if you keep interrupting.

GOD: Would that be so bad?

PERSON: What?

GOD: Talking with me forever.

PERSON: I don't know. I never thought about it.

GOD: Well do. It might happen.

PERSON: Oh.

GOD: God ahead. Keep going.

PERSON: Alright. (*She bows her head again.*) Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...

GOD: Whoa! You sure you want all that?

PERSON: All what?

GOD: My Kingdom coming and my will being done...

PERSON: Actually, I kinda like the “On earth as in heaven” part. We could use a little more heaven around her.

GOD: So what are you doing about it?

PERSON: Me?

GOD: You want my will done. Who did you expect to do it?

PERSON: Well I thought since it was your kingdom, that...uh...

GOD: You can't have a kingdom without subjects.

PERSON: No, I guess not.

GOD: Hey, it's not that hard. All you really have to do is love me with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself...

PERSON: Oh brother.

GOD: Him too.

PERSON: Look, can we get on with this?

GOD: Sure. Don't let me stop you.

PERSON: Right. *(She bows her head and tries to continue. There is a moment of embarrassed silence.)* Uh...I forgot where I was.

GOD: Give us this day...

PERSON: Oh yeah...I got it. Give us this day our daily bread...

GOD: You could use a little less bread actually.

PERSON: Aw, come on...

GOD: No, really. You know half my people eat less meat in a year than you had for breakfast.

PERSON: Picky, picky, picky.

GOD: You want me to do what's best for you, don't you?

PERSON: All I asked for was a little bread.

GOD: And today, the bread I'm giving you is a half-hour of Bible study, a free evening spent with your family, and a twenty-dollar deduction from your checking account for the world hunger charity of your choice.

PERSON: All that...just for me.

GOD: Just for you.

PERSON: You really shouldn't have.

GOD: Hey, I like to give you good things.

PERSON: Thanks a lot.

GOD: Come on. On to the rest of the prayer.

PERSON: Hey, look,, this is kinda dragging on. Why don't we just take a break here.

GOD: There's not that much more, Linda.

PERSON: *(starting to rise)* I'd really rather stop.

GOD: *(firmly)* Linda...

PERSON: O.K., O.K...*(She sits back down, and begins the next line slowly.)* Forgive us our trespasses...*(suddenly speaking very quickly)* as we forgive those who trespass against us...

GOD: What about Kathy?

PERSON: I knew you were going to say that!

GOD: Well?

PERSON: Look, after all the things he's done tome, you expect me to just forget about it?

GOD: I don't know...how do you want your forgiveness—with or without “forgetting?”

PERSON: Aw, com on—you know she's not the least bit sorry. And she treats me like that all the time. I mean, enough's enough!

GOD: Whatever you say.

PERSON: What do you mean whatever I say?

GOD: Well it's up to you. Right now, I'll forgive you for everything as long as it's not a repeated offense and you apologize first.

PERSON: What?

GOD: As you forgive, so you are forgiven. You said it.

PERSON: Oh.

GOD: What do you think?

PERSON: (*genuinely vulnerable*) I don't know. I can try to forgive her, but what if I can't pull it off?

GOD: I'll tell you what. You do your best, and I'll do mine.

PERSON: O.K.

GOD: And don't worry. My best is pretty good.

PERSON: (*with a smile*) Yeah.

GOD: Now, just a little bit more.

PERSON: Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil...Hey, wait a minute! Isn't that kind of a strange thing to pray? I mean you're not gonna lead me into sin are you?

GOD: I don't know. You spend half your time asking me to.

PERSON: What?

GOD: You love being tempted. You're always hoping I'll arrange things so you'll be "Helpless in the face of Passions-Beyond-Your-Control."

PERSON: Well maybe once in a while, I wouldn't mind a little innocent excitement, but...

GOD: Linda...If you can honestly ask me not to lead you into temptation-maybe that means you're halfway resolved to avoid it yourself.

PERSON: Alright. You got me again. It seems like every time I open my mouth, there's something else you want me to change.

GOD: Sometimes you expect a little more out of your immediate family. Come on, time for the big finish.

PERSON: (*really taking her time to pray now*) For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, forever and ever...

GOD: Linda...*(person looks up slowly)* Linda, do you know what would really give me glory?

PERSON: I'm afraid to ask.

GOD: *(gently)* Just...just keep talking with me...O.K.?

(PERSON was not expecting to be loved quite so unconditionally. A look of surprise crosses her face, to be replaced with a dawning understanding.)

PERSON: Yeah...Yeah, I guess I can manage that.

GOD: Amen?

PERSON: Amen.

(Person bows her head slowly)

*1982, Tom S. Long. Adapted with permission from If God Talked Out Loud, by Clyde Lee Herring. Permission has been given the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference to photocopy the text and/or translate it. 4-5-07, Rich Hendrickson, Stewardship Coordinator.