

Planning Your Service

- 1. Overall:** “A Sunday gathering can involve people or exclude them. It must not be a performance. It should attempt to meet people’s needs to give thanks, affirm common values, acknowledge inadequacies, begin to heal, consider wisdom past and present, dedicate themselves to the future in hope and go forth in strength, as well as challenge them intellectually or ethically. All this, of course, cannot happen in every service. But a lay leader can be aware of how people are opened to the heights and depths of living, and plan accordingly.” (adapted from UUA website on Common Worship)
- 2. Build the theme.** Talk to your presenter about his / her topic. Maybe have coffee together. You can help him / her get ideas solidified. It will help you introduce the person and the theme.
- 3. Choose a flow:** Look at the Order of Service outline (the large spreadsheet in your binder). Consider having a nice mix of “what we always do” with innovative or topical elements. Bring quotes and songs that you yourself love to the rest of us.
- 4. Sing!** If you don’t know / love music, contact someone who does. There’s a UUFF favorite hymns section in the UUFF website. Your Sunday’s musician may have ideas. **Give your hymn or other music choices** to Suzanne Osborn and the musician(s) well in advance. Suzanne can help you find singers to support the songs you choose by singing facing the congregation, which is fun for them, not at all a

burden. But choose hymns early (several weeks in advance – or earlier!) so your musician and your song leaders can practice.

5. **Read:** check out what the hymnal has for readings. The UUFF web site’s lay leader’s page has links to the UUA Worship Web, and other online sites, which have lots of readings, meditations, openings and closings.
6. **Other Theme Props:** In addition to music and readings, consider other “theme enhancers” such as flowers, theme art, seasonal items.
7. **Three things:** Three things will add immeasurably to the meaning and depth of your service. **One** is to have a clear and fervent sense of what you want people to take from the service, which you will articulate in your own words at the start and close of the service (at least). **Two** is to think of your service as a work of art, a poem, a dance into which you are inviting the creative participation of many; this attentiveness will keep you open to many gifts. **Three** is to keep connecting to the people in the congregation with your eyes and your heart. These three practices will help people relax into a “threshold/ liminal” place in their lives, moving out of the ordinary into a deeply nuanced place.

The Week of the Service

1. **Lead.** You're the maestro! Weeks or days before your Sunday, consult your other team members (Children's storyteller, musicians, song leaders, speakers). The more you are working as a trusted, engaged community, the more the service will nurture and challenge our community.
 - a. **Check in with your guest speaker.** If you didn't get one already, ask for a short bio you can use to introduce them. If they have never spoken at UUFF before, mail or email a copy of the Letter to Guest Speakers (there is a sample in your binder and you can download an electronic copy from the lay leaders page at uuff.org).
 - b. **Check in with the storyteller.** Does s/he want to sit in the chair and read a book, children facing front, or tell a story with the children facing the congregation. This will change your setup. If you or your speaker have an idea for a story or a storybook, the storyteller will probably be grateful. Remind them that you're looking for 5 minutes, not 8 or 10. This may help them to decide to tell the story in their own words, which is usually more emphatic anyway.
2. **Get the Order of Service to Mary Ann by Friday Night.** You can tell it to her over the phone, or email it, or type it up using the template on the website. Try to get as many of the shorter "in unison"

texts into the document as you can – it's a LOT easier for visitors and children.

3. **Plan your transitions.** Read through the following script ahead of time and make it your own. Think about transitions that work with your readings, songs and theme. Substitute your own words of welcome or Call to Worship if you want. Paraphrase and ad lib. The words here are meant to be a guide, not something to be read verbatim every Sunday. Eye contact and confidence help the congregation relax and trust you. If you make a mistake: Don't apologize...improvise!
4. **Get the key the week before.** There is a lay leader's key in the box behind the office door – don't forget to replace it). Or use the key in the magnetic lock box outside the red doors. The combination this year is 007. (Shhh. It's a secret.)

The Day of the Service

1. **Come early! (~ 9:45)** so you are finished with your preparations before your colleagues and partners arrive. (Note: one Sunday I arrived to chairs stacked on the side of the sanctuary. Not very calming...) As lay leader, you'll be directing a nice handful of folks, and will need to spend time with them to make sure they're relaxed and have everything they need to know. Inevitably, someone's running late, and you can hold it together by not being in a panic yourself.

2. **If there's a Greeter, they'll hand out Orders of Service.** Otherwise, (find someone to help out and) place Orders of Service on the chairs. Ask someone to place hymn books and/or supplements on every other chair or every third chair. (Kids are great at this.) The greeter can also help you in other ways. Ask them if they will:
 - a. Around 10:25 a.m. invite people in the foyer and kitchen to join the service. Or else have them ring the bell or chimes – gently – to call people to their seats.
 - b. At 10:30 a.m. (or once the service has started) close the doors to the sanctuary.
 - c. During the service, take a head count and record it in the office.
 - d. Bring hearing devices to those that want them.
 - e. Help with the collection.

3. **Turn on the sound system in the sound room.** A single ON/OFF switch on the top shelf turns on the whole system. Adjust the mic on the podium so it's aimed at your mouth. Ask someone to sound check you. Also, sound check the cordless mic – the (expensive) batteries die if it's left on after the last service, which happens. If the sound isn't live enough, read on: (You can adjust the volume on the right side of the mixing board on the second shelf. The left hand blue slider controls the volume in the main sanctuary. The right hand slider is for the foyer/office/crying room and sound room. You shouldn't need to touch these unless someone has messed with them.)

4. **Prepare the Chalice and candles:**
 - a. **Ask one of the children or teens if they are willing to light the chalice.** Show them the tea light which will be lit, and give them a candle to hang on to, with which to light the chalice when they come up. Light the chalice yourself if you don't ask someone beforehand. Don't put someone on the spot during the service!

 - b. **Replace the candle in the Chalice if it is not fresh.**

 - c. **Ready the bowl for the candle lighting.** Remove old candle stubs, wax and matches. Put reusable candle ends in one half of the divided basket and fresh candles in the other. There should be extra candles under the podium or in the storage room. Smooth the sand and make a Zen garden pattern if you want.

9. **A few minutes before the service**, or at 10:25 a.m., if there is no greeter, have someone invite people in the entry to join the service. Or else have them ring the bell or chimes – gently – to call people to their seats. Ask someone in the back row to close the doors once the service has started (if there is not greeter). Go to the podium and be ready to start at 10:30 a.m.
10. **Start on time.** If you start with a hymn, the awkwardness of this moment will be absorbed by the standing and singing. Otherwise, be standing at the podium at 10:30 a.m. and start with some general welcoming words. Then, when you have everyone’s attention, move to your opening words or call to worship.
11. **Watch the clock.** Aim to conclude the program by 11:30 or 11:35 a.m. and announcements by 11:45 a.m. You are the timekeeper. You can use your body language to help cut off candle lighting and other participatory parts of the program by stepping closer to the podium when it nears the time to close that part of the service, then step in at the first opportunity. Remind the speaker how much time s/he has. Check the time before opening the program up for cross talk or questions after the speaker.
12. **Relax and Smile.** The hard work is done. Relax in the spirit of the moment.

Prelude (by 10:25)

IF there is a prelude, ask the greeter to invite people into the sanctuary early (at 10:20a). It is embarrassing if someone has worked to prepare a piece of music and no one is sitting to listen.

Opening Hymn (location A)

We're going to start with a hymn today. Please stand in body or spirit and join in singing Hymn number _____.

IF it is in the supplement, add:

It's in the green hymnal supplement.

Bring your hand(s) up when people should stand. Leave enough time, so people are not rising on the first note of the song.

Remember that people in the crying room or with hearing devices will hear you louder than anyone else if you stand near the mike. Unless you are a confident singer, stand back and to the side of the podium while singing.

Welcome (10:30)

It's really a plus if you can get across the gist of the following while looking at the people you're welcoming.

Good morning and welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Fairbanks on this (weather, season, holiday or significant date) morning.

We're especially glad to welcome all who are new to our community. Please see the back of the order of service for more on who we are and how our service works.

If you are having difficulty hearing me, we do have several Personal Hearing Devices that will make it easier to hear the service. They are available from the Greeter by the door, or if you raise your hand someone will bring one to you.

Keep talking in an informal manner until you have everyone's attention and the hall is quiet. Then pause and recite your opening words or call to worship.

Opening Words & Call to Worship

Choose some opening words and/or a call to worship that invites people to enter a spiritual place and says a bit about who we are and that we welcome all comers.

There are Calls to Worship in the back of the binder. You can find more online at the UUA Worship Web or write your own.

Introducing the Theme

Today

Introduce the theme of the service by saying something about the program and/or speaker, and why it is important or exciting.

Sounding the theme is important for the integrity of the service -- there is a point, and you really want people to be ready to get it. It doesn't have to be brainy or profound, rather true to who you are.

Chalice Lighting

Option 1) Reading in Unison (Print it in the Order of Service – don't ask people to fumble in the book. Instead of one of the usual chalice lightings, you could use one of the 7 Principles, with the text printed in the OOS):

I would like to invite name to come up and light the Chalice this morning. As she/he lights the Chalice, please join me in reading the words printed in your program...

Light the chalice yourself if you didn't have a chance to ask someone beforehand. Don't put someone on the spot during the service! Say, "As I light the chalice this morning..."

As I light the Chalice, please join me in reading the words printed in your program...

OR

Option 2) Silence or guided meditation: Say these words (with pauses) as a short guided meditation leading into the chalice lighting:

I invite you to take a deep breath; come into this sanctuary. Be focused and present. Relax. Know that you are welcome here.

OR

Option 3) Sung Response: Choose a short sung response (a chant or round from the back of the hymn book or other simple short familiar hymn, and lead it a cappella.

Chalice Meditation

IF someone else is reading it, they should come up in silence during the chalice lighting and be ready at the podium or other microphone. They will introduce the meditation including the name of the author.

IF you will read it yourself, introduce the meditation highlighting its connection or relevance to Uus (i.e. the name of the UU minister or fellowship it came from, the name of a historic UU event it commemorates, or what UU principle or theme it relates to).

Opening Hymn (location B)

Please stand in body or spirit and join in singing Hymn number _____.

If it is in the supplement, add:

It's in the green hymnal supplement.

Bring your hand(s) up when people should stand. Leave enough time, so people are not rising on the first note of the song.

Children's Story

 Name will read today's Children's story. Children are invited to come up and sit on the pillows so they can see better.

Turn on cordless mike for the storyteller. The switch is on the side.

After the story...

Go Now in Peace

Before the children leave, let's turn to hymn #413, Go Now in Peace. Let us stand and sing the children out to their classrooms.

Children, please wait until we're ready.

Would the people along this aisle *[gesture]* please form an arch for the children to pass under? Others, place your hands on the person's shoulders next to you in order to join in.

Let us join now in singing **Hymn # 413, Go Now in Peace.**

[Move the pillows to the wall after kids leave. Turn off the mike and move the mike stand slightly in front of the candle lighting bowl.]

Joys and Sorrows (~10:45)

This is the time for the sharing of Joys and Sorrows. It is a time for sharing heartfelt personal experience. It is a sacred time.

If you woke this morning with a sorrow so heavy that you need the help of this community to carry it; or if you woke with a joy so great that it simply must be shared, please come up at this time.

Say your name and speak into the microphone so that those in the crying room or with personal hearing devices can hear you.

And please remember, brief sharing allows more to share.

Turn cordless mike ON. Stand to the side and hold the basket of candles for people as a kindness to them -- no awkward bending down and fumbling for what they can't see.

Watch the time. Let candle lighting up to 5 minutes. It's OK to let silence build between candles, but stand up & step in to signal the end if it begins to get long. After the last candle...

Thank you for sharing your joys and sorrows. I'll light one last candle to honor all the thoughts and feelings that are unspoken but which remain in our hearts this morning.

You can substitute a guided meditation here. Otherwise...

Silent Meditation

Let's take a moment for **silent reflection**.

Take a seat and breathe. Count or time 1 to 2 minutes then gently sound the chime.

Second Hymn (location A)

Please stand in body or spirit and join in singing Hymn number ____.

If it is in the supplement, add:

It's in the green hymnal supplement.

Bring your hand(s) up when people should stand. Leave enough time, so people are not rising on the first note of the song.

Reading

Introduce the reading:

Following our theme today we have a reading from
 Author who introduces / explores / etc. the theme of
theme or idea related to today's service.

It is number ___ in the back of your hymn book (OR “*printed
in your order of service*”).

If in unison: Please join me in reading the words in unison..

[OR]

If responsive: I will read the plain type; please respond with
the words in italics.

Program (~11:00)

Prepare brief introduction of the speaker or program. You can use phrases from one of the hymns or readings as a transition or to establish the context for a talk.

Watch the time. Aim to finish program by 11:20, so service can end by 11:45. Let the speaker know that this is your goal. You can point out the large clock on the back wall, which makes it easy to monitor the time while speaking.

Cross Talk

If there is time for congregation response (“cross-talk”), use the cordless mike so those in the crying room, office or using the hearing devices can hear the questions. (Mute between speakers).

Announce time for “one last question” to bring to conclusion.

Offering

At this time in the service we collect the offering. If you are a first-time visitor, we invite you to let the basket pass you by and be our guest today. There are many ways that each of us contributes to our congregation. Many donate on a monthly basis, or electronically. As you pass the basket imagine the variety and entirety of the gifts that we all gladly offer. *Hand baskets to the greeters or 2 helpers.*

As we pass the baskets, please join in reading the offering words from your program:

This fellowship is a community of ourselves,
Its energy and resources are our energy and resources.
Its wealth is what we share.
When we contribute to the life of this fellowship,
We affirm our lives within it.

OR sing to the tune of 371 (Old Hundredth) – (It needs to be printed in the Order of Service.)

This fellowship is our own life;
From us its energy and hope.
When our heart opens, and our hand,
All who seek truth may with us stand.

Collect baskets from helpers and put them under the podium.

Recapping the Theme

Ad lib the connections between the talk and your theme, and UU-ism in general, or this community in particular. this is especially crucial if the talk is more abstract or topical. People will appreciate your effort to "bring it (the theme) home."

Extinguishing the Chalice

Unless you use a final hymn after extinguishing the chalice, use Spirit of Life as a benediction while the Chalice is being extinguished. It should be sung a cappella while people remain seated. The words should be printed in the Order of service. The musician will play the last bar and first note to get us started. Just sing it once through.

Please remain seated and join with me in singing Spirit of Life while person who lit the chalice or someone else comes up to extinguish the Chalice.

(OR)

Second Hymn (location B)

Please stand in body or spirit and join in singing Hymn number _____.

If it is in the supplement, add:

It's in the green hymnal supplement.

Closing Words

After Spirit of Life or the last hymn, read the closing words you selected. Closing words are generally read by the lay leader alone and not by everyone in unison. If you use a unison reading, it should be printed in the Order of Service.

Introduction of Visitors

We would like to welcome any visitors here this morning, those here for the first time in a long time, or those bringing greetings from other fellowships. Please join us after the service for coffee and conversation.

There is a guest book out in the foyer. If you include your address when you sign it, we'll include you on our newsletter mailing list for three months so you can learn more about the Fellowship and find out about upcoming services and events.

Is there anyone here today who would like to introduce a guest? Or any visitors who would like to introduce themselves?

Announcements

I would like to draw your attention to the list of upcoming services and events printed in your program. Please note that we have a Youth Group that meets downstairs every Sunday from noon to one. High school students and young adults are welcome to attend.

If you have any announcements related to Fellowship events please come forward and line up here at the piano to help speed things up.

If you have an announcement that is NOT related to the business or activities of the Fellowship, you may add it to the Community bulletin board in the coffee area.

Out of courtesy to all, please keep announcements as brief as possible.

Hand the cordless mike to the first person in line and let them hand it down the line as each finishes their announcement. Be ready to take it from the last person. Return to the podium for the dismissal.

Dismissal

After last announcement...

If there are no other announcements, please join us in the foyer for coffee and fellowship.

Postlude *(if any)*

If the speaker gets mobbed after the service, make sure s/he gets a chance to get coffee and refreshments, or offer to bring something to him/her.

After the Service

1. Good job. Give yourself a pat on the back.
2. Turn off the sound system in the sound room. Make sure the power on the cordless mike is turned off.
3. If the speaker gets mobbed after the service, make sure s/he gets a chance to get coffee and refreshments, or offer to bring something to him/her.
4. Clean up the podium. Take the offering to office if the greeter doesn't get it. Remove water glass and carafe.
5. Write down the head count for the service. There should be a tally sheet under the podium. If not tell someone in the office what the count was.
6. Clear all candles from the candle lighting bowl. Put partially burned ones that are not too short in one side of the divided basket. Replenish the other side with fresh candles (kept under the podium or in the storage room.) Discard used matches and old wax. Smooth or rake the sand (the side or end of a candle works well).
7. Replace the candle in the Chalice if it is too short to make it through another service.

8. Replace storytelling pillows against the wall or in the crying room.

Call to Worship (option A)

I want to welcome you this morning with the words of
Barbara Hamilton-Holway:

“We gather here as individual people:
young and old; male and female;
temporarily able and disabled;
gay, lesbian, bisexual and straight people,
all the colors of the human race;
theist, atheist, agnostic; pantheist;
Christian, Buddhist, feminist, humanist.

We gather here as a community of people who are more
than categories.

We gather here – each ministering to the other, meeting one
another’s strength, encouraging wholeness.

We give thanks for this extraordinary blessing – the
gathering together of separate, unique individuals as one
whole, one body, our church.

Here may our minds stretch, our hearts open, our spirits
deepen.

Here may we acknowledge our brokenness and be ever
stirred by love’s infinite possibilities.”

Call to Worship (option 2)

I want to welcome you here this morning with the words of Erika Hewitt, inspired by a poem of Mary Oliver's:

“As we enter into worship, put away the pressures of the world that ask us to perform, to take up masks, to put on brave fronts.

Silence the voices that ask you to be perfect.

This is a community of compassion and welcoming.

You do not have to do anything to earn the love contained within these walls.

You do not have to be braver, smarter, stronger, better than you are in this moment to belong here, with us.

You only have to bring the gift of your body,
no matter how able;
your seeking mind,
no matter how busy;
your animal heart,
no matter how broken.

Bring all that you are, and all that you love, to this hour together.”

Opening Words with Call to Worship (option 3)

[Insert additional opening words or poem here if desired.]

We come together this morning as a community of people with different beliefs and diverse backgrounds who embrace basic principles, which include the freedom to engage in our own personal search for truth and meaning.

We come together in the spirit of mutual caring and respect to celebrate life, offer service, and work for a better world.

Opening Words with Call to Worship (option 4)

[Insert additional opening words or poem here if desired.]

We are a place for those who yearn for honest spiritual and religious inquiry, without dogma or guilt.

A place where people of reason, humor and compassion come together to explore life issues and work for a world based on peace and justice.

A welcoming congregation... a place where people of all races, religious backgrounds and sexual orientations are welcome not because of who you are or what you believe, but just because you are here.