

Drama in Worship

Year of the Bible Launch

August 1-2, 2013

Acting out in Church

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“Worship is a dramatic enactment of the relationship that we have with God, a relationship that stems from historical events.... In worship we enact or act out the Gospel.” (Robert Webber)

Consider viewing corporate worship as enactment/re-enactment. Think of worship as a gathering together to put into symbolic actions our response to God.

The principle of acting out in worship is similar to what we do in other areas of our lives. For example, we act out our greetings, birthdays, weddings, and holidays through organized ritual and symbolic gestures that communicate the meaning of the event.

A. Watch for opportunities to value, heighten and care for elements of drama already present in worship.

Communion

Offering

Benediction

Baptism

Processionals

Blessing and dedicating children

Anointing

Laying on of hands

Foot Washing

Passing the Peace

Seasonal rituals - Advent candle lighting/Palm Sunday processional, etc.

Other examples -

Perspectives when planning above worship actions and rituals:

Value doing as well as hearing and seeing. (This do in remembrance...)

Value doing together. (Participating together both directly and indirectly)

Value both tradition and variety.

Value “less is more.”

Value rehearsing.

Value both creating conditions for serving and getting out of the way of the message.

Value giving space/distance as well as a gracious invitation/welcome.

B. Watch for opportunities to use sketches, monologues, readers' theatre, liturgical drama, etc.

Give thought to reasons and purposes.

To assist with identification, interaction and entering into the text.

To assist with taking another look at a familiar text.

To assist with leading worshippers through experiencing the text.

To assist with getting and holding our attention.

To assist with engaging our senses.

To assist with expressions of "live" human interaction.

*Caution – resist using drama for its own sake – does the drama serve the text and context?

1. Watch for opportunities to be informal, folksy, intergenerational, and focus on the ordinary human experience.
2. Watch for opportunities for mystery, contemplation and a sense of the sacred.
3. Watch for "characters" present in the congregation!
4. Watch for opportunities to combine music, words, movement and visuals.

Performance tips:

Use own natural voice – resist efforts to be effective or earnest.

Grow in the ability to be winsome and relaxed, and to establish rapport and trust.

Simplify scenes and costumes.

Open up thought and curiosity rather than moralize or give answers.

Create surprises rather than predictable interactions and images.

Focus a moment in the text rather than covering the entire text.