

# FAQs

## Worship

**Q** How can my church include the pastor, worship committee, and congregation in our worship planning?

**A** Begin worship planning with a blueprint. Some churches will call this blueprint a liturgy, others a template. It keeps you from having to create an entire service from scratch. Each person who helps plan worship should know which sections of the service repeat throughout the month or season and which songs and service elements need to be planned for that particular week. Creative people thrive when they know their constraints.

Who is responsible for planning which parts of the service? This is more than task assignment; it's an opportunity for everyone to fully use their talents. It can be frustrating for a musician to be handed a service that was planned by another person, for example, or inefficient for a group to try to write a prayer of illumination. Of course, each planner is responsible to the others; a spirit of trust is important.

Worship planning often includes one person (perhaps the music director) submitting his or her work to another (often a pastor). Avoid unintentional rejection. "Haven't we sung that one a lot lately?" may seem like an innocent remark, but it might sting the person who chose it. Consider presenting options—three songs with different strengths—instead of yes/no decisions.

Finally, find ways of including the whole congregation in the process. Solicit song ideas from the youth group. Ask the retiree Bible study to write prayers. Try out new songs at evening hymn sings. This creates a flow between pastors, planners, and people in the pews. We should aim to use all the gifts God has given our congregations, from planning to leading to participating.

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## Missional Living

**Q** I've tried to get my fellow church members to get excited about evangelizing without much luck. Can you help?

**A** According to Rev. Keith Doornbos, director of the Church Renewal Lab, most Christian Reformed churches believe their lives are centered within the church walls. This makes it difficult to imagine reaching people beyond the social networks of church, home, and Christian school. Doornbos says, "Churches are perfectly structured to get the results they are getting. So unless they are perfectly happy with how they are making more and better disciples who transform lives and communities for Christ, things need to change." In other words, more of the same doesn't work. Perhaps the following suggestions will help.

First, try gathering a small group of members to take a walk and talk with people about their needs. What problems, hopes, and dreams for their community are people expressing? Record the answers and make them a matter of prayer and reflection. Then make these needs the focus of the church. Second, deal with the current reality of your church and community head on; engage leaders and members to reimagine the church with people different than yourself. Third, the Church Renewal Lab housed at Calvin Theological Seminary has a two-year process of helping churches to break the cycle of insularity toward missional engagement. Sometimes we need others to help reimagine a better way to be the church. Might the Lord be nudging your church to take this step?

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## Faith Formation

**Q** Are children's bulletins worth making? As a part-time children's ministry director, I already have plenty of things to get ready for Sunday. But if the bulletins are valuable, I'm happy to do it.

**A** Your question is a good one. Children's bulletins sometimes seem like just a clever way to keep kids quiet during worship. That really isn't the goal, though. The goal is faith formation. So, can children's bulletins help with that? Yes, they can.

Bulletins for adults generally do two things: they inform the congregation about upcoming events or prayer requests, and they serve as a guide through the church's liturgy. Children's bulletins can serve in similar ways: as a framework for children to understand what is going on in the worship service and to be able to more fully participate. This can be accomplished with a simplified order of worship or by questions or activities that specifically relate to the worship service. With our third- and fourth-graders we include suggestions like these: "List three people the pastor prayed for today"; "Draw two pictures that show what you heard in the sermon"; or "When the pastor asks us to 'pass the peace,' what words did people use when they shook your hand or someone else's hand?"

These kinds of questions and activities don't just keep kids quiet. They actually help them begin to understand that the things we do in worship are intentional. A good children's bulletin helps kids tune in to what is going on in a worship service.

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