

## Publications of the Liturgical Conference of Lower Saxony:

### **TWELVE HELMSTEDT PROPOSALS**

#### **FOR ESTABLISHING A LOCAL CHURCH WORSHIP SERVICE PLANNING COMMITTEE.**

The Liturgical Conference of Lower Saxony at its annual meeting in 1988 in Helmstedt discussed the responsibility of members of local churches in planning worship services. The following are twelve proposals for the creation of a "liturgical planning committee":

- 1) When the Christian community gathers to worship in the name of Jesus Christ and celebrate his presence, it is with the expectation that everyone present may receive spiritual gifts such as Paul describes in Corinthians, 12 and 14.  
Because the whole community can and often does receive these gifts the planning and conduct of Christian worship should be a shared responsibility of pastors, and the "common priesthood" meaning the whole community.  
Since, according to our church polity, the church council is the final authority of local practices, this means it is also responsible for planning and leading the community in worship.
- 2) The leadership of worship is the responsibility of
  - sextons,
  - lay readers,
  - wardens,
  - deacons and deaconesses,
  - choir members,
  - organists and choir directors,
  - and pastors.(See item 6, below.)
- 3) Services are unique, dynamic and living events.  
It is important for worship planners to keep in creative tension the centuries-old traditions, and the specific, emerging needs of the community set in a changing, needy world.
- 4) Worship planners need to take into account
  - the recurring and fixed qualities of the seasons of the Christian year;
  - conditions and events in the community and elsewhere in the world;
  - parish demographics such as age, gender, education, and ethnicity;
  - and the advantages and limitations of the main worship space.
- 5) In 1990 the German protestant churches published a Service Book for trial use which was approved and published in 2000 as the *Evangelical Worship Book*. This service book offers a great many new and flexible possibilities for planning Sunday services. Consequently, individual parishes have more freedom and responsibilities for planning worship services.
- 6) We suggest that parishes that assume these new responsibilities need to establish a worship committee within the church council.  
The tasks of this committee include the support and supervision of those mentioned in item 2, above, and planning worship services.  
This committee, comprised of church members, church leaders, and choir members, may also include representatives of community organizations such as youth and senior citizens.

- 7) As mentioned above one of the tasks of the worship committee is the preparation and oversight of individual services. It is suggested that the committee address these questions and concerns as it plans each service:
- How is it related to the church year?
  - Are there special considerations that need to be taken into account?
  - Is it influenced by concerns and events within the parish, in the community and world?
  - Does a part of the service need special emphasis and planning?
  - How does each part of the service relate to the other parts?
  - Who will be responsible for each task?
- 8) It is suggested the worship committee use this sequence for planning worship services:
- a) Preaching and scripture readings:
    - One or more readings?
    - Present historic context of readings
    - Compare contemporary and traditional texts for scripture readings
    - Present an outline of the sermon.
  - b) Opening of worship:
    - Psalm and hymn
    - Introduction and Kyrie
    - Substitute a song of praise for the Gloria.
  - c) After the sermon:
    - Announcements,
    - notification of events;
    - members of groups within the parish extend invitations personally, possible with visual aids.
    - General prayers:
      - x choice of texts,
      - x assign speakers; style and forms of prayers.
    - Offertory: Discuss its purpose and its relationship to the offertory hymn.
  - d) Holy Communion:
    - Preparation of the elements and the altar,
    - choice of hymns and music,
    - assign persons to distribute elements.
  - e) Closing and sending forth:
    - Consider additions to the service; e.g. special occasions, community celebrations.
    - Words and forms of parting and blessing.
  - f) Discuss ways to welcome people to worship.
  - g) Explore ways to gather after worship, for example, a reception on the porch with tea, coffee and other beverages.
- 9) It is recommended that the committee begin its work by making assignments, e.g.,
- the reading of prayers;
  - preparing the Lord's Supper;
  - or matters related to the sanctuary.
- It is not necessary that all members of the committee be present each time in order to discuss and plan services.

- 10) The committee can best fulfill its responsibility when it works within a clearly defined framework. It is therefore recommended that those responsible for the life of the parish, including the members of the "liturgical committee" meet about twice each year to make general plans for worship, as well as set dates for
- family services,
  - services for special occasions,
  - services with confirmation classes etc.

In addition the committee would establish dates for

- special choral music,
- and services led by other parish groups.

A stated goal for these meetings is to establish a "*general service plan*" for the weeks and months ahead.

- 11) The committee is also responsible for introducing and interpreting worship forms and practices. This could take place during parish evening meetings, in parish council meetings, the parish newsletter, and under special circumstances at the beginning of the worship service.
- 12) The work of the committee can really bear fruit for the parish as a whole, provided its members
- continually increase their knowledge by
    - taking courses in liturgical education,
    - exchanging information on matters of common interest concerning worship,
    - and inviting experts to speak.
  - Further, they need to practice worship together using various liturgical forms, for example, Evensong, devotional exercises, biblical discussion and prayer.

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