

# WORSHIP REVIEW TASK FORCE

Report to Session

May 17, 2018

## PURPOSE:

The Worship Review Task Force was formed in the spring of 2017, following the work of Discernment & Planning. The group was tasked with continuing the examination of worship at WPC, focused particularly on number of services, locations, times and worship elements/enhancements. After several months of work, it became clear the team would need more time for discernment than the summer allowed. WRTF reformed with two members leaving and two more joining.

## PROCESS:

The Worship Review Task Force is made up of WPC members who worship at all four current services. Members are: Jennie Betton, Eric Carwile, Jennifer Cross, Anne Embrey, Wendy Jones (Elder), Steve Patton, Eric Sizemore, Brook Wingate (Chair). Ernie Thompson is the staff liaison, with other members of the worship team participating throughout the process. WRTF has been meeting monthly since the fall and soliciting input from WPC members through email and personal conversations.

## WHERE WE ARE NOW:

***“Christian worship gives all glory and honor, praise and thanksgiving to the holy, triune God. We are gathered in worship to glorify the God who is present and active among us—particularly through the gifts of Word and Sacrament. We are sent out in service to glorify the same God who is present and active in the world.” Book of Order, W-1.01***

Historically, WPC has led the way in worship, establishing “contemporary” services when they were rare and expanding in new and different ways to meet congregational needs. Westminster has a long tradition of being innovative and forward-thinking in its approach to worship.

The WRTF feels that worship at Westminster has become less innovative, engaging, and energetic - “vanilla.” It is not bad, and sometimes achieves greatness, but it does not live up to staff or congregation expectations. Westminster’s history is full of innovation and challenge. The congregation has an appetite for trying new ideas and evolving to meet changing times. WRTF believes that now is the time for another step forward for our church. It is time to add sprinkles to our vanilla!

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE:

The future of Westminster starts with worship – our “front door” to the church. Our pastors are ready and excited for change. As the WRTF has listened to God speaking through others and to us, we have developed a vision for an exciting and challenging future.

The WRTF believes that worship at WPC should meet people where they are, while challenging them to think and act differently. It should be built on scripture and traditions of our Church with modern day

***(Vision for the Future continued)***

application. It should accommodate our church as it is today, while inspiring it to future growth. Worship is one of our primary ways to welcome the seekers and renew the faithful. Our worship services should inspire and surprise. Worship should build strong relationships with God and each other, creating strong community amongst all WPC members.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The WRTF has built our recommendation based on three pillars of Westminster's rich tradition and promising future:

1. Our dedication to being innovative and responsive to the needs of our world and our congregation. Westminster takes risks to serve God.
2. Our mutual desire for community and relationships. Westminster was built on relationships with God and each other. Now more than ever, we desire a strong sense of community and belonging.
3. WPC's commitment to worship that engages and inspires and our dedication to dynamic music as part of worship.

To achieve these goals and push WPC towards a stronger future, WRTF recommends Westminster adopt a Sunday worship model that has two services, at 9:30 and 11:00, at our Friendly location. We further recommend considering these services as less "contemporary" and "traditional" and based more on the primary type of music presented – "worship-band led" or "choir-led." These monikers should not limit the music and pastoral teams from combining and blending services on occasion, but should enable the worship team to change up the order and presentation of worship to better respond to congregational needs.

While the WRTF is representative of the congregation, we feel that a change of this scale should invite conversation from the entire body. As such, we are coordinating with Ernie Thompson for a series of town hall meetings to receive feedback.

As we decrease our number of services, our expectations of those services increase. This proposal depends on the commitment of the staff worship team to revitalize worship at Westminster through greater innovation and collaboration, both within the team and with congregational members. We expect the staff to share each of their unique talents and perspectives in a collaborative, mutually supportive process.

**WHY:**

WRTF believes the two service model will create stronger community, build more relationships, and enable Westminster's worship to go from good to outstanding. Pastors and lay people will have more time to collaborate, be innovative, and respond to changing needs. **Moving to two services is about doing more, not doing less.** It allows us all - pastors, staff, and congregation – to bring more of our congregational gifts to worship, to honor and worship God with all of our voices and gifts, and celebrate our shared past and future together.

## **IMPLEMENTATION:**

WRTF does not have specific recommendations around timing for implementation, and will defer to the staff for the best season for change. Thus far, we have understood the staff is leaning towards either Advent or January 2019.

We do have implementation guidelines that we feel are essential elements to the recommendation and should be approved along with any changes to the worship services.

1. Establish a committee of lay people, both Session members and non-Session members, to provide direct, constructive feedback on worship services. This committee should be identified in fall 2018 and start meeting just prior to the implementation of the new structure. The two-service model depends on involvement of lay people, as well as consistent feedback for improvement.
2. Task the Youth Team to consider other viable and vibrant options for the WYFi services. WRTF feels that once a month youth services in the new two-service model would dominate our schedule too much. Other options could include – but are not limited to – the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday or evening services.
3. Re-evaluate the two service model in May 2019 with the initial consideration of adding an evening service. WRTF has consistently heard positive feedback regarding an evening option, as well as the need for a worship option that is more intimate.
4. Re-evaluate service times within one year of implementation date, particularly regarding the potential move to establish a dedicated Sunday School hour. WRTF has heard a great deal of feedback on both sides of this issue and feels that further examination and time for discernment is needed.

## **A NOTE TO OUR FELLOW LAKE BRANDT & CHAPEL WORSHIPPERS:**

Your WRTF members have had the pleasure of worshipping alongside you in these special places. We understand that this change will feel like a loss. We honor any grief you may feel. Change is never easy and changing worship, which often feels so personal, is even harder.

We need you. We need your voices to share what make the Lake Brandt and Chapel services unique. We want to incorporate those aspects into our shared worship. We need your help to make worship at Westminster even better than all of us could imagine.

We know we are asking a lot of you, but Westminster is not a church that does “easy.” We are a church of seekers, of innovators, of worshippers who believe in something – and someone – bigger than each of us. Together, we will continue our legacy and create an even stronger future.