

Conclusion

Tradition, planning and education have all served to enrich our worship in Sturgeon Bay. But it is always and ultimately about the Lord. When we gather He is always there and on a weekly

basis we are moved by His presence in ways that we simply can't express with mere words. We are so grateful and we never want to take this for granted. How good it is to be in worship!

Responses

Melissa Johnson

I agree wholeheartedly that tradition, planning, and education are essential elements of Christian worship, and I appreciate the description of how this occurs in Sturgeon Bay. Matt and Bob have done a wonderful job of describing their view of worship and how they work together to create it.

I struggle with the language of worship and find myself putting many words in quotation marks as I discuss it. For instance, in my context at Palmer Moravian Church in Easton, Pennsylvania, we say that we have two "traditional" services and one "contemporary" service each Sunday. In actuality, we have two rather traditional Moravian services solely using the *Moravian Book of Worship* for congregational singing, incorporating organ, piano, and brass for most of the music, and utilizing the liturgies from the *MBW*.

In addition, we have another worship experience that is really more "blended" than contemporary. In this worship, we tie together

Moravian tradition and some hymnody with some praise music and different instrumentation. It is an experience that allows for experimentation and stretching. For instance, we celebrate communion in several different ways. We have lovefeasts, but they may appear a bit different from the usual experience. We project our congregational readings on a screen, but the readings themselves often come from our Moravian liturgies.

One worship experience is not more or less effective than the other. The experiences are simply different, and they speak to different people. We have come to call our "blended" worship experience, "New Horizon Worship." This name may signify a new endeavor for our congregation, but it is more than that. If a horizon is a place where two things meet, then this worship experience is meant to be a new (and different) place where someone may meet God.

Because of my experience in different worship settings, I have come to believe that blended worship is incredibly effective; however, it is not the only way. In my mind, leading worship means

creating a space that allows people to experience the fact that God is present and is speaking to each one of us as individuals and as a community of faith. If this is true, then it makes sense that different spaces help different people. Sometimes a traditional Moravian service of worship can function effectively for people; other people may need something a bit more contemporary or different in format to participate authentically in worship.

The reason I have appreciated our “blended” worship at Palmer is that we can do things a bit differently and still claim our Moravian heritage and educate people about Moravian theology in creative ways. I found the authors’ choice of words, “. . . *not hiding the fact that we are Moravians*” to be interesting. It seems to imply that there are others of us who *are* trying to hide this fact. Perhaps this is true, but I hope that all Moravians keep in mind that our congregational struggles largely depend on our specific context.

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John Wallace

As I write these words of reflection on Matthew and Bob’s piece for *The Hinge* on worship, I am grateful for *The Hinge’s* desire to explore the issue of worship. Let me offer my perspective. In Matt and Bob’s bravado style with a sincere blessing, I am struck first by their candor and clean lines of purpose: worship is an experience where tradition, execution/planning, and education under gird the core of celebrating

It is challenging enough to educate people about the Moravian faith in Palmer Township (or I would imagine in Sturgeon Bay) where the name is familiar. In the case of a new church in an area without other Moravian Churches, pastors need to handle this delicate situation creatively. Education about Moravian tradition needs to happen; however, it needs to happen in ways that draw new people into the Christian faith and fellowship.

I agree that effective worship planning is essential. People do expect excellence in worship — more importantly, I believe that God *deserves* excellence in our worship. I resonate with the authors’ statement, “. . . *careful planning once placed into God’s hands seems to set the Holy Spirit free in our worship.*” This is my experience, too. I feel strongly that everything we do in worship should be intentional. I also feel that we should plan just enough to allow for the incredible spontaneity of the Spirit.

our first love for the Lord. For worshiping the Lord, setting aside all of our quirky personal preferences and beliefs, and fully and faithfully standing in the awesome presence of the Lord is the goal of every worship leader and pastor.

Matthew and Bob raise some unifying points that clergy and worship leaders could learn, prepare and present to a congregation in the context of a worship setting. One could easily lead a year long program on learning about “what is a true worship experience.” This