

TIPS FOR HOME WORSHIP

Rev. Katy Yates Brungraber

Teaching Elder and Certified Christian Educator – Member-at-Large, Presbytery of Carlisle

First, release any notion about doing home worship “right.”
The sincerity of our hearts to glorify God is pleasing in the sight of the Lord.



The PC(USA) Book of Order (BOO) provides for Household Worship (W-5.0104).

In fact, “congregations are encouraged to nurture and equip households and families” for the practices of Sabbath-keeping, daily prayer, Bible reading/ study/ memorization, singing hymns/ psalms/ spiritual songs, and expressions of giving, sharing and service to others. Still, household worship is described in the BOO as something individuals and families do in anticipation for corporate worship on the Lord’s Day. With restrictions on group gatherings, and the need to shelter at home and self-quarantine due to the COVID-19 virus, in this national emergency, **home worship takes on a new meaning and even greater importance.**

Home worship looks and feels different from corporate worship. Yet, there are common and familiar elements. It is possible to worship at home without any written outline, simply by setting aside time to
be silent and pray,

read and reflect on scripture,

present one’s offering, and sing hymns / psalms / spiritual songs.

An Order of Worship like the one attached for Palm Sunday is not *required* for home worship; if you find it to be helpful, feel free to adapt it to the needs and ages of those worshipping with you – young and old.

If your congregation **records, streams, or posts on-line sermons** or entire services for the Lord’s Day, great! If not, you can find plenty of Presbyterian Church (USA) congregations that are. Still, do not dismiss the value of leading worship in your own home just because you may not have done it before. Fear not!

With corporate worship, those who sing in the choir, clean the sanctuary, prepare communion, serve as greeters and ushers, and lead worship, often find worship to be more meaningful than those who sit in the sanctuary as if for a performance. With home worship, as with corporate worship, **the more we prepare** and put into it, the more we tend to get out of it – not because of *our* works, but because we are blessed by spending more time with the Lord, focusing on the mission of God! If possible, spend time in advance to gather Bibles and hymnals, and set out a cross (if you have one) and other resources for the day’s worship. Perhaps select in advance music on CD (or download it onto your computer or phone) to play as a **Prelude** to be mindful of the eternal presence of God. If you have internet access, you might explore Reformed hymns (choral and/or instrumental) on You Tube by doing a Google search on hymn titles.

In corporate worship, as a sign of respect for the Lord, worshipers usually stand and sit at various places throughout the service – acknowledging, of course, that we rise in spirit, and, as able, in body. At home, it’s perfectly acceptable to **remain seated** throughout, rising in spirit at the asterisks.

The home worship leader extends **words of welcome** in the name of Jesus the Christ, our Lord and Savior. Whether worshipping as a family/ group of “two or more,” or alone, it always is appropriate to welcome the Holy Spirit. Live alone? Try arranging with a friend to worship together by phone, Skype, or Zoom.

For the attached Order of Worship, simple **Hymns** that might be known by heart were chosen intentionally. Words to hymns may be added in print using a CCLI license. For the time being we will miss the sounds of church organs well played; still, we can make a joyful noise with our voices at home! Find Grandma’s hymnal. Consider also pulling out a musical instrument that may have been tucked in the closet gathering dust for years. With extra time on our hands, we could rehearse a tune or two for worship.

One need not be ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament to lead a **Prayer of Confession** or offer **Assurance of Pardon**. Presbyterians embrace New Testament teaching of the priesthood of all believers.

In worship, there are many ways to pass the **Peace of Christ**, ranging from verbal only and flowing directly into the rest of service, to shaking hands while standing in place, to everyone greeting everyone with hugs! Considering the contagiousness of COVID-19, please **do not** pass the peace with usual signs (hugs, kisses, shaking hands). Remember, whether in corporate or home worship, passing the Peace is something that only the forgiven faithful can offer, out of having been forgiven by God. It is not fellowship time.

Service Music – including Prelude / Postlude, Gloria Patri (“Glory be to the Father,” usually placed after the Pardon), Doxology (“Praise God from whom all blessings flow,” usually placed after the offertory), – always is appropriate, and may be spoken, sung, or offered instrumentally, considering informal home gatherings.

Looking for on-line resources for a **Time for Young Disciples** beyond making paper palm branches? Check the presbytery or synod website for links to reliable sources recommended by Certified Christian Educators. Or look up PC(USA) resources regarding One Great Hour of Sharing and Hunger Education. For general resource searches for educational and spiritual formation and discipleship, it helps to include the word “Reformed.” Prepare ahead an interactive way to explore God’s Word together. As it says so beautifully in the BOO (W-5.0104), “Children come to know, trust, and worship God by worshiping and praying with their parents and others who care for them. Children may lead and participate in household worship by singing and praying, listening to and telling Bible stories, learning catechisms, and serving and sharing with others. Household worship provides an excellent opportunity to teach children the shape and elements of the Service for the Lord’s Day, so that they may be full and active participants in the church’s worship.”

The Word of God is for everyone. While some people have particular gifts and special training for sermon writing or **Scripture Interpretation**, we all – by the power of the Holy Spirit in the hearing and receiving of God’s word – can contribute insights about the scripture. In home worship, it’s perfectly okay to share with one another a word or phrase that gave you hope, made you curious to learn more, or even bothered you.

In grateful response to God for what God has done for us through God’s Son, we say what we believe with an **Affirmation of Faith**. When a child professes “Jesus loves me,” that’s an Affirmation of Faith. In grateful response to God’s goodness, we share what God has given us for the work of God’s kingdom. As an act of faith, you may write a check to the church (or checks, for Tithes and Offerings) during the **Offering**. Times are hard; communicate with your church Treasurer or Finance Committee Chair if you cannot sustain your usual contribution. Still, the work of Christ’s church goes on. Pastors, Commissioned Ruling Elders, Moderators, ruling elders, deacons, church musicians, and staff are working overtime to respond creatively to the needs of the congregation and community in this time of crisis. Prayerfully reflect on how you might share your gifts of time and talent to God’s service in the coming week, while maintaining physical distance.

Prayer is the act of opening our hearts to talk to and listen to God. One person may lead the entire prayer aloud, whether written in advance, or spoken spontaneously. This is a great opportunity for everyone in the family to express their joys and concerns – even young children’s prayers should be lifted to the Lord. After each concern or joy is mentioned, the leader may say, “Lord in your mercy,” and everyone may say together, “Hear our prayer.” Or, the leader may summarize all prayers. Again, there is no “right” way.

For congregations that choose not to celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper weekly, the PC(USA) calendar identifies Palm / Passion Sunday and others as particularly appropriate for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper – not because it is the first Sunday of the month, but because of the significance in the liturgical year. If you opt to follow the attached Order of Worship, in the Sealing section, take time to consider God’s love and sacrifice for you, your love for God, your gratitude for God’s amazing grace, and your life of discipleship. In the absence of communing in corporate worship, we can share an Agape Meal (as was often shared in the early church), or **commune in the Spirit of God, with prayers of thanksgiving**.

As an act of **bearing Christ into the world**, put your faith in action after worship by writing a personal note to (or even calling) those for whom you prayed during home worship, and consider any mission opportunities you might do from home until the time we can join in worship together again, Lord willing.

SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Passion / Palm Sunday

April 5, 2020

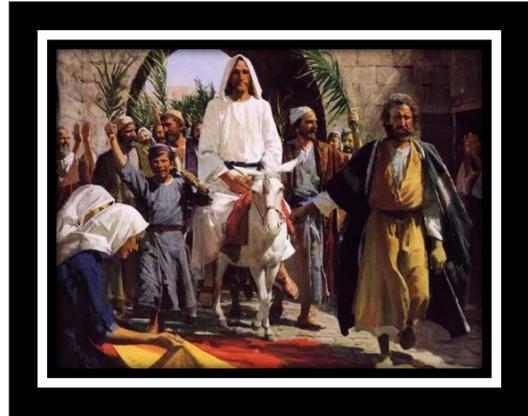
Home Worship, during COVID-19 Coronavirus Outbreak

GATHERING AROUND THE WORD OF GOD

Prelude (optional)

Words of Welcome

Silent Meditation in Preparation for Worship



*** Call to Worship – adapted from Psalm 118:19-29**

If you are worshiping alone, read aloud each line; if worshiping as a family or group, unbolded lines are read by the leader and bolded lines are read by the group.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous...

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord...

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you...

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,

for his steadfast love endures forever.

Come, let us worship the Lord.

*** Hymn**

All Glory, Laud and Honor

VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN

*** Prayer of Confession (unison)**

**Redeemer King, we can picture ourselves waving palms with the crowds
and laying down our coats on your triumphal entry into Jerusalem.**

And we can picture ourselves with Peter denying you a few days later.

We deny you when we put our own interests ahead of yours.

We deny you when we worry, instead of putting our trust in you.

Forgive us, Lord. Help us receive and pass on your gift of generosity and grace.

Help us bow our wills and our lives in gratitude for your sacrifice. In the name of Christ Jesus, Amen.

*** Assurance of God's Pardon**

Even if worshiping alone, say the Pardon aloud, with great confidence.

God is here! Humbly seek him in baptismal waters. Boldly trust him in the hearing of the Word.

Sincerely obey him in sharing the Lord's Supper. Joyfully serve him in this life and the next.

In Jesus Christ, you are forgiven and have new life. **Thanks be to God.**

*** Gloria Patri**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

*** The Peace**

The peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD

Prayer for Illumination On this day of palms and processions, enter us, Holy Spirit, so we may meet you, and be transformed for the work of Christ's kingdom on earth. Amen.

Reading from Scripture – John 11:20-27, 38-44

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Time for Young Disciples

Reading from Scripture – Matthew 21:1-11

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Scripture Interpretation

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

- * **Hymn** *Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God* LAFFERTY
- * **Affirmation of Faith – Apostle’s Creed**
- Prayer**
- Offering**
- * **Doxology** **Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise God all creatures here below,
Praise God above ye heavenly host, praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

SEALING THE WORD OF GOD

The worship leader may read the prayer below as a guided meditation, adapted from the Eucharistic Liturgy for Palm Sunday; at all ages and stages of life we consider God’s love for us, and our grateful response.

God, creator and ruler of the universe, you made all things.
You guided your people from generation to generation.
You sent your only Son among us to redeem us.
You are worthy of praise.
We lift our voices with those of the angels and the great cloud of witnesses:
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.
Praise be to Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.
Like us, he was tempted; unlike us, he remained sinless.
He suffered and sacrificed himself willingly, freeing us from sin and death.
He told us to follow him into the joy of new life.
Accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving as a living and holy offering of ourselves.
May our lives proclaim the One crucified and risen – Praise to you, Lord Jesus:
Dying you destroyed our death. Rising you restored our life. Lord Jesus, come in glory.
Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us.
By your Spirit unite us with the living Christ, and with all who are baptized in his name,
that we may be one in ministry in every place.
Lead us, O God, in the way of Christ, and, in full reliance upon your grace, to follow him.
Help us to love you above all else and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.
Give us strength to serve you faithfully until we are gathered at your heavenly Table.
Through Christ, all glory and honor are yours, almighty Father,
with the Holy Spirit in the holy church, now and forever. Amen.
As our savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:

The Lord’s Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

BEARING AND FOLLOWING THE WORD INTO THE WORLD

- * **Hymn** *Go With Us Lord* TALLIS’ CANON
- * **Charge and Benediction – Go, now, to love and serve the Lord in creative ways. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of God’s Holy Spirit, be with us all.**