Worship Associate Text Guidelines when working with our Co-Ministers

The Worship Associate in an important part of the Sunday worship team. When working with the co-ministers, that function may vary somewhat in order to serve the needs of a particular service. It is most common for Worship Associates to do the welcome with one of the ministers and the offering. You might also introduce hymns, lead readings, choose the story for all ages, or share a reflection. When working with the co-ministers, you will decide together who will be doing which elements. Please find below, what we hope are helpful guidelines for what the sections ought to include, followed by some examples to get you started.

**I. *The Welcome*** portion of the service can be crucial in the mind of a new visitor to determine whether they feel like this might be a place for them on their spiritual journey and to find community. Language and a sense of hospitality are key here. The following is a list of the elements that need to be present in the welcome text. Below the list is a sample of what a worship associate might use for a Sunday worship service. Continuity, connection, and conscious use of language are woven throughout the service, including the Welcome. There is some flexibility on actual word content-especially because the welcome ought to reflect the connection to the worship service theme of the day and the style of the worship associate and leader(s), though please be sure each of the elements are present in some form. Avoid language that makes assumptions. Say the full name of something before using an acronym. After you’ve written your first draft, send it to the minister(s) to begin the back and forth editing process.

**The Elements of the Welcome:**

**a. Welcome Statement-includes a salutation,** your name as worship associate, the name of the congregation, the name of the worship leader(s), and the service theme for the morning. This *might* be followed by a brief statement about our mission *or* a note about a specific principle *or* a statement that coincides with the theme. But don’t make it too long. It is good for this sentence to vary from week to week.

**b. Statement of Inclusion**- this might be a generic diversity statement of welcoming everyone, followed by listing some specific folks, or categories of inclusion, ending with a reiteration of welcome. Vary the list and the order from what you heard the week before. This is very important as it conveys to new(er) folks who we are and about our commitments to multiculturalism. Please refrain from ‘preference’ when referring to sexual orientation. Please refrain from using ‘skin color’ and choose ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial identity’ when naming this element of diversity.

**c. Visitor statement of welcome**-Recognizing that a new person may or may not feel comfortable standing (and in some cases may be unable to stand, so inclusivity is important here too!), please choose words here that are invitational rather than directive. Then explain what you’d like for them to do-to rise, share their name, and where they are from. Don’t look right at a new person and wait for them to do this. Wait a sufficient and friendly amount of time to give people a chance to decide if they want to introduce themselves or not. If no one new shares, simply say something like, ‘we are so glad you are all here’ and then proceed into the next statement.

**d. An invitation to the social hour** after the service-Not everyone drinks coffee or eats snacks. So simply inviting folks for socializing and refreshments opens up the possibilities for folks to stay. If there’s a special luncheon, mention it here.

**e. Path to Membership** statement-on the back of the order of service, in the lobby, and if there is a membership event that day-it can be named here. Check the current newsletter for this information. Skip this if there is no event.

**f. Highlight just a** **couple of announcements**- The minister(s) will usually fill this in after seeing the list on Friday. We strongly discourage folks from giving worship associates/leaders last minute announcements, (unless it is an emergency) and having folks stand up at their seats and call something out. Use your discretion to decide how to handle it if this happens.

**g. Late Seating**-Look to the foyer. If guests are waiting, this is the time to invite them to find a seat. Try to be subtle in this. We aren’t trying to get them to feel badly about being late. This can also be done earlier in the welcome if it seems that there are lots of folks who are waiting. Hospitality!!

**h. Preparation for worship**-Ask folks to silence or turn off cell phones, etc. Share a brief transitional statement into worship connected to the theme and on into the next element (often the prelude). Rev. Lynn or Rev. Wendy will then pick up the memory book at this point so they have time to review the entries before the Pastoral Prayer for sorrows and joys.

Remember this is just a sample. Adapt these words to reflect your personality and the theme.

Welcome Sample 1:

Worship Associate: Good morning! My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Sierra Foothills Unitarian Universalists Sunday worship service. This religious community values being open to varied spiritual paths on the search for truth and meaning. We recognize that we are strengthened by our diversities of identity and perspectives. Rev. \_\_\_\_ will be exploring the theme of ….. with us in worship today.

Together, we welcome all diversities of religious heritage, economic situation, physical ability, gender identity and expression, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, and age, which means we are so glad that you have chosen to be with us today.

We’d like to extend an especially warm welcome to those of you who are visiting us for the first time this morning. If you are here for the first time, and if you feel comfortable doing so, would you please rise (or indicate your presence…), tell us your name and where you’re from so that we might welcome you. Is there anyone here who would like to introduce yourself? { WAIT…if no one does…then-Whether it is your first or thousandth time, you are all welcome here. }

We hope you will stay for refreshments and conversation after the service in our social hall at the back of the sanctuary. For new visitors, if you haven’t already received one, please help yourself to a newcomer information packet available in the entryway. This will tell you more about our congregation and about Unitarian Universalism.

If you’ve been attending for a while and have found a spiritual home among us, we invite you to consider joining us as a member. You can find information about our path to membership on the back of the Order of Service. (if there is one-)Today right after the service, we will be hosting an SFUU 101 Orientation for folks who would like to know more. Please…(details would be in announcements)

There are so many wonderful opportunities for us to learn, serve, and care for ourselves and the world. I want to highlight just a few. If you’d turn to the insert in your Order of Service, please note \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Be sure to read all of the announcements so you can stay informed about what is happening in this community.

[Look to foyer] Please come on in and find a seat……………….. As we prepare to worship together, I invite you to make sure your cell phones are turned off so that we might be fully present.

Breathing in peace and breathing out love, let us sink into our seats allowing the prelude to carry us into this service exploring [theme].

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**II. *The Offering portion*** of the service is a chance for us to publicly participate in the spiritual practice of generosity.

**The elements of the offering:**

**a. Name it-** Identify that it is time for the offering.

**b. Invite and inform-** Weave the theme of the service in with the request for generosity. If there is a special collection happening (either the First Sunday Auburn Interfaith Food Closet or one pre-approved by the ministers/board), be sure to explain how the collection will be offered.

**c. Express Gratitude-** After the plates are collected back up front, please face the congregation and thank those gathered for their generosity. Place the plates on a flat service, (usually the small table with the hymnals) pre-determined before the service.

Offering Sample 1:

(From the pulpit) The offering is a time in the service where we take part in the spiritual practice of generosity, and when we can choose to offer our financial support to this religious organization. The many gifts of time and talent are valued, as are financial contributions. *(something connected to the theme here)* This morning’s offering will now be given and received.

(following the offertory -at center of chancel) We thank you for your generous gifts to support the work of this church here and in the wider community.

Offering including a special collection Sample 2:

We appreciate all the gifts you give so generously because of your commitment to this congregation. Our generosity supports the growth of our shared hopes and values, and secures the future of our church. We also know it is important to care for the larger community. So, today we will take a special collection for the Japan Relief Fund that has been set up by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the UU Service Committee. If you would like to donate, please make checks payable to the UUA, with Japan Relief in the memo line and then place your check or your cash offerings in the envelopes in the plate. We will then send our contribution to combine with those of other UUs around the country to help alleviate some of the suffering and devastation that is currently happening in Japan. If you want to make your pledge payment, feel free to just put your check in the plate as usual, made out to SFUU with pledge in the memo line. We will now give and receive the morning offering.

(after the offertory) Thank you for your care and kindness in the world.

Offering with AIFC collection Sample 3:

The offering is a time in the service when we have the opportunity to practice generosity. We appreciate all the gifts of time, talent and financial resources that are shared with this community. Today is the first Sunday of the month so we will also collect donations for the Auburn Interfaith food closet. If you’d like to donate to them, please make out a check to AIFC with SFUU in the memo line and place it in the plate or you can place cash donations into the envelope for AIFC. Otherwise, your pledge check or donations of cash to SFUU may be placed directly into the collection plate. We will now receive the morning offering to support the ongoing work of this church and its ministries.

(after offertory music concludes) With deep thanks for all your generous gifts.

**III. *Other Elements to Consider***

**a. Who will do what?-** When the worship associate meets with the minister(s), you will determine who will do what, by when. Once you’ve sent your draft text to the minister(s), you will then receive some edit suggestions to help clarify or simplify or to be more inclusive. Or occasionally, a significant news item comes up and something needs to be adjusted accordingly.

**b. Multicultural Competency-** When you are writing, consider it from multiple perspectives. Would people who have identities that are different from mine, find themselves included in what I’m saying? If someone just got a diagnosis or is experiencing sorrow, or if they just got great news or are rejoicing at something- will they feel seen by my eye contact and my tone at some point in my sharing? Can someone with different abilities and disabilities from mine find themselves included by the words you’ve chosen?

**c. Honoring Deadlines-** If you have agreed to find or write something, please do it by the deadline (usually Wed. afternoon) so that the minister(s) has adequate time to review before the Order of Service is due (Wed. 6pm) to our Administrator. The ministers take care of sending it in and work with Ronda, our Admin on Friday to finalize any other details. The service is approximately one hour long. If you have discussed a word or time length for something you are contributing, please do your best to honor that and to acknowledge that you’ve gone over (or under) when you send the draft. We appreciate and feel respected when the worship associate acknowledges and takes responsibility when things end up differently than planned.

**d. Practice-** After you receive the final draft of the text, read through your parts 3-5 times before Sunday morning so that you can feel very comfortable with the words and be able to look up and smile at the congregation from time to time as you read your prepared words. We usually use 14 point font with .7” in the margins. If 14-point font is not big enough for you, please let us know so that we can adjust accordingly before Sunday. Depending on the length of the paragraphs, we sometimes us single spacing or l.5 spacing between lines for ease of reading. If you have a preference, please communicate that with us.

**e. Logistics-** Confirm with the minister(s) what time you’ll be meeting on Sunday morning. When you arrive on Sunday morning, be sure to read the placard in or on the pulpit that lists the Worship Associate duties and complete those tasks after you’ve checked in with the minister(s). Do a sound check with the sound tech, the first few times you are in the pulpit. Read clearly and distinctly so that you may be heard AND understood.

**f. Emotional Honesty-** When you are assisting leading worship, it is important to remember to be confident, yet humble; articulate and clear in your enunciation; moving along but not rushing; and genuine in your emotional expression. Newcomers will be impacted by how you speak, how you look, how you seem-first impressions are powerful. Members and friends are worthy of your careful preparation.

**g. Ease and Flow-** Before the service, in your OofS, note where you are during elements of the service. Never underestimate the power of the non-anxious presence. If you forget something, simply breathe, look to the minister(s) and you will be guided. Your anxiety registers in the congregation so doing all the things above will help you prepare and feel less nervous. You’ll be great and we are here to help you be even better next time-so ask us for feedback later. Also ask someone else to fill out the feedback form, found on website.

Thanks so much for being willing to contribute to the worship life of SFUU!