**Worship Associate Checklist**

The Worship Associate is in an important part of the Sunday worship team! When working with the settled minister, that function may vary somewhat in depending on the needs of a particular service. It is most common for Worship Associates to do the Welcome and the Offering. You might also introduce hymns, lead readings, choose the Story for all Ages, or share a Reflection. When working with the minister 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.

**Checklist for Worship Associate**

1. Meet with Minister/Worship Lead at least 2 weeks prior to service. Determine which service components will be prepared by WA
2. Below are service components to be discussed and delegated. Resources and templates for preparing these service components can be found at the end of the Guidelines
   1. Welcome
   2. Invocation/Chalice lighting
   3. Story for All Ages
   4. Joys and Sorrows
   5. Offering
   6. Benediction
   7. Reflections
   8. Any additional hymns, readings or poems
   9. Music coordination with Music Director and Minister/Worship Lead
3. Prepare service components assigned to you. Send selected items including texts of any reflections to Minister/Worship Lead ASAP but no later than one week prior to service
4. Ensure that Reflection is within the agreed time allotment; be prepared to edit
5. Discuss chancel decoration, coordinate with Minister/Worship Leader any duties
6. Agree on arrival time for day of service to ensure walk through of all service components
7. Meet with Minister or Worship Lead and Music Director in Founders Room 30 min prior to service
8. Before service on Sunday, refer to WA Duties Placard in the pulpit to ensure all preparations such as chalice lighting, Joys and Sorrow bowl and book and others are in order.
9. Check in with Music Director, Ushers, Greeters and Sound staff for any last minute logistical needs.

**Best practices**

**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?

**Honoring Deadlines-** If you have agreed to find or write something, please do it by the deadline. Our Administrator prints the OOS on Thursday before the service. All selection must be made and writing must be complete, reviewed and edited prior to this date. Work with Minister/Worship Leader to endure all items are prepared in a timely manner

**Practice-** Once your readings/Reflections are final, read through your parts 3-5 times before Sunday morning so that you can feel very comfortable with the words. Practice looking up and smiling at the congregation from time to time as you read your prepared words

**Script-** Collaborate with Minister/Worship Lead to ensure you have a mutually agreed script to work with.

**Logistics-** Confirm what time you’ll be meeting on Sunday morning leaving enough time for a walk through of service components, sound check. Also, refer to the Worship Associate Duties placard in the pulpit to endure that preparations for chalice lighting, Joys and Sorrows Ceremony and any other items are covered. Check in with Ushers, Greeters and Sound staff for any last minute logistical needs.

**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.

**Ease and Flow-** Never underestimate the power of the non-anxious presence. A pause or a deep breath may be helpful if you feel anxious or lose your place. A glance or smile at the Minister/Worship Lead can signal a need for assistance and support. You are in Beloved Community, any mistakes will be graciously accepted!

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

**Worship Do’s and Don’ts**

Worship Dos

* **Be relevant.** What in people’s lives will make them care about this? How will it help them get through the week? How does it respond to current events or concerns?
* **Be conscious of power.** Worship is powerful – and we practitioners should be deeply careful with that power. The Sorcerer’s Apprentice is to be avoided. So too is a fully secular and pedestrian event.
* **Keep it moving.** Think about the length of each element and the total length. Too short is always better than too long. Leave them wanting more. Attend to transitions. Are elements adjacent to each other jarring? Logistically possible?
* **Think about diverse human lives.** Is the content and the form inclusive to people who have lived in different social locations and/or have different human experiences? Think here also about metaphors. Does the language and structure appeal to different races and classes? To the blind, the hard of hearing, the wheelchair bound? To the widow? To the parent who has lost a child? To the adult unable to have children? To people in different political parties? To theists and atheists? THIS IS HARD, AND CRITICAL.
* **Rehearse.** When possible, learn stories and regular pieces (learning is not memorizing). Make sure you know the order of elements. Learn how to pronounce any words you don’t know – or better, find a synonym that you do know.

Worship Don’ts

* **Panic.** Things will go “wrong.” Elements might get out of place, someone might not show up on time, you might have the wrong wording, or, most likely – something you don’t expect will happen. Stay calm. Breath in and out a few times. Make a joke (but not at anyone else’s expense). Fix it or move on.
* **Change everything.** We have a basic form with a lot of flexibility in the middle elements. The consistency of the form allows a variety of content. If you dramatically alter the form, don’t also do a radically different content. Similarly, the more radical the content, the better served you will be by a stable form. Worship isn’t about messing with people.
* **Put people down.** You can make a little fun of yourself (not too much – awkward!), very very little of the congregation, and almost none of others. Humor can be a good idea, but keep it in moderation.
* **Rush.** (see also do: keep it moving). Don’t make it seem like you are “trying to get through it.” Give people “spaciousness” to process the worship. WAIT FOR THE LAST NOTE TO FINISH BEFORE YOU RISE. BUT BE READY TO DO SO.