

Worship and Music Committee Minutes

Wednesday, August 8, 2007

Participants: David Roden, Anne Pickett, Carolyn Carmack, Becky Davies, Paul Van de Water, Sherrie Cathcart, Rosa Fullerton, Paul Stetsenko, Larry Hayward

David Roden opened the meeting with prayer.

Months in Review

There was general agreement that the sound system was working reliably. A longer pulpit microphone is on order to provide a bit more flexibility. A few people are still saying the speakers drop out at the end of their sentences, but this is not a problem with the sound system.

The organ is back at about one third strength. Most people have been pleased with the increase in sound coming from the organ. Some people have said it is too loud. The side pipes are scheduled to be available in January of 2008. Paul Stetsenko is not counting on them before February or March.

New choir robes have arrived and they will be used for the first time on September 9th in the morning and for the special afternoon service.

Both intinction and pew service communion formats appear to be working well. The pastors have expressed some concern about crowding around and behind the communion table.

The baptism logistics have evolved. The triple baptism on August 5th worked well by placing the pastors' chairs on the opposite side.

Month Ahead

Pew service communion is scheduled for August 12th and intinction for September 2nd. Sherrie Cathcart is in charge of preparing the elements for August 12th.

Two additional baptism services are scheduled on August 19th and August 26th. August 26th is the Thompson quads. Paul Van de Water did not believe this baptism has been approved by the Session as yet. The committee voted to recommend to the Session approval of the Thompson's baptism for August 26th. Baptisms are normally planned for the first Sunday of each month and should be coordinated through Nancy Hall Berens.

The regular worship schedule starts up again on September 9th with welcome back Sunday. Many groups will have tables in fellowship hall following the service to promote their activities. The next Sunday, September 16th, is the volunteer job fair following the service. This is the primary time to recruit volunteers to help with worship tasks such as pew checking, communion preparation, flower arrangements, ushering, choir and other activities. It was felt that the Worship and Music Committee should also have a table on September 9th to focus on choirs, especially children's choirs. One idea was to have a small choral group sing a few songs around the table to attract attention. Rosa Fullerton agreed to help prepare job lists for September 16th. David Roden will see if the choir can help with music on the 9th and/or 16th.

Other Business

Paul Stetsenko provided background on the request from the Alexandria Choral Society to use our sanctuary for their regular season concerts on November 4th and December 16th. An email poll of the Worship and Music Committee was favorable. Larry Hayward reported that the Administration and Finance Committee was preparing guidelines that would make use of the sanctuary for non-profit concerts the responsibility of the Worship and Music Committee and the Director of Music Ministries (Paul Stetsenko). This would involve rules for the selling of tickets and arranging/moving the furniture and partitions. It was felt that a custodial fee should be charged for use of the building and that the moving of the furniture and partitions should be done by our sextons. This would normally need to be scheduled in advance to ensure adequate staff support. In general the committee wanted to encourage use of the facility by the community, but also wanted to protect our investment against damage to the greatest extent possible. Becky Davies moved that the committee approve the use of the sanctuary by the Alexandria Choral Society for concerts on November 4th and December 16th pending a determination of the custodial fee, and report this decision to the Session. The committee voted in favor of the motion. Paul Stetsenko will work with Nancy Bea to identify an appropriate custodial fee and finalize arrangements with the Alexandria Choral Society.

Paul Stetsenko described his vision for a Sunday afternoon Vespers series. The service would be all music, about 30 to 40 minutes long, and start at 3:00 PM to coordinate with Disciple and other evening fellowship activities. It would be lay led with a cantor singing the scripture and leading the congregational responses. The services would be borrowed from traditional Lutheran and Episcopal liturgies. Larry Hayward has asked Paul to postpone starting the series until the worship planning team has had a chance to discuss overall directions for worship in the next few years.

Questions were raised about the changes in the order of the worship liturgy at several services this summer. The primary issue was moving the offering before the sermon. This had been a common practice in Presbyterian churches up until the 70's, but current liturgical practice encourages congregations to make the offering a response to the Word, and therefore include it after the sermon. Larry Hayward indicated these services were a temporary change based on a number of considerations, but that collecting the offering after the sermon was still the norm.

The topic of lay participation in worship planning and leading was raised once again. Comments had been received from several members of the congregation that felt more lay participation was desirable. The current plan is to include a lay leader for services where three pastors are not available. Under normal conditions, the committee does not wish to include more than three worship leaders at one time.

Larry Hayward was receptive to the general concept, but also expressed concern about how it might impact the overall emphasis on well-coordinated and well-presented worship. The staff is spending significant time developing the services and fine-tuning both the message and the length of the service. It is also important for clergy to be seen planning and leading worship. One committee member was in favor of minimizing lay participation in order to emphasize high quality, professionally led worship. Lay leaders do need to rehearse speaking with the

microphones and be briefed on worship logistics. This puts additional time burdens on the pastor.

It is, however, empowering to see lay leaders do well. It provides a greater sense of inclusion if children, youth, young adults, and older adults are seen in leadership roles. This participation does not necessarily need to be as a worship leader. Finding ways to effectively include contributors from various groups in worship services could be pursued. Offerings of written prayers, artwork, and music are some ways people of all ages might contribute. One idea might be to have the confirmation class submit materials periodically. These would all need to be coordinated with the overall focus of the service.

David Roden distributed the time charts for each worship service for the last 22 weeks. The average worship service extended seven minutes beyond the hour. Additional emphasis on worship planning has helped to reduce this in recent weeks. The goal is to keep the service to 65 minutes or less. Additional time management is desirable for services that include baptism and communion. Baptisms are typically 9 minutes long and communions require about 15 minutes. It was suggested that the sermon could be reduced from an average of 20 minutes to 15 minutes for services that include communion.

Anne Pickett expressed concern that procedure documents were not available or out of date, and that this makes it difficult to know what to do and how to do it when the people who normally volunteer are unavailable. The committee would like to collect written procedures for all tasks in one place so that new volunteers and future committees have the information they need to be effective. All committee members and lead volunteers are asked to prepare a written summary of what they do to Anne Pickett at their earliest convenience.

The topic of Christmas trees was discussed. Three Christmas trees have traditionally been placed in the building. A glove tree is typically placed in the education wing; a traditional tree in the parlor; and a Chrismon tree in the sanctuary. In the past, the Flying Solo's group has decorated the tree in the parlor and Jane Ring has led a group in decorating the tree in the sanctuary. Since none of these trees have survived the renovation, there is an opportunity to reevaluate how Christmas trees might be included in our renovated building. The staff has asked the Worship and Music Committee to take the lead.

There are a number of sensitivities that need to be considered. Many of the ornaments were hand made by members of the congregation and have significant meaning and value. Becky Davies will talk to Jane Ring about these concerns. Assuming we continue to use the ornaments, it would be helpful if a written description of their significance were prepared so that the whole congregation can understand and share in their meaning.

It does not, however, look like a Christmas tree will fit well within the new sanctuary. One idea was to place the tree in the entry hall outside of the library. The broader issue of greening the sanctuary was raised. Several of the people who have led this activity in the past have moved away. There is also the placement of nativity scenes to consider. Cabinets are no longer available in the Westminster room for this purpose. It may be possible to display one or more of

the four sets we traditionally use on top of the bookcases in the library. Advent wreaths also need to be coordinated with the Christian Education Committee and Nancy Hall Berens.

The committee adjourned to the sanctuary to review a number of logistical and decorative options. A potential rearrangement of the chancel space was considered to reduce congestion around the communion table and enable the congregation to better appreciate the attractiveness of the furniture and paraments. The change is theologically sound and may be functionally helpful. Issues related to communion logistics, lighting, sight lines, and the size and placement of a central cross were discussed. The impacts of a substantial change on personal feelings about the worship space are a concern. The committee agreed to present the concept to the Session for consideration. If the Session supports the concept, it would make sense to introduce it to the congregation at the September 9th service. The arrangement could be re-evaluated after a month long trial.

Larry Hayward indicated that the furnishing budget from the Capital Campaign might have some money available to support improvements to the chancel. New paraments, flower stands, the cross, and side tables have been identified as needed improvements. Carolyn Carmack showed the committee the fabric options for a new set of paraments for the communion table and pulpit. Questions about symbols, cleaning, and cost were addressed. Carolyn Carmack will submit the proposal to the Capital Campaign committee for consideration. Freestanding gold stands were proposed as the best way to address flower placement and aesthetics. Side tables for the pastors might be addressed through custom woodworking with the chancel chairs. The decision to add a platform to raise the pulpit should wait until the chancel configuration is finalized.

Paul Van de Water closed the meeting with prayer.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 12, 2007 at 7:30 PM.