

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Manhattan Convener Packet

Revised September 2017

Each Sunday service is a creative, collaborative experience developed jointly by the speaker, the convener, and the music team. Communication among the participants is crucial to create a coherent and seamless worship encounter. As convener, your responsibilities will vary depending on whether our minister is speaking, or we are hosting a guest or enjoying a lay speaker(s) from the congregation. In general, you are responsible to be put together the order of service and make sure that the various elements of the service are included and set the tone for the service. Some speakers will give a lot of input into the elements of the order of service. Others will want you to plan everything except the central message that they are preparing. You may invite others in the congregation to offer any of the elements and will work with the speaker and music team to select music.

A few general guidelines:

- We are using monthly themes from Soul Matters. Jonalu will send you the Worship Packet from Soul Matters. You are welcome to use any of the resources here, including opening words, meditation, readings, and so much more.
- As we work towards a more anti-racist, multi-cultural world, consider readings and hymns from people of color and others outside the dominant white culture.
- Towards the end of the month before your date to convene, there will be a meeting of all conveners for the month, along with Michael Oldfather for the music team, Jonalu, and perhaps some Sunday Service Committee members. The meeting is an opportunity to discuss our connections with the theme, how we might want to develop the theme and how it connects with special occasions during the month. It's helpful to have read the Soul Matters packet in advance of the meeting.
- It's helpful to write out everything you have to say, including transitions, so that you can look to it if you forget what's next. This is especially true for the welcome, sharing joys & sorrows, meditative moments, and so on. You might think that transitions are easy and obvious, but these are inevitably the moments someone finds themselves forgetful or stammering. Writing a script will also help you avoid repetitive forms such as "Now we will..." Consider ways that the elements align with one another. For example, you may be able to repeat the final line of a hymn just sung to begin the introduction to Joys and Sorrows, or pick up a strand from the Story for All Ages to introduce the offering. Of course, this suggests begin well-acquainted with the elements as you plan.
- We are working to have appropriate visual representations of the theme present in the sanctuary. Be aware of these images because you may have opportunities to point them out or to make associations with them.
- Try to keep the things before the children leave fairly brief, so that they can get to their classes. Long, complex readings before then are especially to be guarded against. If you have any questions about the appropriateness of a particular item, consult with DRE Sandy Nelson.
- Special music selections are generally determined well ahead of time. Consult with Michael Oldfather to see what is planned for your Sunday. Songs by the choir need to come before the children leave, because teachers and youth are part of the choir.
- You are welcome to invite others to offer readings, chalice lightings, etc. If someone has a brief personal story that relates, these can be particularly effective. New members are often good to call on to do chalice lightings, as a chance to be re-introduced to the congregation. Children may also be good chalice lighters.

- Feel free to vary aspects of the elements or the order of service as seems required. E.g., the Story for All Ages can come after the offertory if there's not a lot going on—some parents like their children to have the chance to participate in that. Don't hesitate to offer something unusual or creative if it fits with the theme, e.g., using a short video instead of a reading, or adding a skit to dramatize the message. Including a meditation or moment of silence is among the possibilities.
- If you are convener on the second Sunday of the month, coordinate Helping Hands with Dixie Moreau (Dixie.moreau53@att.net). You will be introducing the speaker representing the Helping Hands beneficiary. Please be sure to indicate that any donations NOT marked to go to the fellowship will be given to the Helping Hands beneficiary.
- The example wordings in the attached document are meant to give you an idea of how each service element can work. Do not take either the list of elements or the possible wordings as requirements, but please do think about what role they are meant to play before you alter the structure or choose substantially different wordings.
- The order (elements, titles, etc.) for the Sunday Order of Service must be submitted to Sue Turner (office@uufm.net) by Wednesday evening before the service (see below).

About elements in the order of service:

- *Bells*: Find a child or children to ring the bells to signal the beginning of the service. Usually, there are children anxious to do this.
- *Gathering Song*: A short song brings people together. Coordinate the leadership of this with the music team, unless you are comfortable leading singing.
- *Welcome and visitors*: Try to say something to make visitors feel welcome and to invite them to stick around for coffee. Remember that for some of them a UU service might seem pretty foreign, so it can be helpful to provide a little background. Give them the opportunity to get to know us later by making them feel welcome now. Sometimes, the theme for the morning is introduced during this time. This is a time you may invite the congregation to welcome one another.
- *Announcements*. We do not invite people up to give announcements, except in very special, preplanned circumstances. Draw attention to what's written in the order of service, and read other announcements people have handed you (max 3 short sentences) that didn't make it into the order.
- *Chalice Lighting*: Select a reading or write words that fit with the theme of the service or with the season or otherwise are appropriate for the day. Find someone beforehand to light the chalice.
- *Hymns*: Coordinate hymn selection with the Music Committee, usually through Michael Oldfather. He will also have information about additional music planned for the service, such as a choir anthem or special music. We generally have three hymns – an Opening Hymn after the Announcements, a second hymn before the reflection, and a Closing Hymn following the reflection.
- *Other Music*: Determine with the music team where other music should come in the order of service. Generally, the choir sings before the children leave to encourage the participation of young people and teachers in the choir.
- *Joys & Sorrows*: As a community that cares for one another, we want to know about the significant events of one another's lives. We want to share so that we are known and supported. Together, our joys multiply and our sorrows diminish. Introduce the sharing of joys and sorrows in a way that encourages depth and a tone of the sacred. We may be experimenting with other ways of sharing our Joys and Sorrows, so be aware of potential changes.

- *Story for All Ages*: If the theme for the morning has not yet been explicitly introduced, this is the chance to do it. We have many talented story-tellers in the congregation, so please consult the Sunday Services Committee or Jonalu if you want help with this.
- *Special events*: From time to time there will be special events in the service, such as a New Member Welcome or a Child Dedication. Someone will let you know about these. In general, you will not have any responsibility for them beyond making sure that the right information is in the order of service.
- *Offertory*: The Music Committee Chair will know who the accompanist is and help find out what the music will be. Sometimes, accompanists offer options. Introduce the offertory with words to encourage generosity.
- *Reading*: Readings may come from any source. Again, you're reminded that reaching beyond conventional white dominant cultural sources can enrich our perspectives. Readings may be replaced with a video (please coordinate this in advance with Doug Walter), a skit, a short reflection by you or someone else, or whatever else you think of!

Thank you again for convening! We know it takes work to get it together, and we appreciate the effort you will put in to it. Varied member participation in the services is part of what makes the fellowship thrive.

-The Sunday Services Committee

1. Convener Responsibilities

1.1. Advance Planning – Outside Guest Speaker

- 1) **Contact the speaker** to discuss the topic and order of service. The speaker may select his or her own readings and hymns, or ask you to make selections. Visiting ministers often have almost an entire order of service already established. If the speaker makes selections, ask for titles and authors for the Sunday Order of Service.
- 2) **Provide info about timing**: Visiting speakers who will be providing only the main sermon or talk may need help deciding on timing, expectations about the audience, etc. The “main event” can be anywhere between 20 to 40 minutes, depending on how many additional things are going on. 30 minutes of speaking is fairly typical; this will seem long to many visiting ministers.
- 3) **Provide info about the congregation**: if the speaker is not Unitarian Universalist, tell them a bit about UUism, including that we support freedom of thought in all matters, including religion. Encourage them to speak the truth as they see it, understanding that our services address a wide variety of topics people may not expect in church. If the topic is political, note that we welcome political issue advocacy, but not partisan politics.
- 4) **Ask the speaker for permission to audio-tape the service and post it online.**
- 5) **Provide the speaker directions** to the fellowship, if needed, and a phone number at which you can be reached if there is any problem. Check to see if home hospitality is needed for an overnight stay, if traveling any distance. Contact the Sunday Services Committee chair or minister for information, if needed.
- 6) **Contact the Music Committee chairperson** and/or designated music helper 2-3 weeks in advance to coordinate selection of hymns and other music for the service. Be sure that titles will be sent in for the Sunday Order of Service.

- 7) **If yours is the second Sunday of the month**, discuss with the social action Helping Hands representative what the **Helping Hands** beneficiary is and what you should say to introduce them or their representative speaker. Occasionally the Social Action Committee has a suggestion or recommendation for other program material (poem, reading or music) a propos of the beneficiary. Service planners and conveners are ultimately responsible for the choice.
- 8) **Choose additional readings**, words for introducing service elements, etc., as needed. Our hymnal has many good readings in the back, and you may also want to search <http://www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/index.php> or other websites, use material from the Soul Matters packet, or find your own sources of poetry and literature.
- 9) **Recruit whoever you want to help you with any part of the service** – story, readings, chalice-lighting, etc.
- 10) **Contact the audio-visual equipment** person with any other special needs regarding audio/visual or other presentation needs. The fellowship has an LCD projector for Powerpoint, etc. Streaming video does not work well, but contact Doug Walter (A/V Chair) in advance, and he can often record for presentation during the service. Coordinate any special seating arrangement with Facilities Chairperson.
- 11) **Submit order of service** for the Sunday Order of Service to Sue by Wednesday evening before the Sunday service. Provide the list of service elements you are using and information for each part (e.g., title/author or song title/artist, as well as performer or reader names), and a brief line or two about the speaker(s) and convener and Sue will format them, add announcements, etc.
- 12) **Prepare** your convening script.
- 13) Contact the Sunday Services Committee Chair or the minister if you need help.

1.2. Advance Planning – Minister or Lay Speaker from the Fellowship

- Many of the guidelines above apply (items 6 on), though the minister will have ideas about the service elements. Don't consider those ideas final, but engage collaboratively.
- It may be helpful to meet together to brainstorm about the theme and divide responsibilities. Clarity around who is doing what will prevent problems.

1.3 Responsibilities on Sunday Morning

- Be there at least 20 minutes prior to the service to coordinate with other service participants.
- Check in with the audio equipment person to talk about timing of transitions and other service elements, so that they may be better prepared with cued music, microphones, etc.
- Check that the chalice is ready and matches or a lighter is available (see next section).
- Check that the heating or air conditioning and lights are set at comfortable levels.
- Introduce yourself to the speaker, if necessary, and provide assistance, as needed, e.g. water on the podium.
- Start on time even if there are stragglers.
- Conduct order of service.
- Introduce the speaker, unless it is the minister.
- Facilitate discussion, if any.
- End the service at 12:00 promptly
- Extinguish the chalice.
- If there is an outside speaker, ensure that they have a chance to get some refreshments and are invited to lunch.

1.3. Care and Feeding of the Chalice

- Use only smokeless, odorless liquid paraffin oil. This is kept in the lower cabinet to the right of the refrigerator in the kitchen.
- Use funnel to fill small squeeze bottles and use those to fill the chalice.
- Keep level between 1/2 to 3/4 level in the reservoir.
- Keep wick fibers no higher than level with top of dip tube. This gives a flame of about 1 inch, which is enough. Any higher and it smokes. There is already evidence of smoke on the walls! This will require an expensive paint job sooner than necessary.
- The preferred way to light the wick is with a long, wooden match. These are kept in a small drawer to the left of the long pencil drawer in the large RE room.
- A candle may be useful as a way to get the match lit, but don't use it to light the chalice as that drips paraffin on the glass.
- Contact Tom Manney for more information.

2. Contacts

Sunday Services Committee Chair	Katie Kingery-Page
Sunday Bulletin	Sue Turner, 537-2349, office@uufm.net.
Music Chair	Michael Oldfather
Minister	Rev. Jonalu Johnstone, Jonalu@sbcglobal.net
Director of Religious Education	Sandy Nelson, 341-0135, sandralounelson@yahoo.com
Social Action Helping Hands Coordinator	Dixie Moreau
Sound System	Doug Walter
Building Chair	Mark Mayfield

4

3. Typical Order of Service Elements

Gathering Song
 Welcoming words
 Announcements
 Lighting of Chalice/words for lighting chalice
 Hymn
 Joys and Sorrows
 Choir or Special Music, when scheduled
 Story for all Ages
 Sing children to their activities
 Helping Hands speaker, on 2nd Sunday
 Offertory: words
 Music
 Reading
 Hymn
 Sermon/Main Speaker(s) Discussion
 Hymn
 Closing words