

The Artist's Heart

Creativity in Worship: Getting ready for Lent and Easter

2:15 p.m., Thursday, February 6, 2025

Tom Granum

Interim Director of Music Ministries & Organist

First Baptist Church, Athens, Ga.

706-207-6010

tom@firstbaptistathens.org (church)

tom.w.granum@gmail.com (permanent)

Every person/artist is different. Every worshiping congregation is different.
We hope that every artist and congregation will develop into its potential.

An Overarching Theme for the Artis: *Atomic Habits and Incremental Change*

Most of the suggestions for your consideration are intentionally small and intended to spark YOUR creativity planning for YOUR congregation.

You might read the book, Google, or search for YouTube presentations on *Atomic Habits: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results* by James Clear.

___ For Lent-Easter-Pentecost, strive to improve your choir 1% each week. What atomic habit would help your choir sing 1% better each week?

___ Grow the number of singers for this time:

Short-term commitment – one Sunday, one month, or one season

Every time someone says “no,” you’re one person closer to a “yes.” If they don’t say “no” OR “yes,” you can invite them again!

Recruit: previous choir members; members who haven’t sung in this choir previously; new members; singers from outside the church; text a friend who doesn’t sing in another church choir – “Can you help us out Sunday? We need several more singers.”

___ Use the word “love” as in “I love you” (to the choir) at least once per week if you can say it honestly.
Don’t assume they know you love them. They need to hear it.

Worship Resources for the Creative Worship Planner

Examples of **resources** for developing your creative in worship and preparing for Lent-Easter-Pentecost.

- *The Worship Sourcebook* – Copyright 2004 – Faith Alive Christian Resources
- *Glory to God* – Copyright 2013 – Westminster John Knox Press
- *Psalms for All Seasons* – Copyright 2012 – Faith Alive Christian Resources
Frequently missed: “Performance Notes” pp. 1077-1091 – These are important.
- Hymnary.org

Broad Ideas for Creativity

___ Add a liturgical element for Lent or a season you don’t use regularly.

Confession/Assurance – Call to Confession, Prayer of Confession, Assurance of Pardon (God’s Grace)

o Sing the same refrain each week:

- A psalm refrain for Psalm 51
 - Jane Marshall (*Psalms Together*) – Choristers Guild
 - *Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God* – Glory to God 423
- Michael Burkhardt’s *Gathered in God’s Name* – MorningStar
 - Could also be used as a congregational Call to Worship – soloist with congregation

Apostles' Creed or another Scriptural Affirmation

Congregational Call to Worship – stanza or refrain sung every Sunday

Call to Prayer – congregation sings *Come, Bring Your Burdens to God* – Glory to God 851

A Taizé sung prayer (song) used each week

Prayer for Illumination – spoken (individual, responsive, or corporate) or sung, *Spirit of the Living God*

___ Alter your order of worship for a season

Gathering – Call to Worship/Opening Prayer; hymn; Confession/Assurance

Proclaiming – Prayer for Illumination; children's moment; readings; anthem and/or hymn; sermon

Responding – Invitation; hymn; affirmation; Prayers of the People/LP; hymn; stewardship; offering; Doxology; benediction

___ Present scripture in ways in addition to a single reader reading the entire reading.

Use *Psalms for All Seasons* as a creative source

Multiple readers

Alternate readers for a psalm

Multiple readers for a passage with different people, e.g., narrator, Jesus, other speakers

Sung refrain (that fits text) before, during, and after the scripture

Weave together a reading and a hymn/song: text; sing a stanza; more text; sing next stanza; more text...

Example: Read Psalm 51 – using stanzas from *Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God*

And/or the reading can be the song PLUS spoken verses that aren't in the song.

Read Ps. 51:1-9; sing *Create in Me...*; conclude reading verses 14-19

An anthem that fits in the middle of the reading; text – anthem – text

Someone "signs" (not sings) the refrain while people sing – simple refrain so they can look up and see

Or maybe only the choir sings the refrain

___ A processional doesn't need to include the choir. While the prelude is played,

___ Sing some hymns with instrumentation different from what you normally use.

If you normally use piano and organ together, use just one keyboard instrument.

Unaccompanied

Solo flute with congregation

Worship Ideas by the Liturgical Calendar

Easter is framed roughly by 50 days (7 weeks): Transfiguration – Easter – Pentecost

Opportunities to worship outside the sanctuary:

Begin Palm Sunday and Pentecost outside – congregation processes in

Good Friday service/gathering 3:00-3:15 p.m.) at the cemetery; same place as Easter Sunrise worship

Go to a hill or mountain for Ascension Day, Thursday, May 29 – school out – day trip for youth/sr. adults.

Transfiguration Sunday, March 2 – Sunday BEFORE Ash Wednesday – preparation for Lenten journey

Ash Wednesday, March 5 – first day of Lent – imposition of ashes

Prepare ashes before or day of – burn palms from last year

Sunday's Palms Are Wednesday's Ashes – from *Sing the Faith/The Faith We Sing*

Sign Us with Ashes – Glory to God #433 – solos with congregational refrain during imposition

Palm Sunday, April 13

Begin outside – read some of the Palm Sunday scripture outside – donkey/Jesus? – shout Hosanna and other phrases as you move inside. Everyone has a palm.

The first part of the service can be Palm Sunday; then move into a Maundy Thursday reading

(perhaps celebrating communion); end with a Good Friday reading; soloist, choir, or all sing[s] *Were You There*; no postlude

In the latter part of the service, I like to use Michael Burkhardt's setting of *My Song Is Love Unknown* (soloist; organ-only stanza; choir stanza; men stanza; women stanza; all w/descant – excellent organ setting for each stanza)

Maundy Thursday, April 17

Opening hymn: *An Upper Room Did Our Lord Prepare* from Glory to God

Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19: with *I Love the Lord (He Heard My Cry)* – Sing Stanza 1 – read psalm – sing Stanza 2

Gospel was Mark 14:17-25 incorporating Allen Pote's *The Last Supper*

Most effective and remembered: Ending with Tenebrae Service of Deepening Shadows

As suggested in Glory to God 207 – You'll definitely need the accompaniment edition and this from Glory to God: A Companion

The Shadow of Betrayal (Matthew 26:20-25)

The Shadow of Impending Faithlessness (Matthew 26:31, 33-35)

The Shadow of Unshared Vigil (Matthew 26:36-41)

The Shadow of Christ's Agony (Matthew 26:42-45)

The Shadow of Arrest (Matthew 26:47-50)

The Shadow of Desertion (Mark 14:48-50)

The Shadow of Denial (Luke 22:53-62)

The Shadow of the Cross (Luke 23:33-34, 44-46)

Candles burning – one for each reading

Read scripture – soloist sings stanza after each reading; congregation joins on refrain

("Shadows lengthen into Night"); candle extinguished

Service ends with Stripping of the Church

Good Friday, April 18

We have a noontime service. We have choir but keep it simple. I invite some singer friends from other churches if their church doesn't have a noontime service.

Most effective, meaningful, and remembered: From *Psalms for All Seasons*, Psalm 22 (Listed as 22C, p. 120): two (dramatic) readers; congregation sings short part of *Wondrous Love*; handbells are added. Be sure to read Ps. 22C in the Performance notes, p. 1079.

No sermon – we do a "lessons-and-carols" approach including:

Psalm 22:1-11, 22-29 (above)

Isaiah 53:19

Anthem – *Surely He Has Borne Our Grievs* – John Carter

Mark 15:16-20

Hymn 191 – *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*

Mark 15:21-32

Musical Response – *Ah, Holy Jesus* – organ setting by Michale Burkhardt

Mark 15:33-39

Musical Response – *Ah, Holy Jesus* – organ setting by Johannes Brahms

Hymn (on back of bulletin) – *Ah, Holy Jesus*

Ends with Solemn Reproaches of the Cross (edited by minister)

Sung Response – soloist sings one or several stanzas of *Were You There?*

Depart in silence

3:00-3:15 gathering/service at cemetery – same place we'll have sunrise – soloist sings *Were You There* Scripture, prayer, and soloist ends with *Were You There* (which will continue on Easter Sunrise)

Easter, April 20

Sunrise service at cemetery (same place we had Good Friday)

Bulletin needs to be large print to read in the dawn light

Service begins with *Were You There (When He Rose Up from the Grave)*

Brass ensemble: gathering music and congregational hymns (*Low in the Grave, In the Garden, Christ the Lord Is Risen Today*) -

11 a.m. service in Sanctuary

Last year we used *Psalms for All Seasons* Psalm 118:14-24 (118I] A Paraphrase for Easter (from *The Message*) with the sung refrain

We continued to use several sung congregational responses we had used during Lent: *Gathered in God's Name* (Burkhardt), *Take, O Take Me as I Am* (from Glory to God), and *Come, Bring Your Burdens to God* (from Glory to God).

At the end of the service, we included: Please turn to someone near you and say,

Christ is risen! And respond, He is risen indeed!

Ascension Day, Thursday, May 29

2025 will be my first one to plan. We hope to go to a north Georgia mountain (unfortunately, we cannot drive a van with senior adults up Mt. Yonah) for an informal service. School is out, so we'll probably incorporate a youth trip; senior adults will have an outing; etc. Any suggestions for a north Georgia mountain?

Pentecost, June 8

In two years, this has become a big deal – in a good way!

Gather outside before the service with red refreshments.

Everyone is handed a red ribbon wand (from Oriental Trading).

The opening liturgy is simple (nothing for congregation to read) – but the congregation waves their red ribbon wand and shouts **Come, Holy Spirit, come!**

We use the simple Taizé sung chant/prayer “Holy Spirit, come to us.”

Kite doves (one would suffice but we use three!) – from Friends of the Groom – lead us into the sanctuary. The adult choir stands on both sides of the “outside suggested ‘aisle’” so that the

congregation

goes up the ramp and doesn't try to go up all the stairs. Inside a soloist sings the Taizé stanzas.

After most people were inside, we sang hymns included in the bulletin: *Let Every Christian Pray* and *Every Time I Feel the Spirit* (Glory to God.)

Several languages used in different parts of the service. The most effective last year was 6-8 people came to the chancel/stage (with enough shared microphones) and prayed the Lord's Prayer in different languages simultaneously. We also sang several global songs.

I'm glad to provide more details and share ideas with you – and learn from you!

I'll probably be at FBC, Athens, Ga., for at least another year: tom@firstbaptistathens.org

My permanent email is tom.w.granum@gmail.com

My cell (text or call) is 706-207-6010.