

# Worshiping into God's Future



*A Worship Initiative of the United Church of Christ*

Summary and  
Strategies 2005



# Summary and Strategies 2005



Worship and Education Ministry Team  
Local Church Ministries  
A Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ

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# More Light

Christopher Grundy

chords for capo 2nd fret

D A Bm  
 More \_\_\_ light, more \_\_\_  
 G D A  
 \_\_\_ truth is break ing \_\_\_ from \_\_\_ your \_\_\_  
 Bm G D A  
 Word, \_\_\_ more \_\_\_ light,  
 Bm G D A  
 more \_\_\_ truth, Ho ly Spir it,  
 Bm (repeat last time through) G D  
 help us \_\_\_ hear \_\_\_ what needs to be \_\_\_ heard, \_\_\_  
 A Bm G

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("More Light" was inspired by the words of John Robinson, pastor to the Pilgrims, before their departure to this country in 1620: "For God hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his holy Word." The song is especially appropriate to be sung in worship preceding or following the reading of scripture or the sermon. It may also be used at times of personal or congregational discernment.)

**L**iving God,  
you created light and a universe.  
All creation praises you.  
In each generation,  
your faithful and courageous people  
have sought more light and truth.

Reveal your light and truth  
to this generation  
in our worship of you.

Move among us through many ways—  
in words preached and prayed, poetic and profound;  
in sacrament, water poured, bread broken, wine shared;  
in voices, silent, soft and loud, singing and signed;

Reveal yourself in music, in movement, through visual delights.

Meet us in holy places  
and in the faces of those with whom we worship.

Transform us  
through the testimony, tastes, and touch of your people  
of many ages, cultures, talents, and tongues.

God, all Light, all Truth, we seek you.  
We thank you. We worship you. We praise you.  
We long for the fullness  
of your reign of love and justice even now.  
In the name of Jesus, Light and Truth,  
Amen.



# What is the “Worshiping into God’s Future” Initiative?

“Worshiping into God’s Future: A Worship Initiative of the United Church of Christ” began with a prayer, “O God, what is your yearning for the worship life of the United Church of Christ?” This prayer expresses a call of the *Constitution of the United Church of Christ* to the “responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression and in purity of heart before God.”

Not since the development of *Book of Worship* beginning in 1977, had the UCC examined its worship and sacramental life. Since that time, much happened in the worship of our congregations. New styles of worship emerged out of traditional patterns that ranged from blending contemporary forms with traditional worship to seeker services and other experimental forms as the emerging worship movement. Ecumenical worship expressions now included the increasing use of *The Revised Common Lectionary* and sharing common words for Holy Communion and Baptism. The influence on worship by the arts and electronic media advanced. Specific racial and cultural ways of worship were celebrated. Congregations were calling for more worship and music resources, but what were the resources and training needed for this diverse and expanding church?

To respond to the call and needs for worship in this generation, Local Church Ministries brought a resolution to General Synod XXIV in July 2003. The resolution was crafted by a diverse group of worship leaders, conference ministers, musicians and artists, professors of liturgy, Local Church Ministries board members, and staff from all the covenanted ministries. Many of them are listed in the back of this booklet.

When the resolution was approved, Synod called on Local Church Ministries, through the Worship and Education Ministry Team and supported by the Research Office for General Ministries, to the following tasks:

- *to encourage a broad-based discussion of and inquiry into worship throughout the United Church of Christ,*
- *and having listened to the church to consider, evaluate, design and develop—resources for worship renewal including liturgical texts, music, the arts, and electronic media, programs and initiatives,*

- *including worship leadership training and education in both church and schools of theology; and*
- *possible enhancements to the Book of Worship: United Church of Christ that respond to the distinctive call of this generation in the life of the local church and other ministry settings, and honor our commitment to be a church that serves God in all of Creation, and is inviting and welcoming to all.*

This booklet, *Summary and Strategies 2005*, reports how this call has been carried out over the past two years. It is only a brief summary of the findings of various forms of research. Drawing upon that research, this booklet also includes several strategies to be considered and acted upon as the United Church of Christ worships into God's future.



# Discussion and Inquiry into Our Worship Life



Research for this initiative took various forms and sought the views of diverse constituencies within the UCC. Those forms included written and on-line research surveys, focus groups, responses to trial worship resources, and consultations.

In January, 2004, every congregation received a packet of four different surveys to complete, including surveys for clergy, laity, musicians and artists, and an overall description of worship. Many congregations also submitted copies of church bulletins, recent sermons, selections of worship materials, and other reflections or policies on worship or sacraments. Non-parish clergy, including chaplains and retired pastors, were encouraged to complete surveys as well. A web-site was established so people could also complete the surveys on-line.

Special efforts were made to reach under-represented groups. Surveys in Spanish were sent to congregations in Puerto Rico and other Spanish-speaking congregations. Outreach was done to pastors and conferences with larger numbers of under-represented groups. In addition, two focus groups were held with Native American pastors.

Because of the importance of youth to worshiping into God's future, youth input was obtained in several ways. Three focus groups were held at the 2004 National Youth Event. During the fall of 2004, the youth page of the UCC website contained a link to the youth survey, and an additional 160 youth from across the UCC completed the surveys on-line.

"Worshiping into God's Future Research and Resource Packets" were developed in response to the preliminary results from the surveys and sent to all congregations. The packets included discussion helps, trial liturgies, a songbook, a music CD, and a CD with text and visual images. The resources were created from those submitted by congregations across the denomination and those created new by a diverse group of composers and liturgists. Congregations reflected on their practice around worship patterns, Holy Communion, baptismal rites, and worship in times of life transition. They tried out and considered new possibilities. The packets contained a response form with additional questions about needed resources, and people were encouraged to respond on-line or by mail.

A consultation was also held at Eden Theological Seminary in April 2005 with representatives from theological schools, conferences, professors of liturgy

and worship, small and rural congregations, and Local Church Ministries. After hearing findings of research, the consultation considered worship leadership training and education. Results are included in the strategies at the end of this booklet.

Over 12,000 surveys were returned from all these forms of research, including at least one survey from over 38% of all congregations. Participants were generally representative of UCC congregations by conference. The smallest congregations were under-represented, as were African American congregations. However, both groups had enough responses for meaningful analysis. Congregations that responded were probably more interested in worship than those that did not, as well as more active in their associations and conferences.

## **What is Worship in the UCC?**

Worship is, first and foremost, “an encounter with the presence of God so that we might be transformed to do God’s work in the world.” This alternative was chosen from a list by 90% of clergy and about 2/3 of laity. Of course, worship is other things, as well (and respondents were asked to choose no more than two options). About 40% of clergy and 25% of lay respondents described worship as “a joyous celebration of our redemption,” and 20-25% of both groups said that worship is “a gathering of learners on the way,” “an opportunity to be educated and empowered for ministries of justice and reconciliation” and “a reminder that all are welcome in God’s house.” When asked to write what they hope or long for in worship, overwhelmingly, people said the same thing.

## **What Are the Marks of UCC Worship?**

Most congregations (72%) have only one worship service per week, but 21% have two and 7% have three or more. Most services (89%) are traditional or blend some more contemporary elements in a traditional service (16%), but 9% of congregations have services they describe as Contemporary, Family, or Informal. The parts of the service are similar to those found in other Protestant churches, although frequencies may vary. For example, only about half of the congregations always or almost always include a confession and forgiveness of sins, and only about 20% always or almost always include a creed or statement of faith.

Descriptions of worship (see Figure 1, page 18) indicate that both clergy and laity find a sense of God’s presence in worship, and believe it is biblically-based and celebrative, with a strong musical component.

Most clergy (95%) use the lectionary in some way to plan worship, with 71% using it as a focal point around which they plan, and another 20% using it to select scripture. This frequent use of the lectionary by clergy represents an increase from 67% discovered in 1990 at the time *The New Century Hymnal* was developed.

Traditional church music is still the norm in the majority of UCC congrega-

tions, with the organ used in all but 3%. Almost all congregations use music during a prelude (99%), offertory (93%) and postlude (92%) and 89% have an anthem. Classical music is a distant second (38%) and praise songs are third, with nearly a quarter singing them regularly. Other musical instruments such as drums or guitars and other types of music are present, but in far fewer churches, or only occasionally.

Congregations use a variety of hymnals, including all the UCC hymnals and many others. A majority (58%) use *The New Century Hymnal*, with 39% using it all or nearly all of the time. Many, especially those with older hymnals, use more than one, or reprint hymns in their bulletins from different sources. Although 52% of congregations include sung congregational responses in worship, few chant or sing the psalms (21% and 19% respectively), although 63% speak psalms antiphonally, at least occasionally. Some churches incorporate dance, drama, or visual arts in worship, although the percentages are small.

Holy Communion is generally celebrated either monthly (82%) or quarterly (9%), although a few congregations celebrate it weekly either at the primary or a second service (4%). When clergy and laity were asked how often they would prefer Holy Communion to be celebrated, the number preferring it weekly was greater than current practice at the major service. About half the congregations include children in Holy Communion, and 72% report that youth and adults are welcomed regardless of whether they have been baptized or confirmed.

Liturgies vary, with 18% usually using "Word and Sacrament I" from the *Book of Worship*, 11% usually using "Word and Sacrament II," and 9% usually using the briefer order. Over half of congregations report that they compose or adapt their own liturgies either usually (28%) or sometimes (24%). Congregations (28%) also report using liturgies from other published sources, including Scripture. Although the words vary greatly, the majority of services always or usually include the Eucharistic Prayer/Great Thanksgiving (77%), the Words of Institution (92%), and the Blessing/Words of Consecration (86%). Over a third report that some part of the liturgy is sung (34% often, 3% rarely), with another 10% reporting singing only a communion hymn or a song during the distribution of the elements.

Almost all congregations (97%) practice infant baptism, almost always as part of regular Sunday worship. About 14% practice immersion of youth or adults, but usually only if requested, rather than a general practice. Over half will baptize any child, with the remainder requiring church membership, or promise of membership, by a parent. Most use the liturgy from the *Book of Worship*, or an adaptation, and the majority (78%) use traditional trinitarian words of "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (or Ghost), while another 9% use those words, but add more inclusive words such as "One God, Mother of us all," and 14% use "Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer," or a variation of it. In general, baptismal practices are more in line with the common ecumenical tradition than other liturgical practices.

Theological understandings of the sacraments differ somewhat between clergy and laity (Figure 2, page 18). The most common understandings among laity of Holy Communion are “A remembrance of Jesus’ last supper, death, and resurrection” chosen by 71%, and “A time of forgiveness of sins and reconciliation” (40%). Clergy were more likely to describe it as “A meal in which we encounter God’s living presence” (64%), and then “A remembrance of Jesus’ last supper, death, and resurrection” (55%). Those who saw it as a time to encounter God or a celebration were more likely to want it weekly than those who saw it as a time of forgiveness of sins.

Both clergy and laity also emphasize a broad ecumenical understanding of Baptism, including “An incorporation into the Church universal, the Body of Christ” and “A gift of the Holy Spirit and the grace of Christ,” “An initiation into the fellowship of your congregation” third, and “A sharing in Christ’s death and resurrection fourth. Laity were more likely than clergy to describe Baptism as “A time of conversion – repenting, pardoning, and cleansing.”

Understandings of the sacraments in a justice perspective represent a minority, but a significant one. Holy Communion as “A celebration of God’s reign of justice and love – the banquet of God” was chosen by 25% of clergy and 11% of laity, and Baptism as “An entrance into God’s reign of justice and love” was chosen by 13% of clergy and 20% of laity.

Descriptions of worship generally depict a socially-involved denomination in which laity have an active role. In about half the congregations, worship frequently includes references to societal or justice issues. Similarly, inclusive or expansive language is the norm, with 80% of clergy and 63% of the laity saying it is used regularly in worship in relation to humanity, 69% and 63% in relation to God, and 52% and 47% report using expansive language regularly in relation to all creation. Of the clergy, 49% say that inclusive or expansive language is very important, and 27% say it is important. Of the laity, however, only 17% say it is very important and 25% say it is important.

When clergy, laity, and musicians all were asked about what is distinctive about UCC worship, several of the same themes emerged from all three groups. Over a third of the clergy and nearly half the laity talked about the extravagant welcome, the inclusive nature of the denomination, or the welcoming, caring community in their local congregation. They also mentioned local autonomy and flexibility, which enables worship in the UCC to be done the way each congregation wants it to be done. Some mentioned that theology is not doctrinal, each person is encouraged to discover what God is still speaking to them.

## **How Does Worship Vary Among Congregations?**

The way each congregation worships reflects the particularities of its local setting, as well as the influences, resources, and connectedness of the wider church. Particular influences include factors such as race and ethnicity, size, age of the congregation and average age of its members, and the predecessor denomination

of which the congregation may have been a part. Influences of the wider church include *Book of Worship*, hymnals, and *The Revised Common Lectionary*, as well as worship styles that are discovered or used in worship training events. These factors create a rich, creative mix among congregations that many members cherish.

Congregations were characterized on several particular dimensions of worship, such as lay or children and youth involvement, formal or contemporary worship, and orientation toward justice or openness. Each congregation was put into one of four categories within a dimension, based on how many of the key characteristics of each they reported. Categories ranged from “top” to “bottom.”

### ***Formal Liturgical Worship Style***

Worship was labeled Formal Liturgical for congregations (6%) that used the lectionary, were rated as sacramental and liturgical, had the custom of standing for the Gospel reading, used the Book of Worship liturgies rather than modifying or writing their own, included creeds/statements of faith, responsive readings, confession and forgiveness, and traditional trinitarian words for Baptism. Congregations in the second category (45%) had many of the characteristics of those in the top category, but to a lesser degree. The 40% in the third category did not rate themselves high in these characteristics, but had one or two characteristics, such as using the lectionary or including creeds or confessions. Congregations in the bottom category, 9% of the total, rarely used the lectionary, wrote their own liturgies or used their own words and words from the Bible for sacraments, and described themselves as praise-filled and Spirit-led.

This Formal Liturgical style was related to size, with churches under 200 less likely to be in the top category. Formerly Evangelical and Reformed congregations were twice as likely to be in the top category, with the Mid-Atlantic Region having the most Formal Liturgical congregations. Asian congregations were similar to other congregations in this style, but all other racial ethnic congregations were not Formal Liturgical. New churches were on both ends, more than twice as likely to be in the bottom category and nearly twice as likely to be Formal Liturgical, with fewer in the middle.

### ***Contemporary Worship Style***

Nearly 7% of congregations completing the surveys reported having a contemporary service including elements of contemporary practice, such as praise choruses, praise song leaders, bands, and significant use of modern music, including jazz or rock, and some use of other media, including drama, video, or slide projection. Some congregations had such a service in addition to a more traditional one. In the second category, 28% of the congregations, worship could be described as blended, with some contemporary music or some use of media or drama, but not a contemporary or praise service as such. Slightly more than half (54%) of congregations were in the third category, only occasionally including

contemporary music or drama. The bottom category, congregations whose description of worship included no contemporary elements or use of music other than traditional church music, included 11% of the respondents.

Newer churches were more likely than others to score high on this dimension. For example, 26% of newer churches reported using video. Larger congregations (over 500 members), that might have multiple services, were also more likely. The smallest congregations were more likely to have no contemporary elements, but also were more likely to have a contemporary service, with fewer in the middle. African American and Hispanic congregations were also more likely to have contemporary worship, including use of multimedia. Native American congregations were the least.

### ***Involvement of Laity***

In 19% of congregations, laity are active in leading worship including worship planning and even preaching. In half, laity are involved actively in leading worship, but less so in planning and preaching. In 29%, lay involvement includes only occasional worship leadership such as Bible reading, and no planning beyond hymn selection. In about 2%, laity are uninvolved beyond making announcements or serving as acolytes or communion servers. Laity are most likely to be involved in churches founded since the UCC was formed in 1957 and in merged congregations of the Congregational Christian and Evangelical and Reformed traditions. Churches founded in the last few years were twice as high as others. Involvement does not differ significantly by size. Laity are much more involved in racial ethnic and mixed ethnic congregations than they are in predominately European American ones, either formerly Congregational Christian or Evangelical and Reformed.

### ***Involvement of Children and Youth***

In about 32% of the congregations, children and youth are highly involved in worship, including being leaders, receiving communion, participating in special children or youth Sundays, and hearing child-friendly language. In nearly half (45%) children and youth are involved in worship, but at a lower level than the top category. In 19%, they are minimally involved, such as listening to the Children's Sermon or leading worship only on Special Sundays, in 2% they are not involved at all, and another 2% of the congregations have no children or youth. Children and youth are more involved in churches with 101 to 750 members than in smaller or larger congregations. They are also more involved in newer congregations and racial ethnic congregations, especially Hispanic ones.

### ***Openness of Worship***

For this dimension, "openness" included several factors such as efforts to decrease physical barriers and use of inclusive language. All kinds of people pro-

vided worship leadership. The sacraments were open to all, including children. Using these definitions, 22% of congregations were defined as open, with another 37% open in many of the elements, such as communion open to any adult but not to any child. Some 36% both restricted Holy Communion to confirmed members only and made only minimal efforts to include people who are different. Only 5% made little or no efforts to be open. Thus, the openness in worship depicted in the denomination “Still Speaking” campaign is true of many, but not all UCC congregations.

### ***Justice Issues in Worship***

A strong justice orientation is present in worship in 10% of congregations. This includes frequent mention of environmental, economic, and racial justice issues, use of inclusive language, understanding of worship as a powerful place that connects us to the world, and understanding sacraments as related to justice. Another 48% have a more moderate orientation, 35% only occasionally include justice issues, and only 7% make no ties between worship and justice. Justice issues are higher in newer churches, and churches in the West and New England regions than in others. They are highest in African American and mixed ethnic churches.

### ***Music***

The biggest influence on whether a congregation’s worship had a strong musical component was size, with amount and variety of music increasing with size. Age of congregation also mattered, with newer congregations more likely than other congregations to report using musical instruments other than organ such as brass or percussion and newer musical styles such as jazz and rock. Although most congregations used an organ regularly, newer congregations were least likely to do so (only 74%) and most likely to use a keyboard (68%) and praise band (38%), at least occasionally.

Race and ethnicity influence the type of music in worship. African American and Hispanic congregations were more likely to have modern styles such as jazz and rock as well as spirituals and gospel music. European American, Asian, and mixed racial ethnic congregations were most likely to have traditional music, and the greatest variety in musical styles, and Hispanic least likely. Native American congregations reported a variety of musical instruments, within their resources, although drums were not used. Some also used recorded music rather than an organ. European American congregations had bell choirs, brass and other orchestral instruments, and small group ensembles. Hispanic congregations had dance groups and multiple choirs, Asian congregations included orchestral instruments, and African American congregations had the greatest numbers of choirs, including men’s groups.

## **What Difference Does Worship Style Make?**

Several measures of good or effective worship were developed. First, both laity and youth were asked to rate worship at their congregations, from “the best I have ever experienced” to “we need to improve in many areas.” Second, laity reported how their faith has changed in the last three years on eight items, and these measures were used to develop a composite measure of growth in faith. Third, other measures of growth were examined.

### ***Laity Evaluate Worship***

For the most part, laity and youth believe that worship in their local congregation is good to excellent. People who rated their congregation’s worship highly were more likely to be in congregations where worship was described as exciting, celebratory, spiritual, and contemporary, with drama and mystery, a strong musical component, and lay involvement. Their worship also was high on openness and included justice issues. Laity, at least those chosen to complete the surveys, are attracted to worship that includes references to the issues of the day. However, the worship did not differ significantly on emotional-intellectual, formal liturgical, sacramental, use of lectionary, and involvement of children and youth. Thus, the style of worship, whether formal or informal, was not important in people’s ratings of worship. What was important was whether worship was alive and effective in helping people encounter God.

### ***Growth in Faith***

The only factors that were related to growth in faith were spiritual, drama/mystery, sacramental, exciting, and emotional, rather than intellectual. Although these correlations were statistically significant, they were small. They all measure aspects of whether worship helps develop a relationship to God. In this important criterion of worship, then, style of worship does not matter. Both joyous, praise-filled worship and quiet meditative worship can help people deepen their relationship with God and apply it to their daily living. Any style that helps people encounter God can be vital worship.

### ***Reaching New People***

Style does seem to matter in some other important ways, however. Worship not only helps current members encounter God, it also does so for non-members and the next generation. Some worship styles were clearly better than others at increasing worship attendance, and attracting new, unchurched, and younger worshippers. Congregations whose worship attendance was high for their size and whose worship had more of these important groups were more likely to have worship that was contemporary, spiritual, emotional, included justice issues, was open to all, involved laity including children and youth, and had a strong music component. Whether the worship was informal or formal liturgical in style did not matter.



Congregations are using different strategies to adapt their worship styles to speak to different groups (see Figure 3, page 19). About 15% report having different services to meet the need for different styles, 39% try to blend styles in one service, 10% change from week to week, and 18% try to find a comfortable middle ground that speaks to all. Another 10% recognize the need, and would like to expand. Only 7% say that only one style is needed.

## **How Do Youth See Worship?**

Results of the youth surveys and focus groups helped suggest why youth and young adults are more likely to attend contemporary worship that has a strong involvement of the laity and children and youth. Although the words used were slightly different, youth, like adults, rate worship higher when they feel that God is present, it is spiritual, and joyous, and also when it is multicultural. They rate it low when they think it is boring or intellectual. Although those who attended the National Youth Event where the focus groups were held or completed the surveys on-line are already attenders, they want to do more, particularly hands-on activities such as music performance, artwork, assisting with audiovisuals or multimedia presentations, planning worship, sponsoring confirmands or those to be baptized, and even preaching.

When asked what parts of the service are most meaningful and most boring (see Figure 4, page 19), they found music, both that which they listen to and that in which they participate, to be the most meaningful, with sermons next. Sermons were also among the most boring, along with congregational readings. When asked why aspects of the service were meaningful or boring, the youth were frank. They want to develop their relationship with God, and seem to have little patience for parts of the service that do not enable that. They also want to be engaged in worship with all their senses, not just their ears and their minds. Sermons were boring when the youth felt they were just being lectured at, or they didn't understand them, or they felt the sermons were not addressed to them. They found music to be the most meaningful part of the service, but often none of it was the kind of music that speaks to them. Rather than a total change in music, however, they requested that their music be included at least once in a while.

## **How is Worship Planned?**

Worship planning involves a significant amount of time, both professional and volunteer. Clergy reported that they spend an average of 4 hours per week by themselves in worship planning, not including sermon writing. About 40% of the clergy reported that they meet with a worship team or other staff as a group, spending about an hour and a half per week, and 25% report that they spend an average of 1.3 hours working with individuals.

Although clergy use a wide variety of resources to plan worship, they adapt freely. They adapt *Book of Worship* liturgies for Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation. Clergy retell biblical stories or adapt from several translations. Although the *Book of Worship* is adapted, it is widely used, especially outside of Sunday worship. Although only a quarter frequently use the orders of worship it contains, 62% use it for funerals, 55% for weddings, and 56% for installation of officers. As also mentioned, *The Revised Common Lectionary* is used to some degree by 95% of clergy.

## What Resources and Training are Needed?

In both the initial surveys and the research and resource packets, clergy said they wanted more resources of most kinds. Some respondents said they were already way ahead of what the packets offered, while others felt the packets were not appropriate for their congregations because they were too “far out.” Those more in the middle, who did not have a lot of resources locally, found the resources and the process helpful. And almost everyone wanted more.

More music was highest on everyone’s list of new resources, especially inclusive language praise music and music for prayers. Other requests included resources for special services or occasions including healing services, new liturgies for Baptism and Holy Communion, same-gender covenant services, dedications of leaders, and resources for contemporary worship, as well as resources for promoting participation and change and including children. Because many clergy modify the *Book of Worship*, they requested it on a CD-ROM or down-loadable form for editing and incorporating into bulletins. Others, acknowledging the variety of worship experiences throughout the UCC, requested that many options be provided, for traditional as well as contemporary worship, for example, or for small churches and rural churches, as well as suburban ones. Still others, such as Native American and Puerto Rico clergy requested resources in their own language and cultures and by indigenous authors.

Both clergy and musicians wanted different delivery methods for resources, including the traditional books, workshops, and packets of materials such as *Worship Ways*. However, the internet and other electronic media have become the delivery systems of choice for most clergy and musicians. Materials that can be downloaded or obtained on CD and then modified for the local context and incorporated into worship are clearly their preference. This method also allows them to obtain resources on demand. About a quarter of those responding to the “Worshiping into God’s Future Research and Resource” packets cited a critical need for more training in centers for leadership development, seminary connections, and forums and discussion groups, while 42% cited regional training events as a critical need.

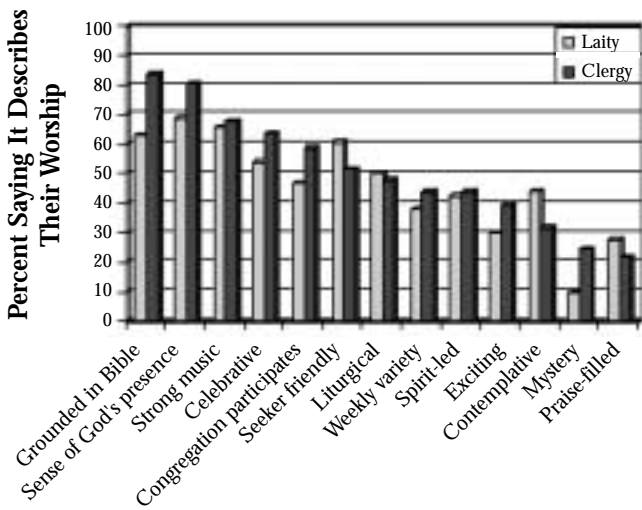


Figure 1. Descriptions of worship.

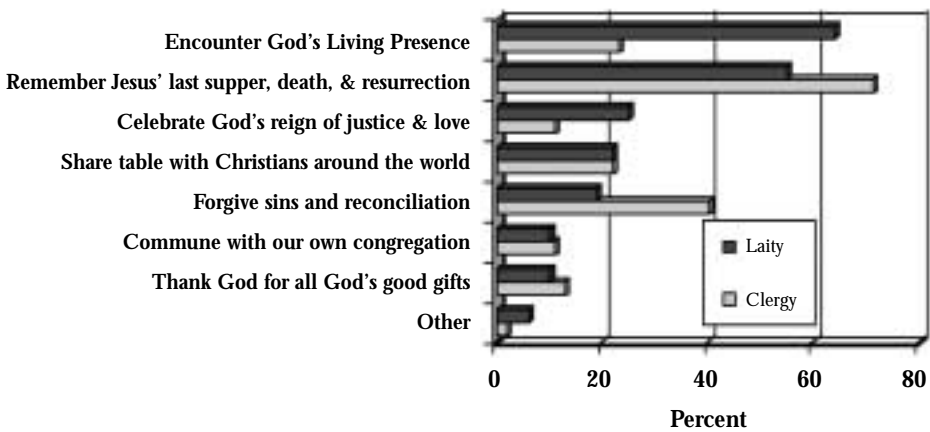


Figure 2. Understandings of Holy Communion.

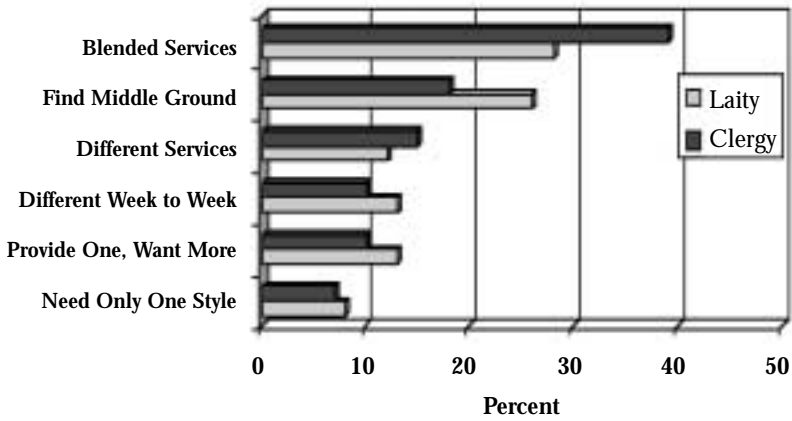


Figure 3. How congregations address different worship styles.

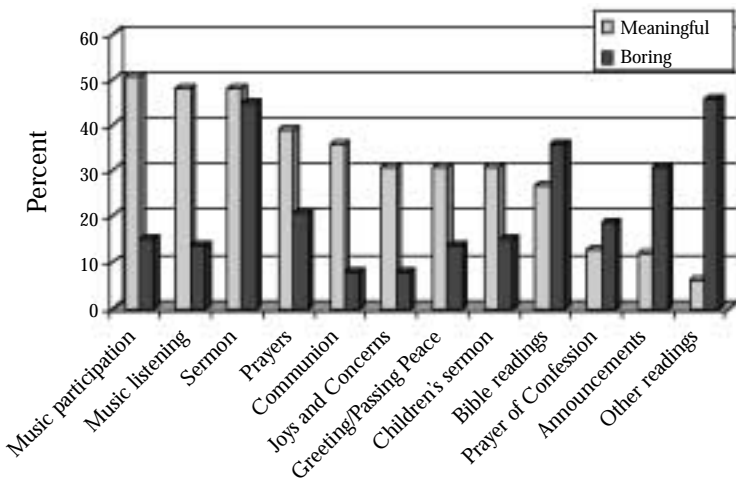


Figure 4. Most meaningful and most boring parts of worship to youth.



# Strategies for Our Worship Future

“Having listened to the churches,” Synod’s worship resolution now calls for the development and implementations of strategies. In consultation with diverse advisors from across the church, the Worship and Education Ministry Team of Local Church Ministries has identified the following resource and leadership training strategies. A basic commitment is to continue prayerful conversations about worship and sacraments that have occurred during the past two years. Research, formal and informal, indicates that these conversations have benefited both worship and the broader mission of United Church of Christ congregations. The Worship and Education Ministry Team will carry out these priorities and continue to explore the possibilities.

## Worship Resource Strategies

### *Priorities*

1. Release and promotion of research related to “Worshiping into God’s Future.” We will seek ways to make the findings available in forms and ways that will be of use to any ministry of the UCC as they plan for programs and resources. These forms include: a multimedia presentation for study and for use in congregations, fact sheets connecting worship research with particular interests, and a comprehensive data CD with summaries and results of all questions and interpretations from the project. For more information, check [www.ucc.org/worship](http://www.ucc.org/worship) or contact the Worship and Education Ministry Team, LCM, following Synod XXV.
2. Supplements to *Book of Worship* and collections of resources based on areas of worship and sacramental life. As the earlier research and resource packets, these supplements will include process for theological reflection, a range of liturgies relevant to a topic, and music resources that connect with each topic. They will be available in both electronic and print formats. The supplements will each be produced separately over time—each with their own production schedule.

Possible topics:

Holy Communion

Baptism and related rites as infant dedications, Baptism affirmation,  
Confirmation, and Welcoming New Members

Patterns or Orders of Worship

The Church Year

Funerals and Memorials

Marriage and Life Partnership

Preaching

Healing

Ministry and the Life of a Congregation

Multiracial and Multicultural, Culturally-specific, Worship

The Just and Peace Church

Occasional Services and Rites

Daily Prayer

Moments of Our Lives

### **Other Resource Possibilities**

1. A theological and spiritual guide for discerning and connecting the mission of a UCC congregation with its worship and sacramental life.
2. Ongoing development of on-line and print resources as *Worship Ways*, *Book of Worship*, liturgies from specific constituencies, and critical articles.
3. On-line and print listings of worship resources from an array of seminaries, institutes, publishers, composers, and agencies.
4. A book or resource that will serve as an introduction to worship and sacraments in the UCC including historical, biblical, theological, practical and research entries. The edited volume would serve both local church and theological school audiences.

## **Worship Leadership Training and Education Strategies**

### ***Priority***

Work with seminaries and especially lay theological training programs to develop worship components and bibliography related to worship in the United Church of Christ.

### ***Other Worship Leadership Training Possibilities***

1. National and/or regional events that continue the “broad-based conversation of and inquiry into worship throughout the United Church of Christ.” The events would also be experiential, engage vital worship

throughout the denomination, and lift significant and emerging understandings from “Worshiping into God’s Future.”

2. Continue to develop and resource the network of professors of preaching, liturgy, worship, or church music related to the United Church of Christ.
3. Identify and work directly with selected congregations who covenant to make “worship and sacraments” the center in their overall ministry. This would occur over an intentional period of time and would include training and in-depth reflection on a congregation’s mission and its worship and sacramental practices.
4. Develop and facilitate two kinds of worship and liturgical consultants: (a) one with expertise in particular areas of liturgy, worship, sacraments, and the arts and familiar with the worship initiative, (b) another with general understandings of worship and the worship initiative, but able to resource other vital ministries in the life of local congregations. Both kinds of consultants could resource the variety of training and education settings suggested above.

## **More Light is Breaking Forth**

“Worshiping into God’s Future” will continue as resources are developed and training is implemented. The Worship and Education Ministry Team of Local Church Ministries will persist in seeking your wisdom and listening to your yearnings. “Worshiping into God’s Future” will continue, however, most powerfully as congregations of the United Church of Christ, in this and future generations, gather with prayer and praise in Word and Sacrament. Our worship will celebrate and witness to the Triune God who transforms us and our world.

With grateful hearts, awaiting more light and truth, open to God’s future, we worship the Living God!



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# Worshiping into God's Future

*A Worship Initiative of the United Church of Christ*



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