Blended Worship for Word and Table

This order of service is used by Belmond Congregational United Church of Christ, Belmond, Iowa. The church includes 138 members with 48 attending worship regularly. Their five-fold pattern of worship is one that has been handed down through the years. It is an adaptation of a pattern that has grown out of the liturgical renewal movement. The pattern of the gathering, hearing and responding to the Word, sharing at the Table, and the going forth are shared by many ecumenical partners and is reflected in Book of Worship’s orders for Word and Table.

Even though the order is rather traditional, the pastor draws upon a variety of sources to make it more contemporary. Worship is described as blended—traditional worship enhanced by contemporary sources, music, approaches, and media. The pastor especially draws upon a variety of resources offered with the lectionary-based curriculum resource Seasons of the Spirit. The congregational life component of that curriculum program offers contemporary liturgies, readings, music, and visual images. Another way the pastor sees this service as blended is by involving children in all aspects of the service.

God Is Revealed as We Gather

Prelude and Ringing of the Bell

Sharing of Announcements, Joys and Concerns, and Meditation

(To prepare and begin worship, the congregation turns their lives, joys, and concerns, over to God. The pastor offers a brief reflection that bridges life outside worship to life within the worshiping community. As God becomes present to them, they become more present to God, offering the fullness of their lives.)

Organ Meditation

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

(These are often responsive prayers drawn from Seasons of the Spirit resources.)

Hymn of Praise

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon

Sung response of praise as the “Gloria Patri”

God Is Revealed in the Word

Children’s Sermon

(The pastor includes a children’s sermon from time to time. More often the pastor stated that she attempts to include children in her sermons. She pointed to Carolyn C. Browns’ book You Can Preach to the Kids Too: Designing Sermons for Adults and Children as especially helpful.)

Reading of Scripture

(The pastor uses the Revised Common Lectionary for choosing the scriptures to focus on for each Sunday.)
Sermon

Silent Meditation

(An important aspect of the service is the few moments of silent prayer following the sermon. It is an opportunity to listen and linger in the Word of God.)

Hymn of Reflection

We Respond to God’s Presence

Prayers of the People, Lord’s Prayer, and Organ. Amen.

(The joys and concerns shared earlier and additional ones elicited from the sermon and silent prayer are now drawn together by the pastor into a time of prayer.)

Offertory Prayer, Gathering of our Gifts, and Doxology

We Gather at Christ’s Table

(Belmond UCC celebrates Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month and also on the first Sunday of a Church season, as well as on Christmas Eve, Maundy Thursday, and Easter Sunday. They alternate between serving communion in the pews and coming forward for communion by intinction. They use words from a variety of sources such as Book of Worship and Seasons of the Spirit. The words used for communion often make connections with the lectionary Bible passage for the day.)

The Invitation, Choir Anthem, and Communion Prayer

The Sharing of Bread and the Cup

A Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving

We Go Forth to Love and Serve God

Hymn

Commissioning

(This is a particularly meaningful moment in the service. The congregation moves from the pews to a large circle around the sanctuary. Holding hands, they commission one another with words spoken in unison, such as “Go now as people united in Christ to heal, to love, and serve . . .”)

Benediction and Hymn of Parting

(The congregation concludes by singing “God Be with You until We Meet Again.”)

Chimes and Postlude