

VOICES  
*Together*



WORSHIP LEADER EDITION  
CURRICULUM

by Sarah Kathleen Johnson

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## Introduction

Christian worship is about relationship with God, one another, and the world around us. It is both deeply personal, and profoundly communal. It is an expression of who we are, that shapes who we become. And it is always particular—a specific community encountering God in a certain time and place.

The goal of this curriculum is to help you better understand the worship practices of your own community. It does not advocate for certain forms of worship or provide one-size-fits-all solutions. Although this curriculum is based on *Voices Together: Worship Leader Edition*, it does not assume your community uses the Voices Together hymnal and worship book, or any other specific resource. Instead, it provides ways to talk about worship that move past personal preference and superficial questions of style. It invites you to reflect together on the specific worship practices of your community in relation to the deep rhythms of worship, culture, the Christian story, and everyday life.

### AUDIENCE

This is an adult faith formation resource and adults who are active in a church community are the primary audience. A take home activity for families or households to explore together is included with each session. This curriculum could be adapted for high school students.

There are two main settings where this curriculum could be used:

- With a *general audience* from the community, such as during a Sunday morning faith formation hour or in weekly small group meetings. In this case, only those leading the session are expected to read the preparation essays from the *Worship Leader Edition* in advance.
- With a *group tasked with worship leadership*, such as a worship team or worship committee. In this case, all participants may choose to read excerpts from the *Worship Leader Edition* in advance to allow more time for discussion and in depth engagement with the material.

### IN PERSON OR ONLINE

This resource may be used in person or online in a video conference. Online options are provided throughout.

### PREPARATION AND SUPPLIES

Those planning and leading the sessions require a copy of the *Voices Together: Worship Leader Edition* (Harrisonburg: MennoMedia, 2020). Each session lists essays to read in preparation for facilitating the discussion. You will also need to take some time to reflect on specific examples from your community before leading the session.

Other basic supplies like poster paper and markers, paper and pencils, and occasional handouts may be required. At times, optional videos are provided and may be shown if the technology is readily available.

### NEXT STEPS

This curriculum establishes a firm foundation for exploring whether and how you may choose to adapt the worship practices of your community. After completing all four sessions, those involved in shaping worship may step back and consider how learning together about their local worship patterns, the culture of their community, and the connections between worship, the Christian story, and everyday life could prompt changes to current practices. Essays to engage as part of this exploration include: 2 *Balancing Trusted Structures and Creative Change*, 9 *Collaboration among Worship Leaders*, and 449 *Requesting and Receiving Feedback about Worship*. The Appendix to the *Worship Leader Edition* provides guiding questions for reflecting on and discussing key themes present in each section.



## Session 1: What Is Worship?

### FOR LEADERS

#### *Focus Questions*

What are the different aspects of corporate worship in your community?

How does worship in your community connect you with God, one another, and the world around you?

#### *Focus Scripture*

41 Psalm 100

156 *Arranging and Adapting the Scripture Worship Resources in Voices Together*

#### *Preparation Essays*

vii *Preface to the Worship Leader Edition*

1 *What Is Worship?*

2 *Balancing Trusted Structures and Creative Change*

3 *Worship Structures*

### OUTLINE

#### *Centering (2 minutes)*

Welcome participants. Briefly introduce the focus questions. Center yourselves through the words of Psalm 100, an invitation to worship.

#### *Opening Exercise: Three words that describe worship (5 minutes)*

Invite each participant to reflect on and write down three words that describe worship in your community. After a few minutes, encourage participants to share their words with the group and write them down for all to read on a poster paper or chalkboard.

Options:

- If you are meeting online, invite participants to type their words into the chat or use an online polling app to create a word cloud.
- If the technology is available, wrap up the discussion by sharing the video “What is Anabaptist worship?” (Anabaptist Worship Network, <https://youtu.be/2IWcZW9TpLg>).

Ideally this list captures some of the big picture dynamics, values, and even frustrations related to worship in your community. As the discussion becomes more focused, keep this big picture in mind as well.

#### *Establish Common Ground: Parts of worship—weekly, annually, and over the lifespan (15 minutes)*

Take time to establish what are the main events that take place:

1. during each worship service (for example, opening prayer, scripture reading),
2. over the course of a year in the life of the community (for example, Christmas, worship at church retreat), and
3. over the lifespan of an individual (for example, child blessing, quinceañera, funeral).

Take about five minutes to make three lists either individually or in pairs or small groups.



Options:

- If you are a smaller group, invite each person to take four or five minutes to make three lists for themselves. It may be helpful to provide a handout with three columns or to list the categories where all can see them.
- If you are in a larger group, divide into three smaller groups and invite each group to work on one of the lists together on poster paper or a shared document.
- If you are meeting online, create the lists in a shared document that you can screen share so everyone can read them. Use breakout rooms with a larger group.

Gather back together and invite one person to read their list or their group's list as a starting point (write it down in a central location on poster paper if it is not already visible to all). Encourage others to add suggestions to fill it out. Repeat with the other two lists.

The lists should provide a relatively complete picture of the types of elements that are part of worship in your community each week, over the course of a year, and over the lifespan. This can expand your vision of worship beyond music and preaching, ordinary occasions, and even weekly gatherings. Keep these lists posted in a central location. Hold on to these lists since they may be helpful for planning future sessions.

***Teaching Moment: Three movements in worship (5 minutes)***

Introduce the three movements in worship (*1 What Is Worship?*). Write them down or show them on the screen.

Option:

- With younger groups, a “sporf” — a utensil that combines spoon, knife, and fork — can be used to illustrate these three movements. We can also think of worship in terms of three directions. (1) Worship has a vertical dimension. Vertical is the fork. It is about encounter with God — reaching high or going deep. It is about opening ourselves to God's presence, Word, and call. It is about praise, thanks, and prayer. (2) Worship has a horizontal dimension. Horizontal is the knife. It is about engagement with other people and ourselves. It is about opening ourselves to one another as the body of Christ. It is about community, and relationship, and reconciliation. (3) Worship has an outward direction. Outward is the spoon. It has a centrifugal direction, like a washing machine spinning the water out the sides. It is about empowerment for faithful living. It is about opening ourselves to the creative power of the Spirit, responding to God's call in our lives and the world. All of these parts are connected. Each of these parts can nourish us, others in our community, and the world around us. Each of these parts can honor God.

### TAKE HOME

Talk about the three directions with others in your household. How do you experience each of these aspects of worship personally? What helps you encounter God? How do you connect with others during worship? What empowers you to follow Jesus every day? With younger family members, consider using the “sporf” to help them explore how worship nourishes them and others in each of these three ways.



### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION: THREE MOVEMENTS IN WORSHIP (20 MINUTES)

Discuss how these movements are present in the worship of your community. Multiple movements may be connected to a single aspect of worship or a specific occasion.

1. Reference the lists created earlier. Which aspects of worship in your community are most connected to each of the three movements?
  - a. Which aspects of worship center on encounter with God?
  - b. Which aspects of worship focus on engagement with one another and ourselves?
  - c. Which aspects of worship empower us for faithful living?
2. Which movements of worship could be strengthened in your community? Do you see areas for growth?
3. What is an example of a time in your life when you have personally experienced one of these three movements in worship, or when you have experienced all three coming together?

Option:

- If you are meeting as a worship leadership group, consider exploring the Five Vital Rhythms of Worship in the same way (1 *What Is Worship?*).

### CLOSING (2 MINUTES)

13 Jesus calls us

This prayer can be read responsively, by one leader, or be a source of inspiration for extemporaneous prayer. If read together online, encourage participants to unmute their microphones and embrace the cacophony of voices and perspectives on worship.



## Session 2: Worship and Culture

### FOR LEADERS

#### *Focus Questions*

What is the culture of your worshiping community?

How does the culture of your community relate to other cultures?

#### *Focus Scripture*

80 Revelation 7:9-12

156 *Arranging and Adapting the Scripture Worship Resources in Voices Together*

#### *Preparation Essays*

28 *Worship and Culture*

29 *Worship in Multiple Languages*

4 *Learning from Different Worship Practices*

47 *Shaping Visual Aspects of Worship*

46 *The Worship Space*

### OUTLINE

#### *Centering (2 minutes)*

Welcome participants. Briefly introduce the focus questions. Center yourselves through the words of Revelation 7:9-12, a vivid visual description of unity in diversity in worship.

#### *Opening Exercise: Explore the worship space (10 minutes)*

Take a tour of your worship space physically (if you are meeting in your worship space and this is not disruptive to others), virtually (through photographs or video), or imaginatively. Whatever your approach, imagine you are seeing the space for the first time. Start outside the doors. As you move through different parts of the space, describe the space to one another. Name what may seem obvious. Notice details. Talk about what the space says about who you are as a community. If your community meets in a space you do not own or did not design, what does this say about who you are? If your community meets in homes, what does this say about who you are? If your community is meeting online, what does this say about who you are? If your community owns a building, what does this say about who you are?

### TAKE HOME

Explore your community's worship space together with children, physically or in your imagination. How do younger participants experience the space? What do they notice that others may miss? Are there ways you can use the space to teach them about worship in your community? Whether or not your household includes children, reflect together on different worship spaces you have visited. Share photos, if possible. What do these spaces look like, sound like, and feel like? What do these spaces reveal about the communities that gather in them? What do they communicate about what worship is about?





***Establish Common Ground: The culture of the local community (15 minutes)***

Settle into the space where the group meets, if meeting in person. Take some time to discuss the culture of your local community.

Who is present is a crucial starting point when reflecting on worship. Worship is always connected to specific communities and therefore to specific cultures. Cultures are the changing patterns of language, symbols, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that are learned and shared within groups of people. Simply put, culture is knowing that “people like us do things like this” (Seth Godin). Culture is far more than language, ethnicity, and race. When we are immersed in a culture, it can be very hard to see the cultural water we swim in. People who are part of the same cultural group may understand and describe that culture very differently.

The following questions are intended to guide reflection and discussion on the culture(s) of your local worshipping community.<sup>1</sup> Instead of trying to cover all of the questions, choose a handful that seem especially relevant in your community, such as one or two from each column, but try not to avoid tackling more difficult issues.

Options:

- If you are a smaller group, discuss the questions together.
- If you are a larger group, break into three small groups and have each group address a different set of questions and report back.
- If you are meeting online, use breakout rooms as necessary.



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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from June Alliman Yoder, Marlene Kropf, and Rebecca Slough, *Preparing Sunday Dinner: A Collaborative Approach to Worship and Preaching* (Scottsdale, PA, Herald Press, 2005), chapter 2.

## THEMES TO ATTEND TO WHEN CONSIDERING THE CULTURE OF YOUR WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS	INTERACTION STYLES	SPIRITUAL RESOURCES
<p><b>Social networks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the kinship ties in our congregation?</li> <li>• What types of family structures are represented?</li> <li>• How do people of different genders relate to one another?</li> <li>• Where are worshipers from? What are our ethnic and racial backgrounds?</li> <li>• Where do worshipers live in relation to the place where church gathers, in the neighborhood or at a distance?</li> <li>• What type of work do worshipers do?</li> <li>• Have worshipers lived elsewhere in the country or abroad?</li> </ul> <p><b>Life stages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What age groups are part of the worshiping community and how many are in each age group?</li> <li>• Do any of these age groups have distinct cultures among themselves?</li> </ul> <p><b>Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many worshipers are currently students, and at what stage and type of study?</li> <li>• What methods are used to teach children in schools, such as memorization, critical thinking, and hands-on projects?</li> <li>• What technologies are learned as part of education and everyday life?</li> <li>• How is the community thinking critically about faith matters?</li> </ul> <p><b>Economic class</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is money discussed and handled in the congregation and by individual worshipers?</li> <li>• What assumptions about money operate in the community?</li> <li>• What economic hardships are faced by members of the community and how does the community respond?</li> </ul> <p><b>Languages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do worshipers usually communicate verbally or in writing?</li> <li>• How many worshipers read, and at what level?</li> <li>• What do worshipers read, watch, and listen to?</li> <li>• What languages are spoken by worshipers?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Expressive styles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What body postures do people use during worship?</li> <li>• What parts of worship are most intense, and what are people doing at those times?</li> <li>• In what ways does the congregation speak during worship, such as in formal or informal language?</li> <li>• How does the worship space relate to hearing, seeing, and movement in worship?</li> <li>• What words describe our congregation when it responds wholeheartedly in worship?</li> </ul> <p><b>Spiritual types</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do worshipers describe worship experiences that move them deeply? Do these descriptions tend to include words about feelings and emotions, or thoughts and insights?</li> <li>• Do services tend to be more spontaneous and emotive, or more planned and reflective, or another combination? What do worshipers value most?</li> <li>• Who is most engaged by current worship practices and who is less engaged?</li> </ul> <p><b>Personality types</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many worshipers are more extroverted, and how many are more introverted? Are services more geared toward extroverts or introverts?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What biblical stories are most important in our congregation?</li> <li>• What stories from the history of the Christian tradition shape our identity?</li> <li>• What stories from our local community's history are important for children and newcomers to know?</li> </ul> <p><b>Signs, symbols, rituals, and rites</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the primary official celebrations in our congregation? What are the unofficial celebrations?</li> <li>• What are the important words, gestures, objects, and actions that create a shared sense of identity?</li> <li>• What in these celebrations seems tired or out of place in the present life of the community?</li> </ul> <p><b>Theological accents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What Christian theological commitments are most important to our community?</li> <li>• What distinctive Anabaptist understandings are important?</li> <li>• What kinds of theological and spiritual language do we use and value?</li> <li>• Are there theological commitments or spiritual practices that worshipers are questioning?</li> </ul>

No one person or group has a complete understanding of a community's culture. As you describe and discuss the culture of your community, consider which voices are missing from the conversation and how their perceptions may shift the understanding of those gathered. For example, in an adult faith formation class led in English, the insights of children and those who do not speak English may be absent, or at an evening Bible study, families with young children may be unable to participate.

**Teaching Moment: Four relationships between worship and culture (5 minutes)**

Introduce the four ways worship and culture relate (28 *Worship and Culture*). Write them down or show them on the screen.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)**

Discuss each of the four ways worship and culture relate.

1. How is worship in your community *contextual*? How is worship connected to the specific cultural patterns of the worshipping community and your surroundings?
  - a. For example, how do the space and other visual aspects of worship reflect your community's context?
2. How is worship in your community *cross-cultural*?
  - a. How does worship connect distinct cultural groups within your local community?
  - b. How does worship connect your local community to other parts of the church, the body of Christ, locally or globally?
  - c. Are various cultural groups within your community represented in your worship? For example, how does youth culture inform worship? How are minority language communities integrated?
3. How is worship in your community *countercultural*? How does it challenge and transform aspects of the surrounding culture that are contrary to the way of Jesus?
  - a. Are there ways worship is at odds with culture that are not countercultural in service of the way of Jesus, but for other reasons?
4. How is worship in your community *transcultural*? Although every aspect of worship is experienced within a particular culture, what features of your worship transcend any one culture?
  - a. For example, what aspects of your worship would you have in common with many Christians with very different cultures?

**CLOSING (2 MINUTES)**

201 Creemos en Dios / We believe in God

Consider options for concluding with this celebratory statement of commitment drawing on 29 *Worship in Multiple Languages* and your knowledge of the culture of your community.

**TAKE HOME**

Sometimes our own cultures only become clear to us when we experience them in relation to very different cultures. Especially if you struggle to see or describe the cultures that are shaping worship in your setting, visit a different worshipping community, in person or online, and consider whether this reveals any unspoken assumptions or practices in your own community (4 *Learning from Different Worship Practices* may be a helpful guide). If you visit a community where it would be appropriate, bring younger children along and see what they notice that adults may take for granted.



## Session 3: Worship and the Christian Story

### FOR LEADERS

#### *Focus Questions*

- How do you tell the Christian story in worship in your community?
- Are aspects of the story missing from your worship?
- Are some worshipers not hearing the story because of how it is told?

#### *Focus Scripture*

422 Colossians 3:15-17

156 *Arranging and Adapting the Scripture Worship Resources in Voices Together*

#### *Preparation Essays*

122 *Introduction to Telling God's Story*

127 *Choosing Scripture for Use in Worship*

128 *Using the Revised Common Lectionary (if applicable)*

137 *Using Scripture in Ways That Honor the Jewish Tradition*

184 *The Christian Year*

72 *Choosing Music for Worship*

85 *Learning New Songs*

### OUTLINE

#### *Centering (2 minutes)*

Welcome participants. Briefly introduce the focus questions. Center yourselves through the words of Colossians 3:15-17, an encouragement to let the word of God dwell in us in teaching, singing, and action.

#### *Opening Exercise: Encountering Scripture (5 minutes)*

Share a story from Scripture in a creative way that reflects a current practice in your community. This could be as a work of visual art, children's storybook, dance, dramatic reading, video, or another expression that emerges from the gifts of participants or that is available to you as a leader. Choose a Scripture reading that is connected to the moment in your congregation, such as a reading that is the focus of worship the previous or following Sunday, or that is related to the season of the Christian year or a current worship series.

Option:

- If you are meeting online or if the technology is available, share a video that interprets the reading, for example, as a story for children, drama, Lego block video, or dance.

#### *Establish Common Ground: Singing the story (15 minutes)*

One of the ways we tell the Christian story in worship is through song. Share an outline of the Christian story with the group.

Options:

- If your community celebrates the seasons and days of the Christian year, post, project, or screen share a diagram of the Christian year (184 *The Christian Year*).
- If your community relies less on the Christian year in your worship practice, post, project, or screen share an outline of the Christian story such as:



- Creation
- Covenant
- Wisdom
- Prophets
- Jesus' Advent
- Birth of Jesus
- Jesus' Epiphany
- Life, Teaching, and Ministry of Jesus
- Journey to the Cross
- Jesus' Death
- Jesus' Resurrection
- Jesus' Ascension
- Holy Spirit
- Church
- Word of God
- Reign of Christ

Discuss how your community tells the Christian story through song. Certain songs may be clearly anchored in one part of the story. Other songs may be connected to several parts of the story.

Options:

- If you are meeting as a worship leadership group that is familiar with the music used in worship in your community, distribute a list of songs or copies of hymnals to the group. Assign each participant a portion of the story and invite them to choose a song that expresses each part. For example, what is the song that represents the resurrection of Jesus (Easter) in your community? What are the songs that tell stories about the ministry and teachings of Jesus (during ordinary time, if you follow the Christian year)? Sing a verse of each song together. If you are meeting in person and focusing on the Christian year, you may arrange yourselves in a circle around a diagram of the Christian year and sing your way around the year and circle.
- If you are meeting with a general audience, choose in advance 5 to 10 songs that are well known and loved in the community. Project, screen share, or distribute lyrics. Sing a verse of a song together. Discuss together how the song speaks into different aspects of the Christian story. Begin with songs that are more clearly connected to a certain part of the story, such as Christmas or Easter, then move into songs that may have multiple points of connection or be more ambiguous.
- If you are meeting online, participants may mute themselves and sing along with recorded music or with one household or song leader.

Through this process, establish how your community tells the Christian story in worship through the songs that you sing.

### TAKE HOME

With younger participants, sing a song that children learned at church or at home. Talk about connections between the song and the Christian story, as well as your own personal stories. With older participants, invite each member of the household to share a song and talk together about how it is connected to the Christian story. Why is this song important to you? How does it connect you to a bigger story?



**Teaching Moment: How Scripture is chosen for worship (5 minutes)**

Scripture is another way God's story shapes worship. There are several ways to choose Scripture readings for worship (127 *Choosing Scripture for Use in Worship*).

Options:

- Invite a pastor or others who are responsible for choosing Scripture readings to take 5 minutes to share with the group how they choose the Scripture readings that are the focus of worship. It may be helpful to share 127 *Choosing Scripture for Use in Worship* as part of making this invitation.
- If you are meeting as a worship leadership group and you have responsibility for choosing Scripture, discuss which of the options you have used in the past and why (127 *Choosing Scripture for Use in Worship*).
- If you use the Revised Common Lectionary or another lectionary in your community, take time to explain patterns in the lectionary readings and how they relate to one another each week and over time (128 *Using the Revised Common Lectionary*).

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION: (15 MINUTES)****How the story is told, what stories are told, and who receives the story**

1. What are some of the ways you tell the Christian story in worship in your community? (It may be helpful to reference the lists from Session 1.)
2. Who may not be hearing the story because of how the story is told?
  - a. For example, how is the story told in ways that engage those who learn by hearing, by seeing, or by experiencing?
  - b. How is the story told in ways that engage participants of all ages?
3. How might you tell the Christian story in other ways? What could be some of the barriers? What could be the benefits?
4. Are parts of the Christian story more central in the worship life of your community?
  - a. Do you engage certain portions of the Bible more often? For example, does preaching tend to focus on the Gospels? Which portions of the Old Testament are read in worship?
  - b. Do certain seasons or days have special prominence?
5. Are parts of the Christian story absent from your worship?
  - a. Does your community never read or engage in worship certain portions of the Bible?
  - b. Are certain seasons or days of the Christian year not celebrated in your community?
6. How does this focus reflect the culture of your community? Are there ways it is at odds with culture?
  - a. What is helpful about this focus? What is lost?
  - b. How might you explore other parts of the story? What could be barriers? What might be the benefits?

**CLOSING (2 MINUTES)**

158 Praise and thanks to you, holy God

Consider teaching the response by ear by repeating it several times. Then invite participants to join in repeating it after each section. Alternatively, draw inspiration from this prayer for an extemporaneous prayer.

## Session 4: Worship and Life

### FOR LEADERS

#### *Focus Questions*

How does worship speak into significant moments in our lives?

How does worship invite us into a vision and form us for God's reign of justice and peace?

#### *Focus Scripture*

Micah 6:6-8 (385 Micah 6:8)

156 *Arranging and Adapting the Scripture Worship Resources in Voices Together*

#### *Preparation Essays*

259 *Introduction to Sharing Our Stories*

377 *Introduction to Living God's Story*

378 *Worship and Life*

380 *Connecting the Ministries of the Community with Corporate Worship*

258 *Ritual and Symbol in Christian Worship*

355 *Expansive and Inclusive Language in Worship*

356 *Scriptural Ways to Address God in Worship*

### OUTLINE

#### *Centering (2 minutes)*

Welcome participants. Briefly introduce the focus questions. Center yourselves through the words of Micah 6:6-8 that call us to hold together worship and justice as we walk with God every day.

#### *Opening Exercise: Sharing significant worship experiences (5 minutes)*

Invite each participant to take a moment to reflect on a significant worship experience, a certain moment or event that stands out in their memory.

Options:

- In a smaller group, invite each person to briefly share their experience with the group.
- In a larger group, invite participants to turn to the person beside them and share their experience. When you return to the larger group, invite a few participants to share examples.
- If meeting online in a larger group, divide into break out rooms with two to four participants. When you return to the larger group, invite a few participants to share examples.

#### *Establish Common Ground: Rituals and symbols in your worship practice (5 minutes)*

Show physical objects associated with central worship practices in your congregation. These may include: water, bread and wine, oil, wedding rings, gifts given at child blessing, and other material objects that are found both in worship and everyday life.

Discuss several of the objects together. Water and bread may be especially good choices. Example:

1. How do we use water in everyday life? What is the purpose of water? What is the meaning of water? What are some of the positive and negative aspects of water?
2. How is water used in worship? What is the meaning of water in worship?
3. What are some points of connection between water in everyday life and water in worship? Are there also disconnects?



**Teaching Moment: Symbols and rituals in Christian worship and everyday life (5 minutes)**

Introduce the concept of rituals and symbols in Christian worship, drawing on the first half of 258 *Ritual and Symbol in Christian Worship*. Introduce the idea of a relationship between worship and life, drawing on 378 *Worship and Life*.

At this point you may choose one of two streams to focus the rest of the session.

- Stream 1: Images of God may form us for God's reign of justice, or they may perpetuate systemic oppression. If your community and you as a leader would find it fruitful to discuss how images of God that are central in your community's worship culture are forming you, consider following stream 1.
- Stream 2: Many communities are engaged in service and social justice ministries. If your community wants to draw stronger connections between these ministries and corporate worship, consider following stream 2.

**Stream 1 Teaching Moment: Images of God and Systemic Oppression (5 minutes)**

Video - How people visualize God predicts who they think is fit for leadership (Stanford University, <https://youtu.be/iakMXqQPJHU>).

- If you are meeting online or technology is available, consider showing this video about how our images of God shape who we see as potential leaders.
- If you do not have technology available, describe the study and the results to the group.

Drawing on 355 *Expansive and Inclusive Language in Worship*, introduce the concept of how the images and words we use in worship shape how we see the world. As with the water and bread, these images, symbols, and rituals emerge from and connect with everyday life in ways that can further God's reign or perpetuate injustice. Often the focus of these conversations is gender, but our images and words connect with many other areas as well.

**Stream 2 Teaching Moment: Connecting Worship with the Ministries of the Community (2 minutes)**

Introduce the possibility of connecting your congregation's ministries to corporate worship, drawing on 380 *Connecting the Ministries of the Community with Corporate Worship*.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION: TWO OPTIONS (20 MINUTES)**

Use the questions that correspond to the stream you selected above.

**Stream 1 Discussion: Images of God and Systemic Oppression**

1. What images of God are most common in worship in your community? Consider writing a list that all can see. If meeting online, encourage participants to add examples to the chat.
2. What do these images of God communicate about human beings in everyday life? What do they say about what is valued by the community?
3. Where do these images of God come from? How did these patterns develop?
4. How could you expand the images of God used in worship? What could be barriers to exploring expanded imagery in your community? What could be benefits?
5. What emotions does this conversation stir up for you?

**Stream 2 Discussion: Connecting Worship with the Ministries of the Community**

1. What are some ministries your community is engaged in locally and globally, directly and indirectly? Consider writing a list that all can see. If meeting online, encourage participants to add examples to the chat.
2. What are some ways your community's ministries are already connected to your worship?





3. What are some ways individuals in the community live out their faith every day?
4. What is an example of how you personally live out your faith every day?
5. What are some of the ways individual service is already connected to corporate worship?
6. In what other ways could you connect the ministries of the church throughout the week with corporate worship?
  - a. Would any of the options provided in 380 *Connecting the Ministries of the Community with Corporate Worship* be a good fit for your context?
  - b. What possibilities come to mind when you consider the specific ministries and worship practices of your community?

### TAKE HOME

Explore ways to integrate aspects of corporate worship into your everyday life. This could include praying before meals or before sleep through songs or prayers from your community. It could also include connections with the social justice and service ministries of your church community, or that are part of other aspects of your life. See 308 *Worship at Home* for ideas about how to get started.

### CLOSING (2 MINUTES)

438 Go forth in peace, and be of good courage

Offer a prayer of blessing and commissioning to conclude. This blessing and commissioning may be read by one leader, all participants together (printed or projected), or be inspiration for extemporaneous prayer.



VOICES  
*Together*