

# **Being a Lay Leader**

**Guidance, Tips, and Resources  
for leading worship at  
UU Community Church of SW MI**

compiled September, 2005

## Dear Lay Leader:

Thank you for taking on this important role at UUCC. I hope it is an enriching experience for you. In this guide you will find:

- ❖ An annotated copy of the “standard” order of service. The “standard” order does not have to be adhered to to the letter every week, but deviations should have a clear purpose in flow, meaning, or message, and not simply reflect the preferences of the speaker or leader.
- ❖ “Tips” on leading worship (and ringing that tempermental singing bowl!) plus a bit of Jill’s philosophy.
- ❖ A collection of resources you may find useful. These are not in any way meant to limit what you do on Sunday, but to provide some examples. Feel free to use or edit what has been provided or find/write your own.



Quote

AUTHOR

Date

### Gathering

**Gathering Bells** *a call to be seated*

**Prelude** "Title" Composer

**Welcome and Announcements** Name, lay leader

**Bell Sound** *a call to quiet and mindfulness*

**Call to Worship** Name  
"Title," Author

**Lighting the Chalice** (unison)  
*In the light of truth and the warmth of love  
We gather to seek, to sustain, and to share.*

**\*Hymn #000** "Title" Composer

### Affirming

**Children's Moment** Name

I have several collections of stories from various religious traditions or from UU authors. Let me know if you would like to browse through them or if you need an idea for a particular theme.

**Singing** as the children leave for religious education  
Dismiss the kids by class (Tigers, Bats, Guild of the Phoenix, Owl) and remind them to walk downstairs.

*Go now in peace, go now in peace,  
May the spirit of love surround you,  
Everywhere, everywhere, you may go.*

**Joys and Sorrows**  
*A time to briefly share significant events affecting our lives.*

**Meditation and Prayer**  
**in words**

The words may be a responsive reading (from hymnbook or other source), a spoken prayer, a poem or other reading – something that will lead people into peaceful reflection.

**in silence**  
**sung response** (unison)



## Tips on Leading Worship

1. Ringing the Bell (singing bowl): It is deceptively difficult to ring the singing bowl well. Practice before anyone arrives. I recommend this method:
  - a. Hold the striker by the carved end, letting it hang down vertically from your hand.
  - b. Strike the rim of the bowl firmly (striker and rim at cross angles), but letting the striker bounce away. Do this three times to begin the service.
  - c. Don't start anything else until the ringing of the bowl has dissipated. It takes a while. Wait for it.
2. Speak with authority and confidence, even if you don't feel it. You are the worship leader! Speak slowly and clearly. Speaking slowly helps everyone slow down and listen. It sets this time apart from all the fast speaking we hear the rest of the week. Allow for generous pauses, especially in the meditation reading.
3. Try to set a tone of reverent joy that is not stiff but not too casual. Worship is important, but not dower.
4. Go through the whole service in your head the day before, and then again that morning, so you won't be surprised by anything. Think about when and where you or others will stand, sit, move, etc.
5. Practice out loud so your tongue won't trip over words.
6. Write out as much as you need to be comfortable, then read it with feeling.
7. If (when) you make a mistake, you don't have to apologize or point it out. Just direct the congregation to what you want them to do next. They will take their cues of how to respond from you.
8. Make sure you have all the accoutrements you will need (matches, hymnal, etc).
9. The service leader and speaker should exit to the back of the sanctuary before everyone else and greet people as they exit. Make a special effort to greet newcomers and invite them to stay for coffee. You are the "head host" when you lead the service – the official representative of the church – your greeting is important.
- 10. Remember: everyone there believes you will do well; everyone is grateful that you are leading the service; everyone knows basically how it will go; everyone thinks you are wise, brave, and hot stuff!**

## Call to Worship

**“Come, let us worship together,” Lindsay Bates**

Come, let us worship together –

Let us open our minds to the challenge of Reason,

Open our hearts to the healing of love,

Open our lives to the calling of Conscience.

Open our souls to the comfort of Joy –

Astonished by the miracle of life,

Grateful for the gift of fellowship,

Confident in the power of living faith,

We are here gathered –

Come, let us worship together.

We hallow our time together by lighting the chalice of our free religious heritage – the cup symbolizing our open community; and the flame, the beacon of truth guiding our way.

As \_\_\_\_\_ lights the chalice please join in with the unison words in your order of service.

## Call to Worship

### “Communion” Rev. Kathleen McTigue

We come together this morning to remind one another  
To rest for a moment on the forming edge of our lives,  
To resist the headlong tumble into the next moment,  
Until we claim for ourselves  
Awareness and gratitude,  
Taking the time to look into one another’s faces  
And see there communion: the reflection of our own eyes.

This house of laughter and silence, memory and hope,  
Is hallowed by our presence together.

As we are gathered here, Unitarians and Universalists around the country and around the world are also gathered in the light of a flaming chalice, our shared symbol of beloved community and free faith.

I’ve asked \_\_\_\_\_ to light our chalice this morning. Would you please join me in the unison words printed in your bulletin.

## Call to Worship

### “Morning,” Clinton Lee Scott

From the east comes the sun, bringing a new and unspoiled day.  
It has already circled the earth and looked upon distant lands and  
far-away peoples.

It has passed over mountain ranges and the waters of the seven  
seas.

It has shone upon laborers in the fields, into the windows of  
homes, and shops, and factories.

It has beheld proud cities with gleaming towers,  
And also the hovels of the poor.

It has been witness to both good and evil, the words of honest men  
and women and the conspiracy of knaves.

It has seen marching armies, bomb-blasted villages and “the  
destruction that wasteth at noonday.”

Now, unsullied from its tireless journey, it comes to us, messenger  
of the morning,

Harbinger of a new day.

The pure fire of the sun comes to us, lighting our gathering,  
bringing to us the spirit of all humanity, of all the earth.

As \_\_\_\_\_ light's our chalice  
this morning, would you join me with the unison words in your  
order of service.

## Joys and Sorrows

We set aside this time each week  
to share the great joys and deep sorrows of our lives.  
That we might receive comfort and congratulations,  
Encouragement and empathy,  
That we might know we are not alone.

If you would like to share a joy or sorrow with this gathered  
community today, I invite you to come forward, light a candle, tell  
us who you are, and share what is in your heart.

...

I light a final candle for all that remains unspoken but in our hearts.

May we each know that whatever befalls us in life, we are held in  
the loving embrace of this community.

## Joys and Sorrows

We set aside this time each week to share the great joys and deep sorrows of our lives with the gathered community.

If you woke this morning with something heavy on your heart, now is a time to share that burden, that we may be a help to one another.

If you woke this morning lifted by some great joy, now is a time to share that lightness, that we may be lifted by one another.

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## Joys and Sorrows

With many cares and preoccupations, we come over the branching streets into this place of worship. We come to honor the celebrations and the griefs that cycle through our lives and our communities. This is a time we set aside for sharing, acknowledging that what affects one, affects us all.

If you would like to share a joy or sorrow with this gathered community today, I invite you to come forward, light a candle, tell us who you are, and share what is in your heart.

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## Joys and Sorrows

George Odell says

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.

We need one another when we are in trouble and afraid.

We need one another when we are in despair, in temptation, and need to be recalled to our best selves again.

We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose and cannot do it alone. ...

All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.

If you would like to share a joy or sorrow with this gathered community today, I invite you to come forward, light a candle, tell us who you are, and share what is in your heart.

...

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## Joys and Sorrows

Starhawk writes:

Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free.

It is in this spirit that we set aside a time to share our joys and sorrows, to be a circle of healing, a circle of friends. If you have something to share, I invite you to come forward, light a candle, tell us who you are, and share what is in your heart.

...

I light a final candle for all that remains unspoken but in our hearts.

May we each know that whatever befalls us in life, we are held in the loving embrace of this community.

## Meditation

*Before the spoken meditation, invite people into a time of pause, a time to slow down, breathe deeply, and enter into the quiet of this community. Remind them the silence will end with singing. They are welcome to participate as they wish, with singing, harmony, humming, or listening.*

### *The Poignancy of Living in These Days*

Rev. Dick Gilbert

I inhale and exhale in regular rhythm,  
An act so common it never occurs to me to pay attention.  
And when I do, I am overwhelmed with the wonder of it all.

I eat my food, as I have done for a thousand thousand days,  
A practice so frequent I hardly notice  
The miraculous million events that happen in my body.  
And when I do, I am taken with their singular beauty. ...

The poignancy of living in these days  
Penetrates me, burrows deep into psyche or soul or spirit –  
I know not what.  
I only know that I feel things more deeply with the passing years,  
That the common things of life become uncommon,  
That the ordinary becomes extraordinary,  
That the habitual becomes sacred.  
Bittersweet is the poignancy of living in these days.  
I awaken myself,  
And bow down in deep gratitude.

*After the spoken meditation, allow for about 45 seconds of silence. Count in your head. Begin to sing or signal the designated singer that it is time.*

## Meditation

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### *In the Holy Quiet of This Hour*

Rev. Dick Gilbert

In the holy quiet of this hour –  
This is sacred time that cannot be taken from us –  
These few minutes of calm in an often-hectic week,  
This island of serenity in an ocean of events,  
This peaceful interlude in the midst of a warring world.

We sit together – a company of believers in life.  
If we are still, we can hear a great communal breathing –  
The heaving of a hundred chests casting off their burdens,  
The inhalation by fellowship worshippers who seek the inspiration  
Of this time, and of this place, and of this people.  
We sense renewal pulsing through our very being;  
We sit here to receive the blessings of life –  
The memories that drift across our minds,  
The hopes harbored in these few moments,  
The dreams we dare to conjure in the magic of this time. ...

All this we seek  
In the holy quiet of this hour.

*After the spoken meditation, allow for about 45 seconds of silence. Count in your head. Begin to sing or signal the designated singer that it is time.*

# Meditation

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By Rev. Wayne Arnason

We join together now in a time of meditation or prayer, spoken at first and then for a time in the peace that silence brings.

As we enter into silence we remember the many connections that sustain and uplift us through this religious community.

We remember those who preceded us, whose contribution built a free faith, and this home for its practice.

We remember those around us, whose continuing care in thought and deed is an ongoing blessing in our lives, keeping the dream of free religion alive in our time.

We remember those who will follow us, the children presently in our care and those not yet come to light, who will inherit the work of our hands and hearts.

In the silence now, we sit surrounded by these many connections, visible and invisible, that remind us every day that we are not alone.

*After the spoken meditation, allow for about 45 seconds of silence. Count in your head. Begin to sing or signal the designated singer that it is time.*

# Meditation

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By Rev. Harold Babcock

Let us be quiet, without and within.  
Let the stillness be in us.  
Let the silence hold you.  
Find the deep places of the soul.  
Begin to let go of the distractions which plague you.  
The peace for which you are searching is tangible.  
Reach out for the peace.  
Find your center, if only for a moment.  
Listen for yourself.  
Relax, be at ease.  
Nothing can disturb your peace.  
Let go of irritation.  
Let go of anger toward one you love.  
Calm the confusion which inhibits you.  
Let go of fear.  
The quiet is within us.  
The stillness is in us.  
The silence will hold you.  
There are deep places in the soul.  
Reach out for the peace.

*After the spoken meditation, allow for about 45 seconds of silence. Count in your head. Begin to sing or signal the designated singer that it is time.*

# Meditation

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By Rev. Emmy Lou Belcher

Let us take a moment to settle into the silence.  
Hear and feel your quiet breathing;  
Hear and feel the quiet of this room  
    and this community of quiet people.  
As we sit in the quiet, feel the life that stretches  
    between us,  
    fills this room.  
Feel the opening of all the windows of our beings,  
    and the full out-stretching of our spirits,  
As we reach outward to the life around us,  
    beyond this room,  
    throughout all creation.  
For this life, for the freedom we have to shape and  
    pursue our lives,  
    we are grateful and rejoice.  
Amen.

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# Meditation

*Before the spoken meditation, invite people into a time of pause, a time to slow down, breathe deeply, and enter into the quiet of this community. Remind them the silence will end with singing. They are welcome to participate as they wish, with singing, harmony, humming, or listening.*

By Rev. Michael Hennon

Between the thought and the deed,  
Between the imagination and the reaching,  
We pause, and still ourselves in quietude:

We still ourselves in order to seek something greater;  
And in searching we pray a response will come  
To the nagging questions that contain our hopes and fears:

Who are we?  
What is our purpose in life?  
Where have we come from?  
Where will our journeys take us?

If there are no certain answers to our questions,  
And surely there are not,  
May we still keep on asking without despair to the end.  
May we claim for ourselves a meaning  
Where otherwise there is no meaning.  
And may we find a light to guide us  
In the face of the greatest darkness.

Between all thoughts and deeds, then, we pause.  
And let us all be grateful in this time  
For the treasures we do find on our way.

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# Meditation

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## *Listening Prayer*

By Bruce Marshall

Let us pause, amidst the busyness of this day, to listen.

To stop our planning and our worrying, and listen.

To shift our attention from what has been and what may be, and listen.

To cease our constant forming of words – be they in talk or in thought – and listen.

Let us listen to ourselves: the feeling and sensations that come from within. What do they tell us? What do we need to hear?

Let us listen to each other: the messages we send and receive that are never quiet captured in words. What do they tell us? What do we need to hear?

Let us listen to the world: the guidance and counsel that comes from life itself. What does it tell us? What do we need to hear?

Let us listen for the spirit: that which both supports and critiques and that sometimes tells us things we don't want' to hear.

Let us pause, amidst the busyness of this day, to listen:

That we may be attentive to life.

That we may be fully present to each other.

That we may be affirmed and renewed by the spirit that resides at the center of all being.

*After the spoken meditation, allow for about 45 seconds of silence. Count in your head. Begin to sing or signal the designated singer that it is time.*

# Offering

A Sacrament, in catholic tradition, is defined as an outward and visible sign of an inward invisible truth. In our Unitarian Universalist tradition, the Sunday offering is a sacrament. It is an outward and visible sign of our inward commitment to the ideals of the church, and our commitment to keep those ideals alive in the wider community and in the coming generations. For we are the keepers of the dream.

We will now give and receive the morning offering. Thank you for all that you give to this church.

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Out of life's generous bounty let us give a portion to support the ministry of this church, both within these walls and beyond, for ourselves and for generations to come. We now give and receive the morning offering. Thank you for all that you bring to this community.

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Our lives have been graced by many gifts from the hand of life. In gratitude and love, let us now share a portion of these gifts to support the life and work of our religious community. The morning offering will now be received.

# Offering

Living is loving, and loving is giving. If there be any good that we might do, do it now. Do not defer nor neglect it, for we may not pass this way again. We will now receive this morning's offering.

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This church is a community of ourselves. Its energy and resources are our energy and resources. Its wealth is what we share. When we contribute to the life of this fellowship, we affirm our lives within it.

## **Benediction**

*These are the words I use to end each service. I begin with a few words that recap a message of the sermon or the last hymn, then say ...*

... It is for today,  
And for the times we shall never see,  
So let us be about the task.  
The materials are very precious,  
And they are very perishable.  
May it be so.

Go in Peace.