RCA Worship Resource Toolkit: Worship liturgies for churches with a contemporary style of worship

Written by Paul Thé, lead pastor at The Bridge Church, Chino, California
Week One: Transformation

Service notes

The service begins with a pre-worship welcome from the pastor or host. It’s an act of hospitality, but it also serves to encourage worship from the congregation. It is followed with a votum (typically a psalm), which is the official “beginning of worship.” The votum is done by a liturgist (often someone different than the host).

The service then moves into songs of praise. There will be a hint of the themes of transformation and being made alive.

Depending on typical liturgy, the hospitality/greeting section can be moved around to suit the natural flow of your service. Included in this liturgy is a section for prayer, psalms, and confession, which can also be tailored to your service.

A Scripture reading has also been included with the primary text. The pastor can include supporting texts from the Old Testament, New Testament, and different scriptural genres.

An outline for the message is provided below for the pastor to consider. In addition, there is a video option, but it closely follows one of the points suggested (namely, transformation doesn’t always occur the way we expect).

The response is multi-layered with a song, communion, and sending. The subject of transformation ties beautifully with the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

Sermon concept notes

- Transformation is similar to the word metamorphosis (like the process of caterpillar to butterfly).
- To be transformed, the old must pass and the renewed must come. Like the caterpillar, we must “die” to self and take up our cross to be transformed.
- The renewing of our minds is the dying of our old thoughts and habits. If we do not renew our minds, we will simply “conform” to this world.
- Transformation doesn’t come easily, nor does it occur in ways we think it should. God’s ways are not our ways, and the path to transformation is mysterious.

Pastor could use clip from “The Karate Kid” (1983). When the character of Daniel LaRusso learns the meaning of “wax on” and “paint the fence,” his ability to defend himself is transformed. In a similar fashion, God often uses unconventional paths to teach us about transformation. (Note: When using this video, look for the clean version. Here’s one from Wingclips: www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/the-karate-kid-1984/purpose-of-training.)
These final points should be handled in the “message wrap-up” section:
- Each one of us can be transformed today.
- What’s stopping you from transforming from a caterpillar into a butterfly?
- Maybe God has been using your current situation, and you need a new “wax on” perspective to see how the transformation has already begun.

If Hollywood examples are preferred, one could use “Transformers” instead of the caterpillar/butterfly analogy at the beginning. The car turning into a “super robot” has a similar effect and will likely catch younger audiences. Use caution, however, because this example breaks down when the robot turns back in a car.

Option for churches with screens:
Play “butterfly to chrysalis” video while pastor preaches. Use a link like this as pastor begins (do not include audio): www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4WYor6UMtU This one lasts about 12 minutes.

Liturgy

OPENING OF WORSHIP

Welcome and anticipation
   Host: Welcome guests to service. Share a thought to engage people in worship.

Votum: Psalm 124:8

Opening song:
   “Glory to God Forever” (artist: Fee; album: Hope Rising)

Opening prayer
   The worship leader thanks God for drawing the congregation into the worship space.

Songs of response:
   “Marvelous Light” (artist: Christy Nockels; album: Life Light Up)
   “Made Alive” (artist: Citizens; album: Citizens)

HOSPITALITY AND FELLOWSHIP

Greeting/passing of the peace

Communication and announcements

Response cards and giving
   Host: Encourage card response and stewardship response.
PRAYERS, PSALMS, CONFESSION, AND ASSURANCE

Congregational prayer
Liturgist: Pray on behalf of the people. Include prayers of praise, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession. Optional: Pray for another church or ministry as well as global and regional events.

Song of response:
“Beautiful Things” (artist: Gungor; album: Beautiful Things)

WORD OF GOD

Scripture reading: Romans 12:1-2
Liturgist: Include other Scripture references from Old and New Testament as desired.

Message: Transformation

Video: The Purpose of Training (from “The Karate Kid”)

Message wrap-up: Calling people to be transformed today
Segue from sermon part one and “Karate Kid” video into wrap-up.

Prayer

RESPONSE

Song:
“Change My Heart, Oh God” (artist: Eddie Espinosa)

Communion liturgy and passing of elements
Host: From the sermon, make a connection between transformation and the Lord’s Supper; further illustrate how Christ died for us and how we are to “die” to self. Pastor may then proceed with typical communion liturgy.

Prayer of gratitude

SENDING

Song:
“We Believe” (artist: Newsboys; album: Restart)

Blessing/benediction
Week 2: Discipleship

Service notes

The service begins with a pre-worship welcome from the pastor or host. It’s an act of hospitality, but it also serves to encourage worship from the congregation. It is followed with a votum (typically a psalm), which is the official “beginning of worship.” The votum is done by a liturgist (often someone different than the host).

The songs of praise this week highlight the themes of God’s grace and laying down our lives for Christ.

Depending on typical liturgy, the hospitality/greeting section can be moved around to suit the natural flow of your service. The section for prayer, psalms, and confession can also be tailored to your service.

A Scripture reading has been included with the primary text. The pastor can include supporting texts from the Old Testament, New Testament, and different scriptural genres.

The response section involves an exercise that asks people to pick up their nets, walk them to the other side of the room, and place them at the cross. Don’t forget to ask some key volunteers ahead of time to participate. There might be some hesitance if walking up front to respond is somewhat new for your church.

Parts needed for this exercise:
- fishing nets for 75 to 80 percent of your congregational attendance
- a cross
- space to walk, preferably near the front of the church, that is 25 to 50 feet in length

Small nets approximately 12”x12” or 24”x24” can be purchased, or a church might consider purchasing a larger net and cutting it into smaller pieces. A quick internet search yielded this for netting: www.partyswizzle.com/fishermansnet.html.

See further notes on the exercise in the response section of the liturgy.

The closing/sending is a prayer of commitment and the reciting of the creed.

Sermon concept notes

- Christ called the church to make disciples. While we churches and pastors might know this conceptually, we ought to consider what we’re actually producing. Would a majority of our congregants say, “My church is a disciple-making factory?”
- When Christ called Peter and the disciples, they dropped their nets and followed immediately. It was an act of faith on their part, knowing that “fishing for people” was much more significant and meaningful than trying to catch fish.

**Liturgy**

**OPENING OF WORSHIP**

Welcome and anticipation

*Host: Welcome guests to service. Share a thought to engage people in worship.*

Votum: Psalm 118:24-26

Opening song:

“Ohosanna” (artist: Paul Baloche; album: A Greater Song)

Opening prayer

*The worship leader recognizes the Holy Spirit’s presence.*

Songs of response:

“This Is Amazing Grace” (artist: Phil Wickam; album: The Ascension)

“Lay Me Down” (artist: Chris Tomlin; album: Burning Lights)

**HOSPITALITY AND FELLOWSHIP**

Greeting/passing of the peace

Communication and announcements

Response cards and giving

*Host: Encourage card response and stewardship response.*

**PRAYERS, PSALMS, CONFESSION, AND ASSURANCE**

Song:

“Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)” (artist: Hillsong United; album: Zion)

Congregational prayer

*Liturgist: Pray on behalf of the people. Include prayers of praise, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession.*

Song:

“Lord, I Need You” (artist: Chris Tomlin; album: Here for You)
WORD OF GOD

Scripture reading: Matthew 4:18-22; Matthew 28:19-20

Liturgist: Include other Scripture references from Old and New Testament as desired.

Optional media:
Jesus, Fisher of Men
www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/jesus/fisher-of-men
This media might work in some contexts and not others. Use as you see fit.

Message: It All Comes Down to Disciple-making

RESPONSE

Call to respond: An experiential response

Suggested text for pastor or host to read:

When Jesus called Peter, Peter was a fisherman. But Peter dropped what he was doing to pursue something more significant. He responded to the call of Christ.

Today, you might find yourself passing time. Like Peter, you’re just casting your nets out to sea but catching very little. Or maybe you find yourself so busy that the focus on discipleship has been lost. Or, quite possibly, you need to respond today for the first time to Christ’s call on your life: “Come and follow me.”

In just a moment, the band will play “From the Inside Out.” During that song you’ll have the opportunity to respond. I encourage you to come down to the front, pick up a net [pile on the right side of the pulpit], walk it to the cross [on the left side of pulpit, 25-30 feet away]. Then set the net down in front of the cross in a pile. As you do so, think about what that net symbolizes. What’s keeping you from becoming a disciple? What’s keeping you from discipling others? What’s keeping you complacent in your walk, where you are being a crowd member instead of a disciple? What are you spending your time doing, when you could be fishers of men and women?

Come down anytime during this song and participate with us.

Song:
“From The Inside Out” (artist: Hillsong United; album: Mighty to Save)
(played/sung concurrently with the nets exercise)

Prayer of commitment and prayer for strength:

Lord, the nets lying here represent a lot of things. For some, it’s a commitment to turn from their life and follow you for the very first time. For others, it’s recognition that what they’re pursuing is not discipleship. These nets might also represent
something that is keeping someone from becoming the disciple you are calling them to be.

We lay these nets and all they represent at your cross today, knowing that only in and through the power of the Spirit can we become the people you want us to be. So we pray for your protection. We pray for strength. We pray that we would submit our lives to your perfect will. Guide us, Father, to the cross, that we might see Christ and follow him daily.

Amen!

SENDING

Confessing our faith:
   The Apostle’s Creed

Song:
   “I Will Follow” (artist: Chris Tomlin; album: And If Our God Is For Us…)

Blessing/benediction
Week 3: Leadership

Service notes

The pre-worship welcome from the pastor or host is an act of hospitality, but also serves to encourage worship from the congregation. It is followed with a votum (typically a psalm), which is the official “beginning of worship.” The votum is done by a liturgist (often someone different than the host). The service then moves into songs of praise.

The hospitality/greeting section can be moved around to suit the natural flow of your service. Included in this liturgy is a section for prayer, psalms, and confession, which can also be tailored to your service.

A Scripture reading has also been included with the primary text. The pastor can include supporting texts from the Old Testament, New Testament, and different scriptural genres.

The message focuses on leadership and moves into the application of creating a community/culture of mentoring.

Sermon concept notes

Ken Blanchard has a wonderful book, Lead Like Jesus. It has a simple outline which can easily be formatted into a sermon. I would recommend the following:

There’s a shortage of leadership in this world.
Jesus is the supreme servant leader and we should follow his example:
  The heart of a servant leader
  The head of a servant leader
  The hands of a servant leader
  The habits of a servant leader

Response notes

I suggest your church create an eight-week study series around Ken Blanchard’s book, Lead Like Jesus. It is a great opportunity to call people to be part of the leader-making process, challenging them to either lead others or be mentored.

The response therefore involves checking boxes on a card for those who want to lead or mentor others and those who want to become leaders in the future. This is a simple card printed with the following information:

I pledge myself to the leadership and mentoring process, as outlined in the book, Lead Like Jesus. As a member of this church community, I would be willing to:
Be involved in a study group for the next eight weeks, so that I might learn to lead like Jesus.
Take someone through *Lead Like Jesus* for the next eight weeks, as I’ve already gone through this book.

Name: _____________________________________________________
Email: _____________________________________________________
Cell: _____________________________________________________

Thank you for responding. Someone from our church staff will contact you this week to begin your journey of leadership.

*If your church would rather take a different approach to the leadership/mentoring theme (or use a different book for the study), please adjust this section of the liturgy as fits best for your context.*

**Liturgy**

**OPENING OF WORSHIP**

Welcome and anticipation

*Host: Welcome guests to service. Share our anticipation to connect with the Lord through the elements of the service.*

Votum: Isaiah 40:28-29

Opening songs:

“Everlasting God” (artist: Chris Tomlin; album: See the Morning)
“Let God Arise” (artist: Chris Tomlin; album: See the Morning)

Opening prayer

*The worship leader recognizes the Holy Spirit’s presence.*

Song:

“Cornerstone” (artist: Hillsong; album: Hillsong Live)

**HOSPITALITY AND FELLOWSHIP**

Greeting/passing of the peace

Communication and announcements
Response cards and giving

*Host: Encourage card response and stewardship response.*

PRAYERS, PSALMS, CONFESSION, AND ASSURANCE

Congregational prayer

*Liturgist offers prayers on behalf of the people. Include prayers of praise, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession.*

Song:

“Jesus Messiah” (artist: Chris Tomlin; album: Hello Love)

WORD OF GOD

Scripture reading: John 13:1-17

*Liturgist: Include other Scripture references from Old and New Testament as desired.*

Song:

“Speak, O Lord” (*Lift Up Your Hearts* hymnal)

Video:

“Lead Them” (from “Braveheart”)

[www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/braveheart/lead-them](http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/braveheart/lead-them)

Message: Lead and Mentor Like Jesus

Prayer

RESPONSE

Song (solo):

“Shelter” (artist: Jars of Clay; album: The Shelter)

*Sung by soloist with band if possible. This song works best when the emphasis moves to creating a “community or culture of leadership.” And it segues into the response card section below.*

Explanation of *Lead Like Jesus* book study

*A great opportunity to call people to be part of the leadership-making process. It would be an eight-week study, challenging people to either lead another or be mentored. Ask ushers to come down the aisle and pass out cards (and pens if needed). Invite people to come forward with their completed cards during the next song and place them in baskets in the pulpit area.*
Song:
“Our God” (artist: Chris Tomlin; album: Passion: Awakening)
*Extra-long intro. Designed to be played and then sung, while people are coming forward with response cards.*

Prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving

SENDING

Blessing/benediction
**Week 4: Missional Engagement**

**Service notes**

This worship service focuses on missional engagement, the kingdom of God, Christ’s rule/reign, and a hope for this world.

The opening begins with a pre-worship welcome from the pastor or host. A scriptural call to worship focuses on God who is above all nations. The service then moves into songs of praise that talk about awakening, the kingdom, and the reign of Christ.

Depending on typical liturgy, the hospitality/greeting section can be moved around to suit the natural flow of your service. Included in this liturgy is a section for prayer, psalms, and confession, which can also be tailored to your service.

A Scripture reading has also been included with the primary text. The pastor can include supporting texts from the Old Testament, New Testament, and different scriptural genres.

The message focuses on ushering in the kingdom as one form of missional engagement. Our many daily actions are how God uses each one of us as instruments of hope.

The response is a prayer for missional work in our cities and communities, followed by “God of This City” as a sung response.

**Sermon concept notes**

One way of thinking about missional engagement is this: ushering in the kingdom of God. Ushering in the kingdom takes many forms, including healing diseases, having compassion, leading others, and harvesting. In a nutshell, ushering in the kingdom (missional engagement) gives people hope, now and for their future (on earth and in heaven).

Application: This week, in what ways can you engage in mission? Usher in the kingdom and be an instrument of God’s hope.
Liturgy

OPENING OF WORSHIP

Welcome and anticipation

Host: Welcome guests to service. Share a thought that will engage people in worship.

Votum: Psalm 96:4-6

Opening song:

“Awakening” (artist: Chris Tomlin; album: Passion: Awakening)

Opening prayer

The worship leader invites God in and recognizes the Holy Spirit’s presence.

Songs:

“Wake” (artist: Hillsong; album: We Are Young & Free) (optional)
“Build Your Kingdom Here” (artist: Rend Collective; album: Campfire)
“Forever Reign” (artist: Hillsong; album: A Beautiful Exchange)

HOSPITALITY AND FELLOWSHIP

Greeting/passing of the peace

Communication and announcements

PRAYERS, PSALMS, CONFESSION, AND ASSURANCE

Song:

“One Thing Remains” (artist: Kristian Stanfill; album: White Flag)

Congregational prayer

Liturgist offers prayers on behalf of the people. Include prayers of praise, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession.

Song:

“10,000 Reasons” (artist: Matt Redman; album: 10,000 Reasons)

WORD OF GOD

Scripture reading: Matthew 9:35-38

Message: Missional Engagement—A Kingdom of Hope
Video:
Missional Engagement: Deon’s Story
www.vimeo.com/28671687

Prayer

RESPONSE

Song:
“Hope is What We Crave” (artist: For King & Country; album: Hope is What We Crave)

Prayer for commitment and response
Encourage people to pray with their palms up or their arms open wide, as they commit themselves to missional engagement.

Response cards and giving
Host: Encourage card response and stewardship response.

SENDING

Song:
“God of This City” (artist: Chris Tomlin; album: God of This City)

Blessing/benediction