

Church of Scotland
The Presbytery of the South West

Welcome to this Introductory Course on
Becoming a Worship Team Member

TUTOR'S NOTES

MODULE 1

Page 3:

The purpose of this section is to encourage self-awareness and to invite candidates to reflect on their call.

Reflection, prayer, guidance and commitment will guide candidates in their search for confirmation of their calling.

Page 4:

This set of 'reasons' is intended to stimulate thinking about calling.

Some reasons are more worthy than others, but candidates should spend time unravelling the valid reasons from the more doubtful ones.

The 'Points to Consider' are designed to stimulate discussion within the group. Some of the reasons are clearly partially valid but not enough on their own.

Page 5

This page is similar in the format on page 4; it is intended to encourage reflection and discussion on skills required for the role of worship leader. Remind candidates that Paul speaks of the gifts of the Spirit which includes prophecy i.e., preaching.

'Relating to members of the congregation' requires an open and approachable personality; it's not enough to be a preacher only.

Page 6

Mark 6:4-6

Throughout these modules there are opportunities to reflect on scriptural references relevant to our purpose of leading worship. In these verses from Mark candidates are confronted with the challenge of speaking to their own fellow members and friends. Worship leaders need to be confident in their calling and that God, if we are responding to his call, ensure that we gain respect from those we are serving. Encourage discussion on this point.

Luke 10:1-3

Encourage candidates to reflect on the urgency of evangelism. Draw out the parallels with our contemporary culture – rejection of Christian truth as the foundation for our lives. You could explore the nature of 'wolves' in our society. Impress upon candidates of the importance of being grounded in the words of scripture throughout the course.

Page 7

It's good to be reminded of the practicalities of delivering a service. Christ did not forget the needs of 5000 and their desire for lunch!

Encourage candidates to consider possible responses to the problems identified.

In extremis it would be desirable to terminate the service. Think, for example, what would be the correct response when someone collapsed in the pew during the service.

And what about the bawling child who seeks to dominate the act of worship?

Add other situations that come to mind.

Page 8

This exercise should stimulate considerable discussion! It would be best to take each example in turn and move on to reflections as below.

Is there a 'call to worship'? –	A call to worship can be quite brief.
How casual or formal is the opening? –	Consider reactions of the congregation to both styles
Is the language used accessible? –	Are there words or phrases not used in everyday language?
Would visitors feel welcome? –	Often forgotten. How might visitors be acknowledged and made to feel welcome?
Would any children feel welcomed?	- How might this be done?
Finally, what impression do you get from the overall delivery?	

Page 9

The four examples are mixed in tone and content. There is no 'perfect' opening – each containing strengths and weaknesses. It is up to candidates to unravel the positive from the negative.

Hopefully, also, this exercise will help worship leaders to reflect on their own style of delivery.

Page 10

Different churches have different formats in regard to benedictions. Initially it would be wise for worship leaders to conform to their church's practice. However, they should be encouraged to develop their own style with due recognition to the purpose of the benediction.

This is a relatively light-hearted exercise which will generate a few wry smiles and discussion! The point to stress is that caution is the watch word. Thinking before speaking is sound advice.

Read over each statement with the group and invite thoughts and reactions.

Page 11

This is the first practical exercise for worship leaders to undertake and will provide a good opportunity to put into practice speaking skills within a friendly environment.

Read through each of the 4 paragraphs with the group, stressing the points being made.

Take this opportunity to discuss with the group their thoughts and feelings now that they are at the end of this first module.

Module 2 should be distributed to participants at this point to allow worship leaders the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the contents and to reflect on exercises which will come up in the course of the next module.

MODULE 2

Page 13

The points being raised on pages 13 and 14 are intended to stimulate thinking about the order of service and the factors which may help worship leaders to shape the service.

1. Tradition or innovation

This can be a sensitive matter – guitars and/or organ is only one example of innovation and tradition. Explore other areas in which there may be a need for changes.

2. Christian Festivals

Encourage worship leaders to 'think out the box'.

3. Congregation

Nationally, the demographic of church attendance veers strongly towards the elderly. This poses a similar problem to the one identified above.

4. Length of service

This will probably be determined by what has always been done though adaptation is not out of the question. Is there an ideal length?

Page 14

This exercise can be completed on the spot and shared with. Ensure that reasons for the orders of service are given. Stress the importance of balance and relevance.

Linking the elements of the order of service is often forgotten as an activity. However, it is essential that links are informative and allow a natural flow between different parts of the service to occur.

MODULE 3

Page 18

The purpose of this exercise is to stimulate thinking about how we communicate with worshippers. Language which is beyond the comprehension of most congregations is not helpful. It would be useful to focus on Christ's example which touched both the minds and hearts of the listeners.

Effective communication is the first obligation of worship leaders when delivering a sermon or talk.

Page 19

There is no need to linger on the distinctions between talks, homilies and sermons. For convenience, throughout these modules the term 'sermon' will be used when referring to any talk delivered by the worship leader.

Initially, worship leaders may prefer a shorter delivery but different speakers will approach this element of the service in their own way. However, the key point is to discourage speakers from delivering a long-winded and, frankly, an inaccessible sermon.

Page 20

This list is not exhaustive, but it does give leaders some pointers and guidelines and, hopefully, confidence. Take each one individually and tease out any queries which may arise.

Page 21

Sermon topics – Some suggestions to get us thinking!

The purpose of this exercise is to stimulate thinking about sermon subjects. Not all candidates will wish to embark on presenting a talk/sermon. However, it would be useful for all worship leaders to be familiar with such a key aspect of Christian worship.

Everyone's thoughts and opinions on the suggested subjects will contribute to the discussion and help worship leaders to gain a balanced perspective on what is acceptable and what may be suspect!

Some topics are clearly appropriate, but others are definitely unacceptable. Allow participants time to debate those in the borderline category.

Page 22

Sources of inspiration!

Once again, this is not an exhaustive list, but it is intended to draw attention to the range of possibilities. Not all worship leaders will feel led to deliver a sermon to their home congregation, but it is important they are of the opportunities and challenges offered by this element of worship.

Page 23

EXEMPLAR 1 – The Good Samaritan

The 4 exemplars in the following pages are intended to guide potential preachers to find a way through the early stages of sermon production. Each exemplar decreases in support, but the core elements of preparation, message and structure are stressed in all cases.

Bible Reading

Discuss with the group the question of Bible versions used and whether there is a need to review their own church's version.

Conveying the message

The point being made here is the extent to which the reading conveys the message most effectively. It might be worthwhile reading the message without respecting punctuation and natural pauses. Then re-read the passage paying full attention to the bullet points listed.

Ideas

This is an important initial stage in the development of sermons. The earlier this begins the better. Invite answers to the question: where, when and how might ideas come into being?

Page 24

The box contains a random selection of ideas for a sermon. In due course, these ideas would be refined and worked up into a coherent sermon structure.

It would be useful to discuss briefly the four bullets and how they might impact on the sermon.

The guidelines given on the overall structure are not compulsory, but they do give a steer to worship leaders in their preparatory work.

Point out that there is a unifying theme to this sermon – neighbourliness. This focus will ensure that a coherent message is being conveyed to the congregation.

Invite participants to 'ad lib' on the spot regarding an opening sentence.

Page 26

EXEMPLAR 3

This example of building up a sermon focusses on a familiar Old Testament passage. Encourage worship leaders to consider the Old Testament as a fruitful source for sharing the good news of the gospel.

Take time to discuss the points raised in the bullet points.

It would be worthwhile to highlight the positives and negatives of internet searches. i.e., focus on trustworthy resources (e.g., Church of Scotland website).

As we move through the exemplars, fewer guidelines are given, the key point being made being the importance of a developing a coherent structure for the sermon.

Page 27

EXEMPLAR 4

Invite participants to reflect on the possibilities raised by centring the sermon on a miraculous act of Jesus. What is the account of this event telling the contemporary audience and today's readers? It could be used as a springboard for reflection on intimidation and even persecution of Christians in today's world.

Page 28

Once again, attention is being drawn here to thinking through the direction of the sermon. Listing three points can be done on the spot.

How might this sermon be illustrated by referring to our current status as Christians?

It would be a profitable use of time to consider each of these bullet points in turn. Discuss with participants what might qualify as 'appropriate illustrations. Does this include personal experiences? historical anecdotes? events in the news? - and others.

MODULE 4

Page 29

We are all aware of the reduced numbers of children attending church services so there may be a limited requirement for this part of the service. Would worship leaders be quite happy to deliver a children's address to an adults-only congregation? Discuss!

Go through the points made on page 24 focussing on the bullet points which arise.

The point about health and safety relates to passing out edibles and resultant allergic reactions to some products. Best avoid this practice.

Page 30

The example of a children's address given here is not intended to be a 'model' but rather a vehicle for discussion. After considering the address as a whole, focus on the questions which should stimulate thinking.

Singing

This is an opportunity to share ideas relating to choruses and singing in general. Hopefully, there may be musically talented folks in the group and their knowledge and experience would be valuable.

Page 31

Praying with children is not the same as praying for children. We would wish children to be part of the praying activity. It is for this reason that what we pray about and the words we use require careful consideration.

Point out to worship leaders the importance of using words and language which are accessible to young people. They should also be reminded of the need to relate prayers to their daily lives and experiences.

Page 32

As with all scriptural reflections, it would be important for you, as tutor, to give some consideration in advance to the questions posed in this section.

Preparing a children's address is a deceptively straightforward exercise which will, in fact, stretch the participants talents. They should always remember the audience they are addressing and the importance of bringing all youngsters into the address.

MODULE 5

Page 33 and 34

This scriptural reflection may generate a considerable amount of discussion and shared opinions. Some of the issues which arise will be addressed in the following pages.

Issues relating to hymn singing are expanded in short paragraphs followed by points for discussion.

Page 35 and 36

These two pages are primarily for information though you will note that Thanksgiving and Supplication include points for discussion. If questions arise at any point from these two pages, then, clearly, such points should be addressed and discussed. We should not forget that this is an interactive course which encourages involvement by all at any stage.

Page 37

Ask worship leaders for any additional suggestions to those suggested.

Go through the bullet points individually teasing out reasons for these hints.

An opportunity to write an intercessory prayer is given in the final assignment of this module.

Page 38

Prayers with responses

This may or not be a tradition within individual churches, but it is worth drawing attention to this inclusive way to share prayers.

Page 40

The sample version of an intercessory prayer provides a useful vehicle for discussion. Take time to expand on each of the bullet points once worship leaders have had the chance of reading through the whole prayer.

Are there any ways in which this prayer could be improved, corrected or reduced in length?

Page 35

Dedication of the offering

As with the Lord's prayer it would be important not to allow the dedication of the offering to become a ritualistic occurrence. Ask participants for suggestions on how they be avoided.

Language in prayers and sermons

This is an issue which arises throughout the act of worship and certainly merits full discussion. Inappropriate (theological) expressions can become a real barrier to understanding and involvement on the part of the congregation.

Changing the wording in the bullet points could be a challenge but as an exercise in communication it is well worth the effort. Remind participants that congregations are often bewildered by expressions and language used.

Scriptural Reflection

This section concludes with a reflection on the nature of prayer as expressed in the words of Jesus. Remind participants of the importance of being grounded in Scripture when it comes to an understanding of prayer.

Page 42

This short section acts as a reminder to participants of points made earlier on reading out loud. Encourage readers to practise reading out loud at home and, if possible, in their local church. Stress the importance of pace, clarity, intonation and volume. Even well practiced speakers can fall down on one of those requirements.

Page 42

Module 6 will take place, ideally, in a church building (or hall). This final module will give the opportunity to budding worship leaders to put into practice what they have learnt over the past 3 modules. We should not forget the purpose of this introductory course namely to equip interested members of the congregation with the skills required to conduct partly or wholly an act of worship.

However, different individuals may be at different stages in their journey to becoming a worship leader and tutors should be sensitive to the stage reached by each participant in the group. There should be no pressure on individuals to commit themselves to more than they are comfortable with.

Remember – the purpose of this module is to give participants the experience of speaking in a place of worship.

MODULE 6

Page 43

The object of this assessment is clearly outlined on page 43

This is very much 'horses for courses'.

Your assessment should be encouraging and supportive whilst offering guidelines for future development.