

LITURGIST GUIDELINES  
SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Thank you for serving as a liturgist at Second Presbyterian Church. The word liturgy comes from the Greek meaning “work of the people”. Working together with the Pastor, the liturgist leads the congregation in worship. We hope these guidelines will answer most of your questions and help you prepare for your time of service.

CONTENT

In a typical Sunday morning worship service, the liturgist will

- Lead the congregation in or speak the Opening Sentences [printed in bulletin] after the Invitation to Worship
- Declare the Call to Confession [chosen or composed by liturgist]
- Lead the congregation in the Prayer of Confession [printed in bulletin]
- Pray the Prayer of Illumination [chosen or composed by liturgist] before the first Scripture reading. Introductory comments about the text may also be made, as suggested by the Pastor
- Read the first Scripture selection [printed in bulletin]
- Introduce and lead the congregation in the Affirmation of Faith [printed in bulletin]

Other responsibilities may be assigned as agreed between the liturgist and the pastor.

SCHEDULE

**2-3 weeks ahead**

Call or visit the Pastor at her office during the week to let her know the dates you will be serving as liturgist and to talk over the service(s). Confirm the scripture readings and discuss any special parts of the worship service(s) with her.

Begin to familiarize yourself with the scripture selections. The Pastor usually preaches from one of the scripture texts in the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL). The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the RCL texts can be found on the Vanderbilt Divinity Library website - <http://divinity.library.vanderbilt.edu/lectionary/>. Study the scriptures that you will read. Read them aloud until you become comfortable with them. Pay attention to enunciation, so the text can be clearly heard. Think about the voice, intonation and pacing that are most appropriate to the text. Make a note of any questions or pronunciation issues, to discuss later with the Pastor.

Liturgical resources from the *Book of Common Worship* which you can use to choose a Call to Confession and/or Prayer for Illumination are available at the church office. You may also use other appropriate liturgical resources or compose your own Call to Confession and/or Prayer for Illumination. If you do, you should review them with the Pastor before the service. An idea or theme for the Call to Confession and/or Prayer for Illumination can often be found among the scripture selections for the day.

**One week ahead**

Call or visit the Pastor at her office during the week to discuss any questions that you may have and to review final details of the service. The worship bulletin is usually printed on the Thursday before the service. The scripture printed in the bulletin may have been edited by the Pastor to make the language inclusive. Be sure to read the text as printed in the bulletin.

If you have not served as liturgist before, become familiar with the sacristy, chancel and lectern, including the microphone, light and lectern Bible. It can be helpful and it is certainly appropriate to practice reading your parts of the service until you are comfortable with them. Remember to wait 3 seconds after the organ stops playing before you begin to speak, to allow for the reverberation in the sanctuary.

### **Day of Service**

Be in the sanctuary at least 30 minutes before the service. Take care of any personal needs, and get a cup of water if you will need it during the service.

Get a bulletin, or two if you want to have one both at your seat and at the lectern. If you have composed the Call to Confession, Prayer for Illumination, or other comments or remarks to guide the congregation in its responses, put them with your bulletin.

Be sure that there is a hymnal at your seat. If you are wearing a chasuble, select it and put it on, so that you become comfortable moving around in it, particularly up and down the chancel steps. Position the lectern microphone to suit and adjust your speaking volume as necessary so you can be heard clearly throughout the sanctuary. The sound system is normally ON about 30 minutes before worship begins.

Locate the Pastor to let her know that you are there and to confirm any last-minute details or changes in the service order. She usually comes to the sanctuary about 20 minutes before the service. This is an appropriate time to have a prayer with her asking God to work through you as you lead the people of God in worship.

Until the prelude begins, use the time to review the service, pray silently, or greet people as they gather for worship. When the prelude begins, take your seat in the chancel.

### **DURING THE SERVICE**

If you have prepared and practiced for the service, you should be comfortable in your responsibility as a liturgist. The following points may be helpful to you

- While the liturgist is in full view of the congregation, don't be too concerned to do things in any special way. If you are comfortable, the congregation will sense that and be helped in their worship experience. If you are uncomfortable or uncertain, the congregation will sense that, too. Don't become upset if you make a mistake.
- Your attitude in the chancel during all of the parts of the worship service for which you are not responsible should be that of an attentive worshiper. The liturgist remains a part of the congregation.
- As much as you can, look up toward the congregation while speaking or reading. The congregation will appreciate it and your voice will project better. If you keep a finger in the margin where you are reading, you can quickly find your place again.
- In a responsive reading, speak the leader's part with conviction and also speak the congregation's part in a more subdued tone.

### **AFTER THE SERVICE**

Remain at the back of the sanctuary near the Pastor to greet and talk with the worshipers as they leave.

Thank you for serving as a liturgist. The Worship Committee welcomes any comments that you have that could be helpful to others in the future.