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## A CUSTOMARY FOR WORSHIP

### A WORSHIP PLANNING TEAM

1.0 Worship in any Christian assembly must be planned and directed by **competent leaders**, whose task is to provide that people meet with one another and with their God each week in proclamation, prayer, and praise that is addressed to God, through Christ, and in the Spirit.

1.1 In a parish situation, it is often the pastor who plans worship from week to week, ideally with assistance from the church musician, and following action taken by a Worship Committee and church council. Depending on local circumstances, an active Altar Guild might also participate in worship planning. And in some circumstances, a different **planning team** might be charged with providing worship plans and ideas for each season of the Church Year. In smaller parishes, the entire active congregational membership might be assigned these responsibilities, in a kind of *rota*, or succession of weekly or monthly worship planning teams. (*Rota*: Latin for “wheel”.)

1.2 However the system is structured, it's good advice to insulate the ordained personnel from possible criticisms of clericalism by insuring that **laypeople** have at least some voice in planning worship, if only through elected representatives on a Worship Committee. Worship planners could meet seasonally, four or five times a year, to plan ahead for the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Post-Pentecost, reflecting on past experience during each specific season, and designing this year's observances and celebrations. Or planners could meet as often as once a week, to plan for a specific occasion.

1.3 The Worship Team will also have responsibility to prepare whatever **print resources** will be needed for a given occasion. Needless to say, all print resources —

the Sunday bulletin or guide to worship, printed announcements, printed psalm refrains, and printed prayer forms — should be prepared with care, so as to facilitate full participation by the faithful, and so as not to prove a stumbling block to the first-time visitor. And remember: The best worship is always “post-literate”. No print resources should be necessary, not even hymnbooks, in the most ideal circumstances. Of this more later.

1.4 Worship Teams will want to insure that parish worship makes room for necessary and **desirable diversity** from season to season. It would be too great a shock to most peoples’ sensibilities if every Sunday’s worship were altogether unique and unlike the previous week’s worship. Nevertheless we have the calendar of the Church’s Year, a splendid resource for allowing and indeed encouraging meaningful variety. There is no justification for a Sunday in the Easter season to look like a Sunday in Lent.

1.5 Finally, following this last item, it will be the responsibility of the Worship Team to make certain that paraments and banners and vestments are **changed** from season to season and on occasion from Sunday to Sunday. And under direction from the Altar Guild or its equivalent, someone must insure that candles, table linens and “holy hardware” are in place when they’re needed, and replaced, repaired or replenished when that’s needed.

*To be continued...*

