



# BREAKTHROUGH

*A GNJ guide to best practices for worship*



## A Companion to the GNJ Sermon Series:

- Stop Being Nice
- Catch Your Breath
- Road Trip
- Plugged In
- Ghost Stories



**UNITED METHODISTS**  
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

[www.gnjumc.org/breakthrough](http://www.gnjumc.org/breakthrough)

# breakthrough noun,

often attributive

break·through | \ˈbrāk-ˈθruː\ 

## Definition of *breakthrough*

1. : an act or instance of moving through or beyond an obstacle  
// a breakthrough in the talks between the region's leaders  
// a breakthrough agreement
2. a sudden advance especially in knowledge or technique  
// a medical breakthrough

Have you ever felt stuck?

Maybe your car battery died. Maybe at the gym you can't top your personal best. Perhaps you spent an hour staring at your sermon manuscript, but just couldn't finish. Or maybe you feel stuck in a monotonous cycle of Sunday after Sunday.

Every person, organization and church goes through seasons where they feel stuck. This is especially easy in the life a congregation; Sunday is always coming. The world around us is changing faster than we are. It's hard to keep up. And time just slips away from us.

Breakthrough is a resource designed to provide easy to use best practices and worship series so that GNJ congregations can re-tune their worship, spend less time preparing the details and focus on what really matters – preaching the gospel to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.

The suggestions in these pages have been cultivated from leaders in GNJ churches. They've been tried and tested in different ministry settings and contexts. Take a look and use them to refresh your worship.

The Breakthrough Journal is a guide to be used in coordination with a set of five worship series designed for GNJ congregations that can be found on our website [WWW.GNJUMC.ORG](http://WWW.GNJUMC.ORG). You will find all the liturgies you need for your bulletin, creative graphics and videos, song and hymn suggestions, sermon starter materials and more. They're all free, and everything is adaptable.

Take and use what works. Rewrite or skip what doesn't.

The goal is to save pastors 10 hours each week to prepare the sermon and lead the congregation.

The goal is for leaders in churches to continue to learn, grow, and serve well.

As pastors and church leaders partner together to do God's work: the breakthrough will come.



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# WORSHIP SERIES

## PLANNING WORSHIP IN SERIES

A worship series gives congregations one theme to develop and grow into a period of three to five weeks. Building momentum from one week to the next, people will plug in and come back expecting to hear more. This anticipation will help people in the congregation stay connected and committed to the worshipping community. Worship series, if done well, can help your congregation relate the worship experience to friends and neighbors and invite them along because they know what to expect.

**The worship series will align all elements of the congregation's experience including:**

- Small group curriculum
- Social media messaging
- Graphics for newsletters, bulletins and screens
- Mission activities
- Stewardship messaging
- Sermon
- Liturgy and prayers
- Hospitality

**When the entire ministry has a unified focus, you can expect to see your congregation grow and lives changed. When planning a series, consider the following:**

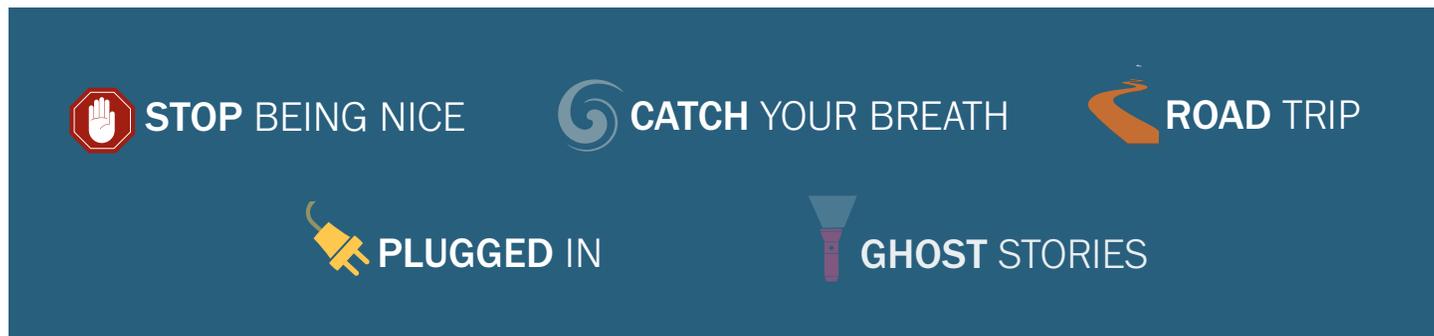
- Outline the series including:
  - one key theme
  - weekly sub themes
  - highlighted scriptures
- Provide the framework
- Collect illustrations or stories

Planning a worship series provides a place to hang ideas before even thinking about writing the sermon. By planning in advance, you can develop and empower people to help so that when you are ready to write the sermon, you've accumulated a wealth of ideas, resources and support.

# 2019 WORSHIP SERIES

## TIMELINE

A team of ministry leaders at GNJ have created worship resources to be used all year with a suggested calendar for GNJ congregations to be using these resources during the same time period – giving us the opportunity to share ideas and bright spots along the way.



## SERIES OVERVIEW

A general outline to share with creative thinking partners or the worship design team to begin generating ideas for your congregation.

## WORSHIP LITURGY AND BULLETIN MATERIALS

- Call to worship
- Invocation (Opening prayer)
- Hymn/song ideas
- Offering prayer

## SERMON BACKGROUND AND OUTLINE

Theological resourcing and research to ground and guide your sermon. The outline for each sermon involves a five step process, but can be adjusted for your style.

## WORSHIP DESIGN

Visual, multi-sensory, interactive worship design components to set the worship space and tone for the whole experience including:

- Altar ideas
- Interactive activities for worship
- Take home items to prompt your congregants throughout the week

Resources for all series are available at: [www.gnjumc.org/breakthrough](http://www.gnjumc.org/breakthrough)



## SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM

Small group questions to print, post or share so that your groups each week are able to engage with the series.

## THE “GIVING MOMENT”

Offering introductions with specific stories or celebrations of the church’s mission and ministries to inspire giving.

## RESOURCES TO INVITE PEOPLE TO CHURCH

Conversation prompts, postcards and other resources to empower people to make personal invitations, the most effective way to invite new people to church.

## MEDIA, VIDEOS AND GRAPHICS

- **Series logo** | the main image for the worship series
- **Background slides** | background images for liturgy, lyrics, or sermon notes in PowerPoint or ProPresenter
- **10 second sermon bumper** | Pre sermon video that gives your congregation an idea of what themes you have covered and where the rest of the series will go.
- **4x6 postcard** | Promotional card to be mailed to everyone in your database; also to be included in each bulletin for congregants to share with friends.
- **5x8 vertical bulletin insert** (color and black and white) | Another way to get graphics and themes in front of your congregation before and during each series.

# HOW TO ADAPT WORSHIP MATERIALS TO MY CONTEXT

You know your congregation better than anyone else.

Throughout this journal you'll read suggestions and insights about how to use the materials for each series. These are many of the best practices gleaned from many different churches. However, it is important for you to adapt all these materials to fit your context.

Here is one approach that might be helpful. Create a few models of a typical worshiper in your congregation (three to five is plenty) by doing the following:

1. Create a ***MissionInsite*** report giving an overview of your surrounding community. You can create one or two models or archetypes of members of your community from this data even if it represents your neighborhood and not your present congregation. **Go to [www.missioninsite.com](http://www.missioninsite.com) and use #p9gcv to register or go to [www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org) to learn more.**
2. Distribute a five minute survey (on paper or by using **[www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)**) to key members of your congregation that asks the following questions

- *What are the most time-consuming roles in my life right now?*
- *When I am worried, what do I usually worry about?*
- *What brings me the most joy?*
- *For me, living my best life looks like...*
- *Age, gender, marital status, children, race and anything else you want us to know.*

3. Using the answers to the survey and MissionInsite reports, piece together three to five archetypes or models that represent the largest sections of your congregation. For example:

*66 year old white man who is married and recently retired. A huge Eagles fan, he lives within 45 minutes of his grandkids and is mostly concerned about his health. He finds the most joy in his grandkids, and he imagines his best life to be highly active at his church, the local soup kitchen, and in his children/grandchildren's lives.*

*30 year old working single mother with two kids. She lives in an apartment, speaks English as a second language and worries about making ends meet. She loves her family and is highly connected to the immigrant community. She wants her children to have a better life.*

4. For feedback, ask a few members of your leadership team to review them to see if they agree that the models are representative.
5. Hereafter, whenever you're planning to use a story or example, use these three to five archetypes and ask yourself, "Does this particular image speak to the interests and culture of the people in my congregation?"

# HOW TO COMMUNICATE WORSHIP SERIES TO THE CONGREGATION

Communicating with the congregation about the importance of the ministry through a variety of media will increase the effectiveness of your series.

**Bulletin** | A well designed insert in the worship bulletin (not more than one) is a useful tool in highlighting upcoming series and events.

**Newsletter** | Upcoming events, meaningful stories of ministries and series descriptions all belong in weekly newsletters that allow for more detailed information than the bulletin.

**Email blasts and E-Newsletters** | Email blast and e-marketing tools will attract a different crowd that will click links for more information.

**Social Media** | Facebook, Instagram and Twitter can reach your worshipers and your community very effectively.

**Announcements Slides** | Worship screens are a great place to advertise leading up to the series to get people excited and engaged.

**Logo** | A brand/image associated with the series will keep people connected and be a visual cue for continuity.

## 3 IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER WHILE DEVELOPING YOUR ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE NEW SERIES.

- 1. Be Consistent** | Brand your work using the same font, colors and logo. Visual consistency helps people remember the theme.
- 2. Think of the Guest** | Skip the insider language. Your guests have never “gathered in the narthex.” Assume this will be someone’s first week and write your announcements through their eyes.
- 3. Speak with One Voice** | Write with one voice even if many people are contributing to your reading material. People notice a clear and consistent message.

# THE WORSHIP SERVICE

## PUTTING TOGETHER A BULLETIN THAT WORKS

The order of service, elements of worship and the flow that is outlined in the bulletin matter. Whether worshiping in a traditional or contemporary style, the bulletin should give the congregation the information they need, but also be accessible and user-friendly for guests.

**To create a great bulletin and order of worship, ask yourself these questions:**

*How does the bulletin introduce everyone to your church's vision and mission?*

*What is essential for all worship participants to know?*

*What information is for members only, and might alienate or distract others?*

*What information do your guests need?*

*Which worship elements connect well with the congregation? Which could be reimaged?*

## BULLETIN BEST PRACTICES

1. Avoid insider language.
2. Throughout the service, balance speaking from the pulpit, unison speaking and singing.
3. Consider the amount of time people are standing. Do not alternate standing and sitting often.
4. Don't put all announcements in the bulletin; pick the two or three most important ones. Then, refer to your website, Facebook page or other communications for the others
5. Plan worship and preach for the congregation you hope to reach, not only the congregation that is currently gathering.

# Sample Order Of Worship For Traditional Services

	<b>WORSHIP ELEMENT</b>	<b>LEADER/SPEAKER</b>
<b>GATHERING</b>	Welcome	Pastor
	Call to worship	Liturgist
	Opening hymn	Pianist/Organist
	Opening prayer	Liturgist
<b>PROCLAMATION</b>	Children's time	Pastor, Sunday school teacher/Volunteer
	Choir anthem (or hymn)	Choir
	Scripture reading	Liturgist
	Sermon	Pastor
<b>RESPONSE &amp; THANKSGIVING</b>	Communion	Pastor
	Giving moment	Pastor/Lay member
	Collect the offering	Hospitality team
	Offertory prayer	Pastor
<b>SENDING FORTH</b>	Closing hymn	Piano/Organist
	Sending forth	Pastor

# Sample Order Of Worship For Contemporary Services

	<b>WORSHIP ELEMENT</b>	<b>LEADER/SPEAKER</b>
<b>GATHERING</b>	Welcome	Pastor
	Worship song	Worship leader/Band
	Worship song	Worship leader/Band
	Opening prayer	Unison or Worship leader
	Centering song	Worship leader/Band
<b>PROCLAMATION</b>	Scripture reading	Reader or Pastor
	Sermon	Pastor
<b>RESPONSE &amp; THANKSGIVING</b>	Communion	Pastor
	Giving moment	Pastor
	Collect the offering	Hospitality team
<b>SENDING FORTH</b>	Closing song	Worship leader/Band
	Sending forth	Pastor

# Sample Order Of Worship For Blended Services

	<b>WORSHIP ELEMENT</b>	<b>LEADER/SPEAKER</b>
<b>GATHERING</b>	Welcome	Pastor
	Worship song/Hymn	Worship leader
	Responsive reading	Worship leader
	Unison prayer	Worship leader
	Song or Hymn	Worship leader
	Song or Hymn	Worship leader
<b>PROCLAMATION</b>	Children's time	Sunday school teacher/ Volunteer
	Scripture reading	Reader
	Sermon	Pastor
<b>RESPONSE &amp; THANKSGIVING</b>	Communion	Pastor
	Giving moment	Pastor
	Collect the offering	Hospitality team
<b>SENDING FORTH</b>	Closing song	Worship leader
	Sending forth	Pastor

# LEADING WORSHIP THROUGH LITURGY

Liturgy draws upon God's word and brings God's message to life. United Methodist worship services use this basic pattern to aid us in bringing God's Word to life.

## **There are four main components:**

1. Gathering
2. Proclamation
3. Response and Thanksgiving
4. Sending Forth

In reviewing the bulletin and liturgy discern what applies to your context and what does not. Take a risk and use a part of the liturgy that you may not normally use and adapt it to your setting. Feel free to edit portions of the liturgy and service so that it reflects both your own and the congregation's theological and cultural perspective.

When inviting liturgists and speakers in worship, be careful. Not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of a group. Some people may need some coaching. Other people might not be right to communicate in front of your whole congregation. Think about how your speakers interact with others, their stage presence, and their speaking voice. A smile from the liturgist or speaker can go a long way in making guests and regular attenders feel comfortable and welcome.

## GATHERING

We gather to worship as a response to God's goodness and work in our lives. God calls us to gather and worship is our response. The gathering portion of the worship service is the church's work. We come to be in community. We lift our voices in word and song.

### **Elements of worship in the gathering might include:**

- Words of welcome from the pastor
- Greeting time
- Call to worship
- Singing, including an opening hymn
- Unison or responsive prayer or reading
- Some congregations take the offering

The gathering is joyful! God has been faithful to us, and we come to give thanks and praise.

# PROCLAMATION

Our historical order of worship is a dialogue between the church and God. The church gathers and raises its voice to give thanks. In proclamation, we wait, listen and meditate on the voice of God through scripture and message.

## **Elements of worship in proclamation might include:**

- Children's time
- Prayer for illumination
- Scripture reading
- Sermon

We believe that proclamation in worship is God's work. As pastors and leaders, we do our work to prepare and then wait in expectation to hear God's voice.

# RESPONSE AND THANKSGIVING

Hearing God's word invokes a response from the worshipers, both immediate and beyond the service. The time of Response and Thanksgiving is an opportunity for the gathered community to immediately respond to God's message.

## **Elements of response and thanksgiving might include:**

- Invitation to discipleship
- Reaffirmation of faith
- Response hymn
- Baptism, confirmation, communion, reception of new members, recognition and commissioning
- Creeds
- Silent reflection
- Prayer - pastoral, congregational, healing
- Passing of the peace
- Offering
- Doxology

# SENDING

Our worship doesn't end at the end of the service! We are sent out to do God's work in the world. The sending makes this clear.

## **Elements of sending may include:**

- Hymn
- Blessing/Benediction
- Invitation to fellowship
- Sending out commission

## GIVING MOMENT

The two minutes before collecting the offering are some of the most important of the whole worship service. Ministry and mission is only possible through the generosity of disciples.

Introducing the offering is a moment each week when we can celebrate ministries of the church, highlighting the difference that generous giving makes for the church and community. It is also a regular moment to explain why we give.

### Why do we give?

- God gave everything to us
- We love God
- We are called to be generous people
- We believe that the church is God's vehicle for community and world transformation
- Together we can do infinitely more than separately

Each week, celebrate one ministry of the church. This may include:

- Local or global mission project
- Vacation Bible School
- Short story of life transformation
- Sharing an encouraging email received
- UMC ministries funded through the connection including the World Service Fund, the Black College Fund, Africa University and others. You can find stories to use on the UMC website [www.umcgiving.org](http://www.umcgiving.org).

For a more detailed outline on how to encourage year round generosity, the United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey offers resources at [www.gnjumc.org/umsf](http://www.gnjumc.org/umsf)

## INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP

Our mission is to make disciples so an invitation to respond to the sermon should be a goal of each service. Your invitation should be clear and actionable and can include coming to the altar for prayer, closing eyes and raising hands, anointing or silent prayer from the pews. The invitation should not be limited to new believers; it is the opportunity for all to commit to growing in faith. Expect people to respond.



# USING GRAPHICS AND MEDIA

The language of today is video and our worship needs to be visually-driven to speak to new audiences and connect with the community around us. Using logos, graphics and videos can make an impact on your congregation and guests to draw them into the message or series that's planned.

## USE THE SERIES LOGO ON:

- Worship slides during the welcome and sermon
- Bulletin covers
- Website
- Facebook and social media
- Church newsletter
- Posters
- Emails

## USE VIDEOS:

- To promote on social media and in worship two to three weeks before the series begins to generate interest and curiosity.
- To introduce the sermon to introduce the series and go deeper in the message. Using the intro video every week of the series won't get old, it will help with the continuity of the overall theme.

## GRAPHICS AND MEDIA BEST PRACTICES:

- Use the same background slide for the whole service. It won't get boring, it will create consistency
- Leave space for spoken words and lyrics to be centered and focused.
- Include up to four lines on one slide for songs. No more.
- Include up to six lines on one slide for prayers and responsive readings. No more.
- Work closely with your media team for preparation and flow.
- Introduce a video only when needed. Many can stand alone.

## BUILD A MEDIA TEAM (OTHERS CAN HELP!)

*Who is knowledgeable around social media?*

*Who operates your church website?*

*Who processes your weekly bulletins?*

*Could this be an opportunity to involve others?*

# PREPARING YOUR WORSHIP SPACE

For people to immerse in worship it is important that they are drawn into the space and not distracted. Preparing your space does not need to be expensive or time intensive. Take a look around and consider how you use your space.

## HOW IS YOUR SANCTUARY DOING?

*Is the entrance bright and welcoming or cluttered?*

*Are the floors, walls and furniture clean?*

## HOW DOES YOUR SANCTUARY TELL THE STORY OF YOUR CURRENT CONGREGATION?

*What is inviting?*

*Are there items in your sanctuary that no longer express who you are?*

*Are your fixtures older than the people you want to attract?*

*What should you update?*

## HOW ARE YOU USING YOUR ENTIRE SPACE?

*What parts of the service can be conducted from the balcony?*

*Where is the best place for the readers to be?*

*How do you use your aisles in worship?*

*Can you relocate your baptismal font?*

## More creative inspiration for the worship space:

- Join the Breakthrough Facebook group to gather and share creative inspiration. Type Breakthrough in the search area and check to join.
- Find someone in your congregation passionate about design to modernize your worship space.
- Use Pinterest to find designs for altars, bulletin boards, take home objects and other worship elements
- Join a PaCE group.
- Evaluate your fixtures. Do they need to be clean or replaced? Do they match the congregation you want to reach?
- Consider your baptismal font. Is it in the right place? Is it beautiful? Is it meaningful even when you are not holding a baptism?



## WHAT DO YOUR GUESTS NOTICE THAT YOU DO NOT?

**Locked Front Doors** | Not everyone knows to use the back entrance. A locked door is a sign you are not welcome.

**Unfriendly Signs** | “Parents don’t let your children touch...” “No drinks in the sanctuary.” “Please be quiet.” These signs focus on what is not wanted instead of what is wanted.

**Clutter** | Balconies and rooms off the narthex that are used as storage send a message that you do not respect your sacred space. If you don’t honor this space, why should your guests?

**Smelly** | Smell is a powerful motivator – to leave! If your church has a moldy basement and the odor drifts up into the sanctuary or you display flowers, such as hyacinths, people, especially those with allergies or health concerns, will not be comfortable.

**Empty Space** | If your worship space appears empty, chances are your guests will feel empty. Remove a few pews or use ropes or space dividers to concentrate the congregation to the front of the sanctuary making a critical mass.

# A NEW SERMON OUTLINE FORMAT

Sermons can be formatted in many ways. The Breakthrough worship series are formatted in the five movements created by Andy Stanley, Senior Pastor of North Point Church and author of *Communicating for a Change* (go check out the book!). This format is simple, yet powerful and provides enough flexibility to adapt to a wide range of contexts. If you haven't tried it, please do.



# Sample Sermon Outline

## WHO

## WHAT

## TRANSITION

### ME

Start with a personal story, often (but not necessarily) funny or slightly self-deprecating to help humanize the speaker and root the sermon in real-life experiences.

*“And I think we all deal with this issue in one way or the other...”*

### WE

Make sure every listener has decided that the sermon actually applies to them, otherwise, they don't need to pay attention. Take the time to articulate the different ways the sermon can apply to the different types of people listening. For example, if you are preaching about fear, talk about the fear of failure, losing a loved one, change, becoming obsolete, parenting, unemployment, etc.

*“As it turns out, scripture has a lot to say about this; let's take a look at our passage...”*

### GOD

Unpack the scripture passage. Offer context, provide helpful historical orientation and clarify what God might be saying to us about this topic.

*“So in light of all this, what does this mean in our own lives?”*

### YOU

Get to the action. What is a specific challenge we can make to our listeners? Is there a way to remember this challenge midweek? How is today's message going to affect lives on Tuesday afternoon?

*“Can you imagine if our church/community/world actually did this?”*

### WE

Take a moment to imagine a world where people actually lived out the challenge from the sermon. Are people's lives better? Is the Kingdom of God lived out in a real way?

*May we hear God's challenge to no longer \_\_\_\_\_, and as a result, may the world know \_\_\_\_\_. Amen.”*

# DON'T PLAN WORSHIP ALONE

## INVITE OTHER VOICES INTO WORSHIP PLANNING

God has gathered gifts and talents in your congregation. Find them and use them. A pastor who must prepare and lead all of worship alone will wear out quickly. The pastor's role is:

*...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. - Ephesians 4:12-13, NRSV*

Many churches have a worship committee. If you don't, you can start by finding one or two people to share ideas. Ask what they think about an upcoming sermon theme. The pianist, organist, choir director or worship leader can be a great voice for feedback and creative ideas about music in the worship service. Some of the most meaningful worship design work isn't done by having a huge team; it is the result of conversations.



# EVOLVE YOUR WORSHIP COMMITTEE INTO A WORSHIP DESIGN TEAM

There is one difference between a worship committee and a worship design team: creativity.

A worship committee makes sure the elements are ready for communion, the bulletins are printed and the candles are ordered for the Christmas Eve candlelight service.

A worship design team partners with the pastor as creative thinkers to bring the worship theme to life. A worship design team doesn't have to be a big team with excessive meeting time. A pastor may have lunch after worship with two or three people to share ideas about what is coming up next. The key is to get creative conversation partners.

**Here are some ideas for people to involve if you're putting together a worship design team:**

**Musician** | A pianist/organist, music director, contemporary worship leader or choir director to help think about what songs connect with the series theme.

**Writer** | A teacher, a young person or someone else who is gifted as a creative thinker and storyteller to write and edit materials – including your sermon.

**Interior Designer** | A creative person in the congregation can make sure the theme is reflected in the worship space on the altar and using other decorations or props.

**Media Team Lead** | Technical people bring the theme to life on the screens in the worship space with graphics, lyrics, video and more.

**Stage Manager** | Every group of creative thinkers needs a person who is able to think logically and create structure. The stage manager helps organize the group so that brainstorming leads to action.

**Youth And Young People** | Young people give valuable insight about culture and what is going on in the community. Young people are also wildly creative.

## GETTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE ROOM

This worship design team is crucial in a pastor's ability to speak to the perceived needs of the congregation. They serve as sounding boards, brainstorming partners and an action team. Be sure to keep a few things in mind as you choose them:

- Choose as opposed to accept volunteers. Just because somebody wants to help doesn't mean they are a good fit. You are the primary discerner of where your congregants' gifts are best utilized.
- Pick people who challenge you. Differences of perspective and opinion can really open your eyes to issues you would've otherwise missed.
- Pick people with positive energy. While we hope for a diversity of thought, we don't want people who are critical without ever offering ideas or seeing possibilities. Working with these folks should be fun!
- Make sure key demographics of your congregation are represented. In particular, young families will have difficulty making the time, but it is important their voice is heard.
- Find people who AREN'T on 25 other committees. Their voice is already being heard.

## FEELERS, THINKERS AND DO-ERS

Having multiple voices in worship planning allows for a well-balanced worship experience. Many of our worshipers will fall into three categories:

**Feelers** connect with worship on the emotional level. They may seem more “touchy-feely.” Many feelers connect deeply with the music in worship; but may also be impacted by a moving story or testimony. For feelers to be affirmed and engaged with worship, they stay in tune with the emotional energy of the service.

**Thinkers** connect with worship on the intellectual level. They are well-attuned to the sermon and connect to a well-crafted theme or phrase which develops throughout the worship experience. Most thinkers need a well-researched, thoughtful sermon. Many pastors are thinkers and a seminary education skews strongly towards preparing pastors to be thinkers.

**Do-ers** connect with worship when they can participate by doing more than speaking and singing. Communion can be a highlight for do-ers, who are invited to move, feel and taste the elements. Do-ers also connect with creative responses to the sermon such as coming to the altar to place a stone or taking an object home to place on their bathroom mirror.

You don't need to cover these three every week. You do want to make sure that each month you have at least one meaningful opportunity to connect with each distinct group. To do this, try to connect and regularly be in conversation with a feeler, thinker, and do-er in your congregation. For pastors, it is important to connect with people who relate to worship in a way that is different from themselves.



# A CREATIVE CALENDAR

When it comes to creative worship planning, time for preparation is essential. All of us have had a brilliant idea when it was just a little too late to make it happen. Having a creative calendar allows the time necessary for brainstorming, preparation and implementation on Sunday morning.

## Sample Creative Calendar

### TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE SERIES BEGINS

1. Open and browse through all elements of the worship series. What possibilities jump out to you? What might you need to rework for your church?
2. Send the series description to your creative thinking partners, or connect with a worship design team to imagine the possibilities.
3. Start planning a mission project in your community, if you are going to do one.

### ONE MONTH BEFORE THE SERIES BEGINS

1. Take some time to read through the sermon background material. No need to take a lot of notes or start writing yet; just allow the ideas to sink into your spirit. You'll be surprised how many sermon illustrations and ideas arise if you've simply thought about what messages will be coming up next.
2. Put the series description and series overview into your newsletter to allow your congregation to see what is coming up next in worship.
3. Check in on the progress of the worship design team if they are working on anything special (drama, space design, altar design, etc).
4. Announce the mission project you'll be doing related to the series.

### TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE SERIES BEGINS

1. Notice how the series falls on the calendar. Which week of the series will be Communion Sunday? What other events do you have taking place during the series?
2. Begin playing the promo video on Facebook and in your church service.

### TWO WEEKS BEFORE EACH SERMON

1. Begin formal sermon preparation.
2. Have the first draft of your sermon outline or manual script one week before you plan to preach to allow time to refine and to ease tension and stress.

### THE WEEK OF THE SERMON

1. Ensure music and other creative elements are prepared early in the week (Monday or Tuesday!).
2. Test all videos and graphic elements on the screens in the worship space.
3. Review your sermon using the "Steps to Finish a Sermon" checklist on page 24.
4. Practice telling friends, colleagues or congregation members the big idea of the sermon, or relating parts of the sermon. Get their feedback as you refine.
5. Make sure to leave room for prayer and the movement of the Holy Spirit. God speaks through planning and spontaneity.

# STEPS TO FINISH A SERMON

Is your sermon ready? Not sure? Here's a checklist:

- My scripture is chosen (and I have read it at least 10 times).
- I can articulate the core message of my sermon in the following format:**  
“I think that a lot of us deal with \_\_\_\_\_. Scripture teaches us to \_\_\_\_\_.  
So I challenge everyone to \_\_\_\_\_.”
- I have shared the above core message with a real, live person and they understood what I was talking about.
- I am not married to the above person.
- In 60 seconds or less, I can recite my sermon's five movements:**
  - **Me** | a personal story.
  - **We** | establish a mostly common issue that we all deal with (this is connected to your personal story).
  - **God** | turn to the wisdom of your scripture passage (and Wesleyan theology) to connect the above issue to a solution, comfort or personal challenge.
  - **You** | clarify exactly what a listener should do in light of this wisdom.
  - **We** | paint a picture of what the world/community/church would look like if we all actually did the above thing.
- I have shared the above five movements with a real, live person and they understood what I was talking about.
- I am not married to the above person.
- I have a sermon title.

# HOSPITALITY TEAMS

Hospitality is essential – every part of our worship should welcome all people into our worship.

Hospitality is not a committee but a way of being. Each person should see themselves as the embodiment of Christ for that time and space.

However, there are specific hospitality roles that are required. These are your ushers and greeters as well as other roles such as worship hosts, parking lot attendants and guest center hosts.

## WHO ARE THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO BE THE FACE OF HOSPITALITY IN YOUR CHURCH?

Have you ever walked into an event and someone greeted you warmly, shared her or his name and asked with real interest your name? Besides just being friendly, this person took time to answer your questions and make you comfortable. It is likely that this kind of welcome added to your overall experience of the event. Each person who visits your church should receive this kind of welcome.

Before a guest meets the preacher, hears the message or experiences the music, they encounter the hospitality team. For a newcomer, your presence makes the crowded space friendlier. For the regular congregation, you begin their worship experience in a grace-filled way.

## GREETERS AND USHERS. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

### GREETERS

Greeters welcome guests and regulars to the church with a smile, warm handshake and pleasant greeting. Their main responsibility is to be near the door, inside or out and make everyone feel welcome to the church. All regular worshipers can be greeters. They notice new people and introduce themselves. They assist guests who need to find the nursery or the restrooms. They remember names and faces and share warmth.

### USHERS

Ushers perform one of the most important functions of the church service, they enrich the worship service by their attention to making sure each worshiper has the materials they need to enjoy the service. Ushers help guests meet regular attenders, help everyone find comfortable seating, arrange seating so that there are not large gaps between congregants and make the worship space feel full and intimate. Ushers remain in the back of the church to seat people who enter after the service starts, lead them to seats so as not to disturb the service and offer assistance as needed. In addition to serving the congregation, ushers serve the pastor by counting and recording everyone in the sanctuary: congregation, children, choir, praise team, organist, babies, worship leader, pastor, people in the balcony and ushers.

### HOSTS AND ATTENDANTS

When you are ready to go beyond greeters and ushers, think about assigning a worship host. Hosts take a few more minutes to get to know guests and help them feel welcomed and comfortable. A short conversation that includes introductions and brief sharing is all that is needed. Hosts are important during key times: back to school, Advent and Easter.

Hospitality is also important beyond the sanctuary. Parking lot attendants and door openers help churches go over and above expectations to assure that everyone is welcomed into your space.



## TREAT YOUR VISITORS LIKE GUESTS

A visitor comes once. A guest is someone you want to return again and again. What does it look like if you stopped talking about visitors and started welcoming guests? Changing your language changes your attitude.

## QUESTIONS TO LIFT YOUR HOSPITALITY OVER AND ABOVE

*When guests arrive is there good signage? Do they know where to park? When there is limited parking do you leave spaces available for guests?*

*Can a guest navigate safely around the church? What is the condition of the walks, steps etc.?*

*How are you creating a safe and welcoming atmosphere for children? What do you offer for children during worship? Is it well communicated for new families?*

*Is the phone message up to date? Are service times and emergency contact information shared?*

*Does your website make it easy to find information about the worship service? About your staff? About other ministries?*

*Is your church information updated on "Find a Church" on [umc.org](http://umc.org)? What information is there about your local church? An email address? Up to date phone number? The current pastor's info? Service times? Take a moment to review this information and update it now!*

*Do you have a regular social media presence? What does it say about you? Do you post your service information each week? Share your sermon summary? Livestream your sermon?*

# GOING DEEPER WITH EVANGELISM, SMALL GROUPS AND MISSION



# HOW TO INVITE PEOPLE TO CHURCH AND DEVELOP AN EVANGELISM PROGRAM

1. Identify your best “entry point” for a new person or family. (hint: it’s often NOT Sunday morning worship)

*What is your church’s most welcoming, least intimidating venue for a completely new person? This could be one of your small groups, a monthly supper club, a local service project, youth Sunday, OR a typical Sunday morning.*

Once identified, put all of your invitation energies into that “entry point” (a supper club mailer, an invite card for congregants to give to a friend, a simple reminder on Sunday mornings...)

2. Challenge your congregation to take part in “the three not’s”. Anytime someone in your congregation hears somebody say the following, immediately invite that person to their church (preferably to your church’s best “entry point”).

*“not ready for this” (as in “My husband and I were really not ready for this thing that happened...”)*

*“not doing well” (as in “I’m not doing well, my wife just lost her job...”)*

*“not from here” (as in “We’re not from here, we just moved in a few weeks ago...”)*

3. Provide a clear pathway to engagement. After someone comes the first time, what are their next steps? How do they connect into the life of your church? Do you have a plan for them? To go deeper, watch the Pathways to Discipleship video on the new disciples video at [www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org).
4. Answer the question: *What are the rules?* Every person in your congregation (particularly a new person) is quietly wondering what the “rules” are. What does it take to be considered a part of this community? The answer to that question should be clear, succinct and repeated often. An example might be:

To be a committed part of this community, our expectation is worship PLUS 1. We expect you to be at worship whenever you’re in town AND to take part in at least one other ministry of our church: small group, mission day, children’s ministry, etc.

# HOW TO USE SMALL GROUPS QUESTIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

For people to engage with your social media you must post regularly. Although these posts should include invitations to your weekly services and events, the posts must go beyond advertisements. People use social media to talk about and share information. What do you want your community to be talking about? How is your church's voice being heard?

## **A few do's and don'ts:**

- Don't let just anyone open social media accounts for the church. Too many churches have a social media page that someone set up once for an event and was never used again. These pages are often found when someone googles your church, making it seem that the church is inactive.
- Do make sure all login information is shared with the pastor and/or administrator.
- Do use apps that let you schedule posts such as Buffer to maximize your exposure and minimize your time investment.
- Don't "set it and forget it." Current events such as national catastrophes or concerns for your congregation such as a recent death mean you have to stay active on the page.
- Do make sure there is someone designated to monitor your sites, including reading and replying to comments.
- Don't only post about upcoming or previous events. Tying your activities to scripture and how your congregation is living out their mission or including personal statements from your congregations can greatly boost engagement.
- Do share photos. Remember to tag the people in your photos so that your posts show up in their friends feed.
- Don't post photos without permission; especially photos of minors.

## **Next level social media:**

- Pay attention to when your audience is online. Posting at the right time make a difference in engagement.
- Be cautious about when you share other's post that they fully reflect the mission of your church. What might be fine for a personal page might be polarizing on the church's page.
- Look at the social media pages from highly vital churches (in and outside of the denomination). What can you learn from them?
- Think about how you can engage people in your sermon through social media.
- Use social media to further small group conversation throughout the week

# PLAN A COMMUNITY MISSION OPPORTUNITY THAT TIES TO WORSHIP SERIES

The congregation can "try on" the worship message by putting it into practice with a mission project. Highlight one single mission project during a worship series to allow for maximum impact.

How do you choose a mission project? First ask, what is the "big idea" of the worship series? Then, how does the "big idea" connect to a mission opportunity?

For instance, the big ideas of a worship series about the Miracles Everywhere Campaign focuses on: Next Generation Ministries, Hope Centers, hurricane relief and new ministries in Tanzania. The big idea would draw the congregation to engage in a hands-on mission that highlights these initiatives:

- Helping Pinelands Center at Mt. Misery with camp preparations like painting a cabin or clearing a new trail.
- Serving as volunteer drivers to transport kids to IGNITE.
- Sending homework helpers to CAMP YDP, a GNJ Hope Center.
- Collecting back to school supplies for CUMAC, a GNJ Hope Center.
- Making UMCOR flood buckets or health kits for use in future natural disasters
- Sponsoring a pastor’s salary in Tanzania to build new ministries.

Here’s another idea. For a worship series on fruits of the spirit, you could focus mission on holding a worship service in a nursing home to spread joy, have the Sunday school paint rocks with messages of kindness and hide them in people’s yards, go caroling even if it is not Christmas.

Does your mission project need to be new? Not necessarily, but maybe. The worship series has the potential to breathe new life into an effective long established ministry, but it may also be the unique opportunity to launch a new mission engagement.

## POSSIBLE MISSION PARTNERS

Check out these organizations who are advanced specials and affiliated groups. They often have long and short-term volunteer opportunities.

### GNJ Advanced Specials and affiliated organizations:

CAMP YDP, *Paterson*  
Christian Outreach Project, *Rahway*  
CUMAC, *Paterson*  
Pathways to Prosperity, Norwescap, *Philipsburg*  
The Neighborhood Center, *Camden*  
Camden Urban Ministry Initiative, *Camden*  
Amistad, *Freehold*  
First Friends of New Jersey and New York, *Kearny*  
Respond Inc., *Camden*

### Another option is to contact a local group:

Boys and Girls Clubs  
Regional Habitat for Humanity in your county  
Family Promise  
Local social service agency  
Local senior citizen home  
Community newcomer’s group  
Animal shelter

# FOLLOW UP

## HOW TO FOLLOW-UP WITH GUESTS IN WORSHIP

Nothing replaces one on one conversation. In order to start a relationship with a new guest, pastors and the hospitality team need to gather contact information. Follow up with guests with a connections card. Connection cards can be handed out by ushers, they can be put in the bulletin or they can live in the pews. What's important is that you ask guests to complete the connection card and return it in the offering plate or hand to an usher.

### CONNECTION CARDS ARE THE FIRST STEP – REACHING OUT IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL

Provide a time and place for guests to connect with staff and other members of the congregation every Sunday after worship. This invitation can be given at the sending forth and written in the bulletin.

Reach out to all first-time guests within 48 hours. Make it a priority. Use the information on the connection card to schedule a home visit, make a phone call or send an email. Some people find a visit intrusive and others find an email impersonal. You will need to determine the best course based on your context.

After the initial contact, follow up with written communication where you can share church information. Personalize it and handwrite a note.

Have your childrens' leader connect with the parents of each new child in Sunday School (through a connection card!) to get contact information and send a postcard or note to each child.

Offer next step opportunities when a guest has attended more than two times. Personally invite him or her to an upcoming gathering or lunch with the pastor and a few church members.

Make sure new worshipers do not fall through the cracks once they start attending regularly. Get small group leaders and other ministry leaders to reach out to them to see where they might best plug-in.

## ASSESS WHAT'S WORKING AND WHAT'S NOT

To avoid getting stale, worship evaluation must happen on an ongoing basis. Too often these conversations are based on personal preference. *"I don't like the musical selections."* *"I'm not being fed by the messages."* Assessments should be based on the purpose of worship. Here are three healthy questions for you and your worship leadership to discuss regularly.

1. What are we great at? What needs to improve?
2. Why do we do \_\_\_\_\_? (Fill in the blank with any element of worship)
3. What feedback are we getting from guests?

Do more of what's working and stop doing what's not. Don't be afraid to share your findings with other churches.

# TRACKING STATISTICS IN VITALSIGNS DASHBOARD

Worship attendance isn't the only important indication of church health. Numbers and trends, however, can signal growth areas or blind spots.

**Here's an example:** if your church attendance has plateaued, but your giving is increasing, the odds are that your congregation has embraced the mission of the church and is growing spiritually.

**Another example:** if the community around you is rapidly growing, but your church shows sharp decrease in average worship attendance, there is reason for concern.

Looking at your worship attendance, or small group attendance, or giving might not be helpful each individual week. But by inserting the numbers into the Vital Signs Dashboard, you are able to see trends and use this data to continue engaging your communities.

Using VitalSigns can help you measure the effectiveness of your ministry and even the Breakthrough worship series. The VitalSigns Dashboard is not the official statistical reports, so pastors and churches won't be judged upon them. However, they provide important statistics for how your church is growing, how it compares to other churches throughout GNJ and how we are doing collectively. We also hope to glean insight into the effectiveness of these worship series. Will providing introductions to the offering increase giving in our churches? Will we see changes in attendance during or after worship series? Will having small group curriculum related to the sermon help our number of participants in small groups?

Having this information allows us to learn from each other and fine tune our work to provide you better resources. It's not hard and it is, well.... vital to our ministry together.

## HOW TO TRACK STATISTICS ON THE VITALSIGNS DASHBOARD

A simple system for counting and reporting statistics can make a big difference. Print out enough copies of the GNJ Worship Attendance Sheet for the next year. Have your head usher fill it out and leave it for your secretary, office manager or an office volunteer. Have the same person insert the data on the same day each week.

**Worship Attendance** | Have your ushers count your worship attendance 15 minutes after the service begins, using the GNJ Worship Attendance Sheet on the next page.

**Professions of Faith** | Indicate professions of faith, baptism or the reception of new members on the Worship Attendance Sheet and insert them into the Vital Signs Dashboard.

**Small Groups** | Enter the number of small groups which meets each week.

**Small Group Participation** | Ask small group leaders to take attendance and send the number of participants each week to the church office so that the secretary or pastor can tally and enter the number of participants.

**Offering Received** | Ensure offering counters submit the weekly totals to the secretary or pastor to insert this into the VitalSigns Dashboard each week.

# GNJ Worship Attendance Sheet

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Church Name \_\_\_\_\_

Service Name/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

# of adults in worship	
# of children in worship	
# of children in Sunday School <i>(if not counted in worship)</i>	
# of worship participants <i>(pastor, readers, musicians, etc)</i>	
<b>TOTAL IN WORSHIP:</b> <i>(add top 4 boxes)</i>	
# of Baptisms:	
# of Professions of Faith:	

## CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Join the Breakthrough Facebook group to connect with other pastors trying the same things you are. Share ideas, ask questions and get advice. GNJ PaCE groups are another way to connect about worship series and resources for success. Join or start a PaCE group specifically geared for worship design and sermon series.

## ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED

GNJ has a communications team that can add to or modify the resources that are available for the worship series. If you find you are looking for a resource that is not online, send an email and see if they can help. [communications@gnjumc.org](mailto:communications@gnjumc.org).

## GET YOUR BREAKTHROUGH

You are creative, resourceful and whole. Our mission is to equip you to spiritually lead your community by giving your tools, saving you time and helping you find the margin you need to make disciples of Christ for the confirmation of the world.

Keep this guide near your desk. Use it to transform the world.



Mission And Resource Center  
205 Jumping Brook Rd. | Neptune, NJ 07753

[www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org) | 732.359.1000



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