



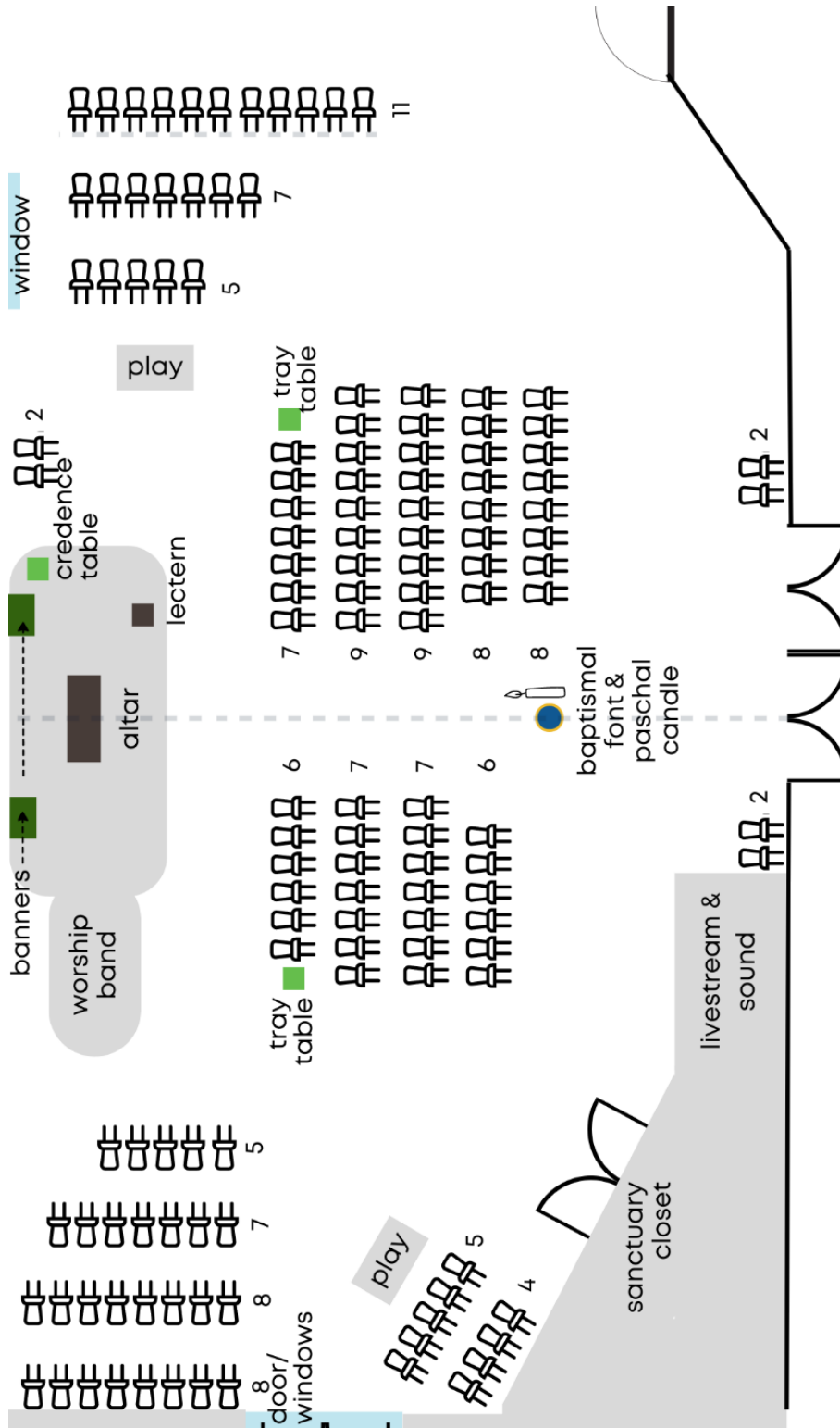
# **Guide to Worship Leadership: Readers/Communion Servers**

*Updated September 2024*



# Seating Chart

View from back:



# Introduction

The primary job of worship leaders is to aid in the proclamation of the Gospel and to help the people offer their praise and worship to God.

- Worship leaders are like Mary, announcing that the Lord has come into the world and bearing God's presence in (and beyond!) the act of worship.
- Worship leaders announce the Good News of Jesus Christ with a warm welcome
- Worship leaders help people to hear the Good News through the words of Scripture
- Worship leaders prepare our worship space and help create the conditions that are most conducive to hearing the Word and offering praise
- Worship leaders announce the presence of Jesus and give Jesus to our partners in Word, Bread, and Cup

Worship leadership is a big deal. It is not just fulfilling a task. Worship leadership is essential to carrying out our shared mission to proclaim Christ and to gather as God's people in worship.

In clarifying how we carry out certain leadership roles, we are setting up the conditions for people to receive the radical welcome and generous grace of the Gospel. How we greet, how we speak God's Word, how we share the sacrament ... these are all part of how we live and embody God's promises on Sunday morning at New Joy Lutheran Church.

# Readers

Readers proclaim the Word of God as found in the words of Scripture. These are inspired Words of wisdom, promise and power handed down to us from our ancestors in the faith to nurture us in Christian faith today.

When we read Scripture publicly, our call is to read in a way that allows listeners to receive the text's wisdom, promise, and power. Most of scripture has movement, drama, and life to it – we should read the text in accordance to its inspired contours.

As you review the text in advance, seek to understand its message, teaching, and wisdom. Your understanding of the basic premise of the reading will guide you to read it in a way that helps others to understand.

- Is this text a prophetic warning to a sinful people?
- Is this a word of promise to a weary people?
- Does the text include surprise or sorrow, cheer or concern?
- What lines deserve a slight inflection, varied tone, or emphasis?
- Is there room for a pause or varied pacing in reading the text?
- Is the text poetry, story, instruction, or rehtoric?
- Some Scripture can be dense (particularly some of St Paul's letters). How can your reading help the listener hear the argument Paul is making?

All of these, and more, will inform how you give voice to the Scripture. Consider how your own voice and posture will give life to these life-giving texts. And while this is not a dramatic voice-acting gig, a good reading of scripture should captivate hearer's faith.

The microphone should not need adjusting. It is a sensitive mic, and will pick up your voice as long as it points in the direction of your mouth.

Consult online pronunciation guides or to speak with Pastor Chris with questions you have about pronunciation. *Note: catching Pastor Chris at 9:29am to review the pronunciation of a word might be difficult. Track him down earlier in the morning or prior to Sunday.*

If assigned for the season, the Reader prays the Scripture Prayer prior to reading the text.

At the start of each reading, the reader announces: “A reading from Deuteronomy” or “A reading from Second Timothy.” There is no need to announce the chapter and verse numbers. The precise citation is listed in the bulletin for any who want or need to know.

Following the reading, offer a slight pause and then announce the concluding words: “The Word of the Lord,” or “Holy wisdom, holy word,” or whatever phrase is used in that season. The congregation responds, “Thanks be to God.”

Announce the psalm in this way: “We will read Psalm 82 responsively.” If there are particular instructions about the psalm – if a refrain verse is used, for example – those instructions will be included in the print out on the lectern.

Readers, having proclaimed the written Word of God, also proclaim the sacramental Word of God by serving holy communion.

# Communion Servers

Communion Servers are “ministers of the cup” for Holy Communion, sharing the gifts of our Lord’s Supper with all who desire to receive it.

The Lutheran Church teaches that our Lord is present in the bread and drink of this holy meal. The gifts of bread and cup are to be handled with reverence but not with rigidity or overwrought formality. This is a meal, after all. We share the food and drink carefully yet warmly and with joy.

## **The movement**

After Pastor Chris offers the instructions for receiving communion and announces, “These are the gifts of God for you, the people of God, and for that we say, “Thanks be to God,” the Communion Server comes forward to the credence table and takes a tray of cups.

The Communion Server serves alongside the Assisting Minister (who will have a plate of communion wafers or bread).

- We try to alternate sides that the Pastor/Acolyte and Assisting Minister/Communion Server serve. Pastor will usually indicate who stands on which side.
- Pastor and Acolyte serve communion to the band before serving the congregation.
- Either the Pastor/Acolyte or the Assisting Minister/Communion Server team should be prepared to walk and serve communion to anyone who desires to receive but is unable to walk forward.
- All servers – Pastor, Acolyte, Reader/Communion Server and Assisting Minister receive communion behind the altar after everyone else has been served.

## **Distribute Holy Communion to the congregation**

Pastor and the Assisting Minister will distribute the bread at the front of the center aisle, saying the words of promise, "The Body of Christ, given for you," as the bread is placed in the person's hand. The cup ministers – the Acolyte (standing with Pastor) and Communion Server (standing with Assisting Minister) will stand a few feet to the outside of the bread minister, saying these words of promise, "The blood of Christ, shed for you." Speak slow enough, and loud enough, that you can be understood. Look the person in the eyes and smile.

Martin Luther wrote that the most important words in the sacrament are, "for you." It's not good enough that we hold in our hands the body and blood of Christ. But instead, we hold and share these gifts which are given for a purpose – "for you" and for the world. Make your announcement that "the Body of Christ is given for you" and "the Blood of Christ is shed for you" clear, so that the person receiving the sacrament can clearly hear this Good News.

You may use the person's name, if you choose to do so, but by no means should you feel pressure to do so. Accidentally using a wrong name or stumbling over their name can become an unnecessary distraction to receiving the gift of holy communion.

If for some reason we do not have an Assisting Minister that day, we will call upon another Communion Server who will then distribute the bread alongside the Pastor. Communion Servers should understand how to distribute the bread, too, in case they are called upon to do so.

If the bread falls to the floor, please pick up the bread and hand it to Pastor or keep it to give to Pastor after distribution. Pastor will consume the bread, or leave it to be distributed in the memorial garden following the service. Anyone distributing the bread should be prepared to offer a

blessing to anyone - child or adult - who does not receive the sacrament. Sample blessings are listed below.

### **Blessings for those not receiving communion**

Blessings need not involve touch or a gesture, but they may. Appropriate touch would include making the sign of the cross on the person's forehead, or placing a hand on someone's shoulder as a gesture of blessing. If someone appears uncomfortable receiving a touch, a spoken blessing offered without any touch is perfectly legitimate.

Spoken blessings are best done with a generous smile, unless the tone of the service (Holy Thursday, perhaps) calls for a more sober expression. If the Pastor, Assisting Minister, or Communion Server is able, it is perfectly appropriate – but by no means expected – to lower oneself to a child's level to offer a blessing. Please know that unbaptized adults or adults not receiving communion for any reason may also ask for a blessing.

Language for the blessing can vary, and may include the following:

- “Remember that Jesus loves you, this day and always.”
- “The blessings of God [Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit], be with you now and forever.”
- “You are God's child, precious in God's sight.”

No matter the words used, the most important part about such a blessing is that it simply and concisely declares the promise of God's love and grace for the person receiving the blessing.

### **Gluten Free**

For any who ask for Gluten Free elements, direct them to Pastor.