

## **1. NBC Worship is *Active and Participatory***

Liturgy stems from the Greek word meaning “the work of the people”. The “act” of worship requires active participation of the entire congregation through corporate forms of prayer, song, response and action. This idea is best defined by Soren Keilgegard’s illustration that worship is something you do - as he describes that even though a church sanctuary looks like a theater....it is greatly different because, in worship, the prompters are on the stage, the actors are in the pews and the audience is God.

## **2. NBC Worship is *Biblical***

Isaiah 6 records Isaiah’s vision of being in the presence of God. In this biblical account of worship, you will find the same elements of praise, confession, assurance, proclamation and response that we use every Sunday morning. Also, of course NM worship is centered around the reading of the word through a format called the Lectionary....which was developed by the second Vatican Council (1962-1965) to give congregants a chance to hear/read as much of the scripture as possible. The reading of these scriptures, as our pastors remind us also links us to Christians around the world.

## **3. NBC Worship is *structured by the Church Year....***

....with the major seasons the Preparatory season of Advent and the follow up season of Christmas....and the Preparatory season of Lent and the follow up season of Easter. The time between these seasons is called “ordinary time” - the bulk of these extend from the close of Easter season to the end of the liturgical year, with several other of these Sundays occurring between the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of Lent.

## **4. “*Priesthood of the Believer*” is at the heart of our worship**

We are all called to minister....Carlyle Marney said “I do not priest me, I priest you and vice versa....priest at my elbow is of the essence...we are priests to each other”.....our good friend, the late

Cavett Taff addressed how we should use our gifts in “priesting” one another when he said, “we all have our unique fingerprint and are bathed in a unique spectrum of the rainbow...all for a purpose and all for God.”....and so...our worship is lay planned (the Worship committee oversees both structure and content) and partially lay led (with the liturgists and lay readers contributing every Sunday).

#### **5. NBC worship *connects us with Christians throughout the ages***

Through our liturgical service we use ancient components of worship....even those that Jesus used when he went to worship in the Synagogue.....Psalms, hymns, prayers, banners, etc.....these forms remind us that we do not worship God in a historical vacuum, but are connected to God’s people throughout time.

#### **6. NBC worship is *Holistic***

Our service invites our congregation to worship God with body, mind and spirit. With bodies....we stand, bow our heads, pass the plate, sing the songs...with mind....our intellects are engaged by words in a sermon or a homily.....and the combination of what we see, hear, feel and taste (communion) combine to allow our spirits to join those of our fellow believers in worship. Our service is planned so that all members who participate are fully engaged in a sensual experience that allows us to praise, reflect, learn and commit during the worship hour. Every element of our service carries meaning.

#### **7. NBC worship is *Incarnational***

We believe that the structure of the service itself mediates God’s presence and message to us in powerful ways. We wait expectantly on God who graciously comes to us in our ordinary earthy ways (much like he came as an infant in a barn). While we believe that God is ever present with us, this worship service is a time we set aside to be open to his touch, his voice, his message and his presence.

## 8. NBC worship service is *Inclusive*

Folks from varied backgrounds - different denominations, those that have chosen to be unchurched, those who have had difficult experiences with the organized church, etc. usually feel quite comfortable in our service. Sometime those who are accustomed to a more evangelical, informal service have to get used to the liturgical nature of the service but many of us who come from that background have found in it a structure and meaning that we hungered for. We truly open our arms to any and all who choose to worship with us.

9. At NBC the **ordinances are observed regularly with reverence**.....on the first Sunday of every month and on special “holy days” (ex: Maundy Thursday) we invite the congregation to “taste” and remember as scripture commands.....both baptism and communion (as well as baby dedication, etc.) always involves an active response read by the congregation

Many liturgical services include communion in every service.....NBC; however, in an effort to combine some Baptist tradition (emersion Baptism, offering, etc.) has chosen to observe it once a month.

Lets “walk through” our current worship service.....when you think about your written order of service that you receive as you enter the sanctuary, you will be well aware that the back part of it includes announcements that the congregation needs to know....events upcoming, opportunities for ministry, etc. We choose not to make these announcements from the pulpit because we view our sanctuary as a sacred space and our worship hour as sacred time ....it is designed to only include the “dialogue of worship” so we don’t want any distractions from centering on our task of communion with God.

On the cover of the order of worship you’ll find a thought ..this, like all of the written liturgy is found/written by a lay liturgists...many times these folks are members of the Worship Committee....the cover quote is there to help our congregants begin their journey that they will take in

the next hour....sometimes it has to do with the sermon topic... sometimes one of the scriptures that will be read and sometimes it's simply about the act of worship so that we are reminded why we're there.

During our time of *Preparation and Praise* at the beginning of the worship service, we offer "meditation of Preparation" ...we provide a thought that will, hopefully help members settle and center to ready themselves to speak to God and to hear Him in our sacred place. The prelude continues this preparation time.

With the "Call to Worship" we issue an invitation to join in the "act of worship" to all who hear....

The Litany of Praise is always lay led and responsive so that everyone can participate in offering praise and thanksgiving.....continued praise is offered in the singing of the Gloria Patri....this includes praise to Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Then, the invocation is to invoke God's presence and blessing on this appointed hour of worship.

This section to "prepare and praise" is concluded with a pastor welcoming members and visitors to this sacred hour.....and then reading the Old Testament and Epistle reading from the lectionary

We then move into a period of *Confession and Assurance*

Confession is a spiritual discipline that we incorporate that encourages a humble heart before God and others as both corporately and individually the gathered people of God confess their shortcomings and sin before God (In college I remember wondering why only Catholics needed to confess!)

We participate in corporate confession (with written liturgy) so that we will be reminded that we all - each and every one of us.... "fall short" and that we need a time to examine our lives and be honest with ourselves

and honest before God about who we are..... Doing this corporately helps us support each other and realize that we're all in this boat together.....running the race, falling and getting back up.....

At NBC we realize that confession is not some work that we lay before the Father's throne.....rather, it is the simple acknowledgement that God's Word is true and right and that when we measure ourselves against its demands, we come up short.

The Silent confession gives us an opportunity to reflect on our personal journey and lift up our shortcomings and our sins of omission and commission -then, in the quiet to listen to God's response

What follows is a reminder of God's infinite mercy.....we call it the Assurance of Pardon....it might be called absolution or affirmation...but it is always a reminder...that "if we confess our sins - God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" In other words, we choose to give sin and guilt their proper due....and then to silence them.

The morning (pastoral prayer) and the corporate Lord's Prayer completes this "vertical" time of our communion with God

**Intercession and Dedication** (once called Affirmation and Thanksgiving at NBC) then offers a time to acknowledge God's generosity and the gifts we've been given as well as offering us an opportunity to follow God's example and command to "give cheerfully"....the passing of the plate while done for practical purposes is also symbolic of our attempt to "give something back" to the Generous God we worship. The doxology continues to remind us that "all blessings flow from God"

### **Proclamation and the Word**

This is for us to be reminded of the truth of God's word ....we hear it through gospel reading, anthem and sermon....

### **Commitment/time of response**

Many Baptist churches have an “invitation hymn” that is sung at the end of the service. At Northminster we choose to offer a “time of response” with quiet music played so that everyone can reflect on the thoughts, sights and sounds of the service and have an opportunity to reflect and respond as each member feels the need - whether it be a prayer response, a thought/silent inward commitment/response or a response to share corporately (moving a letter or making a faith statement).

Then, of course the service ends with “punctuation” so to speak...with the closing hymn and a blessing through the benediction.

The postlude is usually celebratory because we have been blessed to share and participate in such a meaningful hour.

At NBC we have modified the order of worship on a few occasions; for Lent one year we moved the Confession to the beginning of the service with the Litany addressing our need for redemption. And, we have added a few things over the years - after scripture reading now, the congregation responds with “thanks be to God” and our pastor begins his sermon with the “passing of the Peace”....to which the congregation responds.

NBC is a very special place....the thoughtful, reverent worship hour in a beautiful, symbolic sanctuary offers all who come an opportunity to “worship the Lord in a spirit of holiness”.

