

#METOORECKONING WORKSHOP

"WORSHIP / SERMON / LITURGY PLANNING"



A few reminders and framework for planning worship, sermons, liturgies, Bible studies or public rituals.

1. Prioritize spiritual self-care

When you want to address the difficult and challenging material around #MeToo and #ChurchToo, start by being sure you were in a good place to do that.

2. Make time for preparation

Allow yourself extra time if possible to take the steps and preparation that will help you lead people in worship or Bible study experiences out of a sense of calm and purpose and clarity.

3. Use trauma sensitivity with language, story, and care-giving

Teaching and leading are forms of caring for the community or organization or audience who is participating with you. It's easy to focus on getting the information right, yet it's equally important to focus on getting the process/formation and care right as well.

4. Share stories with a little caution and a lot of care

If you're sharing your own stories, please be sure that you feel they are adequately processed and settled that you are ready to make them public. If your body tells you otherwise (anxiety, panic attacks, any symptoms of trauma, major avoidance, disordered eating symptoms, etc.) please listen to what your body is saying about your readiness to share.

If you are sharing the stories of others, public ones are better. Any story sharing from anyone that you know personally or have heard from others, needs consent / permission. Never tell a story that was shared in confidence. This is not the same as protecting perpetrators or their families. The point here is to be sure that victims and survivors have power over their own stories.

No matter whose stories you are sharing, your own, another person's, a public figure, or a biblical character, think about the way that story is going to land with the people you speak to, preach or teach too, or invite into a ritual. You will not always know, of course. But a healthy dose of imagination and empathy will go along way to helping you present material in ways that does not retrigger or re-traumatize. Prepare the way for what you plan to share or do for those who are gathered. Practice the language of introduction and content warning and allowing people to step aside or bow out if it will help them when needed. Shocks and surprises do not help survivors.

5. Ask yourself what you want to SAY and DO

As you are preparing your material for a ritual or sermon or a study or another kind of public presentation, ask yourself two different but related questions.

What do I want this sermon/ritual/teaching To SAY? While you were working on this material think carefully about what you want to really say. Zoom out from the material and think about what you want listeners or participants to hear? To take away? To understand differently or better? When you were clear on what you want to say you can build your material towards saying it better. More clearly. Illustrate and support your points. And don't make too many.

What do I want this sermon/ritual/teaching to DO? Please also consider a separate but related issue which is, what do you want your participants or listeners to do as a result or in response to your leadership? Perhaps all you want them to do is understand more. But it's likely you will have some action in mind that you want them to take... Examples of this might include:

- Become better listeners
- Take notice of gender stereotypes
- Become involved in changing a policy
- Participate in a future Event
- Speak up
- Believe women
- Pray
- Protest
- Demonstrate solidarity
- Practice empathy
- Talk to your children
- Change your expectations
- Write government officials
- Change one's heart or mind so as to approach relationships differently

The clearer you can be and what you want people to do, say or feel in response to the sermon, ritual, teaching or worship service.

6. When possible, collaborate

The work of designing liturgy and ritual in response to #MeToo and #ChurchToo it's hard and even exhausting work. It may be in livening while you're doing it but there may be a cost afterwards to your body and spirit. The more you can share the labor and the creative impulses, the less depleted you may find yourself. Your level of introversion or extroversion will play a role in this, of course. But isolation is one of the tools of patriarchy and empire, and so we act politically as well as with personal compassion for ourselves when we work together.

A caveat: think about the ways that collaboration can embolden and empower Your planning and delivery. And do not become ensnared in the trap of group fear or anxiety. Of course draw on the wisdom of others, but do not talk one another out of good work. Name your feelings and honor your wisdom and also honor the calling of each person to speak and act and do what the Spirit is guiding them toward.

7. Be prepared for typical responses

People are likely to respond emotionally (across the whole spectrum of emotions) to worship, ritual, teaching, or preaching that addresses #MeToo and #ChurchToo. Remember to practice calm as you receive the responses. And utilize clear boundaries when others approach you to respond or give feedback.