



Culturally Engaging Worship Service on Mission

By Mike Zehnder

Recently, I was speaking to a group of pastors and worship leaders gathered at Concordia University, St. Paul, which was sponsored by The Minnesota South District—LCMS, Oswald Hoffmann School of Christian Outreach, Concordia University, St. Paul, and LINC-Twin Cities. I was giving a live internet demonstration on resources for planning worship services on any imaginable topic using the visual arts. As we viewed each site, I demonstrated how it worked by picking a topic or Bible passage to search for material. Whenever I asked for a suggested topic or theme to “search,” one of the District Mission Execs – true to his calling – would shout out: “Mission!” We saw plenty of material available and it inspired me to bring you this very PRACTICAL article on planning a service with a mission theme, whether for **Ablaze!**, local evangelism, world mission, a Mission Sunday, or precursors to a Friendship Sunday.

Below are links and descriptions of available of only a very small portion of the visual material available on the web on the topic of mission: (Note, within a few months, I will have on our website probably the largest descriptive worship resource list available on the web. It will be announced on Mission Moments and Worship Beat newsletters.)

- **Heartlight** [<http://www.heartlight.org/>] Click on the link that says “PowerPoint.” In the “Search the Backgrounds” box, type “Mission” and you will get 13 FREE PowerPoint backgrounds for things like song lyric backgrounds, sermon backgrounds, title slides, etc.
- **PowerPoint Sermons** [<http://www.powerpointsermons.com/>] In the “Search” box at the top left type “Mission” and you will get 28 BEAUTIFUL graphic backgrounds with multiple options that are completely editable. This is my FAVORITE background site and is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. Though some free graphics are available this is a pay for use website. It is rock bottom reasonable and offers thousands of high-quality, downloadable PowerPoint templates, and JPEG stills that are easy and completely customizable, helping pastors creatively display their sermons (and also helping secretaries looking for background lyrics for songs, etc.). So much more is available than just backgrounds. Click on the frequently asked questions to see all the assistance you can receive.
- **iChurchPhoto** [<http://ichurchphoto.com/>] Typing “Mission” in the search bar on the right produced 21 photos that look very professional. The cool thing about this site is that it is “For Churches By Churches.” There is nothing like an insider’s understanding.
- **iStockphoto** [<http://istockphoto.com/index.php>] This is my favorite photo site on the web (it also has video and illustration). It is not “religious” in nature, but it is amazing what you can find on here. Please note that though it is a pay site, you do NOT need to download anything more than “extra small” (\$1) or “small” (\$3). This is all the resolution you need for projection. For newsletters/publications, small might do – try it – but you might also need “medium” (\$5). These photos are SUPER PROFESSIONAL. It’s my favorite photo site and the FIRST one I check for illustrative pictures. By the way, I typed “Mission”

in the home page search bar and received amazing options. The site asked me, "Did you mean mission as in Mission (Place of Worship), Determination, or Surveillance?" I merely checked the first one and had 1880 options!

- **SermonSpice** [<http://www.sermonspice.com/>] This is my favorite and I highly recommend it. Type the word "Mission" you will receive 63 options for these categories: Sermon Illustrations, Countdowns, and Background Loops. If you don't know what these are, just click around and learn. I LOVE this site for the video section as an introduction to a topic at the beginning of a service or just before the sermon or as reinforcement just before the Benediction. You can preview every video in whole. They are cheap, short, powerful, and easily downloadable in multiple formats. Check out the hilarious "Evangelism Linebacker," the poignant one-minute video called "Mission-Wise" (good at the beginning of a service); the Evangelism Quotes Countdown is also powerful. You get different results if you type in Mission, or Missions, and if you type in Evangelism, you get another 93 options.
- **WingClips** [<http://wingclips.com/>] is a list of regular Hollywood movies with permission to use as a part of the signup and payment. 40 clips appeared when I typed in "Mission" in the search bar.
- **CCLI** [<http://www.ccli.com/usa/>] (subscription needed) for music options go to the SongSelect section and type "mission" as a topic. Clue: if the song has multiple versions available like lead sheet, text, audio, etc. it's probably worth checking out. Just pass up the rest unless you are an advanced musician.
- **WorshipOutlet** [<http://www.worshipoutlet.com/>] This site premiered about a year ago and is already the best source for complete thematic worship services, called "Worship Alive Plus!" They provide creative, engaging worship resources for use in weekly worship planning that are Biblically faithful and also culturally relevant. The thematic worship services include music options for both contemporary and traditional services, video suggestions and locations, modern litanies, and fresh orders of expression such as benedictions or confession/absolution, which are based on the scripture lessons. There are even experiential ideas for the congregation called **NuParables** to move people beyond mere intellectual assent of truth. The sermon ideas, included with each service, contain all the "labor intensive" stuff to find: humor, illustrations, quotations, videos, Unparallel, and all the ingredients that bring "spice" to a message that is already full of theological meat. The site is searchable by topic, key word, scripture, even by the three-year Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), and the Lutheran Service Book (LSB) lectionaries. You can also upload your own services and ideas to share and get free products if you do. Three free items are downloadable in each of their product lines, so check it out. Hint: You have to first sign up for the "free registration" before you can do any searches. If you are looking for a service on Mission/Evangelism, check out the poignant service entitled, "Our Soul Purpose."
- **Ablaze! Mission Service** The entire service is available on our website [<http://www.centerforusmissions.com/UserFiles/File/ABLAZE%20Worship%20Service.pdf>] and the also on the LCMS website [<http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/World%20Mission/HeartsAblaze-WorshipService.pdf>]. I wrote it a few years ago (2006) and it has litanies, songs, sermon ideas and much more. It's around 50 pages of options from which to choose, cut, and paste so be judicious unless your people enjoy 3-hour services a la Bach's days. ☺ It does NOT contain the latest contemporary mission song options or Lutheran Service Book options so use the LSB index and the CCLI SongSelect search to find the latest available songs for traditional or contemporary worship.

Have a great mission service! Let me know how it goes. By the way, are you a subscriber to Worship Beat? It's a new publication of the Center of US Missions. Every month I share multiple resources, options, songs of substance, theological reflections, and more. Churches and musicians can also advertise for positions needed/wanted. It's free. Just go to [\[http://www.centerforusmissions.com/index.php?page=news-subscribe\]](http://www.centerforusmissions.com/index.php?page=news-subscribe) to sign up or read a few of them on our archive site at: [\[http://www.centerforusmissions.com/index.php?page=wb2008\]](http://www.centerforusmissions.com/index.php?page=wb2008).

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