

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: THE WORSHIP SERVICE

by Janet G. Miller

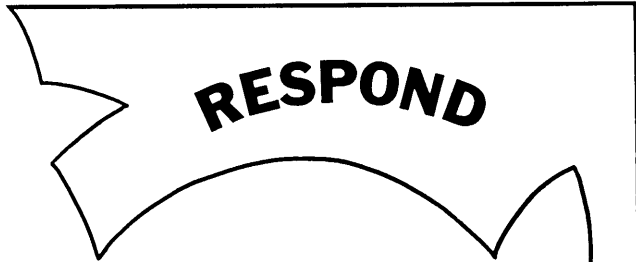
Janet Miller will be remembered as the author of "Beyond Banners," an attractive article appearing in the May 1977 LETTERS. That article was chocked full of creative projects to aid young people in learning about their Christian heritage and the role each of them plays in the ministry of the church. In teaching her choristers at The First Presbyterian Church of Youngstown, Ohio about worship, Janet devised a jigsaw puzzle whose parts in themselves are symbols of the elements of worship. Guilders are urged to use the same puzzle with headings taken from their own church's order of worship.

Young choristers need careful preparation as they, holding hymnals and orders of service, process into a worship service. People in the pews are invited to meditate, sing, pray, listen and respond in an established pattern. Since God-centered worship is not necessarily natural, children's choirs "leading in worship" need to grow into a better understanding of the discipline. Through the use of traditional symbolism, the church's history and faith can be passed on to a new generation.

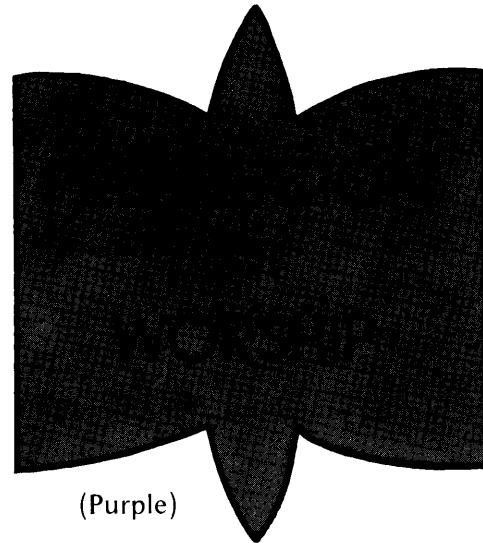


Choristers can help put it all together in a jigsaw puzzle! Draw the full-size puzzle on newsprint and cut the pieces apart, using them as patterns to make permanent puzzle pieces from heavier construction paper or poster board. Fabric makes a durable background for the puzzle and is easily stored. Using a black marker on the fabric, trace around the cut pieces as they are positioned on the full-size pattern. Tack the background to a bulletin board and allow the choristers to add puzzle pieces as they learn what the colors, words and shapes represent.

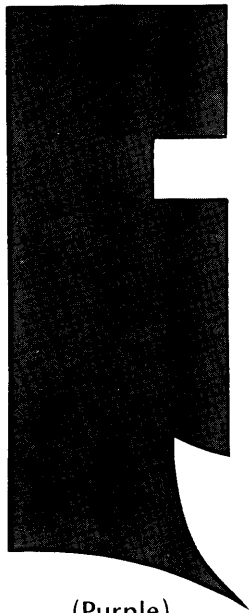
Choristers show how much they understand. Each additional puzzle piece relates (shown by color) to one of the aspects of worship, and by word and shape encourages more detailed learning. Discoveries about each part of the service might include the following information.¹



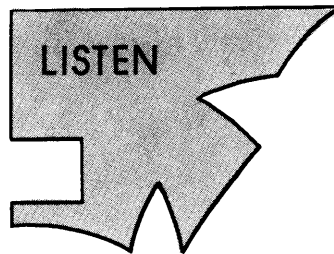
(White/Red)



(Purple)



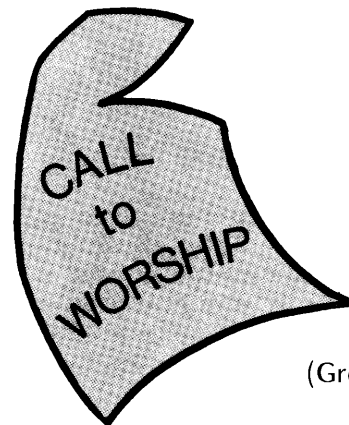
(Purple)



(Green)

People come together to worship God because they have much to learn and praise to give. They turn their thoughts to God while listening to the prelude, and choir members might use the Choristers Daily Prayer,² in order to prepare themselves for the responsibility of spreading God's word through song.

The butterfly, a symbol for Christ's resurrection, represents God's living presence.



(Green)

CONFESS . . . LISTEN . . . RESPOND

Three puzzle pieces representing the aspects of worship — CONFESS, LISTEN, and RESPOND are the first to be placed on the puzzle. CONFESS is colored purple, the liturgical color for penitence. LISTEN is represented by green, a color associated with Christian growth, and RESPOND is white with red lettering symbolic of the Holy Spirit as represented by a white dove and flames of the Pentecost story.

When asked to define the three key words — CONFESS, LISTEN, and RESPOND—in relation to the worship service, chor-

The people are called to worship God, and this act defines their relationship to God through Jesus Christ. Psalm 100 or a portion of Psalm 96³ said responsively gives the congregation an opportunity to respond to the leader's call. Many other Psalms and scripture passages express a Christian's need to bring praise and prayer to the Creator.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Col. 3:16)



(White/Red)

In response to being called to service for God, the people offer a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. *Come Christians, join to sing*⁴ is a good example. As suggested by Charlotte Metcalf,⁵ this hymn coupled with Psalm 100 offers a double learning experience. Hymns during the worship service give other opportunities for praise, prayer, and learning together.

Anthems help the congregation worship by supporting or augmenting the spoken word. The choir's offering should be the best it can give.

The rose is a symbol for Christ's birth as used in the hymn *Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming*.⁶ The first stanza of *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*⁷ brings the miracle home to us as "hearts unfold like flowers before thee, opening to the sun above . . ."



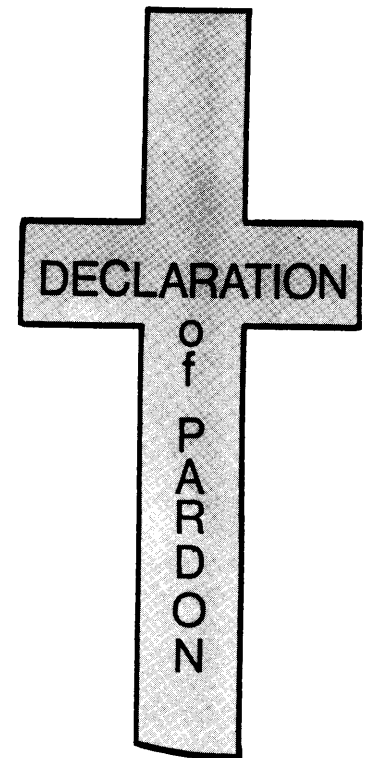
(Purple)

Together the people pray, admitting that they fall short of the perfect love which God shares through Jesus Christ. The explanation enables children to identify their particular shortcomings, such as not helping their parents enough, not doing their best in school, or not feeding the gerbils yesterday! Christians can admit their faults because they believe God forgives. The outstretched hand represents God who guides his people.

To understand the Declaration of Pardon is to understand Easter! If a person believes that Christ died for him, then all

things are new, and he has the opportunity to start now to become a better Christian. The response to God's gift of forgiveness is thanks:

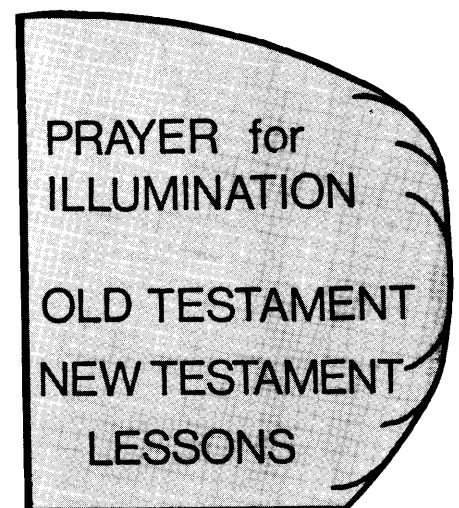
You are the Lord, giver of mercy!
 You are the Christ, giver of mercy!
 You are the Lord, giver of mercy!



(Green)

With the good news of God's mercy comes a reminder to forgive others and be thankful to God (Col. 3:12-14).

The cross, once a means of torture, is to Christians a symbol of God's love through Christ.



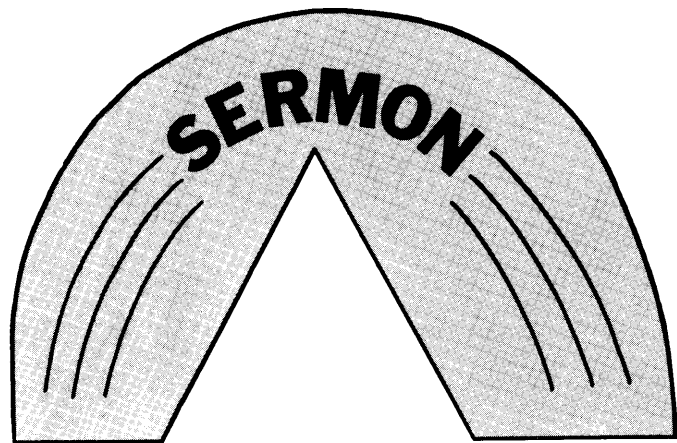
(Green)

The Bible is important to Christianity because people believe in God through his Word, and are aware of his power and

presence while listening to the Scripture lessons. The Prayer for Illumination asks that the Holy Spirit help the listener understand what he hears.

The Old Testament tells of creation and life before Christ. The Gospels (good news) of the New Testament tell about Jesus' life, while the Epistles (letters) written to the early church tell of early Christianity and further explain Jesus' teachings.

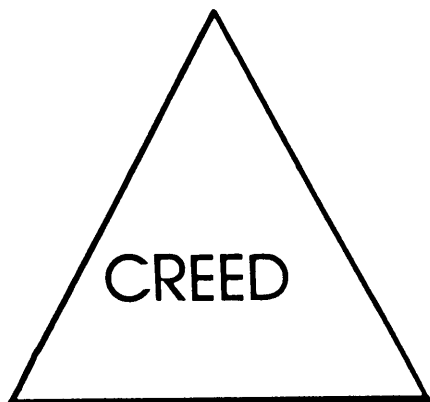
Bread as a symbol is used in the hymns *Break Thou The Bread Of Life* and *Bread Of Heaven, On Thee We Feed*, where it represents the living Word found in the scriptures.



(Green)

Christ commanded his followers to preach the Good News to others, as reported in Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . ." A sermon based on scripture explains how Christians fit into the picture of God's world.

The rainbow symbolizes God's covenant with his people.

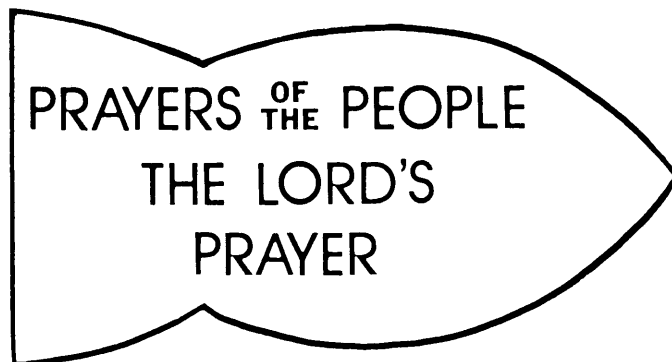


(White/Red)

A creed states what a person believes. Often it takes the form of a story telling about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The triangle with equal sides symbolizes the Trinity on which Christian faith is based.

Early Christians who gathered under the secret sign of a fish no doubt prayed, as now, for the Spirit's guidance, for the church, and for others in need. Prayer brings the worshiper's thoughts into perspective and points him to the future. Jesus taught the early Christians how to pray saying "Our Father, who art in heaven . . ."



(White/Red)

Following the Lord's Prayer the congregation might exchange The Peace, a response to the message of I John 4:7: "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God."

The fish sign stood for early Christians who saw in the Greek word for fish, "Ichthus," an acrostic for the name "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." Prayers and fellowship were very precious to the early Christian communities.



(White/Red)

At the offering Christians symbolically offer themselves and the best they can give. The seven-tongued flame symbolizes the Holy Spirit, whose guidance causes Christians to be caught up in the desire to serve God by giving.

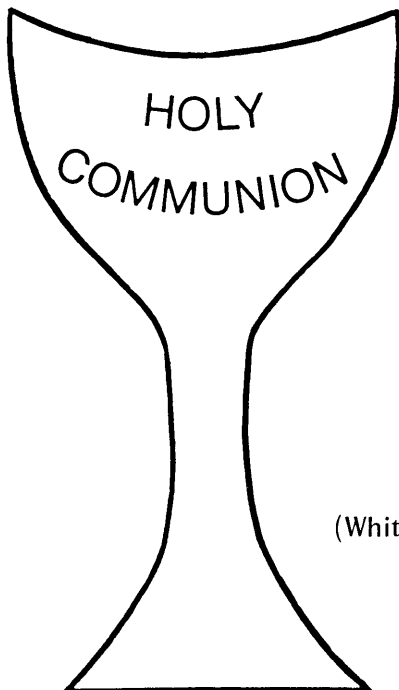


(White/Red)

The doxology or another response might be sung as the gifts are brought forward and dedicated. A doxology can be found in the last stanza of many hymns. At Christmas and Epiphany the congregation can sing the third stanza of *What Child Is This*.

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
 Come, peasant, king, to own him.
 The King of kings salvation brings;
 Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
 Raise, raise the song on high!
 The virgin sings her lullaby.
 Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
 The Babe, the Son of Mary!

The Epiphany star led from distant lands people who, having seen the Christ child, took the news and spread it far and wide.

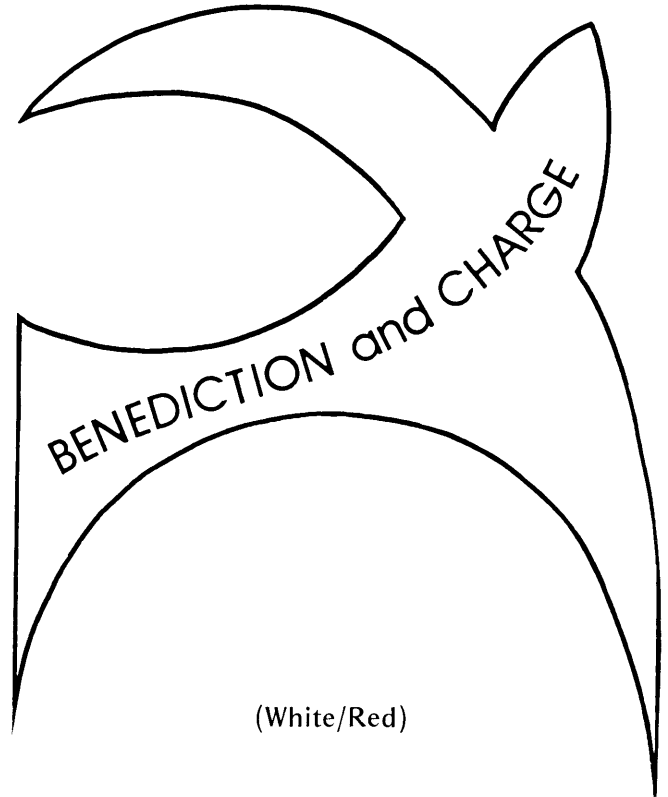


(White/Red)

In Paul's account of the Last Supper (I Cor. 11:23-26) Jesus said "Do this in remembrance of me." Each time Christians share in the communion service they receive again the signs of God's love and grace, symbolized by bread and wine.

The chalice or cup holds wine for the Lord's Supper and symbolizes God's grace.

Some action words found in a "charge" might be "Go . . . live . . . serve . . . rejoice . . . strengthen . . . support . . . help . . . honor." God's word becomes the living Word in his people as they leave the place of worship.



(White/Red)

The benediction asks that through God's grace Christians will be able to carry out the charge.

The Holy Spirit symbolized by a dove, is with God's people at all times when they remember Jesus and his teachings.

While choristers are learning about the worship service, their understanding can be strengthened by scripture, hymns and discussion. The chance to place a piece in the jigsaw puzzle encourages eager participation as choristers construct a colorful bulletin board and learn more about their faith. In doing so, the choir is learning about responsible leadership in worship.

¹ *Parts of Worship*, taken from "Service For The Lord's Day." *THE WORSHIPBOOK (Presbyterian)*. Westminster Press. 1972.

² M-8

³ PS-8 and PS-7

⁴ H-72

⁵ "Hymn and Scripture Combinations," by Charlotte Metcalf. *LETTERS*, October, 1973.

⁶ H-52

⁷ H-9

