

# **WORSHIP LESSONS LEARNED FROM CONSULTING**

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2024 WELS National Conference on Worship, Music, & the Arts

# BEFORE WE BEGIN

***What is the question or two you would really like answered in this presentation?***

# “WORSHIP LESSONS LEARNED...”

## ➤ **Strategic Lessons**

*Seeing the Big Picture*

## ➤ **Tactical Lessons**

*Discussing Some Best Practices*

# "...FROM CONSULTING"

## ➤ **Face-to-Face Consultations** *(5% to 6% of WELS Congregations annually)*

- **SWOT Analysis**
- **Pulse Surveys**
- **Exit Surveys (members who have left)**
- **Sermon Feedback Analysis**
- **Secret Worship Visitors**

## ➤ **Statistical Analysis** *(97% of WELS Congregations annually)*

- **Follow Up Survey**
- **Descriptive Statistics**
- **Inferential Statistics**
- **Predictive Analysis**
- **Multivariate Analysis**

## ➤ **Broader Trends Study**

# **"... FROM CONSULTING"**

## **(SOME CAVEATS)**

- ✓ **Statistical Data > Anecdotal Evidence**
- ✓ **Principles > Statistical Data**
- ✓ **Das Evangelium produziert seine eigenen Formen**

*John Schaller*

# **STRATEGIC ISSUES**

*The Big Picture*

# Lesson Learned

For the majority of your prospects, corporate worship will be the first interaction they have with your congregation. What happens there matters.

# “Worship is for believers!”

## *Except...*

### **1 Corinthians 14:23-25**

If the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and **inquirers or unbelievers come in**, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”



# TOP 50 WELS CONGREGATIONS: ADULT CONFIRMATIONS OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS

*What percent plan worship expecting visitors?*

## Total Adult Confirmations in Past Five Years

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

## Adult Confirmations as % of Five-Year Change in Communicants

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%



*The* INSTITUTE *for*  

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**WORSHIP &  
OUTREACH**

<https://www.worshipandoutreach.org/>

# Lesson Learned

For the majority of your prospects, corporate worship will be the first interaction they have with your congregation. What happens there matters.

# Lesson Learned

The last thirty years has seen the biggest shift in American religious culture in the country's history.

This must shape how we think about everything, including worship.

# DIFFERENT TIMES

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

2010s

2020s

## Positive World

ORIGINS:	WWII existential threats; emphasis on "One Nation Under God"
STATUS:	Professing to be a Christian is a status-enhance. Violating Christian standards affects status negatively.
STRATEGY:	Wage culture war. Retain a "Moral Majority." (Christian Broadcasting Network - Pat Robertson; Christian Coalition - Ralph Reed; Focus on the Family - James Dobson). Be seeker friendly. (Willow Creek - Bill Hybels; Saddleback - Rick Warren)
ENDED:	Collapse of the Cold War. No more existential threat. Seeker friendly pivot to moral therapeutic deism; downplaying of denominational affiliation, traditions, dogma, etc. "Moral Majority" seen as anything but moral (Jim and Tammy Faye Baker; Jimmy Swaggart)

# DIFFERENT TIMES

1940s

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2010s

2020s

## Neutral World

- ORIGINS: Disengagement from church membership. "Rise of the Nones" begins. Religious pluralism normalized. (Pres. Bush visits mosque post 911.)
- STATUS: Professing Christianity is neither positive nor negative. Christian norms softened. (Pres. Bush opposed to gay marriage but supports civil unions.)
- STRATEGY: Cultural engagement: contextualizing; community service; addressing social issues; urban focus; adapting communication; celebrating diversity; focus on cultural elite/influencers. (Redeemer Presbyterian NYC - Timothy Keller; Hillsong Church; The Veritas Forum)
- ENDED: Increased secularization.
- Increased perception of Christian's as hypocrites. (Rise of Pew Researching: finding unchurched young people note their church-attending friends behave no differently.)
- Increased politicization of moral issues (abortion, LGBTQ rites, etc.) is now viewed, not as a positive effort, but as intrusive and judgmental.

# DIFFERENT TIMES

1940s

1950s

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2000s

2010s

2020s

## Negative World

ORIGINS:	Broad shift to secular humanism. Increase in view of Christian morality as potential threat to “public good”: misogynistic, homophobic, prejudiced, anti-science.
STATUS:	Professing Christianity is a social negative (e.g. Timothy Keller being uninvited to speak at Princeton Seminary). Christian norms are actively opposed (e.g. Supreme Court’s <i>Obergefell Decision</i> ).
STRATEGY:	Apologetics Personal witnessing/evangelism Neo-cloistering A more polemic culture war (e.g. Christian nationalism)
ENDS	???

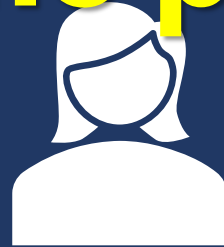
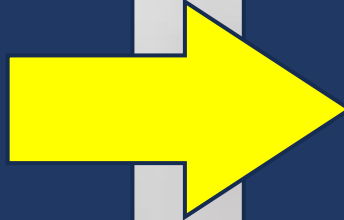
# DIFFERENT PEOPLE

## movement in the past thirty years



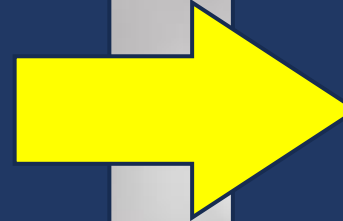
### THE SEEKER

- Identifies as Christian
- Churched background
- Prays & probably consumes spiritual content somehow



### IN BETWEEN

- Identifies as "spiritual"
- Likely has a churched background
- Maybe prays, but doesn't consume any Biblical content

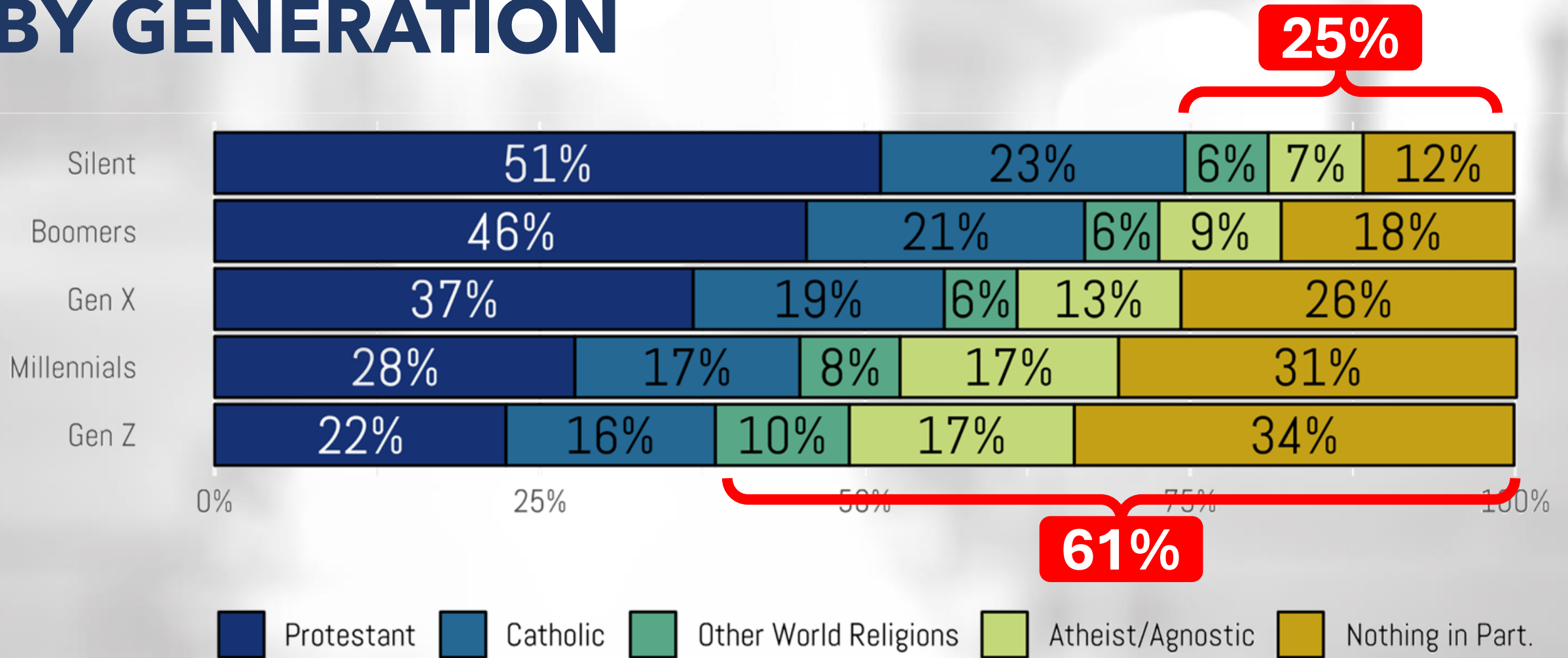


### THE LOST

- Identifies as agnostic or atheist
- Generally no church background
- Has either rejected the gospel or has never really heard it

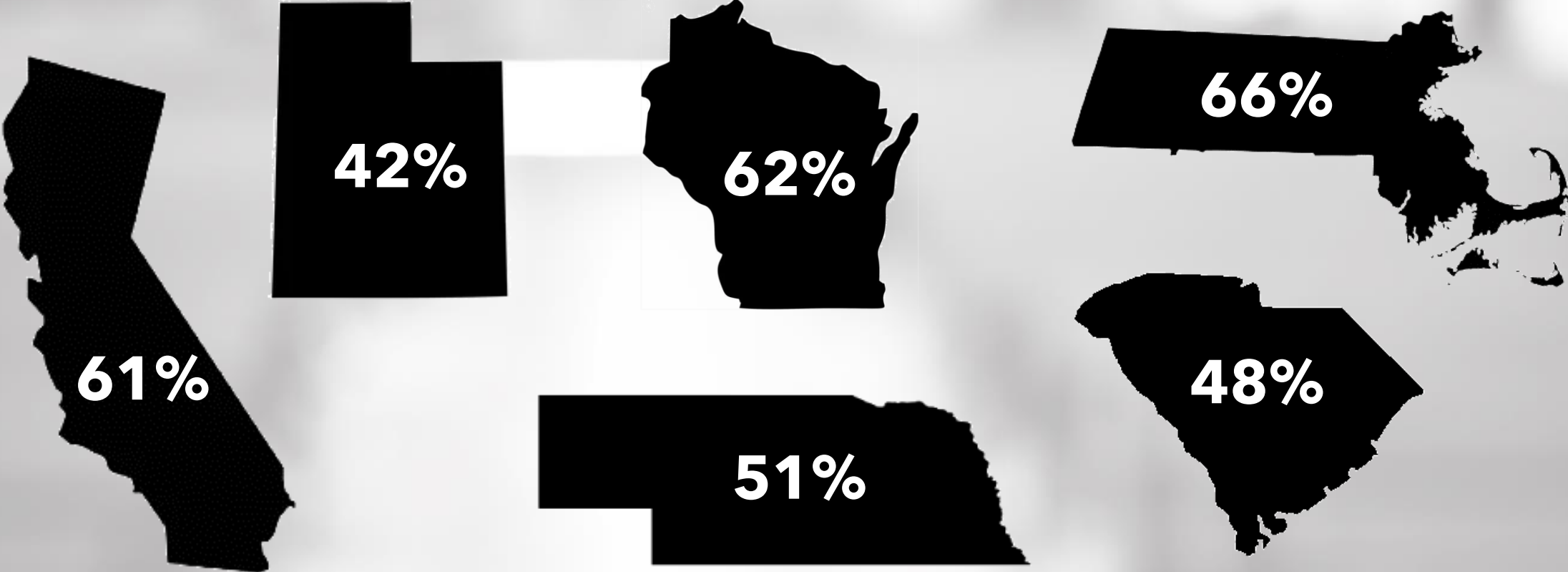


# RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION BY GENERATION



# DIFFERENT PLACES

*Percent of State Population That Attends Church  
"A Few Times a Year" or "Never"*



# **So, whom are you trying to reach?**

**Gen Zers who live in a large New England city and view churches as unnecessary?**

**Gen Xers who live in a suburban community in the Deep South and feel guilty that they stopped going to church?**

**or**

**Midwestern Boomers who are still technically members of a church but attend sporadically?**

# Lesson Learned

The last thirty years has seen the biggest shift in American religious culture in the country's history.

This must shape how we think about everything, including worship.

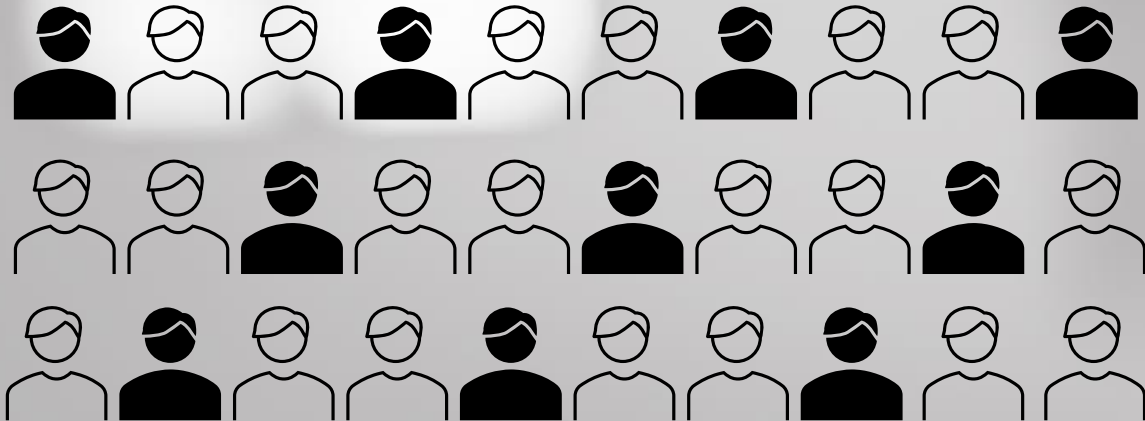
# Lesson Learned

Let go of this thought: *"To reach \_\_\_\_\_ (some demographic) we need to be more \_\_\_\_\_ (some style) in worship."*

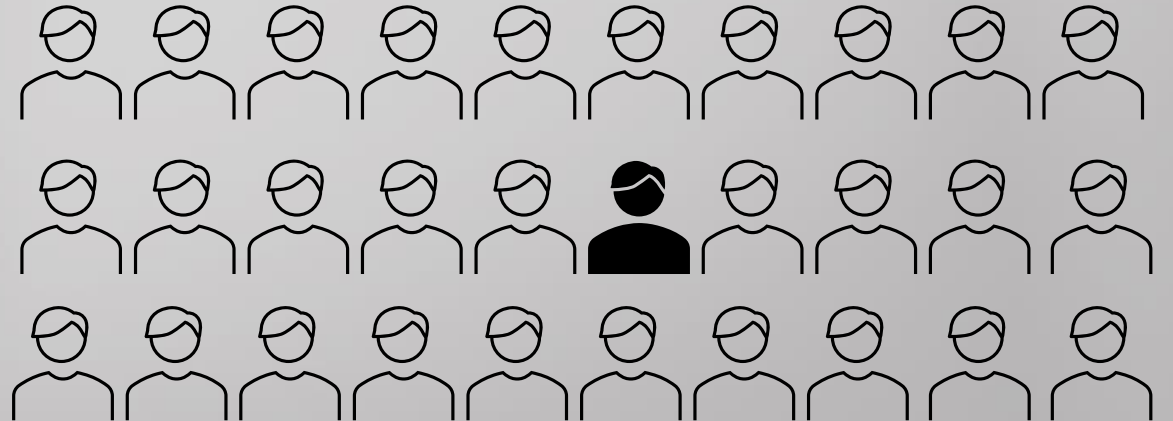
- First, you are assuming people are looking for a good church, and that "good" relates to stylistic preferences. Most are not looking for any church, period.
- Second, no demographic group really knows what they want. (And certainly not what they need!)
- Third, no demographic group is monolithic in what they think they would prefer in a worship service.

# First, Americans are no longer looking for "a good church."

**In 1980, 1 in 3 unchurched Americans were actively looking for a church to join.**



**Today, that number is 1 in 30.**



# Second, no demographic really knows what they want.

## *Millennials, which do you prefer?*

a classic congregation **67%**

a sanctuary **77%**

a traditional church **40%**

quieter worship **78%**

casual worship **64%**

a trendy congregation **33%**

an auditorium **27%**

a modern church **60%**

louder worship **22%**

dignified worship **36%**

# Third, no demographic is monolithic in what they think they prefer in worship.

“How do we get millennials into the church? What programs do we need to start? What music style do we need? How do millennials hear sermons differently?”

“Some research finds that millennials are reconnecting to the liturgies, rituals and hymns of the historical church. Other research finds that millennials flock to churches using music that sounds like the radio... Some studies show that preachers need to dress down and be more relatable. Other studies point out large concentrations of millennials attending churches where the pastor uses a robe...”

*Attracting the **Not Really Typical Millennial** by Eric Drew*



# 50 FASTEST GROWING CONGREGATIONS IN WELS

(over the past five years)

HIGH LITURGICAL (HIGH TRADITIONAL)	LITURGICAL (TRADITIONAL)	CASUAL LITURGICAL (NEOTRADITIONAL)	NON-LITURGICAL (NON-TRADITIONAL)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follows themes of the Church Year and pericope</li> <li>Ordinary used almost every</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follows themes of the Church Year; mostly follows pericope</li> <li>Multiple traditional orders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follows some themes of Church Year; not always pericope</li> <li>"Flow" of normal order of service used, but not always</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observes festivals of Church Year; not pericope.</li> <li>Minimal order of service:</li> </ul>
<p><b>6 (12%)</b> offer multiple "styles"</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frequent use of liturgical chant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occasional use of liturgical chant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>special rites (many weeks are custom anyway)</li> <li>Rare to no use of liturgical chant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>historic rites/ceremonies</li> <li>No use of liturgical chant</li> </ul>

# Lesson Learned

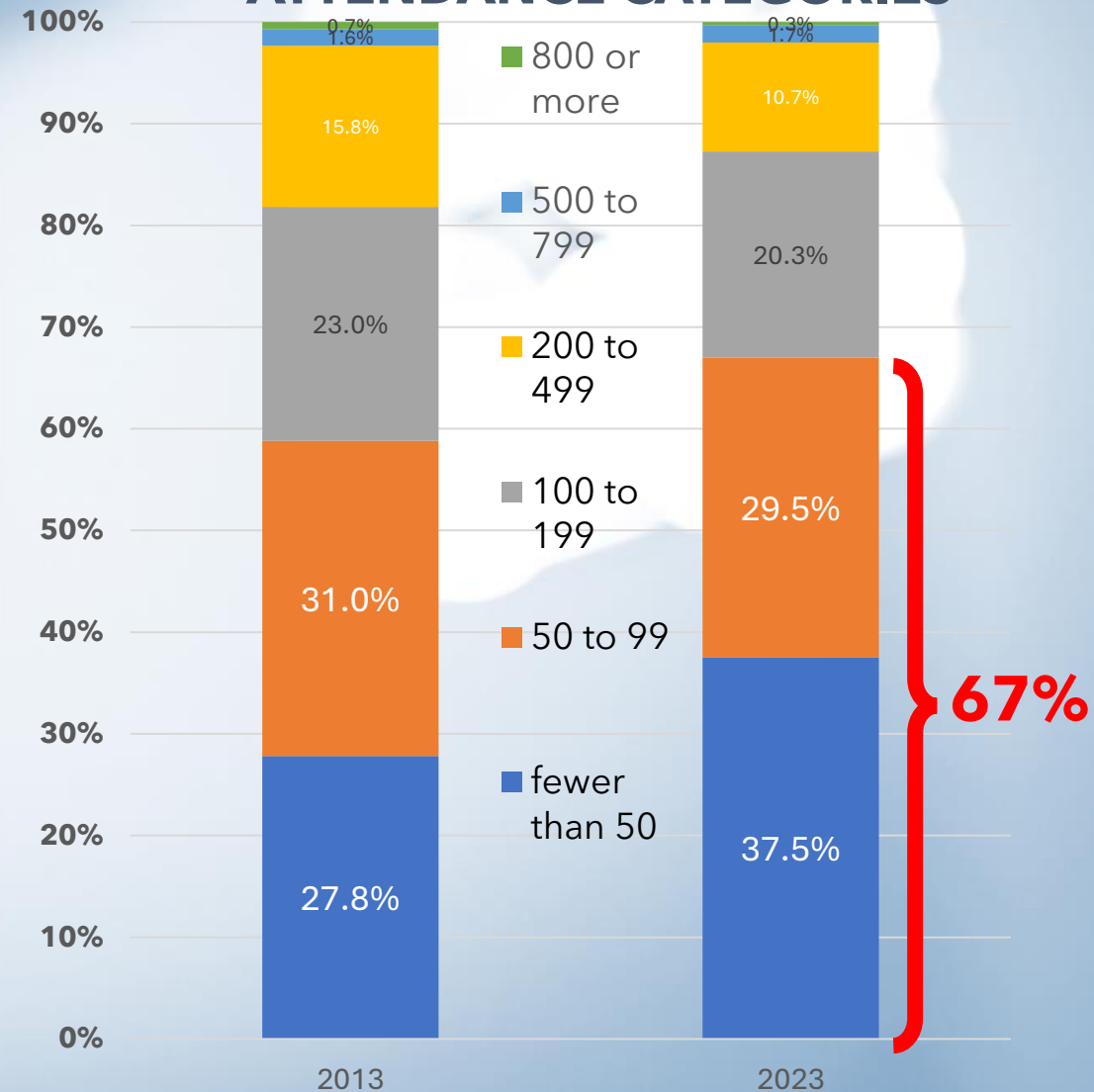
Let go of this thought: *"To reach \_\_\_\_\_ (some demographic) we need to be more \_\_\_\_\_ (some style) in worship."*

It's a fools errand.

# Lesson Learned

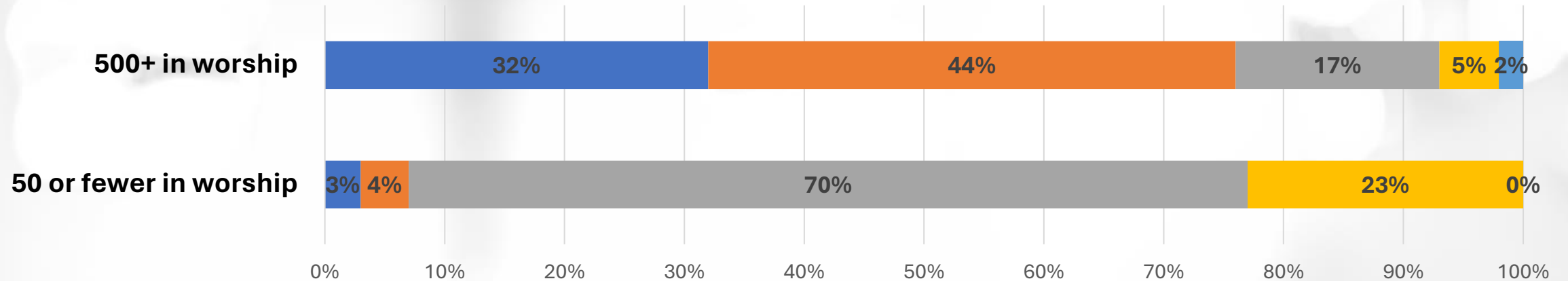
“Marketing” generally only works for large churches which can attract the few remaining church shoppers. For most WELS congregations, outreach will need to be relational, not program related.

PERCENT OF WELS CONGREGATIONS IN VARIOUS IN-PERSON WORSHIP ATTENDANCE CATEGORIES



# NEW MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT SIZED CHURCHES

## *Where do they come from?*



- Unchurched Christians actively looking for a church
- Cultural Christians with tangential connection through church program (Christmas Eve visitor; child in preschool; etc.)
- Cultural Christians with a relationship to a congregational member
- Non-Christian with a relationship to a congregational member
- Non-Christian with no relationship with any member; connection via church program (drug counseling)

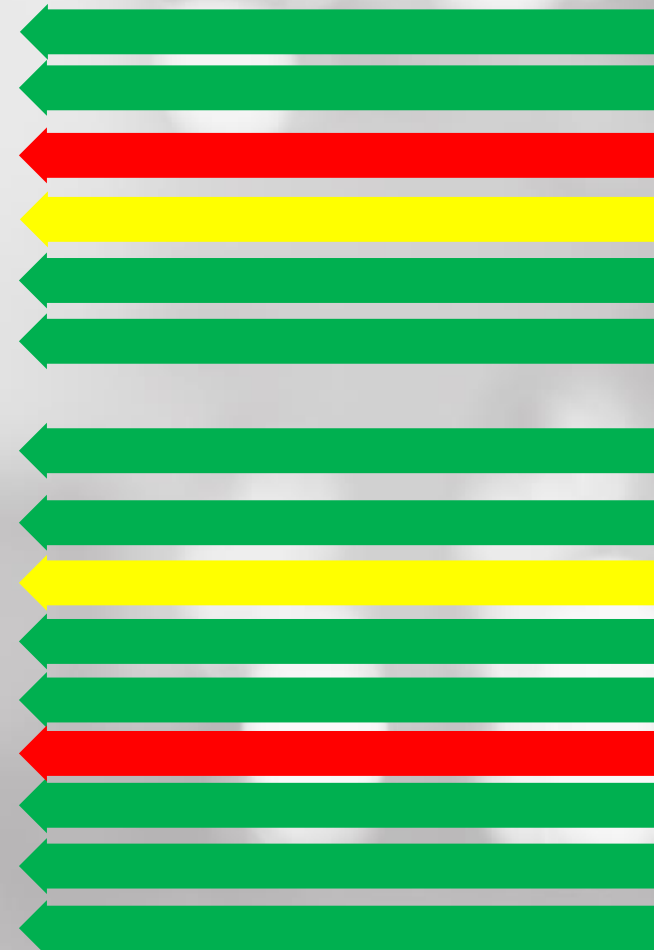
# TOP 15 IN TOTAL ADULT CONFIRMATIONS COMPARED TO CONGREGATION SIZE (2023)

Top 5% in size

Top 20% in size

Top 33% in size

CHURCH	CITY	STATE	TOTAL MEMBERS	MEMBER RANK	ADULT CONFIRM	AD CONFIRM RANK
St Peter / The Core	Appleton	WI	3,275	1	108	1
NorthCross	Lakeville	MN	1,168	30	53	2
Risen Savior	Lakewood Ranch	FL	335	295	46	3
St Mark	Leesburg	FL	487	186	43	4
St Andrew	Middleton	WI	942	54	37	5
St John	Mukwonago	WI	1,371	23	32	T6
Carbon Valley	Firestone	CO	137	673	32	T6
Immanuel	Greenville	WI	2,824	2	31	8
St Paul	Onalaska	WI	1,609	16	28	T9
Faith	Sharpsburg	GA	679	114	28	T9
St Paul's	New Ulm	MN	2,124	7	28	T9
St Mark	De Pere	WI	2,577	4	27	12
Divine Savior	West Palm Beach	FL	290	338	26	13
St Paul	Mauston	WI	1,017	43	25	14
Christ	Pewaukee	WI	1,655	13	24	T15
St Mark's	Watertown	WI	2,433	5	24	T15



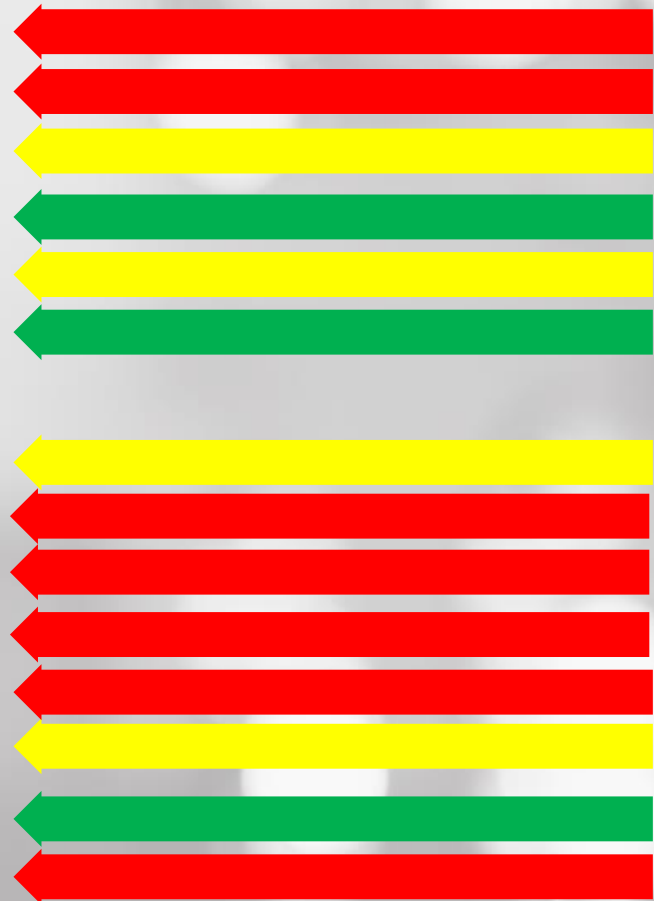
# TOP 15 IN WORSHIPERS PER ADULT CONFIRMATION (5+ in 2023) COMPARED TO CONGREGATION SIZE

Bottom 15% in size

Bottom 25% in size

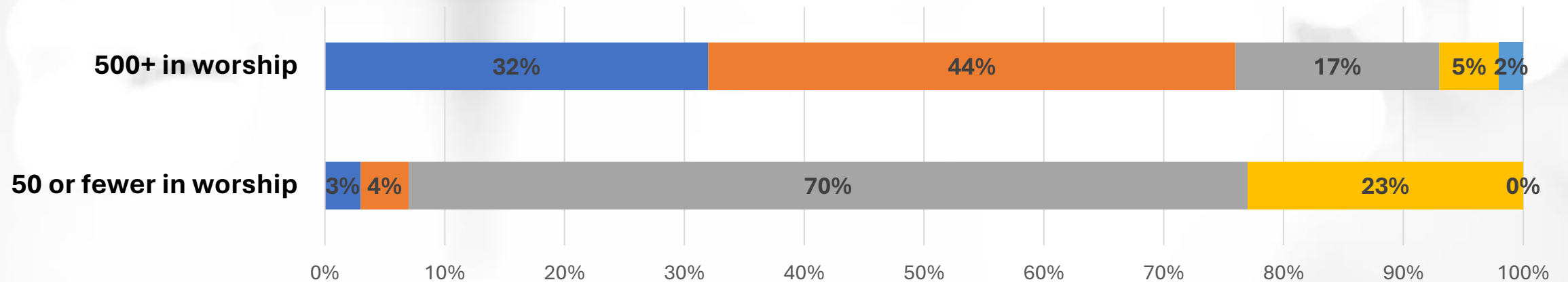
Bottom Half in size

CHURCH	CITY	ST	TOTAL MEMBERS	MEMBER RANK	ADULT CONFIRM	AD CONF RANK	WEEKLY ATTEND	WORSHIPERS/AD CONFIRMS
Intown	Atlanta	GA	91	853	10	T96	32	3
Christ the Rock	Hutto	TX	85	887	24	T16	78	3
Amazing Grace	Amarillo	TX	55	1,025	15	T50	50	3
Our Savior	Burlington	IA	32	1,113	5	T214	18	4
Crosspoint	Georgetown	TX	64	983	11	T81	41	4
Christ	Keystone Heights	FL	31	1,115	6	T178	23	4
Light of the World	Fairbanks	AK	110	772	15	T50	58	4
Saviour of the Nations	Vancouver	BC	69	960	12	T70	50	4
Carbon Valley	Firestone	CO	137	673	32	8	134	4
Living Hope	Chattanooga	TN	121	727	14	T55	59	4
St Peter	Clovis	CA	128	699	18	T35	77	4
Risen Savior	Lakewood Ranch	FL	335	295	46	4	235	5
Immanuel	Long Valley	NJ	107	788	7	T149	36	5
Christ Our Refuge	Hewitt	TX	41	1,086	6	T178	31	5
Cross of Life	Mississauga	ON	63	987	10	T96	52	5
Water of Life	Las Vegas	NV	224	445	23	T20	120	5
Living Word	Gray	TN	224	446	21	T27	112	5



# NEW MEMBERS IN DIFFERENT SIZED CHURCHES

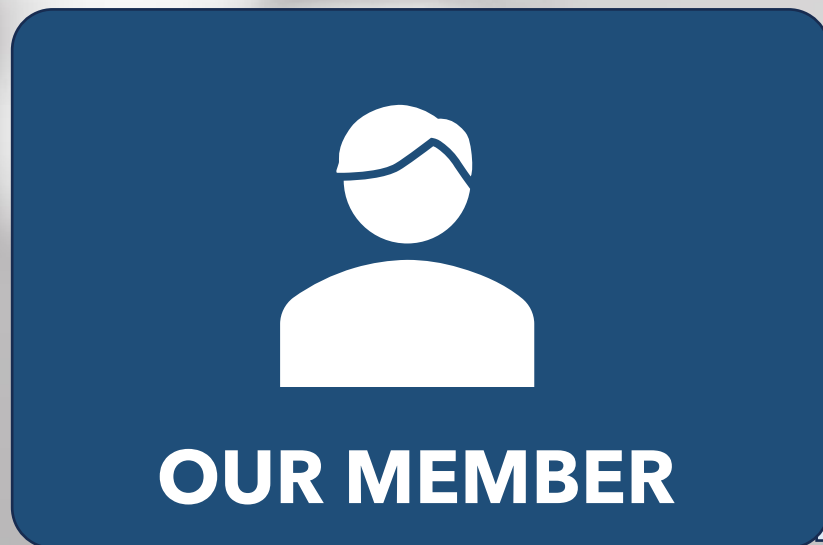
## *Where do they come from?*



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# THINKING ABOUT CONNECTIONS

**Even with strategies that stress relationship evangelism, what happens in worship matters.**



**D**uring  
**Practical Hospitality**  
**Sharing faith**  
**Inviting to church**





# Lesson Learned

If WELS members don't invite their friends to church, often the problem is not that they are timid or apathetic about evangelism. (Though that is sometimes true.)

The problem is they think whomever they bring will not get much out of worship.

**The following are things you might consider prior to inviting an acquaintance to attend your congregation's worship service. Please rank them according to this scale.**

1 = This is a strong negative.

2 = This is something of a negative.

3 = This is really neither positive or negative.

4 = This is something of a positive.

5 = This is a strong positive.

*Considerations that make it LESS likely you'd invite someone to worship.*

*Considerations that make it MORE likely you'd invite someone to worship.*

friendliness of congregation

1 2 3 4 5

1.9

quality of sermon

1 2 3 4 5

2.2

quality of music/singing

1 2 3 4 5

2.9

ability of individual to participate

1 2 3 4 5

2.1

friendliness of the pastor

1 2 3 4 5

3.8

response of individual to invitation

1 2 3 4 5

3.0

responsibility of Great Commission

1 2 3 4 5

4.7

our doctrine

1 2 3 4 5

4.6

# Lesson Learned

If WELS members don't invite their friends to church, often the problem is not that they are timid or apathetic about evangelism. (Though that is sometimes true.)

The problem is they think whomever they bring will not get much out of worship.

# Lesson Learned

In the average WELS church, it is a minority of members who feel strongly about everything worship related.

Most are willing to change if they see the potential benefit.

A person's hands are shown holding a document with a form, possibly a contract or invoice, in front of a laptop. The document has some text and a logo that says "COMPANY INC".

**Avoid the “WELS members  
hate change” fallacy.**

An elderly man and woman are looking at a whiteboard. The man is pointing at the board with a pen, and the woman is looking at him with a thoughtful expression.

**They hate change for which  
they see no good reason.**



# Lesson Learned

Most WELS members are willing to change if they see the potential benefit.

# Lesson Learned

For the vast majority of your prospects, when they size up your congregation and worship, there are only a few things that really matter.



**Sermon**

**Welcoming  
Culture**

**Personable  
Pastor**

**ESSENTIAL**

**AAA Worship**

**Good  
Atmosphere &  
Aesthetic**

**CRUCIAL**

**Respect for  
Children**

**Quality  
Website**

# **PRACTICAL ISSUES**

*Best Practices*

# SERMON: Lessons Learned

**Aspects of the sermon, on a scale of 1 to 10**

(10 = "of utmost import"; 1 = "of no concern")

**How much it matters for a:**

**AVERAGE  
WELS  
PASTOR**

**AVERAGE  
WELS  
MEMBER**

**TYPICAL  
WORSHIP  
GUEST**



# Law and gospel is proclaimed.

The need for Jesus is seen: as Savior, as Sanctifier.  
The gospel has predominance, in tone, if not in time.

## WELS PASTOR

**10**

We have, to our credit, read Walther too often to think otherwise.

## AVERAGE MEMBER

**10?**

They've heard "law and gospel" said plenty of times. However, they may not know how to assess this, perhaps conflating hearing Jesus mentioned with gospel preaching.

## WORSHIP GUEST

**?**

Should be a 10! But guests are not sure what either of these are. They rarely have the spiritual maturity to know how they should feel (grateful or guilty) after a sermon.

# The sermon engages the Biblical text.

One walks away saying, *"I understand what that text is talking about,"* (historical context, symbolism, vocabulary, main emphasis, etc.).

## WELS PASTOR

7

This is based on the number of sermons where the sermon expounds only a few words of the text or where one isn't certain which reading is being expounded.

## AVERAGE MEMBER

7

WELS members notice when sin and grace are discussed, but not in the context or vocabulary of the sermon reading. They're forgiving, as long as they hear Jesus mentioned.

## WORSHIP GUEST

9

Even the spiritually dead can discern between a pastor explaining Scripture and a pastor sharing a spiritual message loosely connected to a Scriptural text. Guests want the former.

# The sermon flowed well.

There were multiple points that logically connect. There was a smooth transition between each. Any illustration was clear and relevant.

## WELS PASTOR

**7**

The general attitude is, "We utilize our God given gifts faithfully, but ultimately it is up to the Holy Spirit to do any good."

## AVERAGE MEMBER

**4**

The general attitude is, "We trust in the Holy Spirit to bless faith, not the eloquence of the pastor." Downplaying rhetorical acumen is seeing as tantamount to trusting the efficacy of the Word.

## WORSHIP GUEST

**10**

The general attitude is, "If this doesn't make sense, what is the point of listening?"

# The overall presentation was strong.

The preacher spoke well and with confidence. He did not rely on notes. He seemed authentic in his emotions, not theatrical.

## WELS PASTOR

5

Thought: "Faithfulness requires I do my best, but it's not me, but the Spirit, who does the work."

## AVERAGE MEMBER

5

Thought: "Faithfulness requires the pastor do my best, but it's not him, but the Spirit, who does the work."

## WORSHIP GUEST

8

A worship guest doesn't have the spiritual maturity to know about the importance of pure doctrine. So, if the guest doesn't feel the presentation was good, he will simply find a preacher who can present better.

# The introduction and conclusion were strong.

Your attention was grabbed in the first three sentences. "I got to pay attention to this." The wind-down was natural, and touched head and heart.

## WELS PASTOR

2

Thought: "This is just me easing into the text."

## AVERAGE MEMBER

3

Thought: "Just don't be too boring."

## WORSHIP GUEST

9

The first 30 seconds determines if they're going to attempt to listen, or just let themselves daydream. The final 30 often determines if they're going to come back.



# There was application.

The preacher clearly wanted the listener not simply to know something in the text, but to act or think or emote differently in response to the text.

## WELS PASTOR

5

Thought: "Depending on the text. Some might not have much application." This is based on the number of sermons heard where the primary (sometimes only) application is to be grateful for one's salvation.

## AVERAGE MEMBER

7

Thought: "It would maybe be nice if there was more of this. But so long as we learn about our Savior, that should be enough."

## WORSHIP GUEST

10

If a guest visits, this is probably why. There is - some behavior, some emotion, some situation - they hope can be changed. They want more than news, even more than good news. They want a better life.

# The sermon length was good.

You know...

## WELS PASTOR

5

Thought: "It shouldn't matter, but I know it does. With commercials and social media, people's attention span is shortened."

## AVERAGE MEMBER

9

For the average WELS member, this generally means the shorter, the better. It allows for a maximum of 19 to 20 minutes.

## WORSHIP GUEST

?

Guests are concerned more about service length than sermon length. They're fine with 30-minute sermons, if the sermon is good.

# What DOES'T matter to the prospect?

- Did the preacher wrap up in 20 minutes
- Did the preacher use visual illustrations: screens, props. (Nothing wrong with this. Simply saying dada shows the average prospect doesn't care.)
- Was the preacher funny (Again, nothing wrong with the use of appropriate humor. Simply saying, this isn't what keeps prospects coming back.)
- Did the preacher reference current events (That's not what "relevant" means to most prospects.)

	PASTOR	MEMBER	GUEST
<b>SUPERNATURAL WORKING</b>	10	10	?
The sermon engages the Biblical text.	7	7	10
<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL WORKING OF</b>	7	4	10
<b>THE WORD</b>	5	5	8
The introduction and conclusion were strong.	2	3	9
<b>SUPERNATURAL WORKING</b>	5	7	10
The sermon length was good.	5	9	?

# **SERMON: Lessons Learned**

Your typical worship guest wants a sermon that:

- expounds a portion of Scripture thoroughly,
- is eminently logical,
- is presented winsomely and well,
- affects his Monday, making it somehow better.

Nothing is more important than the sermon. A good sermon will cover over most other issues.

# WELCOMING CULTURE: Lessons Learned

We need to look at what happens before worship, in worship, and after worship, **from the perspective of a worship guest.**



# WELCOMING BEFORE WORSHIP

- Maintain an up-to-date online and social media presence that lets guests know they are welcome, when services are, and what to expect.
- Train greeters/hosts to welcome warmly, answer questions, and help the guest “settle” into worship. Training should include how to greet “the *really* unexpected guest”.
- Create a welcome area where guests can obtain information about the church.
- Have the pastor situated for an adequate amount of time in a location where he can introduce himself to guests. (This is brief. He shares that he wants to speak more *after* worship.)
- Train leaders that no business is done/discussed on Sunday till everyone else has left.

# WELCOMING DURING WORSHIP

- Make worship accessible to a first-time visitor by utilizing a worship folder. (*"Accessible" isn't "comfortable."*)
- Have members trained to recognize and sit near guests.
- Have a time when people greet one another.
- Have ways to collect contact information that allows people to provide as much or as little information as they want. (Make sure this collection method involves members doing whatever it is you're asking guests to do.)
- If your community has children, have a way to acknowledge their presence (children's sermon, nursery, etc.).



# WELCOMING AFTER WORSHIP

- Have hospitality time with refreshments. Train members to “pass-the-potato” with guests. I.e. A member doesn’t get to leave a guest until he has introduced that guest to another member.
- Have systems of worship guest follow-up for every type of contact information provided: snail mail, email, texting. Determine what happens in 24 hours, 5 days, and the following weekend.
- Have the pastor personally involved in follow-up: handwritten thank you card, text from pastor, etc.
- Again, make sure members know the focus is on guests. Church business isn’t discussed unless it pertains to that focus.
- Create ways for guests to provide feedback on their experience. This not only helps them feel appreciated, but it helps you improve your ministry efforts.

# The Gift of Emotional Intelligence

Welcoming guests requires identifying, equipping, and empowering members who have this gift. Because there is no one-right-way to welcome worship guests. Just like guests you have in your home, worship guests are emotionally different. Some are extroverted, wanting to talk to as many people as possible to learn more about the congregation. Others want to talk as little as possible but will still appreciate being noticed and acknowledged. One with emotional difference can quickly tell the difference and respond accordingly.

# WELCOMING CULTURE: Lessons Learned

We need to look at what happens before worship, in worship, and after worship, **from the perspective of a worship guest.**



# PERSONABLE PASTOR: Lessons Learned

People don't need the pastor to be an extrovert or comic or great conversationalist. They do expect him to be accessible and warm.



# Some Pastoral Goals

- Remember people's names the day they visit. (Write it down if necessary.) Know their name by the third time they come back. (This goal is obviously affected by the number of visitors you have.)
- Give guests at least 30 seconds on the way into worship. Give them your name and ask for theirs. Explain you hope they can stick around a bit after, because you want to talk more.
- Give guests at least two minutes after worship. Topics: who all came; what the adults do; what led them to visit. Close with the hope to see them again soon.
- Smile. You're a pastor. It's the Lord's Day. You aren't in a bad mood.
- Be personally involved in worship guest follow-up in some way.

# PERSONABLE PASTOR: Lessons Learned

People don't need the pastor to be an extrovert or comic or great conversationalist. They do expect him to be accessible and warm.



# AAA WORSHIP: Lessons Learned

Plan worship that is:  
**Accessible**, and...  
**Appreciated**,  
and therefore...  
**Authentic.**



# ACCESSIBLE

- A first-time guest can follow along in the worship service (typically because it's laid out in a worship folder or on a screen). He doesn't need to find different pages in multiple books. (Consider using the hymnal *only* for hymns.)
- A first-time guest if he desires can sing along with most parts of the service. This generally means use of tunes that are either *familiar* and/or *regular/repetitive*.



# Accessibility Rating of Music (ARM)

Have some honest, objective individuals go through your services on occasion and rank everything that will be sung on a scale of 1 to 10.

- 10) Almost anyone could sing this from beginning to end their first time through.
- 8) The melody is not too difficult, but it is newer. However, the average person could pick up on this and sing it after hearing the first verse or two. After singing it once, he would be able to sing it easily the following week
- 3) The melody is not too difficult, but it is not widely known. And the hymn is has irregularities (e.g. irregular rhythm, bridges between verses, refrain that comes at irregular intervals). The average person will be able to sing along with some of this, but not all of it.
- 1) This would take multiple weeks for an experienced singer to learn to sing well.

# COMPARE

## ***Amazing Grace***

(CW576)

- Common Meter, consistent throughout all verses
- Hymn itself is widely known
- Shorter verses

**ARM Score**

**10**

## ***Lord, Thee I Love With All My Heart***

(CW817)

- Longer verses with rhythmic complexity (887 887 88 88 488)
- Yet, verse to verse, the melody is the same

**ARM Score**

**5**

## ***Magnificent, Marvelous, Matchless Love***

(CW577)

- Longer verses with extreme rhythmic complexity (10 8 10 8 98 10 10 with refrain)
- Inconsistent in when one sings refrain
- There's a bridge

**ARM Score**

**1**

# COMPARE

## ***The Service - Setting 3***

- Sung Kyrie (congregational response - "Lord, have mercy" - is identical throughout)
- Gloria sung by all (refrain to open and close; in between are three verses that are all different in melody and rhythm)
- Sung Preface (congregational response is different each phrase)
- Sanctus sung by all (no repetition in melody)
- Agnus Dei (repetition in melody)

**ARM Score**

**2**

## ***The Service - Settings 6 to 10***

- Spoken Kyrie
- Gloria set to known metrical tune
- Spoken Preface
- Sanctus sung to known metrical tune
- Agnus Dei sung to known metrical tune

**ARM Score**

**7-10**

# COMPARE

## ***Gloria***

(CW Setting 2)

- Simple refrain that repeats throughout
- Three “verses,” all very different: irregular rhythm and melody
- Range of notes is reasonable

**ARM Score**

**3**

## ***Gloria***

(CW Setting 2 - with cantor)

- Simple refrain that repeats throughout
- Cantor sings verses with congregations coming in on refrains

**ARM Score**

**8**

## ***Gloria***

(CW Setting 7)

- Set to WEBB (a familiar hymn tune)
- Shorter verses
- Complete melodic regularity

**ARM Score**

**10**

# Thinking about hymns

**Opening hymn** - Sets the mood of the service and prepares people for worship. Need to watch length. Should be well known by congregation.

**Hymn of the Day** - Selected from the list of our best hymns to match the liturgical theme of the lectionary (no ARM target)

**Sermon hymn** - Careful to match with sermon focus; often has emotional content; first hymn during distribution

**Closing hymn** - short hymn or several stanzas; well known. Sends people out with hearts lifted.

The Hymnal Project Committee did not give you ten settings for you to use them all. They gave you ten settings so you'd have options.

They did not provide you with 200 new hymns so you could have four new ones in one service.

IMO, in WELS, in many locations, we are using the hymnal poorly... trying too much too fast.

# APPRECIATED

- Members (and guests to a lesser degree) comprehend what is going on. The usage of canticles and hymns... rites and customs... is understood.
- Members are grateful that the pastor plans worship that is indeed accessible to them. (Worship is not simply about the pastor's personal preferences.) Each week, they can participate confidently, not timidly.
- Members know worship has been planned with a time target in mind. There is an understanding that members might have other things to do that day.

# Comprehension of the Service

## **Worship folder footnote about the Kyrie**

The word *kyrie* is a Greek word from the phrase *Kyrie eleison* which means "Lord, have mercy!" This is the most heartfelt cry of a believer to his Lord. At this point in the worship service it is not a cry for forgiveness. The forgiveness of sins has just been announced. Thus, the Kyrie is cry for mercy that our Lord and King hear us and help us in our necessities and trouble. Christians have been praying the Kyrie at Sunday worship for more than 1700 years.



# Time Targets

The average over-scheduled American has expectations of how long certain things will take. They think of a worship service as being about one hour.

What is probably more important than being done in an hour is being consistent. When worship is 40 minutes one week and 90 the next, that perplexes members.

# Shooting for an Hour: Is it even possible?

- ❑ Limiting the sermon: 14 minutes or less
- ❑ Carefully tracking hymn usage: length of verses, number of verses, etc.
- ❑ Careful psalm selection
- ❑ Consideration for liturgy (spoken is 2X faster than sung)
- ❑ Thoughtful liturgical pivots

## WHO ARE YOU PLANNING FOR?

short sermon +  
full and sung liturgy +  
four hymns with all verses  
= *Member Focus*

longer sermon +  
liturgy spoken & sung +  
Select verses of four carefully  
chosen hymns  
= *Prospect Focus*

# AUTHENTIC

- Because worship is accessible, members can participate confidently, they participate joyfully.
- Because worship is appreciated, members see the meaning in the traditions and customs.
- **Guests pick up on this.** They can distinguish between your members going through the motions because they feel they have to versus participating joyfully because they want to. Guests are OK with the fact it will take them some time to learn your worship patterns *if they think it is something your members appreciate.*

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# GOOD ATMOSPHERE & AESTHETIC: Lessons Learned

Your worship space need not be ornate. But you do want it to be tasteful and include visual elements that contribute to the emotional tone ("mood"; "vibe") of worship.



## ***Some of this is challenging***

- Space is optimized for acoustics. (Optimum reverb of about 2.3 seconds.)
- Worship instrumentation is selected and optimized for the space.

## ***Most of this is not complicated***

- An entry space that is free of clutter, brightly lit, with some simple artwork and church literature that is professional looking
- A rented worship space with matching paraments and banners.
- Bathrooms that are clean and bright.
- Children's area that is clean and safe.

# GOOD ATMOSPHERE & AESTHETIC: Lessons Learned

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# RESPECT FOR CHILDREN: Lessons Learned

With worship guests who have children, about one-third do not expect anything "special" for their children in worship.

**Two-thirds do.**





# Worship “for Children”

## **This could mean a huge variety of things:**

- A children’s message within the normal service
- Frequent use of children’s choir
- A “children’s church” where children of a certain age are excused during the sermon
- A staffed nursery for the very young children
- Acolytes for the older children
- A “worship bag” for children to bring into the sanctuary

**It is generally not that prospects are looking for something specific. They are simply looking for tangible evidence that your congregation appreciates that children are there.**

# RESPECT FOR CHILDREN: Lessons Learned

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# QUALITY WEBSITE: Lessons Learned

The website is the new front-door of your church. **80% of worship guests look at your website before they visit.**



# Questions about your website

- Is your website meant primary for members or for guests?
- If it's primarily for guests, what do you want to share? What do you want them to know right away? What are things you want them to know about your church, but maybe *after* they get to know you personally? (Think about it this way. If you were having a spiritual conversation with someone, where would you start? *Where wouldn't* you start?)
- Aside for the messaging, what does the appearance of your website communicate about the conversation. (Imagine your website was in a language people didn't understand. What would they guess about your organization.)

# Consider *not* putting the whole service on the website.

- Just share the sermon and snippets (e.g. the anthem your children's choir sang).
- This gives members spiritual edification if they must miss worship, without communicating that watching online is just as good as being in-person.
- It gives prospects a taste of the tip of the pyramid, but not the whole thing.
- There are other ways to get the service to homebound members.

# QUALITY WEBSITE: Lessons Learned

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**Sermon**

**Welcoming  
Culture**

**Personable  
Pastor**

**ESSENTIAL**

**AAA Worship**

**Good  
Atmosphere &  
Aesthetic**

**CRUCIAL**

**Respect for  
Children**

**Quality  
Website**

# **WORSHIP LESSONS LEARNED FROM CONSULTING**

**Jonathan Hein**

2024 WELS National Conference on Worship, Music, & the Arts