

**“Worshipping into God’s Future” PowerPoint Slide Show Script**  
**Worship and Education Ministry Team**  
**Local Church Ministries:**  
**A Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ**

*(This script was created to accompany the “Worshipping into God’s Future” PowerPoint Presentation available at [ucc.org/worship](http://ucc.org/worship).)*

Slide 1

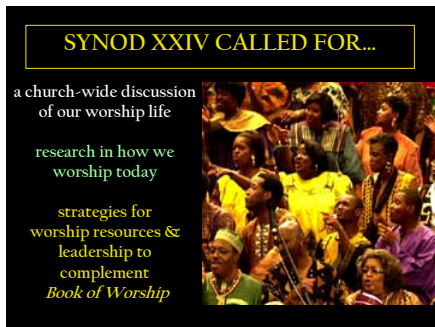


“Worshipping into God’s Future” is an exciting worship initiative for the entire United Church of Christ. For over the past two years, the Worship and Education Team of Local Church Ministries and The Office of Research have gathered vital information about the worshiping life of our congregations.

These slides present some of the riches of that initiative. Please use them for reflecting on your own congregation’s worship practices. You might use the entire slide show or select just one or two slides for reflection.

For a more thorough report, download “Summary and Strategies 2005.” It is available on-line at [www.ucc.org/worship](http://www.ucc.org/worship).

Slide 2



The Twenty-fourth General Synod of the UCC in 2003, passed a resolution that called for a church-wide discussion of our worship life, research into our current worship practices and trial resources, and possible strategies to complement our *Book of Worship*.

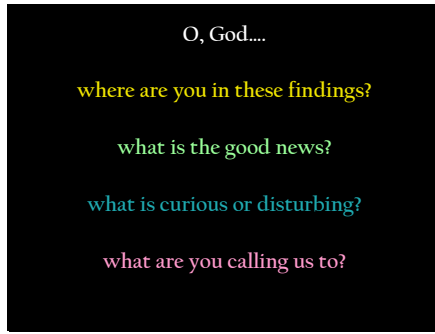
These slides include a sampling of the results of the significant resolution.

Slide 3



Take a moment in prayer. Invite God to reveal insights and ways that worship in your own congregation may be even more vital, more central to the life of your church.

Slide 4



Consider the following prayer as you discern what God may be calling from your own congregation.

Slide 5



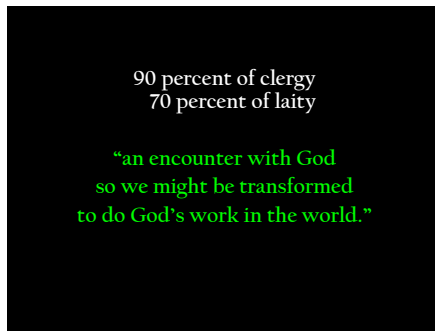
“Worshiping into God’s Future” heard from UCC churches in an overwhelming way. Through surveys, focus groups, and on-line feedback, we received over 12,000 responses including at least one response from 38 percent of all our congregations.

Slide 6



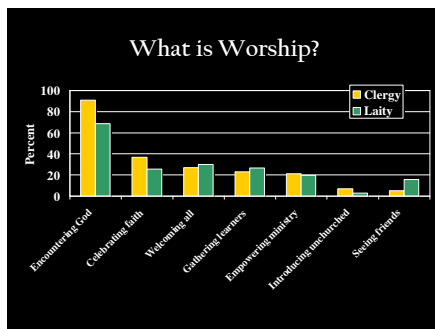
From those responses, we discovered how we currently understand and practice worship.

Slide 7



Laity and clergy alike overwhelmingly describe worship “as an encounter with God that leads to doing God's work in the world.”

Slide 8



This slide illustrates how “worship as an encounter with God” compares with other understandings expressed by clergy and laity.

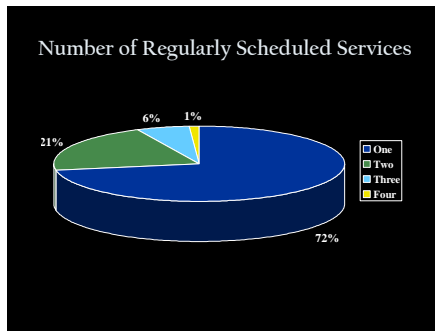


Slide 12



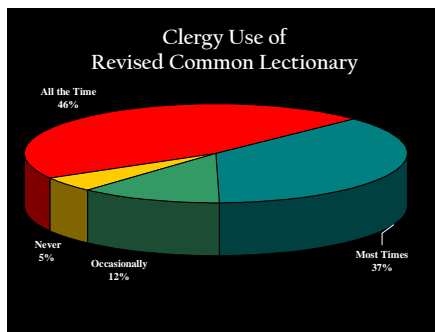
We also asked about what is actually happening at worship in UCC congregations.

Slide 13



We discovered that most of our congregations only have one scheduled worship service.

Slide 14

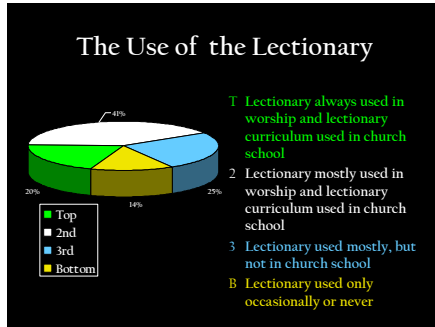


We found out that 95 percent of our congregations use the *Revised Common Lectionary* in some way in planning or actual worship and preaching.

This finding represents a remarkable increase of use of the lectionary since 1990, when 67 percent of our congregations used the lectionary in some way.

Such broad use of the lectionary reinforces our strong emphasis on the Bible in worship, and also expresses an ecumenical spirit as we join with other denominations around common Bible readings.

Slide 15



This slide illustrates the range of use of the lectionary among our congregations—from those who use it in worship and Christian education to those who do not use it at all.

Slide 16

- ### Worship Elements
- Always or almost always Included
- Prelude
  - Call to Worship
  - Invocation
  - Time with Children
  - Prayer of Our Savior/Lord's Prayer
  - Pastoral Prayer
  - Joys and Concerns
  - Bible Reading
  - Sermon
  - Announcements
  - Offertory/Offering/Prayer of Dedication/Doxology
  - Benediction
  - Postlude

When asked about what congregations do in worship, they identified the frequency of different elements of worship.

The "always or almost always" category might best describe elements that are evident in most UCC worship services. For example, 96 percent almost or almost always have a sermon, 86 percent have a time with children, 95 percent have a time of sharing joys and concerns, and 98 percent include the Prayer of Our Savior/Lord's Prayer.

Slide 17

- ### Worship Elements
- Sometimes Included
- Processional
  - Confession and Words of Assurance
  - Statement of Faith
  - Creed
  - Passing the Peace
  - Time of Greeting
  - Responsive or Sung Psalm
  - Other Responsive Liturgy
  - Prayer Concerns, written or oral
  - Silent Prayer
  - Prayer of Thanksgiving

Certain worship elements were only included in worship sometimes. For example, here the UCC Statement of Faith is used always or almost always by only 4 percent of our congregations and used 74 percent occasionally.

Slide 18

### Worship Elements

Less frequently or never included

- Collect
- Items from Calendar of Prayer
- Congregation Stands for Bible Reading
- Readings from Contemporary Texts
- Drama
- Video Clips
- Testimony
- Altar Call
- Mission or Stewardship Moment

Some worship elements are used by a small percentage of churches. For example, 2 percent of our congregations might always or almost always have an altar call. On the other hand, 13 percent may occasionally have an altar call, and 85 percent never have one.

Slide 19

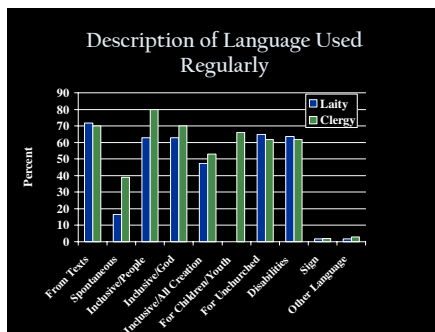
### What about the words we use in worship?



Ebenezer United Church of Christ, Burlington NC

“Worshiping into God’s Future” also explored the language that we use in our worship.

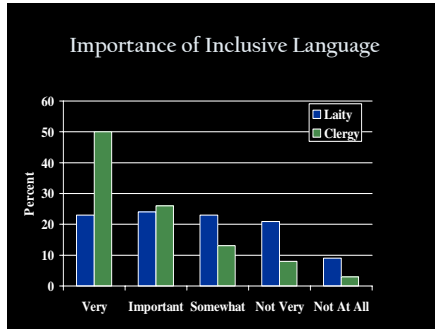
Slide 20



This slide identifies the kinds of language used in worship and how frequently we use it. “From Texts” refers to language that is read from the Bible or in bulletins. “Spontaneous” refers to informal language not found in texts. “Inclusive” was not defined in a particular way, persons identified their practice of it in their own ways.

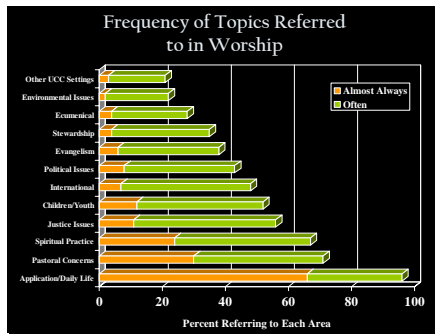
The slide also identifies the use of language sensitive children, youth, those who are disabled, and those who are not familiar with church. “Other language” refers to the use of another language other than the one that is dominant in a congregation. For example, this might mean the use of Spanish for primarily English-speaking congregations.

Slide 21



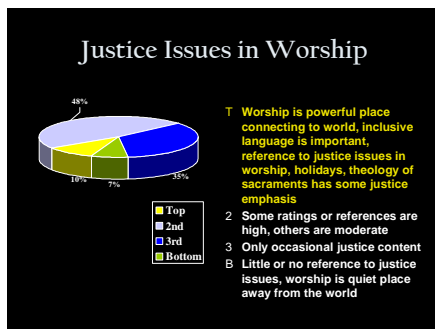
Where the last slide identified the use of inclusive language, this slide identifies the importance of such language for laity and clergy within the UCC.

Slide 22



This slide identifies the topics that are mentioned in a local congregation's worship service. For example, what is mentioned in prayers, concerns and celebrations, and sermons?

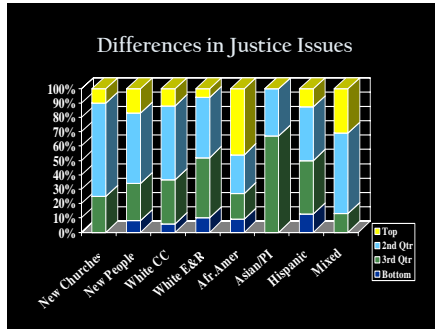
Slide 23



Ten percent of our congregations make a profound prophetic commitment to connecting worship with justice. Others do it to a lesser degree. Those 10 percent do all these things:

- They understand worship as a powerful place to connect with the world.
- Emphasize an understanding of sacraments that relate to the "reign of God's love and justice."
- Mention the environment, economics, race, and other social issues in worship.
- Use inclusive language.
- Commemorate special days as Martin Luther King Jr. Day, World AIDS Day, and Amistad Sunday.

Slide 24



This slide describes responses of particular historical or cultural-based congregations to connecting worship and justice. African American congregations seem to be most represented in the top 10 percent.

Slide 25



What about worship styles?  
Are we traditional, contemporary, blended, emerging?  
Does it matter?

Slide 26

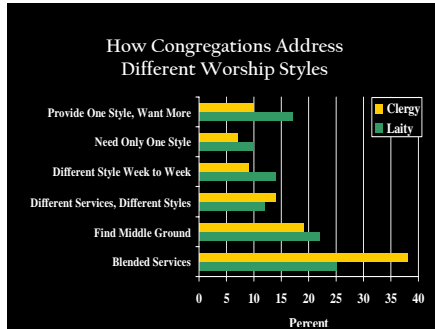
60 percent congregations  
Traditional and primarily traditional  
in primary worship service

11 percent in primary,  
30 percent in additional  
Contemporary and primarily  
contemporary

Over half of us describe our primary worship service as traditional, 11 percent of us describe it as contemporary.

In second or additional services, however, 30 percent describe worship as contemporary.

Slide 27



We approach the worship style concern in a variety of ways. Most congregations attempt to blend their service, drawing upon a traditional flow of worship expressed with both contemporary and traditional elements. For congregations with only one style of worship, laity desire, more than clergy, to try out new styles.

Slide 28



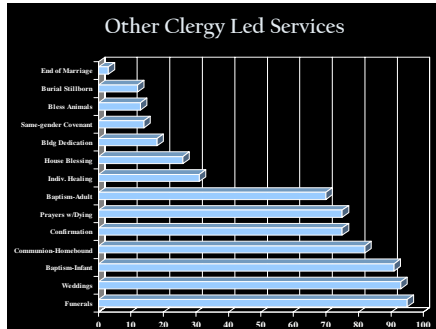
We also discovered a variety of special and occasional services that our congregations hold dear.

Slide 29



This slide describes the involvement of our congregations in special services usually not held on Sundays. Some of these services are held in one's own congregation, some are held in one's own congregation but invites other congregations to participate, and some are held elsewhere along with other congregations. More than any other special service, we participate in special Christmas Eve services.

Slide 30



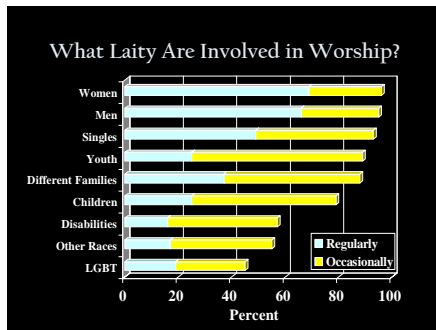
When asked to identify special liturgies that clergy have participated in during the past two years, funerals were the most frequent response. Healing services, house blessings, and same-gender covenants were also included among the kinds of services that some UCC clergy perform.

Slide 31



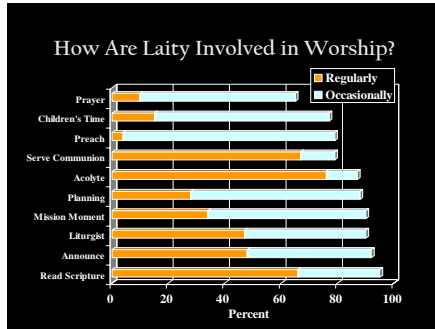
Who is involved in worship in our congregations? How are they involved?

Slide 32



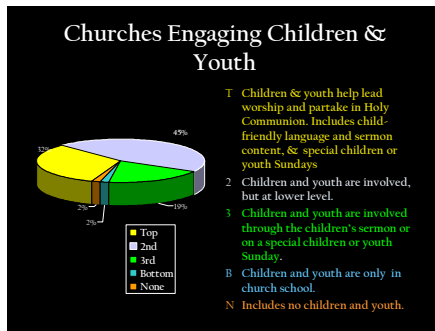
This slide shows the range of types of persons involved in worship or worship planning.

Slide 33



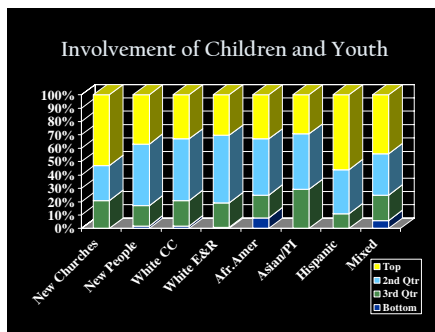
This slide is more explicit pointing to the ways that laity are involved.

Slide 34



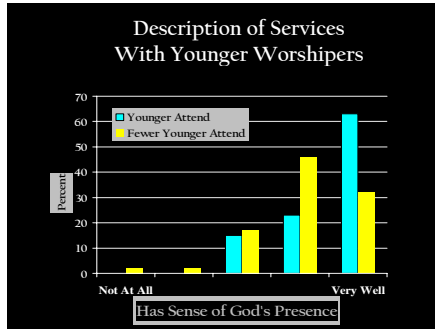
In about 32 percent of our congregations, children and youth are highly involved in worship, including being leaders, receiving communion, participating in special children or youth Sundays, and hearing child-friendly language. In nearly half of our churches, 45 percent, children and youth are involved, but to at a lower level. Children and youth are more involved in churches with 101 to 750 members than in smaller or larger congregations.

Slide 35



This slide indicates that children and youth are more involved in newer congregations and racial ethnic congregations, especially Hispanic ones.

Slide 36



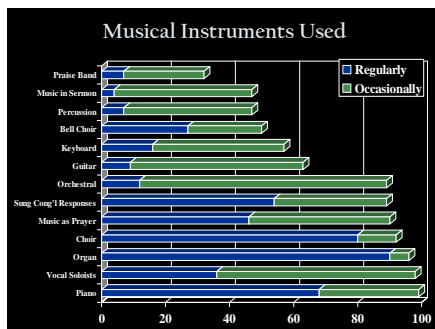
There was also some great news! For congregations that say they have a strong "sense of God's presence" in worship, they also report strong attendance of younger people. We wonder about whether worship with a strong sense of God's presence draws younger people? Or is it that the presence of younger people seems to magnify the sense of God's presence in worship?

Slide 37



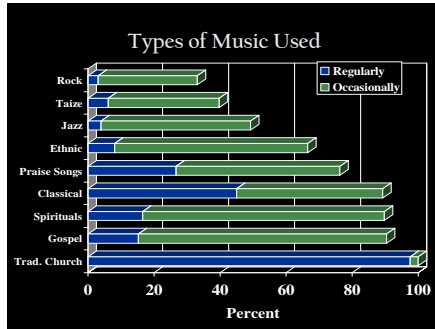
What did we discover about the use of music in UCC worship?

Slide 38



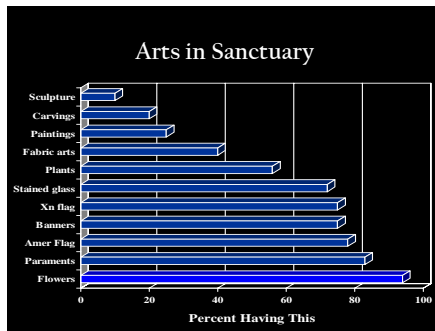
Music matters. The organ is used in 97 percent of our congregations. But bell choirs, drums, praise bands are also part of our celebrations.

Slide 39



*The New Century Hymnal* is being used in 60 percent of our congregations, 65 percent of the time. Yet we also sing a diverse collection of music from our hymnals and other sources. We sing spirituals, praise songs, jazz, songs from around the world and even Taize-type chants.

Slide 40



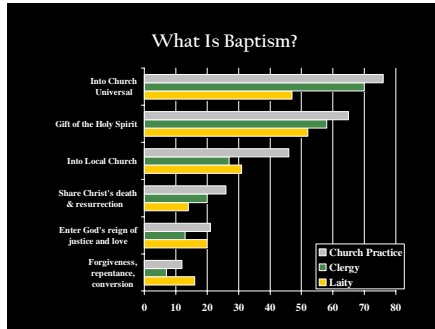
In terms of other art forms in worship, flowers and fabric paraments are prominent. Almost 80 percent of our congregations include an American flag somewhere in the worship space.

Slide 41



We explored the waters of baptism and Christ's table as part of the "Worshiping into God's Future" initiative.

Slide 42



Clergy and laity were invited to select two meanings of baptism that they emphasize. They were also to suggest the meaning that they thought their entire church emphasized. Baptism as an "entry into the Church Universal" was the most frequent response.

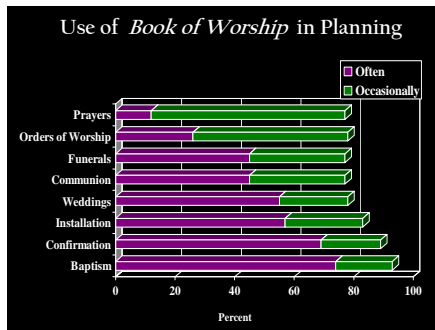
Slide 43

What about the words used at Baptism?

[Book of Worship for Baptism](#)  
 92 percent often or occasionally,  
 more than for any other rite.

When it comes to the words we use for the Baptism rite, we use the *Book of Worship*. And we use the *Book of Worship* for Baptism more than we use it for any other rite as funerals, weddings, or Holy Communion.

Slide 44



This slide describes the use of the Book of Worship for a variety of rites. Here we see the overwhelming use of the Book for baptism.

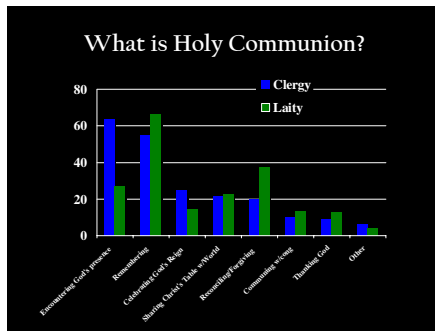
Slide 45

62 percent of congregations  
 “in the name of the Father, Son, and  
 Holy Spirit”

36 percent  
 Other words as  
 “in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
 One God, Mother of us All.”

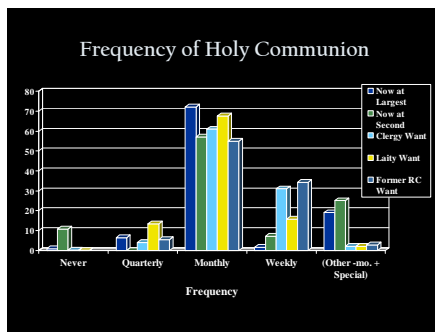
Although the traditional baptism formula is used by 62 percent of our congregations, and is the only alternative suggested in Book of Worship, 36 percent of our congregations may use other language.

Slide 46



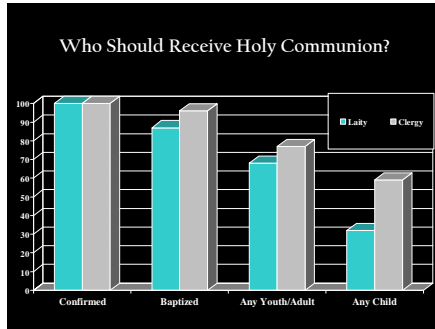
Clergy and laity were also invited to identify two meanings of Holy Communion that they emphasize. While clergy emphasized Holy Communion as “a meal in which we encounter God’s living presence,” laity emphasized “a remembrance of Jesus’ last supper, death, and resurrection.”

Slide 47



This slide indicates the frequency of Holy Communion at the primary worship service and, if they have one, at a second service. It also indicates that although over 70 percent of our churches celebrate Holy Communion, 31 percent of clergy would prefer celebrating it weekly. UCC laity, formerly Roman Catholic, also indicate a slightly higher interest in weekly celebration of Holy Communion.

Slide 48



When it comes to who is invited to the table, we reflect traditional understandings, but also seem to identify new practice. As expected, we invite 100 percent of those confirmed and to a bit lesser degree, all the baptized. Perhaps this is because some congregations do not invite unconfirmed children to the sacrament.

Our congregations, however, seem to break from ecumenical tradition that sees Holy Communion as a meal of the baptized. We do this when almost 70 percent of our churches invite youth or adults, whether baptized or not, to the table. The invitation is extended to children only to a slight degree less.

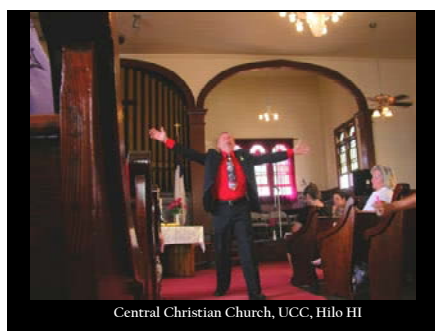
Slide 49



Not only did we hear about what is currently going on in worship, we discussed how we were doing, tried out one another's worship ideas, and experience freshly composed words and music.

We did this through a packet of reflections, prayers, music, and images. These resources continue to be available at [www.ucc.org/worship](http://www.ucc.org/worship) at the "Worship into God's Future" link.

Slide 50



In those resources, we discovered a service of praise and healing at Central Christian Church, UCC in Hilo, Hawaii.

Slide 51



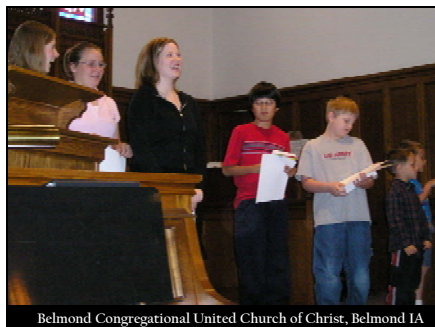
We identified the connection between the mission of a congregation, one that is Christian and Africentric, with worship through Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago.

Slide 52



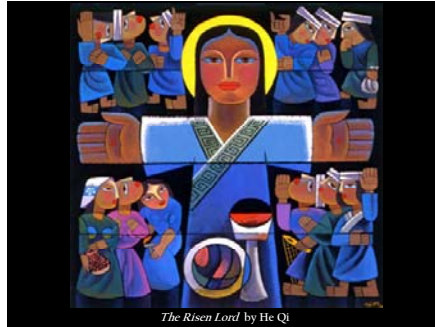
We heard about the gifts of praise, of multimedia, and team-developed worship through a seeker worship service at Sulphur Springs UCC in Sulphur Springs, Indiana.

Slide 53



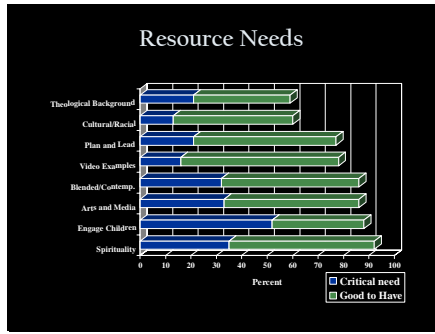
We considered the cross-generation and blended worship service at Belmond Congregational UCC in Belmond, Iowa.

Slide 54



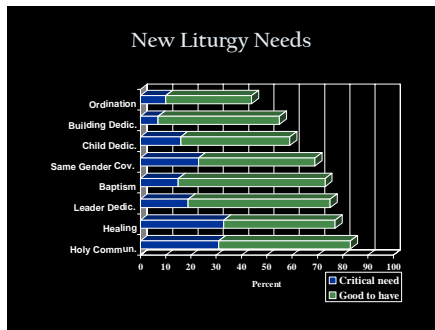
Congregations were also invited to try new liturgies, music, and visual images.

Slide 55



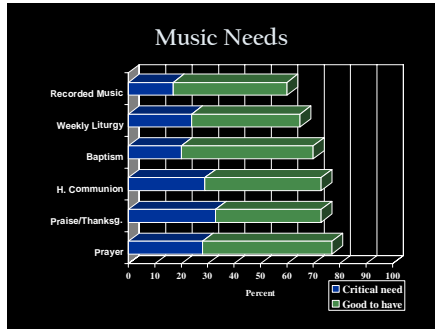
As a result of the survey and the trial liturgies, we discovered the need for resources that connect spirituality and worship and for resources that connect children with worship.

Slide 56



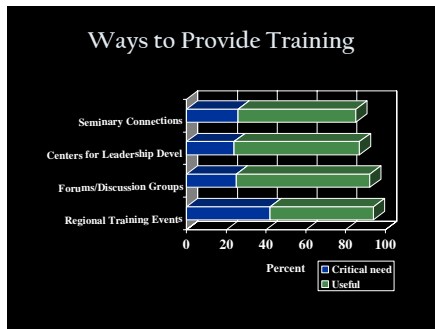
We found out that we continue to want a variety of liturgies especially for Holy Communion and for healing. Many of these resources are being created at this very time.

Slide 57



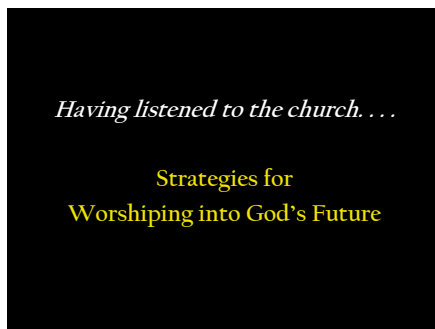
Congregations expressed a need for praise and prayer music.

Slide 58



When it comes to worship leadership training, there was a high interest in regional training events within the United Church of Christ.

Slide 59



The Worship and Education Ministry Team, have heard your diverse voices and heart-felt reflections about worship in the United Church of Christ.


We are beginning to identify our next steps. Please review "Summary and Strategies 2005" at [www.ucc.org/worship](http://www.ucc.org/worship) for more detailed descriptions of those strategies.

The strategies are diverse and include both worship resource and leadership development and training.

Slide 60

Primary Strategy

Continue prayerful conversations  
about our worship and sacramental life  
through  
resources and leadership development




Please know that the strategies will continue the prayerful reflection and vital renewal of worship in the United Church of Christ.

- We will continue to promote significant findings and hope you will reflect on them
- We will engage with conferences, seminaries, and other settings in enriching both clergy and lay worship leadership.
- We will continue to seek your voice, and draw upon your own gifts of praise, song, prayer, Word, and sacrament.

Slide 61

With grateful hearts,  
awaiting more light and truth,  
open to God's future,  
we worship the Living God!



May you continue to reflect prayerfully on your worship and sacramental life. May your worship and witness reveal the Living Christ! May the peace of Christ be yours.

Slide 62

