



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

**ATTENTION:**

- Bishop-elect
- Installation Planning Committee
- Worship Planners

## PLANNING WORSHIP FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A BISHOP

Preparing worship and music for the installation of a bishop provides creative opportunities and unique challenges. This article is designed to assist worship planners who have worked primarily in local worshipping communities (i.e., smaller venues, weekly worship), so that they might take full advantage of the opportunities while avoiding potential pitfalls. When planning for a large, one-time event, the need for being well-prepared intensifies. Flexibility is still possible and the Spirit is still at work when close attention to details increases the likelihood that this church's convictions about worship come to rich expression. Careful, collaborative planning minimizes the chance for chaos or confusion.

Always keep in mind that not only is the installation of a new bishop very important in the life of the synod, it is also a churchwide event.

The suggestions that follow may vary in the extent to which they apply to your planning, depending on the different sites and circumstances surrounding any particular bishop's installation.

### Some basic assumptions

It is a common temptation for those preparing a one-time worship event to put too much into it. In most cases, less is better, if not best. Make **wise decisions** about which liturgical texts, music, hymns, and ritual action to use. Challenge worshipers without confusing them. Nurture them without boring them.

It is important to attend to what **new worship resources** may be available in this church. For instance, some synods would benefit from a bilingual service. When such materials become available, these synods should work closely with members from the corresponding ethnic or language-specific community in planning and creatively honoring the rich diversity of the synod. (With regard to language, keep in mind the possibility of communicating with American Sign Language.)

Because this is a one-time event, new materials require precise **leadership** that draws the best from the assembly. The introductions and rhythms of new music need to be clear. New spoken texts should be tested in advance by worship planners. Speak them aloud, listening for challenging phrases and cadences. If newer materials are incorporated, include enough that is familiar to avoid frustrating the assembly.

Worship leaders need to be prepared, so plan for their **rehearsal**. (Build adequate time into the schedule well in advance of the service.) Presiding ministers and assisting ministers may be working with vessels and books that are unfamiliar to them. Give them the opportunity to

pick things up, turn the pages, and experience how things feel. **Rehearse movement** as well, so that leaders communicate to the gathering that they are both comfortable and confident. A choir should become familiar with spoken texts as well as with the music they lead in order to assist the assembly throughout the worship.

Clear layout of **worship folders** is critical for strong leadership and for healthy participation of the assembly.

The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will serve as the **presiding minister** from the beginning of the service through the installation of the newly elected bishop. It is preferable that the presiding bishop also serve as **preacher**. The newly elected bishop should have a conversation with the presiding bishop regarding the decision about preaching.

### **Worship planners**

Though worship planning teams vary from synod to synod, the group of planners for the installation of a bishop should always include:

- One person who keeps an eye on the “big picture”—a leader among the worship planners who has the authority to make necessary decisions, even as the liturgy unfolds. This person should be in close contact with the newly elected bishop and attentive to the timeline for providing a draft of the service to the Office of the Presiding Bishop for authorization. This person is responsible for facilitating everything, from the readers testing the microphone to providing uninterrupted rehearsal time for a choir.
- A coordinator/host for all worship leaders who sees that vestments, microphones, leader materials, drinking water (especially for the presiding minister/preacher), and more are ready and available prior to the service. This person may also be responsible for liturgical rehearsals (such as processions), or that task may be assigned to someone else.
- One person to coordinate music and all musicians.
- A person responsible for the space: artwork, vestments, paraments, plants, flowers, etc. This person may also serve as sacristan. (See next bullet.)
- A sacristan to coordinate a team of people who prepare and clean communion vessels, and iron vestments and paraments. The sacristan makes sure that what is required for the liturgy is in place when needed.
- A person to coordinate hospitality and to lead those who distribute worship folders, receive the offering, and guide worshipers to the meal of communion.
- A person to operate and/or communicate with the operator of the sound or electronic media system. (While a local sound technician may be available, it is still necessary to have someone indicating to that person when various microphones have to be “live,” which depends on the various speaking/singing parts.)

Local circumstances may necessitate additional people for particular tasks. Make sure you have enough people to get the job done well without being overwhelmed or confused by involving too many.

## Creating a worship space

The installation of a bishop may take place in the worship space of a large church building. In many ways, this is preferred, especially if it is the home of an ELCA congregation. But because of size limitation, an auditorium, convention center, or hotel ballroom may be required.

The advantage to using **an existing worship space** is that the furnishings and instruments are already in place. But even a large worship space may present challenges when planning for worship that draws many people who are not familiar with the building and with the flow of movement during worship (for instance, during the meal of Holy Communion). Worship planners working in space that is not their “home” need to anticipate and think carefully about practical matters as well as about challenges that may be particular to this event. Consider the importance of sight lines to where the activity is taking place, whether at the font, the pulpit, or the table.

**A large ballroom** provides flexibility. The room can be set to the planners’ specification. Take advantage of the flexibility. Resist the temptation to assume a theatre-type set-up with a single platform in the front, especially if other configurations increase visibility and ease of movement. Creatively think about how to provide space between the place of reading scripture and preaching, and the place of table fellowship. There are a multitude of possibilities. When designing the space, **simplicity** contributes to seeing the Word and the Sacraments as central to the gathering.

**An auditorium** presents the greatest challenge. Fixed seating on a sloping floor with a stage at one end of the room risks making members of the assembly feel like spectators, rather than active participants. If you must function in an auditorium, use as many ideas from this article as possible, and do the best you can to emphasize a healthy understanding of the assembly’s role in worship.

In a worship space that allows for flexibility and customizing the set-up, the **flow and timing of communion** benefits from similarly sized sections for each communion station. Approximately 125 people per section is optimal. Consider having communion ministers come forward as offertory presenters who hold the bread and wine. This allows for direct movement to their assigned stations. In some synods, this option yields to the desire to have all of the bread and wine on the table during the Great Thanksgiving. In any event, the desire is to expedite the start of distribution.

If your synod has **worship furnishings** that are portable, you are sure to have what you need. The challenge is purchasing or creating them, storing them, and transporting them. If you do not have dedicated furniture for use at assemblies and other events not held in a church building, you need to be creative and careful with what is available at the hotel or convention center or with secular furnishing that might be rented and made to work.

**Table/Altar:** Traditionally, altars are approximately 40 inches high. Most banquet tables are about 30 inches high. Using a banquet table “as is” often results in uncomfortable awkwardness for the presiding minister and the assembly. Be creative about raising the table to a better height. (Consider such options as risers built for the occasion, cinder blocks, or even 8-10 inch lengths of PVC pipe used as extenders of the table legs.) Do not depend on the on-site staff to provide what is needed. Measure and plan for this during an

advance, preparatory site visit. Be sure that ministers are alerted not to lean against the altar, which is likely to be less solid than the permanent furnishings they are used to.

**Baptismal font:** The installation of a bishop is not the location for a baptism. Still, a prominently placed font in the worship space reinforces the **importance of baptism** in the lives of God's people and in the worship of every Christian assembly. In keeping with Martin Luther's encouragement for a daily return to baptism, thanksgiving for baptism may be part of the gathering at this service. However, this can be the trickiest piece of liturgical furniture to create, especially when taking seriously the need for something of sufficient size with plenty of water so that it will not be overwhelmed by the size of the space. Consider a children's wading pool or the liner for an outdoor water feature (borrowed from a local nursery) that might be surrounded by a temporary wall of stone or bricks and adorned with plants or flowers.

**Pulpit/Ambo: Proclamation of the Word** is central to the gathering. Most convention centers have a "podium" or "lectern" of some sort that can be used for reading from scripture and preaching. Judicious use of fabric can cover some of the distracting characteristics, like the name of the site, and can add appropriate liturgical color. Again, plan for this in advance and then be prepared with pins, duct tape, needle and thread, or whatever else may help to transform the "local furnishings." It is also possible that a congregation in the synod has a pulpit that actually can be carefully transported to the site.

**Kneeling bench (prie dieu):** Prior to the beginning of the worship service, a kneeling bench should be placed for the rite of installation. Enough room should be provided so that the presiding bishop and others laying on hands will have comfortable access to the bishop-elect who is kneeling.

**Paraments:** A synod with its own worship furniture is likely to have the paraments necessary for this service. In some instances, paraments borrowed from a congregation or purchased for the event may work with make-shift furnishings. A large space actually provides more freedom for using fabric (or various fabrics) to adorn the worship space.

For the table, a large piece of quality, white fabric is both essential and basic. It must cover a standard banquet table (8', adjustable for 6' tables) from floor to floor all around. Be sure to account for the extra height described above. Again, pins and duct tape can be used to "custom fit" in the back and around corners. Other colors can be hung over the white in creative, yet tasteful, ways. Remember that red is the primary color for the installation of a bishop and that simplicity is desired. Another large piece of white fabric may begin the transformation of a hotel lectern.

**Vestments:** Vestments are unlikely to be created for this one-time event. A matching set should be used for the principal worship leaders. If possible, the use of matching albs for all worship leaders contributes to the aesthetics of the worship. In any event, the best source for vestments is usually a congregation willing and able to loan what they own. In some settings, having everyone bring their own vestments may be necessary. Like with all decisions, think this through carefully.

Remember that synod pastors and rostered lay ministers should be invited to vest and process as part of this service. Together with ecumenical guests, make sure to alert all potential participants to what is expected so that they are aware of what to bring (the clothing associated with their ministries) and where they will meet for vesting. Usually, with ecumenical guests, it is best that they vest in ways that are consistent with their own tradition rather than “dressing like Lutherans.”

As with every gathering around the means of grace, this service deserves attention to care and dignity. Be prepared with irons and steamers to deal with wrinkled vestments or paraments.

**Cross:** As the primary sign of Christian faith, a significant cross should always be visible. It is the most tangible and familiar sign of our faith. Whether stationary on a platform, hanging above the altar table, carried in procession, or projected on a screen or wall, be sure that it is of appropriate size and dignity for the room.

**Communion vessels:** Some synods have adequate numbers of matching communion vessels. Others simply borrow from congregations. Consider the method of distribution, the number of communion stations, and ease of use when determining which vessels to use. If non-alcoholic wine and gluten-free bread are to be offered, it is preferred to identify a single station for this distribution rather than making varied elements available at each station. Clear and hospitable directions in a worship folder can direct people with special dietary limitations to this station.

**Candles:** Candles have a time-honored use in our churches and can be helpful in creating a sacred space. For most gatherings, especially for Holy Communion, candles are best used to mark the primary focal points of Word, Meal, and Baptism.

Be aware that the use of candles in public spaces may be limited by local fire codes. Convention centers and hotels often have differing regulations they are required to follow. Be certain to talk this through with the site manager in order to obtain the necessary permissions. In most places candles will be allowed when used carefully for worship. Be prepared to provide glass “globes” if necessary and, at the very least, followers that fit the candles.

**Plants and flowers:** Green plants and/or cut flowers can help transform a ballroom into a room for sacred use. They can also be costly. However, just as is true in a congregation, there may be individual donors who are willing to provide flowers for the installation of a bishop. In some instances, plants may be borrowed or rented. (Check with a local florist or nursery.) Be sure that they are of an appropriate size for the room. Plants of varied heights (from about human height down to very small) may be arranged attractively in key places in the worship space. When used, plants should draw attention to the central things of worship.

**Art:** Artwork can either inspire or detract. The use of art should support and enhance thanksgiving for baptism, proclamation of God’s Word, and celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Artwork positioned around the perimeter of the room may be helpful in creating a sacred space, but should also visually lead to the central things. Too much art distracts from worship and may seem to “clutter” the space.

Projected images on large screens may be used as art (usually referred to as “media art”). The advantage of a digital file on a computer is that it requires much less space for storage than a large tapestry or painting. To use projected images with integrity requires state-of-the-art equipment and technicians capable of operating it. Expenses sometimes depend on the desired effect, from high resolution projection (most expensive) to the use of a simple stenciled image put over a spotlight (sometimes called a “gobo,” which is less expensive).

Projected art requires close attention to copyright restrictions.

If screens are used to project texts of hymns and songs, be certain that:

- appropriate copyrights have been obtained;
- materials are also available in print for those who can’t see the screens;
- music is provided for those who read music; and
- the person responsible for changing the text has rehearsed with musicians and understands that the text must appear before worshipers are expected to sing.

### **Printed materials**

The actual printed worship folder can function in numerous ways:

- As a work of art showing care and attention to beauty. (Consider using local artists, perhaps children, for cover designs.)
- As a functional piece of information to guide the assembly through the worship.
- As an educational piece. (Brief descriptors and carefully worded rubrics can help teach and explain about portions of the liturgy itself. For example: “The assembly stands and sings to welcome the gospel.” Again, less is best.)

Be certain that all necessary copyrights are obtained and credited properly.

**REMINDER:** Prior to printing, a final draft of the service folder and leader pages must be sent to the Office of the Presiding Bishop for review and approval. (See “**Liturgical Review**” in the planning packet.)

It would be hospitable to prepare a number of worship folders in large print. In some synods, it may be necessary to prepare translations of worship materials for any worshipers whose primary language is other than English.

Prepare a binder of materials for the worship leaders in large print on non-glossy paper, carefully marked with information about who says what and from where, as well as critical posture or gesture instructions. Keep it simple. Large paragraphs of directions are distracting while leading worship. Encourage the principal assisting minister and/or “master of ceremonies” (sometimes call the “director of the liturgy”) to mark the leader’s materials during rehearsal.

### **Processions**

The presiding bishop would normally come last in any procession. Local piety and protocol may alter the details of the order, but the following is offered as a standard order for procession. At the end of the liturgy, it would be appropriate for the newly-installed bishop to process immediately before the presiding bishop. Brackets [] indicate optional participants.

Cross  
Candles/Torches  
Book—Bible or lectionary  
Vergers [master of ceremonies]  
Synodical rostered lay ministers  
Synodical clergy  
Invited clergy of other church bodies who are not bishops  
Bishops or judicatory leaders of other church bodies  
Bishops or judicatory leaders of full communion churches  
Synodical bishops of the ELCA  
Bishop-elect [with the secretary of the synod]  
Preacher (if not the presiding bishop)  
Principal assisting minister  
Presiding bishop

Choir, communion ministers, pastors, bishops, and ecumenical guests who participate in the procession will move to their seats when the procession arrives at, or passes by, their respective designated seating areas.

### **Sound systems and lighting**

Worship leaders, functioning in hotel ballrooms and other spaces not designed for worship, are often dealing with sound systems and acoustics that are not familiar to them.

- In a dry acoustic, assembly singing can be enhanced if the congregation itself is amplified and the sound fed back to them.
- Be certain that the organ and each individual instrument is adequately amplified. This can be a challenge because the assembly is not yet present when the volume is tested. Remember that the instruments are there to lead the assembly. Accompaniment must be loud enough to encourage confident singing, but not so loud that it overwhelms the assembly's voice.
- Sound systems and lighting must be turned on for rehearsals. Arrange for this, in advance, with the technicians.
- All worship leaders with a spoken or sung part, even the presiding bishop and synodical bishop-elect, should test their microphones prior to the service. This should be done before the assembly gathers.
- Remember that, in a worship service, the participation of God's gathered people is essential. Therefore, the assembly needs sufficient lighting to see for reading and singing. Some extra lighting to highlight the focal points of Word, Meal, and Baptism may be desired as long as it doesn't overshadow the primacy of the assembly.

### **Music and musicians**

Choirs and instrumentalists are often gathered from various congregations for a synod-wide event like the installation of a new bishop. These musicians usually have limited rehearsal time. Regarding everything related to such a significant event, more needs to be pre-determined than is usual for most weekly gatherings. A few pointers:

- The Holy Spirit is active and works through advance planning.
- At a large, one-time event it is important to dedicate enough time (many weeks) to identifying all the challenges, especially the movement from introductions into singing and between stanzas. This is when confusion often occurs.

- There is usually little time for nuance or musical subtlety at such a gathering. Plan interesting, but straightforward, music.
- If new music is being used, remember to balance it with familiar things and to select things that are accessible to a diverse gathering.
- Provide music, rehearsal tapes, and detailed information to singers well in advance of the event.
- Plan for music during communion that supports the flow of movement. Avoid long silences. In other words, plan some music for when the choir communes. It is helpful to have the assembly singing right away after the Great Thanksgiving.
- Agree in advance whether or not to complete all the music if there are still planned pieces when the meal has concluded.
- Mark as many details as possible (breathing, dynamics, etc.) in advance to save time in rehearsal. Doing this during rehearsal takes up valuable time.
- In advance, communicate logistics completely and accurately. This includes things like location (rehearsals and liturgy), arrival/start times, parking, areas to gather and leave coats or valuables, where or when food/meals may be provided, where to store instrument cases.
- Provide for valuables to be secured either behind locked doors or in a location where an assigned person keeps watch.
- Be clear about vestments or expected dress for choir members and make arrangements for music folders, music stands, pencils, and other things needed.

### **Other worship leaders**

In addition to the presiding bishop (who serves as the presiding minister through the installation) and the bishop-elect (who presides following the rite of installation), there are several important liturgical leadership roles to fill for this service. These include:

- Preacher (if other than the presiding bishop)
- Principal assisting minister (a lay person selected for her or his gifts in leadership)
- Readers
- Musicians (see above)
- Offertory presenters (who bring forward bread, wine, and monetary gifts)
- Secretary of the synod (who presents the bishop-elect for installation)
- Acolytes (crucifer, torch bearers, book bearer, etc.)
- Communion ministers
- Ministers of hospitality (ushers, greeters, parking lot greeters, persons to see to special needs—elevators, hearing assisting devices, etc.)

It is critical to reserve sufficient leadership roles for laity. The assisting minister, readers, acolytes, and some communion ministers, as well as ministers of hospitality, reflect this church's commitment to lay leadership.

Since the installation of a bishop occurs only infrequently, and since it often occurs in a space that is unfamiliar to everyone participating in the service, a “master of ceremonies” or “director for the liturgy” may be beneficial.

Planning decisions provide an opportunity to bring to expression this church's commitment to richly inclusive leadership. Women and men, adults, youth and children, persons of color,



persons whose first language is other than English, and persons with disabilities should all be considered for leadership roles that suit their particular liturgical gifts.

### **Security and emergency**

It is increasingly important to attend to matters of security. With varied points of entry to any given site, it is important to designate some people to watch for disruptive behavior and to make these people aware of any particular concerns that may be known in advance.

In addition to a person to coordinate security, a local nurse or emergency medical technician (EMT) should be on site throughout the event, with ready access to first aid provisions.

Ushers and ministers of hospitality should be briefed thoroughly on all these arrangements and on who to contact under what circumstances.

### **Some concluding and/or summary thoughts**

- Worship planners must attend carefully to **expenses** related to the service of installation, especially when the location is other than a church building.
- It is helpful if there is **one person leading** the planning process and “on duty” during the worship. This collaborative leader keeps an eye on the “big picture,” and is capable of anticipating potential challenges and offering thoughtful, sometimes quick, solutions in advance and *during* the liturgy.
- Liturgical and musical leaders need to plan every detail carefully in advance. **Nothing should be taken for granted.** The places that are often tricky to coordinate are the beginning, the ending, and transitions (things like the entrance procession, exchanging the peace and the offering, distribution of communion, and the sending procession).
- Arriving worshipers should be invited into a **spirit of prayer and celebratory participation.** Rehearsals should be finished before people begin arriving.
- Processions and other ritual actions should be **bold, yet simple.** If large numbers of clergy (or others) are invited to process, make sure the duration of music is adequate and that the music leaders are prepared to extend, as needed. If reverencing the altar is common practice in your synod, be sure to allow for that extra time. The procession at the sending need not include all those who processed at the beginning. It may be limited to the principal worship leaders.
- The committee responsible for oversight of all aspects of the installation is usually responsible for designating the use of the **offering** received during worship. The worship planners are responsible for making arrangements to transfer the collection to the appropriate person(s) following or during the service.
- It is appropriate for **communion ministers**, including the principal worship leaders, to commune *after* serving the assembly. This practice stems from a contemporary understanding of hospitality where the host serves the guests first.
- Just as it is important to anticipate when and how **musicians** will **receive communion**, it is essential to make this clear to the musicians themselves and to the servers. In some settings with a large number of musicians, it is helpful to dedicate one serving station to the musicians.
- Again, taking nothing for granted, talk through the service with all musicians, liturgical leaders, ushers, and others who will benefit from knowing how the various aspects of the worship fit together in ways that make for an **uninterrupted flow.**