

Early Worship at Hamilton Union A Presbytery New Initiatives Project

In 2011, Hamilton Union Presbyterian Church held a series of discernment meetings to imagine ways that we might reach out to families and seekers in our community. We thought our target population was families with children who had school and sports related commitments that forced them to choose between attending worship and participating in an extra-curricular activity. We decided to try a 30-minute worship service that would focus on essential biblical messages and would be delivered visually. We encouraged people to bring their coffee to church and had refill stations set up in the back of the sanctuary.

To launch this project, Hamilton Union Presbyterian Church applied for a “New Initiatives” Grant from the Presbytery of Albany and received \$1,200. We used the funds to purchase a laptop computer, power point projector, and a CCLI license to allow us to legally project song lyrics.

The service has been offered from September through June since 2011 and routinely attracts between 20-40 participants most of whom do not come regularly to the 10 a.m. service. While we did not initially reach school age children participating in Sunday sports, we did reach a diverse intergenerational group who like the shorter simpler format for a variety of reasons. One demographic group we never thought of was families with babies! Turns out nap time is 10 a.m. but 8:30 a.m. is a good time for families who have been up with their little ones since 6 a.m. At one point in our first year I counted five babies in bucket carriers at worship! Now those babies are school age and their families still come to early worship!

This morning’s Presbytery worship is an example of our early worship approach. When it is not a communion Sunday the order is as follows:

Opening sing-a-long
Lighting the peace candle
Memory Verse
Opening song
“Thorns and Roses”
(prayers of intercession and thanksgiving)
The Lord’s Prayer
Scripture lesson and short video based message
Offering
Prayer
Passing of the Peace and closing Peace Round

The “video” messages are gleaned from social media, websites like “wingclips” and Christian education resources. For the past year we have been working through a video series based on the “Jesus Storybook Bible” which allows us to follow the liturgical seasons while teaching the essential stories of the Old and New Testament.

The congregation of Hamilton Union would like to thank the Presbytery for making this service possible through a New Initiatives grant. We have several years of half-hour power point slide shows and we would be happy to share a selection of them with anyone who might be interested in adapting this approach to their church. **Please contact MJ Pattison, mjpattison@gmail.com.**

