QuickSheets
Fast and fabulous ideas for ministry
PRESBYTERIAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSICIANS
Office of Christian Formation

Creating Alternative Worship Services
Not Just Different Types of Music!

When we think of alternative worship services, often different styles of music or focusing on a specific demographic comes to mind. However, other factors can help broaden creative options:

- Change in location. For example, another room other than the Sanctuary or outside.
- A difference in the primary leaders for the worship service. For example, children in a service for all ages.
- A service not on a Sunday morning.

Here are two examples of alternative worship services from St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Iowa City, IA in 2026.

Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday is an example of how a change in location was a primary catalyst in change for a service. In 2025, the temporary pastor suggested having it in the Atrium. There was already going to be a Lenten potluck that evening, so why not have a service in the same space right after dinner?

Although the space is large, the service led itself to being more intimate. It maintained the basic structure of a Sunday service. However, people were sitting at tables in groups of 8.

Some of the musical elements were:

- One singer and a cellist leading a hymn that was unfamiliar.
- The other hymns were familiar and led by the piano.
- A cellist playing a musical offering after the Confession.
- A soloist singing during Communion.
- No Prelude or Postlude.

Some non-musical elements:

- Instead of a full sermon, there were a few short pastoral reflections that were interspersed with questions the pastor asked and tables would discuss.
- Communion was taken at the tables. People passed around the elements at each table.

Child-led Service

This service replaced an annual Children's musical that happened before Covid. The order of the service basically stayed the same from a typical Sunday morning. However, there is flexibility to change things up to fit the needs of the service as it fits the church liturgical calendar or the needs and gives

of the children leading. Planning started in January for the service on April 26, 2026, which lined up with Good Shepherd Sunday. The focus was on John 10:1-10 (The Voice Translation)

> ***Jesus:*** *I tell you the truth: the man who crawls through the fence of the sheep pen, rather than walking through the gate, is a thief or a vandal.* **2** *The shepherd walks openly through the entrance.* **3** *The guard who is posted to protect the sheep opens the gate for the shepherd, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.* **4** *When all the sheep have been gathered, he walks on ahead of them; and they follow him because they know his voice.* **5** *The sheep would not be willing to follow a stranger; they run because they do not know the voice of a stranger.*
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> **6** *Jesus explained a profound truth through this metaphor, but they did not understand His teaching.* **7** *So He explained further.*
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> ***Jesus:*** *I tell you the truth: I am the gate of the sheep.* **8** *All who approached the sheep before Me came as thieves and robbers, and the sheep did not listen to their voices.* **9** *I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be liberated, will go in and go out, and will find pastures.* **10** *The thief approaches with malicious intent, looking to steal, slaughter, and destroy; I came to give life with joy and abundance.*

It sounds like a news report! As a result, instead of the sermon, there was a mix of children reading Scripture verses, a pre-recorded video that looked like a newscast, and intrepid reporters (children) going into the Congregation to ask questions.

After the sermon, the Adult Choir walked to the choir area during a hymn and lead a hymn and sang *The Lord Bless You and Keep You*.

Some of the other musical elements included were:

- Pre-K through Grade 2 singing Deep and Wide
- Grade 3 – 5 on chimes during the *Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us*
- Pre-K through Grade 5 singing *This is the Day* by Mark Burrows
- A sung setting of Psalm 23 (Glory to God 473) with a small group of Children singing the verses and the entire Assembly singing the Refrain.

Writer: Austen Wilson, Director of Music Ministries at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Iowa City, IA
2026 Worship and Music Conference Interest Session Leader
www.presbymusic.org
www.pcusa.org/formationresources