

An Ecumenical Service

An ecumenical (interchurch) service among Christian churches may be a way to bring a focused and coordinated response to the opioid epidemic in an area. Think of an ecumenical Thanksgiving service as a model. Of course, the common theme here is prayer for and support of those suffering from addiction and substance abuse.

This service might be hosted by the Catholic church which prepares the service and invites other churches to attend and share ministry roles of leading, reading, and blessing. As such, the service would most likely come out of a Roman Catholic tradition and have a Catholic flavor.

Planning and preparing with other churches is another possibility. This would lead to a service that reflects the flavor and structure of multiple churches.

In preparing such a service, the following questions, drawn from *Liturgies of Lament* by J. Frank Henderson may be helpful.

Where will the service take place? What is central, neutral, offers enough space, etc.?
How will the service consciously foster Christian unity?
How will we make the service hospitable and welcoming for all?
Is there anything that ought to be avoided because it would offend?

The structure of the service will depend on who is involved in its planning. In the Catholic tradition, a Word service might be a typical model. Other traditions might emphasize different elements of song, preaching, praying, etc.

Common elements to keep in mind are: Scripture, Song, Silence, Sharing of ministry roles, Hospitality and a homily or reflection. Examples of how these various elements may be used in a prayer service may be found in the services contained in this package of resources.

An Interfaith Service

An interfaith service, that is, a service with Christians and non-Christians, is a bit more challenging to plan. Still, it may have a powerful impact on the community. Here, it is advisable to bring the faith leaders together and focus on what is shared in common. J. Frank Henderson offers several models for planning:

1. Each group works independently and prepares something appropriate from its tradition.
2. Faith leaders agree on a common plan and prayer structure and then draw on prayer elements and music from each tradition.
3. A common plan and structure is agreed upon and then prayers are written for the occasion by representatives of each faith tradition.