

NEWS FROM LYNNE PABST

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Worship in the Space of Homelife

Given all the current ideas of creating a worship space particularly in the home, I was asked by another Christian educator the question 'How do we support such activities without those suggestions turning into home "altars" which are not part of the Reformed Tradition?'

Creating "worship spaces" or "centering spaces" within the home is a vital part of faith formation practice especially during these times of COVID when the community physical space cannot be used. Home worship spaces also are a great way for multifaith families to connect at home. The new Faith Practices Toolkit from the Office of Faith Formation suggests establishing a "Home Worship Center". Even I suggested this in an earlier article. While the same language was not used, when I was growing up, I think every Protestant Family had a Bible on the living room coffee table. In fact, a Bible was a traditional wedding gift for the new couple's home. As the tradition began to get dusty so did those Bibles, and the church found itself combating the practice of having a Bible in the home which was never opened. So how is a practice of a home worship space encouraged without it becoming an altar or a dusty shrine?

Understand What Reformed Worship Is:

Christian worship, for Calvin, receives its distinctive character from the word of God and from the fact that God is entirely spiritual and nonmaterial. Worship is the united act of a disciplined congregation receiving God's word and giving itself to God in praise and obedience. (Loetscher, L. A. *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, 1978)

Space that is set apart for worship.....is not to be an escape from the world, but a place for encountering the God of all creation who gathers us in and sends us out. (*Book of Order PCUSA*, W-1.0203)

Worship can take place wherever God's people gather and the Spirit is present. No special material items are needed. So a family's worship space may not be a physical one but more of a temporal space. Instead of making space within their *home*, do they make space within their *homelife* to worship God?

Be careful of Language Used: It is a worshiping space or a space that helps us connect and commune with God and other believers. There is no need to use the term altar, as the sacrifice has already been completed through Jesus Christ.

Items Placed in the Worship Space: Items placed should be used and accessible to all. If a Bible is placed, then there should be a practice of regularly opening and reading it. If a cross or

Nativity Set is placed in the space, then children should be allowed to hold, touch, look at the items. If the worshiper cannot interact with them, then they become dusty shrines.

Time Used: The space whether physical or temporal should be used to help one receive God's word (not just the Bible but Jesus), give time for praise and prepare for daily life. Set aside a time at the beginning of the day to prepare for the day to come or make time at the end of the day to gather and praise God. God can be worshiped at any time and in any space.

Where we as Christian educators have possibly erred, maybe due to the thinking that children need concrete items, is to focus on the physical worship space rather than the temporal space. We suggest lighting a candle, placing a Bible, etc. When we should be saying, start your day together as a family with a prayer and song while driving to school. Or when your family hears an emergency vehicle siren, pause whatever you are doing, say a pray for protection of the responders and the victims, and sing a song or tell a story of God's steadfastness.

In simple terms, God wants to be part of our daily lives walking with us all the time rather than being in a space visited by believers periodically. God made this evident in sending Jesus, rending the Temple curtain, and giving the Holy Spirit. We need to talk not so much about "worship space in the home" but "worship in the space of homelife".

References:

Book of Order PCUSA. Louisville, KY: Office of General Assembly PCUSA, 2017.

Loetscher, L. A. *A Brief History of the Presbyterians 4th ed.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978.

UPDATES:

Using Big God Big Questions for Confirmation — Presbyterian Publishing currently is working on an online guide to go with it for those doing Confirmation Class online. Watch for it. If I see it first, I will pass it on.

Faith Practices Toolkit has been released. It is posted online as a free download on the Faith Formation website: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/formation> You will want to check this out for information on faith practices with children, with youth, intergenerationally, and at home. The six faith practices of sabbath, storytelling, praying, hospitality, service, and retreat are examined. It is all free in a downloadable pdf.

Mission Information:

<https://pcusa.activehosted.com/index.php?action=social&chash=1e4d36177d71bbb3558e43af9577d70e.2235&s=0ed918de07aced1c2f36dcf3ea66f913>

Pop-up Bookstore: Trying again for the Pop-up Bookstore during September 19th Presbytery Meeting in Wellsboro. Bring your checkbook, cash, credit card. Place orders at a discounted price. Books which are on display can be purchased and taken that day. I do not want to take a box home. (see flier attached to Presbytery Meeting docket)