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## READING OF SCRIPTURE

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In the Reformed tradition, the public reading of scripture plays a central role in the worship experience. Two brief excerpts from The Directory of Worship:

The church confess the Scripture to be the Word of God written, witnessing to God's self-revelation. Where that Word is read and proclaimed, Jesus Christ the Living Word is present by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. For this reason the reading, hearing, preaching, and confessing of the Word are central to Christian worship... (W-2.2001)

The public reading of Scripture should be clear, audible, and attentive to the meanings of the text, and should be entrusted to those prepared for such reading. Listening to the reading of Scripture requires expectation and concentration.... (W-2.2006)

### Public Reading of Scripture

Reading Scripture so that the worshipping community can understand it is different than reading it silently to ourselves. When we speak, we give all kinds of verbal clues as to what we mean. These clues include phrasing, pacing, inflection, etc. The clues given in written work are punctuation marks. BUT, sometimes "reading" punctuation marks aloud confuse the meaning of the text rather than enhance it.

GOAL: Read the passage so that those in the pew understand its message and can follow the dialog and/or reasoning of the selected text. By using verbal clues, we communicate clearly what is in the written text.

### Some general "rules."

- Take your time. (In other words, there is no need to rush through the text.) You are communicating the most important message in the world. Its worthy of everyone's time.
- In more complex passages, identify the characters and speakers. In many passages there are lots and lots of pronouns. While you should not substitute the proper name for each one, it is helpful to remind the listeners who the "he" or "they" are in passages where pronouns refer to several persons.
- The scripture is filled with lists of things that go together, and others that are contrasts. A real challenge in public speaking is to assist the listeners in keeping together what is supposed to go together and make clear those things that are contrasts.
- Various kinds of literature, and pieces of literature, appeal to us in different ways. Some tell stories that resonate with our experience. Some are more focused on the communication of feelings. And yet a third type in that which appeals to the intellect. Scripture contains all three kinds of texts. And the challenge in public reading of Scripture is to use the "style" appropriate to each form.

## **PRACTICE PASSAGES**

Phrasing, pace, emotion: Luke 2:1-20

Identification of speakers, narrator, dialog, “experience”: Acts 9:1-9

An example of a passage that appeals to the intellect: Romans 2:18-25

Examples of passages appealing to “emotions:” Psalm 23, Psalm 1