

shepreaches

toolkit for good friday liturgical curation.

1. pray.

begin this process with prayer.
pray over the entire effort.
pray over your spirit.
pray that God will build your team.
pray that God will send every resource.
pray that God will send and prepare the right preachers.
pray over your goals and motives.
surrender it all to God.

2. build a team.

don't try to do this alone! in addition to being a very western way of working, isolation breeds loneliness. creating a circle of women builds community and makes the heavy load of liturgical curation much easier. your team can consist of two women, or up to five. together, this team will curate the worship experience, spread the word about your service, and pray daily. but, you might want to delegate more specific tasks and areas, such as:

- making contact with churches to secure a location. this person will also serve as the point of contact with the church throughout the process.
- making contact with preachers to invite and secure their participation. this person will also serve as the point of contact with the preachers throughout the process.

- creating a marketing plan that is consistent with the shepreaches brand and aesthetic, and a calendar for marketing posts.
- a community liaison that organizes a special community engagement effort that connects to the worship experience.
- creating all actual liturgical materials, including bulletins, fans, sign-up sheets, etc.

3. secure a location.

when you are looking for a location, consider churches or spaces that might fall into the following categories, or any combination thereof:

- in an area of your city where Black people live or can get to easily.
- pastored or led by a woman/women, or is by a man who has deconstructed any internalized patriarchy to create a congregational space that is welcoming and affirming to all women.
- can hold at least 75-100 people in the sanctuary.
- has an additional space, such as a fellowship hall, for your community engagement component.
- is located on a college/university/seminary campus to encourage student participation.
- is willing to provide the space free of charge, under the condition that your team will handle all set-up, clean-up, and all aspects of the service. they are willing to participate as they would like to, but are not required to offer anything more than space. you will give a portion of your offering to the church as a sign of gratitude and to help defray any incurred costs.
- doesn't already have its own good Friday evening service.

4. secure preachers.

shepreaches exists to create spaces and platforms for young Black women to do the work we are called to do. therefore, your **seven preachers** should be:

- Black/African-American
- millennial (ages 19-34)
- has received, or is in the process of receiving, a formal theological education.

however, you are welcome to do an intergenerational service that incorporates Black women who to preach of a variety of ages that begins with millennials (19-34). with this intergenerational model, there is no cap on the age.

a few notes on preachers:

these criteria are not meant to be exclusionary or classist. the reason we look for theologically trained preachers is because we want to challenge notions that preaching doesn't require training, and that women are incapable of doing the work that is necessary for preaching well. furthermore, these services intentionally integrate social constructs and issues that are especially oppressive to women. a part of our work, as theologically trained women who preach, is to bridge the chasm between the academy and the church when it comes to liberation hermeneutics.

draft a letter/email of invitation to your preachers that contains the following information:

- the work of shepreaches and the purpose of the worship experience (verbiage to be provided).
- they are being invited to be one of seven preachers to preach for the 2017 shepreaches good Friday service in your city.
- the theme! say as much or as little as you would like.
- time, place, date, etc.
- further information to be provided, such as scripture assignment, attire, etc.
- reiterate that you would be *honored* to have them preach your service.

5. establish a theme.

as previously mentioned, **the theme of your service will integrate the Word and pressing social issues, with an emphasis on how these intimately impact Black women.** for example, you might want to deal with immigration issues, family and reproductive rights, domestic and sexualized violence, racialized sexism, etc. you can integrate many issues under one theme. let me illustrate:

our first service was themed, "seven songs and sermons in honor of the Savior." with this theme, we were able to integrate music and preaching as the framework for the service. to manifest the frame, preachers were asked to select a song that

helped to set their sermon up, in addition to their text. the songs ranged from Sandy Patti to Stevie Wonder. a one-minute excerpt was played before they read their scripture and gave their title. further, the dancer danced to a song about “a song to the Lord.”

our second service was themed, “a for colored girls gospel,” to play on the range of experiences that were lifted up in Ntozake Shange’s choreopoem, *for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf*. these issues included sexualized violence, racism, overcoming and joy, and all of them were taken up in the sermons. there was a monologue from the choreopoem and a dance celebrating the strength of Black women.

so, the theme should be broad enough to include a variety of issues, and to allow for a variety of expressions, including dance, music, and of course, preaching.

6. select scriptures.

very simply, select seven passages that include women. bring out unknown women in the Bible. provide fresh perspectives on the popular women. give names to the unnamed. give stories to the ones who are reduced to one line. tell the stories of her strength, as opposed to her weakness and victimization. subvert patriarchal interpretations. utilize womanist hermeneutics. do right by every woman in the Word, as representatives of the Black women in our lives. be great.

after you have selected your scriptures, make preaching assignments to your preachers. you should have them confirmed by now. draft a nice e-mail to them that contains the following:

- vision and purpose of shepreaches and shepreaches good Friday worship
- date, time, location
- scripture assignments
- attire
- preaching time limits. services typically don’t go further than 2.5 hours, so allot 10-15 minutes per sermon.
- what time you want them to arrive
- requests to spread the word
- attach the graphic to the email
- let them know that they are free to contact you with any questions

7. connect to your community.

what is happening in your community that challenges and/or oppresses Black women and families? or, is there an enduring issue among your team that you want to pay attention to?

- identify a local organization that focuses on this issue and invite their partnership into the experience.
- organize a time just before the service that will focus on the dissemination of information, some kind of training.
- allow them a time in the service to speak about their work and how they are helping Black women and families.
- provide a portion of your offering to the organization(s) to support their work.

again, to illustrate, two years ago, we partnered with Breakthrough Ministries, which provides shelter and job training to homeless and recovering women. I went to their shelter for three weeks leading up to the service to lead Bible studies. we asked everyone to bring one box/package of feminine hygiene products for the shelter, as this is often a forgotten need for many women's homes.

last year, we invited several organizations to participate in a women's health fair. the organizations focused on health and wellness, domestic and sexualized violence organizations. we provided safe and secure HIV testing. the fair took place immediately before worship. representatives were invited to stay for worship and acknowledged in worship.

8. spread the word.

create a super dope graphic that includes the following:

- theme
- location, time, date
- community partners names/logos
- pictures and names of your preachers
- shepreaches logo (included in toolkit)

- community engagement information
- hashtag, i.e. #SPGF2017 (shepreaches good friday 2017). you will also want to include your city in the hashtag, i.e. #SPGF2017CHI

please e-mail the final version of your flyer to neichelle@revneichelle.com prior to distribution/posting! I just want to be sure the graphic is on brand and provide a fresh set of eyes! 😊

additionally, you will want to create a marketing calendar/plan that includes the following:

- launch a facebook event page with all of the details. invite away!
- create a press release and invite local press.
- contact local churches, women's organizations and groups
- encourage team and preachers to personally invite up to 10 people and to spread your graphic on their personal social media.

8. curate your worship experience. including your space.

this can take whatever creative, anointed, and Spirit-led form your team can imagine. however, you will include the following:

- a younger (teen) woman and a Black millennial male ally to offer prayer, read scripture, etc. this is not to tokenize, but it is to enliven the womanist focus on the entire community while centralizing the voices and lived experiences of Black women.
- a liturgical artist, i.e. an actor, dancer, singer, mime, etc. to infuse the worship experience with embodied worship.
- a women's band and praise-team/choir. remind them to omit any patriarchal/non-inclusive language from music.
- a team representative gives a brief synopsis on the history and purposes of shepreaches as an agent for social and ecclesial transformation on behalf of Black women. a script will be provided.
- your seven preachers, of course!
- an offering, which will be allocated as follows:
 - *a tithe out to your community partner* .
 - reimbursements to your team for any out-of-pocket costs
 - remaining offering will be redistributed into your community through donations to your host church, preachers and musicians

- invitation to altar prayer after the final preacher. the preachers are situated throughout the altar and sanctuary to pray for people as they need. one person from the team offers a corporate prayer from the pulpit over the entire house.

the space is a significant part of the shepreaches worship experience. we never undo anything that is inherent in our host sanctuary, but we do bring our own images into the space. we've integrated art produced by Black women, photos of Black women, book covers of our favorites books by Black women. these have been situation throughout the worship space. there are tall Catholic candles with icons of Mary and the Virgin of Guadalupe, as well as tea lights, throughout to evoke their life-giving presence and to symbolize the light of Jesus Christ in our midst. fresh flowers as offerings to our ancestors and reminders of life. a bowl of fresh water has symbolized the Holy Spirit and our baptism. music by Black women in playing in the sanctuary as people are walking in. it's all very womanist and very liturgical. but, also very simple.

10. make special invitations to women's groups, organizations, and homes.

shepreaches worship exists to provide safety, love, voice and affirmation to all Black women. many of these women don't associate with churches, for historical, social and/or personal reasons. so, write a special letter or email to women's groups, organizations and homes. let them know about the work of shepreaches, and give them a special invitation to join worship. be sure to include all of the pertinent details. let them know what separates this service from others, and that it is your hope that the women they represent will be **EXTRAVAGANTLY WELCOMED** into the space. in our first year, we organized a car pool situation from various sites, just for women to be able to get to the service.

also, encourage preachers to invite their mentors, families and closest friends.

11. recruit volunteers.

you will need some additional hands, especially during the week of and **DEFINITELY** on the day of. you can decide what you will need volunteers for, but in the past we've had volunteers help with:

- graphic design
- ushering

- street team (people who agree to help you spread the word to their networks and circles, especially if you don't have access to the same circles and networks).
- picking up printed liturgical materials/candles/decorations/snacks for preachers/etc. basically, running errands!
- a prayer squad that does nothing but PRAY for the service, preachers, etc.

WEEK OF:

11. pour into your preachers.

This is your *greatest gift* to the preachers. And probably one of the most countercultural aspects of the work of shepreaches.

You will want to create a special space for you and your preachers to commune and prepare spiritually. You might want to share a meal, but as the convener, you are responsible for praying over each preacher and over the worship service. In the past, I've washed the feet of the preachers after a homemade meal and lots of conversation and laughter. After the footwashing, we prayed together over the service. We made a whole ritual out of it, with music and water and love. Enjoy this part and invite the Spirit to move freely.

12. create liturgical materials.

This includes your bulletin, e-mail sign up sheet, and any other materials you want to have. In the we've created church fans, which were really fun. Include the shepreaches logo on any materials. You will find past bulletins in this toolkit.

DAY OF:

13. show hospitality to your team, preachers and volunteers.

Have a stash of drinks and snacks available for when they arrive to the service. Ask them to arrive about an hour early for prayer and settling into the space.

