

## Corporate Worship Philosophy at CCD

### Introduction

We were created to worship. This is clear from the beginning of the Bible to its end. The primary Old Testament word for worship has a dual meaning *to serve* and *to worship* telling us that the two go together. Adam was created to worship/serve God in the Garden. His vocation was priestly! There was nothing that Adam did that was not worship. The apostle Paul says as much for the Christian in Romans 12.1. Thus, worship is a 24/7 proposition.

Having said this, when God's people come together as a local church body, particularly on the Lord's Day, we come to worship *corporately*. To worship in this case is 1) to "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" in word, song and prayer, 2) to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, 3) to hear from God and encourage and exhort each other to faith and obedience, and 4) when necessary, to exercise church discipline. The content of what follows concerns our corporate worship philosophy.

### General Principles

- We desire our worship to be God-centered
- We see all the component parts of the worship service as worship
- We believe that worship has internal and external aspects to it

### The Components of the worship service: The Order of Service

The apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthian church to, "Let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner". He was speaking about their corporate worship services. While he did not prescribe to them (or anywhere else in his New Testament letters) any particular order, he did provide a principle for us to follow. The early church's corporate worship followed the pattern of the synagogue from which it was birthed. This included prayer, singing, the public reading of Scripture, and a message, i.e. sermon. What follows is CCD's order of service, including a rationale for each component part with the hopes of making your entire corporate worship experience at CCD more meaningful.

- Prelude

The prelude is intended to transition our minds from the concerns of the world and everyday life. It is a call for God's people to focus on the great object of our worship, God our Father, through Jesus Christ our Mediator, in the power of the Holy Spirit our Sanctifier. It is a summons to prepare our hearts and minds to readily engage in every aspect of the worship service.

- Welcome and Announcements (W&A)

The welcome and announcements tell us about events and circumstances surrounding the life of our body. In essence, they remind us of our life together in Christ. It is our intention to limit relatively superfluous information in the W&A; the bulletin board serves that purpose.

- Affirmation of Historic Creed

In an attempt to recognize our place in church history - that we are not an island unto ourselves - we affirm one of the major creeds together as a local body. It also serves the purpose of our testifying to what Christians down through the centuries have always believed, what constitutes Christianity at its core.

- Opening Prayer

This prayer is intended to be an invocation. In it we are asking God to manifest his glorious presence in our midst through the Holy Spirit. From a heavenly perspective, we are asking him to open our eyes to the reality of our presence with "the festal gathering" of the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Hb 12.22f).

- Music Set

The music set serves the primary purpose of preparing us to hear God through His word in the sermon. The songs are purposefully and thoughtfully selected according to the theme of the passage to be preached. The role of music in worship is addressed further below.

- Pastoral Prayer

Prayer is an integral part of worship. It expresses our dependence on God and is truly an expression of faith. As in personal prayer we address God as our Father, asserting his greatness in his person and purposes followed by our requests, so the pastoral prayer is an opportunity to do so corporately. Arguably, the Lord's Prayer is a corporate prayer, "Our Father . . ."

- Offertory

As an act of worship we present our monetary offerings to the Lord. They are given cheerfully for two reasons. The first is in response to his tender mercies shown to us in our salvation. The second is in response to his command. As a local body of believers, we are obligated to participate together in the gospel enterprise. This participation requires funding which the offertory accomplishes.

- Scripture Reading

Paul exhorted Timothy to give attention to the public reading of Scripture. At the heart of worship is hearing God speak and showing our faith in him by yielding ourselves to what he says. This is the reason why the Scripture reader says, "This is God's word". The expected response is "Amen".

- Message

In addition to what was just said, we believe that the preached word is authoritative so long as it accurately reflects the word of God. Therefore our approach to preaching is expository by nature. God's self-revelation is the basis of all worship.

- Closing Song

The closing song supplies the corporate "amen" to God's word. Therefore, the closing song is especially selected to reflect the theme of the passage just preached. In singing the song together, we profess with one voice that we do in fact agree and accept what God has just told us in his word.

- Closing Prayer and Benediction

This not only serves the practical role of signaling the end of the worship service, it actually requests of God that he bless his people according to his promises - a request with which a faithful God will not but comply.

- Postlude

Just as the service began with contemplation in anticipation of meeting with God, the postlude provides an opportunity to reflect on having met with God. It is desirable for those participating in the worship service to remain seated for the first portion of the postlude for this purpose.

The order of service just outlined above is, as stated earlier, based on principle and is not *prescribed* by Scripture. Therefore, it can and will be modified from time to time to provide freshness and avoid the danger of falling into wooden traditionalism.

#### The role of Music in Corporate worship

Music is one of God's grandest gifts given to man. It is a powerful means of expressing our adoration to God. It can also be a means of great controversy in the church. Thus, we want to use this God given gift in a manner that edifies the saints and not in manner that divides them.

The basis for selecting music at CCD is, in large measure, thematic based on the order of service. Our prelude music is selected in accordance with an invocation. Our offertory selection has to do with thanksgiving or other aspects of giving in a sacrificial manner. Our music set and closing song reflect the theme of that particular morning's passage. The suitability of any given song is thus determined by the content of the song. This means that the categories of *contemporary* and *traditional* are not particularly useful as selection criteria at CCD (see more below on this issue of music selection).

We recognize that many come on Sunday mornings with preferences for a certain music style and even instrumentation. The Western church is a diverse group (in terms of non-essentials) and is becoming more diverse all the time. At CCD, our expectation and hope is that as we continue to mature as a congregation and as individuals, we will, in the spirit of love, be willing to give preference to others in this matter of music selection. For instance, if the type of music and/or the manner in which it is sung is not appealing to someone's personal tastes, we would like to see that person consider a couple of things: First, how the song glorifies the Lord by reflecting especially the theme of the passage being preached, and second, that other brothers and sisters in the body might actually enjoy the way the song is being sung. After all, the worship service is a corporate service and should not be viewed, at least primarily, as a personal worship experience.

This last statement also applies to how we express ourselves in worship. One of our core principles stated above is that worship has internal and external aspects to it. God has given

each of us distinct personalities through which we manifest our adoration to God in response to His truths and presence. Some of us are more subdued while others are more animated. To negotiate this continuum in our worship services, our expectation is, once again, that each of us would understand ourselves to be part of a worshipping community. This means that we ought to show our adoration to God in a manner that edifies the body and not in a manner that either draws attention to one's self or otherwise distracts the congregation from its worship.

Because of our thematic approach and our desire for growing in Christian maturity, the conclusion should not be drawn that we do not prescribe specific parameters in selecting music. Our baseline criteria, aside from being thematic, are as follows:

- True

By true, we mean the song must be true to the Scriptures. Do the lyrics reflect the truth of God's word? Related to this is not merely whether a song quotes from God's word, but how well the song, in a sense, preaches those words (which requires theological depth). In other words, the song must be true both quantifiably and qualitatively.

- Clear

The song must be clear to those who are singing it. The terms and images of the song must convey an overall singular message that the people singing it can readily understand and assent to. This may require that our musicians, at times, explain certain phrases or images beforehand.

- Sing-able

For a congregation to worship together, it must be *able* to sing together. Some songs were designed to be sung either by accomplished singers or by choirs. These types of songs limit who is able to actively participate in this part of the worship service. When these types of songs are sung, it would be appropriate for the worship team to sing them solo or to again teach the congregation how to sing them musically.

A more thorough description of criteria is found in the *Song Evaluation Standards* statement.

The Senior Pastor, the Pastor of Worship, or whomever the Senior Pastor may designate will be responsible for either selecting or approving the songs for Sunday services.

Criteria for *regular* participation in the corporate worship ministry at CCD

- Participants must be partners at CCD (or a child of a partner)
- Participants must be above reproach
  - o Having a good reputation inside and outside the church
  - o Be in agreement with CCD's worship philosophy
  - o Not be divisive, but one who seeks unity

- Additionally, participants in the music ministry must . . .
  - Be accomplished musically at least to the point of contributing to and not distracting from the worship service
  - Be old enough/mature enough to interact at an adult level

In short, we desire for anyone serving in the upfront ministry to be characterized by humility and not self-promotion. When this person serves up front, he or she must fade to the background drawing the congregation's attention to the Lord and his excellencies.