

What follows below is a Vision for Worship ... that is material ripped off from other good people. It was drafted for a pastor's report way back in 2005, and rather than try to update it, we're just keeping it as is. This was presented to Council in 2005, and at other times over the years.

from my May 2005 Pastor's Report to Council...

On to worship. Somewhere in the fall of 2004, I hoped for the development of some kind of 'music team.' I started working most directly with Rob Hutten on this. The reason for this wasn't 'to be like other churches' or to merely fulfill some real or imagined expectations, but because regularly worship music is being chosen which is best accompanied by other than organ or (merely) piano and because we certainly have the musicians to play it. However, as with anything at All Nations, getting things organized and people involved is usually a challenge. We're a busy bunch; and don't always start new, long-term ministries easily for this reason and others. While my personal thinking and work with Rob H was going on, 2 other things were taking place: (1) one member asked about my/All Nations' vision for worship music (representing, I believe the question of more individuals), and the Porters got down to some serious worship planning for Lent and Easter. All this made for a wild start to 2005!

Here, then, are some documents related to this. Not nearly as tidy as I'd like them be for you; however, that ol' busyness thing kicked in again.... What you'll find are:

1. What I've used in our Essentials (new members) Sunday School Class regarding worship. After the preliminaries (defining terms like 'worship' and 'liturgy'), you'll find a robust **theology** of worship in 6 statements. *I believe that a theology of worship is needed before one talks about worship music and, more particularly, worship music style.*
2. So, then you'll find **principles** for worship-leading that flow out of this theology. Because I'm basically stealing these words from articles I've read or courses I've attended, the connections may not be immediately clear. Let me spell out one example: If one theological statement about (Reformed) Christian worship is that it is *communal* ('corporate', 'fellowship', 'koinonia', 'covenantal'; point 5), then it stands to reason that our *default* language in worship (both spoken and sung) should be 'we', not 'I'. (Not that we never say 'I' – there are certainly biblical, pastoral, and contextual reasons to use it – but that we 'assume' 'I' and go from there.)
3. Next, you'll find, in 3 pithy statements, a 'liturgical aesthetic'. No doubt, you've often heard it said that our worship should be 'our best'. But we also know we're not aiming for 'professionalism'. So what does 'best' mean? How might a liturgical aesthetic be different from a 'concert hall aesthetic'?
4. I offer a few closing comments.

I. SOME PRELIMINARIES, THEN A THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP IN 515 WORDS

“Worship”: 3 Definitions

1. Rom. 12:1: **attitude of the heart**, directed toward God that embraces all of life
2. Psalm 95:6: **particular actions**, of self-conscious praise, whether in liturgy or at other times
3. Acts 20:7: **public event**, (often Sundays) where church gathers to.....
 - what we’re talking about today

“Liturgy”: 2 Definitions:

1. **what a church does when it gathers for that event**; includes everything
 - a. from *leitourgia*: laos (people) + *ergon* (work) = work of the people
 - b. therefore, *every* church has a liturgy, a way of doing things
2. **printed/prescribed order of worship**
 - “liturgical churches”
 - more specific use of the word; probably a more common use of the word

6 Profound, Spiritually Nourishing Ideas about Worship

1. **Gen 1:1 – Rev. 22:21: Worship & Belief/Theology go hand in hand**
 - *lex orandi est lex credendi*: “the rule of prayer is the rule of belief”
 - worship and theology must cohere, there’s a *fittingness*
 - to ask how we should worship, we ask: **who is God?**
 - examples: - God is Trinitarian, so our worship is joining Christ’s perfect offering to the Father through the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9, 10)
 - God is Creator, so...
 - God is God of the Covenant (not a contract), so...
2. **Psalms 105, 107, 136: Worship is Remembering** (Memory, Memorializing, Anamnetic)
 - we remember *God’s deeds in history*
 - worship services are like recitals, narratives [see also: Lk. 22:19; sermons in Acts 2, 7, 22, 26]
3. **Psalm 32: Worship is Dialogic**
 - traditional CRC understanding
 - metaphor for the conversation between God and his people
4. **Worship Calls on the Holy Spirit**
 - 1 Cor. 6:19: the Holy Spirit indwells the church
 - 1 Cor 12:3: the Holy Spirit enables us to declare Jesus as Lord
 - Heb. 2:4: the Holy Spirit gifts the church
 - 2 Thess. 2:13: the Holy Spirit sanctifies us ... and therefore our worship!
 - Holy Spirit is at work, not the minister or worship leader
5. **Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 10:16: Worship is Fellowship, Koinonia**
 - worship is an picture of all the church’s life
 - it is “corporate”, “together”
 - we are “fellowship/koinonia” *in* Christ
6. **Revelation 4, 5, 19: Worship is Participation in the Kingdom to Come** (Eschatological)
 - when we gather it points to the future, to Heaven
 - the Lord’s Supper: a sharing in the Kingdom:

Another way of articulating a theology of Christian worship (how a friend of mine explained it to his college students):

Worship Is . . .

- **Covenantal**—our services are a conversation between God and us in which God renews with us the covenant of grace.
- **Participative**—worship leaders are not performers, but *enablers*, encouraging the full, conscious, active participation of the congregation (not “audience”).
- **Holistic**—we bring all of ourselves to worship: faculty, staff and students, body and soul, brain and heart, doubt and belief, lament and joy.
- **Expansive**—we make creative use of words, music—and more!—from many times, places, peoples, and cultures to enlarge our vision of God’s kingdom and situate ourselves properly within it.
- **Reverent**—even when playful, our worship acknowledges that it is *God* with whom we deal when we gather together.
- **Spirit-directed**—we are led by the Holy Spirit in form and in freedom, both in prayer-filled planning and in the surprising moments of worship.
- **Expectant**—the Spirit blows where it will, so we worship with our sails raised, expecting great things of God and enjoying, rather than engineering, a contagious spiritual energy.

(A few other key themes:

- intergenerational (children)
- participative (worship and lead-worship)
- draws upon many cultures (all nations)
- sacramental (visual art)
- evangelistic (for non-Christians, new Christians, maturing Christians)
- educational (liturgy *is* learning)

II. PRINCIPLES FOR WORSHIP-LEADING (or, as some are putting it these days, “Lead-Worshipping”...)

We Pray . . .

- As a *community*: using “we” instead of “I.”
- For a variety of reasons: to adore God, to confess sin, to give thanks, to ask God for something.
- At a thoughtful pace (more slowly than we normally speak), and with space for attentive, reverent silence.
- Without using verbal filler (“just,” “um”).
- To God, who is Three-in-One. Though we sometimes address the Spirit or the Son directly, we pray most often to God the Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus the Son.

When We Speak in Worship . . .

We don’t *instruct* people what to do next, we invite them to participate in the act of worship.

We

- give a foretaste of the next text, or refer to the one preceding, when introducing a song or a reading.
- let people know how each act fits into the dialogue of worship and the theme of the service.
- attend to the emotional contours of the service—what’s happening in our heart and in the congregation’s hearts.

We read Scripture with *intelligence*, *passion*, and *hospitality*, keeping the following principles in mind:

- **Prepare**: practice the reading ahead of time.
- **Pace**: read slowly, but use some variety.
- **Space**: allow time for the text to be heard and absorbed.
- **Grace**: read with expression that makes Scripture come alive, yet not with so much drama that it calls more attention to the reader than the message.

- **Embrace:** whenever possible include both genders when referring to people (the NRSV translation does this automatically).

When We Work with Technology in Worship . . .

We strive to be *unnoticed*, sacrificing a small bit of our full participation so that others may worship fully.

Sound/Lights

- Anticipate the speaker and have the microphone turned on; turn speakers' mikes off during singing.
- Keep listening and adjusting the sound levels as needed.
- Set lights appropriate to the mood of the service.

When We Sing or Play Music . . .

Our primary work is to *support the congregation*.

Players

- use a consistent tempo, a clear bass line, and room to breathe.
- give obvious cues for when God's people are to begin singing.
- make the melody stand out, especially when introducing new songs.
- allow the text of the song to guide the accompaniment.
- drop out occasionally so that the people can sing unaccompanied.

Singers

- sing with expression of face and voice.
- be aware of body language; make eye contact.
- avoid idiosyncratic embellishment that a congregation can't sing.

III. A LITURGICAL AESTHETIC: "GOOD WORSHIP MUSIC" AT ALL NATIONS

1. Good worship music is *functional* – its goal is to serve the purposes of the gathered church. Good worship music enables worshipers to ... praise, confess, hear God's assurance of pardon, pray, hear/proclaim the Word.
2. Good worship music is *vernacular*. It consists of texts and music which the people – with little musical, poetic, or aesthetic training – can embrace.
3. Good worship music is *communal*. The highest value is enabling a group of musical amateurs to make music together. "The congregation is the primary choir."
4. Good worship music *reflects the theology/principles above*.

IV. A FEW CLOSING COMMENTS

1. Ideally, every worship service has all of the "6 profound theological elements" listed above. A least a *little* bit of each.
2. Ideally, over time (say, a year), our worship services *definitely* contain a range of biblical and theological themes.
3. To the degree that we are unable to express these themes or carry out these principles,
 - a. we realize again our dependence on Christ – both his perfect offering of worship *and* his forgiveness;
 - b. we need to remember that we are in *loving community* with one another. Both of those words are key: we are in *community* (like it or not; that's just how God does things), and to make that community work we need to exercise all the Christian virtues, *love* being the center and foundation of them.