



Philosophy of Worship

You've likely heard the old nickname for Presbyterians: "Frozen Chosen." But don't be fooled: the Reformed faith does not make you passionless about worship!

*In fact, doctrine drives us to doxology.
Knowing God's grace and truth leads us to worship him.*

We pursue worship with great care and intent: it is based on a clear vision, rooted in a Biblical philosophy, and focused on a number of important priorities.

OUR VISION FOR WORSHIP

*Meeting with God together as we glorify and enjoy him
for who he is and what he's done for us*

A service of public worship is not merely a gathering of God's children with each other, but before all else, a meeting of the triune God with his chosen people. In worship, God graciously calls us into his presence to hear him speak to us through his Word and Spirit; and in worship, God transforms us by his Spirit to be more like Jesus as we respond to him in faith and obedience.

As we gather, we glorify and enjoy God for who he is: infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth – the very definition of everything beautiful, good, and praiseworthy. Even if he had done nothing for us, he would still deserve our worship. How much more then do we worship when we think of all he has done for us! God is worthy of great honor, glory, and thanks for the salvation he has so graciously accomplished for us through Christ and applied to us by the Holy Spirit.

Each Sunday, it is our vision to truly meet with God together, glorifying and enjoying him for who he is and what he's done for us.

OUR WORSHIP PHILOSOPHY

Content, Form, Style

This rich theology directly impacts how we worship together on Sundays. Because of our vision, we prioritize content, form and style – in that order.

Content. We approach worship by thinking first and foremost about substance: the content of what we sing, pray, read and speak. We don't need the thoughts and opinions of men or women. We need God's living word. So we seek to align and saturate the entire service with Scripture. Specifically, we

seek to be Trinitarian (worship is enabled by and owed to Father, Son, and Spirit) and Christ-Centered (he is the mediator who brings us to God).

Content is the central priority that forms the foundation of our worship philosophy and priorities.

Content, *Form*, Style

Form. We have a set order or liturgy that we work through each week, which is designed to reinforce our content. Our liturgy rehearses the gospel story through each step of our worship service:

We start with a prayer of invocation and the call to worship. God deserves and desires our praise, so we ask him to empower us to worship, so that the service will bring glory to him and good to us.

We move to songs of adoration, recognizing that God is intrinsically worthy of praise.

We then move into a time of confession, assurance, and peace: having seen God and his greatness, we recognize our own sin – both corporate and personal – and are reminded of the gospel’s promise of forgiveness and the impact it has on us.

Then we move into the congregational prayer, where we recognize that the sovereign God who saves us also cares about the details of our lives, so we can take our concerns to him.

After the prayer comes the sermon, which is always a rehearsal of the gospel: different applications of Christ’s sufficiency and greatness.

And finally, we have the song of sending, the benediction and the dismissal. These pieces remind us that we don’t exist for ourselves. We are to take what we have received and learned and be salt and light to the world.

Each step of our service, each section of liturgy, is aligned with Scripture and reinforces the content of gospel truth, placing Christ at the center of our worship.

Content, Form, *Style*

Style. After content and form comes style. While content and form are far more important, unfortunately style (particularly in music) is the area that often causes debate within so many churches and indeed our own. We describe our style of congregational music as “blended.” Two further terms explain what we mean by this second term.

First: diversity. We want to sing the great hymns of our heritage and the best contemporary songs too. In our worship music we want to encourage one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as we sing to the Lord with all our heart (Eph. 5:19). We want to praise the Lord with all our voices, young and old (Ps. 148:12-13), and with a variety of instruments (Ps. 150), from organ to drum kit, from piano to guitar, strings, woodwinds, and brass.

Second: unity. We want to artistically combine and arrange for modern and classical instruments to play together in worship. We want our people to sing with united voices across generations and transcending personal style preferences in music – giving a beautiful illustration and testimony of our unity in Christ and our love and deference for one another as many members of one body (1 Cor. 12-13). Diversity in songs, ages, and instruments + unity of instruments, voices, and hearts = blended worship.

OUR WORSHIP PRIORITIES

Relationship with God, Participation, Conviction, Freedom, Family

When thinking about worship, the vision is our starting point. Because we have a vision of meeting with God together as we glorify and enjoy him for who he is and what he's done for us, we then structure our worship accordingly. When the pastors and worship staff sit down to plan our worship, the following priorities also influence our thinking:

Relationship with God. Corporate worship, at its core, is a meeting between God and his covenant people; therefore, we want to enter into every part of worship in light of God's presence with us. If Jesus were to return and stand in the middle of our sanctuary one Sunday, it shouldn't make a difference to our praise. Why? Because he is already in our midst! God is with us in worship not only by virtue of his divine omnipresence, but much more intimately, as our faithful covenant Savior. Engagement in worship is part of our personal relationship with the God of heaven and earth! This changes how we think about worship.

Participation. This priority is so central to how we think about worship. Worship is not a passive, consumer experience. It's a dialogue between God and his people. In worship, God speaks to us by his word and Spirit, and we respond back to him in a number of ways – through various forms of prayers, singing, silence, posture, sacraments, offerings, confessions of faith, vows, and acts of commitment. The entire service of worship can be viewed as a holy conversation back and forth between God and his people. We want our people to be active participants in this holy dialogue.

Conviction. Grace-filled worship involves authentic participation and genuine emotion as we respond to God's word and Spirit. When we are singing songs about the joy of the gospel, we want our hearts to feel that joy! Likewise, when we sing about the brokenness of our sin, we want to feel sorrow. This is not emotionalism, but conviction. The truth of the gospel ought to convict our hearts – this is a Biblical emotional response. We want to engage the head and the heart and so fully participate in worship.

Freedom. Believers around the world worship the Lord in so many different ways; when you have a relationship with God, you should feel free to respond in a way that is well with your soul. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Cor. 3:17). We want every person to know the freedom of worshipping God regardless of circumstances of joy or grief, ease or struggle, fear or confidence, lack or abundance. Whether you want to smile, laugh, cry, say "Amen," raise your hands, or bow your head, you should feel free to worship in a way that reflects where you are and what the Lord is doing in your heart.

Family. Within this small community, there is much diversity – diversity in style, tradition, preference, age, personality, and instinct. While one style may not be a personal favorite, each worshiper can value how it may facilitate participatory worship for other members of this family. Where the Spirit of the

Lord is, there is freedom. Where Satan is, there is division; division is his calling card. We are a family and we strive to love each other as such!

When we plan our Sunday services, these priorities, laid on the foundation of our philosophy and vision, drive the songs we sing, the prayers we pray, and each and every component of the service. We come together to be in the presence of God and to worship him in Spirit and in truth.