

Philosophy of Music in Worship

Everything in the life of a congregation flows out of its worship services...Music for worship helps set an atmosphere where we as God's people can enter into worship with heart, and soul, and mind. Music is a major element of reformed worship. From the beginning of the service with the prelude to the end with the postlude, music plays a significant role within our worship of God.

Worship is participatory, is centered upon the Word of God and it is important that the congregation hear the Word of God from both the Old and New Testaments. It is not something we watch or observe happening, it is something in which we are active participants. From the call to worship that draws us in as a community of faith participating together in the worship of God, to the benediction, the praise, honor, glory and power belong to God alone.

Prayer is at the heart of worship. In prayer, through the Holy Spirit, people seek after and are found by the one true God who has been revealed in Jesus Christ. They listen and wait upon God, call God by name, remember God's gracious acts, and offer themselves to God. Prayer may be spoken, sung, offered in silence, or enacted. Prayer grows out of the center of a person's life in response to the Spirit. Prayer is shaped by the Word of God in Scripture and by the life of the community of faith. Prayer issues in commitment to join God's work in the world.

Song is a response which engages the whole self in prayer. Song unites the faithful in common prayer wherever they gather for worship whether in church, home, or other special place ... through the ages and from varied cultures, the church has developed additional musical forms for congregational prayer. Congregations are encouraged to use these diverse musical forms for prayer as well as those which arise out of the musical life of their own cultures. To lead the congregation in the singing of prayer is a primary role of the choir and other musicians. They also may pray on behalf of the congregation with introits, responses, and other musical forms. Instrumental music may be a form of prayer since words are not essential to prayer. In worship music is not to be for entertainment or artistic display. Care should be taken that it not be used merely as a cover for silence (*Book of Order*).

Learn the tune.

Sing them as they are printed.

Sing all. "If it is a cross to you, take it up and you will find a blessing."

Sing lustily and with a good courage.

Sing modestly. Do not bawl.

Sing in time. Do not run before or stay behind.

Above all, sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this, attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually. (John Wesley's singing rules)

From these tenants of worship one can define a truly Biblically based Philosophical understanding of worship. A true understanding of the Biblical guidelines for ministry, includes all ages and generations, from children to adult; instrumental music; soloists; and all church activities such as Christian Education, bible studies and retreats should encompass the following truths:

Music is a very high priority in the worship of God:

Then David spoke to the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals, by raising the voice with resounding joy (I Chronicles 14)...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord...(Ephesians 5:19).

Musicians are ministers appointed by God and music for worship should not be considered mere entertainment:

Leaders of music at worship are called by God to be teachers of music, soloists, leaders and motivators of choirs and congregation, guiding the process of ministering to one another through music. A part of the ministry of equipping includes the inclusion of trained persons to maximize the worship experience (I Chronicles 16).

Singing praise to God is not optional:

Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth! Sing out the honor of His name; Make His praise glorious (Psalm 66).

Sing to the LORD, all the earth; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is also to be feared above all gods (I Chronicles 16).

Extensive use of musical instruments is commanded in the scriptures:

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises. Sing to the LORD with the harp, With the harp and the sound of a psalm, With trumpets and the sound of a horn; Shout joyfully before the LORD, the King (Psalm 98).

Sing aloud to God our strength; Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob. Raise a song and strike the timbrel, The pleasant harp with the lute. Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, At the full moon, on our solemn feast day. For this is a statute for Israel, A law of the God of Jacob (Psalm 81).

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the LORD with the harp; Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy (Psalm 33).

Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; Sing praises on the harp to our God (Psalm 147).

Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD! (Psalm 150)

Musical texts should be consistent with scripture and doctrinally sound:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Colossians 3).

All music must be appropriate for the occasion, inspirational, and Spirit filled:

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers (Ephesians 4).

The ministry of music is a great opportunity for evangelism. It is open to all, not just formal members of the local congregation. Thus making the worshipping community lift praises to God, in one accord, with cheerful voice and loud sounding instruments. Praise the Lord, praise God in His holy temple.

Scripture references from The New King James Version