



Corporate Worship

Our aim is to gather weekly for meaningful corporate worship with hearty congregational participation, to the great enjoyment of God & His Church, for His Glory & our good, and as a witness to the lost.

Section 1 - Principles of Corporate Worship That Shape Congregational Participation

Principle #1 - The Sunday Gathering is, by its very nature, a corporate affair. God assembles His church on the Lord's Day in corporate worship so that we may enjoy, worship, and be ministered to by Him together. The Sunday gathering is to be an experience where believers are connected to one another as we connect with God. God also ministers to us as we minister to one another by giving praise unto Him. In corporate worship, the church gathers as living stones to join together in our worship of God. Every aspect of the gathering is worship, not just the music and singing. (Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Cor. 11:18; Eph. 5:18-20 ; Col 3:15-16; Acts 2:42-47)

Principle #2 – God gathers us for His Glory. Our aim in corporate worship is to glorify His name together. God Himself is the central figure of the worship gathering and is present among His people. The three attitudes of gravity, gladness, and gratitude should simultaneously fill our hearts. (Eph. 1:3-14; Heb. 12:28-29; 1 Thess. 5:16, 27)

Gravity – We should approach corporate worship with an appropriate reverence and awe as the One true God is in our midst.

Gladness – We should have spirits that rejoice in the life altering reality that Jesus is risen.

Gratitude – We should have hearts swelling with gratitude for the grace we have received.

Principle #3 – God gathers us for our mutual good. God gathers us for the edification of our souls and our relationships with one another. While our worship is primarily directed upward toward God, we simultaneously minister to one another. Every member of the church has a role to play in corporate worship for the good of the brothers and sisters they gather with.

As we actively participate in singing, praying, reading, hearing, and serving, God uses each member for the edification of the entire local church. (Heb. 10:24-25; Eph. 5:18-20 ; Col 3:15-16)

Principle #4 – God gathers us to reach the lost. While corporate worship is aimed at the worship of God and the edification of the church, our gathering should also have evangelism in mind. The way God calls us to evangelize the lost is not to make them the primary target of the Sunday gathering, but rather our worship of God, edification of one another, and declaration of the gospel would be the means of evangelism to them. While we aim for the exaltation of God and the edification of the church, we also aim to make our gathering intelligible for unbelievers. (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 14:23-25)

Principle #5 – Given that the Bible is the means through which God specifically reveals Himself and His will, the substance of corporate worship is found in the Bible. Therefore, our gatherings will focus on singing the Word, reading the Word, preaching the Word, praying the Word, and seeing the Word (ordinances), and testifying of the Word.

Principle #6 – The corporate worship gathering should be constructed to foster hearty congregational participation in our worship to God and fellowship with one another. A church service is not a bunch of individual Christians who happen to be standing next to one another while offering their own worship to God through a private portal of praise. It is a family gathering. That means when we plan a service, we must ask ourselves how we encourage and facilitate the whole church to engage in each act of worship.

Section 2 – Practices That Foster Congregational Participation

Gathering for corporate worship

Hebrews 10:24-25 - and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

We gather consistently.

The Sunday gathering is where the church becomes visible to itself and to the world. We should refrain from “watching church” at home out of comfort or ease, knowing that the Lord calls us to physically gather to worship Him while He is in our midst ministering to us. Live streaming from home can never provide what the physical corporate gathering can. Therefore, the primary purpose of the live stream is an evangelistic resource to reach the lost and connect them to the local church.

We gather with an eagerness to practice hospitality by greeting one another, serving one another, welcoming guests, and making room for one another.

We will keep the lights on through meet and greet to promote an environment that says, “you are welcome here” rather than, “you are late!” We aim to be people that pursue one another and our guests. We look not to be served, but to serve in ways that contribute to the needs of the Sunday gathering. We should gladly welcome strangers and those arriving late into our rows as corporate worship is not about my experience, but our act of worshipping our God together.

We gather with a readiness to edify one another through hearty participation in each element of corporate worship.

We recognize that it is not that the congregation consumes while those on the platform participate, but rather that those on the platform facilitate the corporate worship of the entire congregation, of which everyone in the room is a part.

Reading the Word

1 Timothy 4:13 – Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

Reading Scripture as the Call to Worship:

Scripture will be read to the congregation or together with the congregation to begin our time of praising God through singing together.

Reading Scripture to enhance our singing:

We will consistently read scripture to, or together with, the congregation that informs the song we are about to sing. In this reading our desire is to connect the lyrics we will sing with the Word that informs them.

Reading Scripture of the sermon text:

We are committed to reading the entire sermon text in faith that the exact words of the Scripture are the most powerful words that will be spoken in the sermon. The translation for our sermon text will be NASB 95. The Scripture reading will either replace or come after the “bumper video”. We will at times employ the use of scripture readers, which are to be selected from the full breadth of membership. Whoever reads the Scripture will pray following the reading to ask for God to give us wisdom and understanding.

Reading Scripture as the benediction:

We aim to have the last words of the service be the words of God and not man. We will read a benediction from the Bible to close out the service.

Singing the Word

Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

We aim to sing songs with lyrics that are saturated by the Word.

We will sing songs, both new and old, based on the merit of a song’s saturation and exposition of the truths of scripture.

- What this means is that we will not “ban” songs from concerning sources.
- However, we will keep a list of concerning sources and limit our song library to a minimum of the songs we sing. A song from a concerning source must meet the selection criteria except that it must uniquely stand out in its excellence to declare the gospel or the glory of God.
- A song from a concerning source must be reviewed by an elder before adding to our song library.
- Once per year at a church family meeting the worship director or an elder will explain our overall song selection process and how we hope to edify the body through it. He will also share what is concerning about the teaching from questionable sources and what was so doctrinally rich and edifying about the songs from them we decided to include in our library.

We aim to sing songs that are singable by the congregation.

Songs should not only be theologically rich and accurate, but also possess a tune that invites hearty participation from the congregation by ease of singing.

We aim to sing in an environment that makes the face of the congregation prominent.

Seats will be arranged so that the congregation may see each other’s faces. Lighting will be sufficient to make the faces of the congregation visible. This does not mean the

house lights will be at 100%, but they will be bright enough to facilitate togetherness and minimize anonymity. Lighting on the musicians and vocalists should be uniform and we will refrain from the use of spotlights. LED screen backgrounds should be simple, not too bright, should promote focus on the lyrics, and should limit distracting movement. Use of theatrical lights and haze should always be undecipherable by the congregation.

We aim to sing in an environment that makes the voice of the congregation prominent.

The mix and volume of the instruments and vocalists will aim to accompany the voice of the congregation, as opposed to overpowering the voice of the congregation. The leader of our singing should encourage the congregation to sing by both reminding us of our call to sing, our responsibility to one another, and through warming our hearts and loosening our voices with spiritual encouragement from the Scriptures.

Preaching the Word

2 Timothy 4:1-2 – I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His Kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

Our elders are committed to the faithful exposition of the Scriptures.

The primary sermon diet of the congregation will be expositional preaching through books of the Bible. Even when we address issues topically, we are committed to the exposition of the Scriptures in order to do so.

We aim to preach as pastors, not presenters, or performers.

Preaching is intended to be a means of corporately feeding and shepherding the local church. The pastor is primarily preaching to the church who know him and are known by him. The preacher's aim is not only to faithfully exposit the biblical text, but also to teach, rebuke, correct, train, exhort, and encourage in the context of what is going on in the lives of the congregation. The tone of our preaching should be that of a loving father towards his family. Because of the relationship between the pastor and the church, the lights should be up so that the pastor can clearly see those to whom he is preaching the Word.

The congregation are active participants in the preaching of the Word.

Preaching, contrary to popular opinion, is a corporate act. The church should imitate the Bereans, who search the Scriptures carefully to make sure what they are hearing is truth (Acts 17:11). The church is responsible for receiving and responding to the Word that is preached to them. We will publish the sermon text ahead

of time so the church can read and familiarize themselves with the passage before it is preached. The church should bring their Bibles to follow along with the preaching of the text. The church should take notes about what in the passage spurs them on and how they should respond to it. The church should make it a practice to discuss the sermon passage after the service with their household, friends, and small groups to facilitate being doers of the Word rather than hearers only. During the sermon, the congregation is welcome to offer up "amen" to affirm their agreement with points made from the biblical text and also interact with the pastor as he engages with them.

Praying the Word

Acts 2:42 – They were continually devoting themselves to the apostle's teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

We will pray in the first-person plural: "we, us, and our".

This conveys that the person leading the prayer is praying on behalf of and for the whole congregation.

We will build an "amen" culture.

The "amen" of the congregation shows agreement and ownership of what was prayed by the leader.

We will pray out loud together to our God.

This could be a prayer of praise & adoration before or between songs. We will pray together a prayer of confession before taking the Lord's Supper. We will also pray a prayer of gratitude where appropriate in the service.

We will spend time in guided prayer at the conclusion of the preaching of the Word.

To facilitate an opportunity to immediately internalize and respond to the Word preached, the pastor will guide the church through a series of prompts for prayer.

Seeing the Word – Ordinances of Baptism and Lord's Supper

Matthew 28:19 – Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Baptisms will take place during the corporate worship service.

Baptism is an act of the baptized and the local church. The one being baptized publicly identifies with Jesus as their Lord and Savior. The church affirms their testimony and commits to their discipling and care. Together, we all celebrate God's saving work. All baptismal candidates will be encouraged to be baptized during the corporate worship service.

The Lord's Supper is a celebratory meal of the gathered church. We will take the Lord's Supper as a church during the corporate worship service.

The Lord's Supper will be taken on the 4th Sunday of each month and potentially at other all-church gatherings. We will encourage members to reconcile divisions in preparation for the Lord's Supper. We will encourage recently reconciled members to sit next to one another for the Lord's Supper as an expression of unity. We will corporately confess sin, particularly as it relates to the Word preached, as well as be reminded of our assurance of pardon in Christ before taking the Lord's Supper. We will declare the gospel to one another by saying, "Christ died for you", as we pass the elements. We will take the elements together at the same time. The elders will be the primary administrators of the Lord's Supper during the Sunday gathering.

Testifying of the Word

1 Peter 2:9-10 – But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; or you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

We will testify of the person and work of God in our lives to give Him the glory due to His name, edify the church, & proclaim His goodness to all.