



## Philosophy of Worship

- **We believe all of life is worship**

Scripture tells us that we were made for worship. All people worship someone or something. It is in our God-given nature. We believe as the Westminster Confession states “the chief end of man is to glorify God<sup>1</sup> and enjoy him forever<sup>2</sup>.” However, sin entered into the world through the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Because of sin, we now naturally desire to glorify ourselves and enjoy the pleasures of this world forever. But, God in his grace, has bought us from our slavery to sin, redeemed us through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus Christ and adopted us as sons and daughters who will receive eternal life in his holy presence. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are made “wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him<sup>3</sup> (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 1).”

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 86:9; Isaiah 60:21; Romans 11:36; I Corinthians 6:20; I Corinthians 10:31; Revelation 4:11

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 16:5-11; Psalm 144:15; Isaiah 12:2; Luke 2:10; Philippians 4:4; Revelation 21:3-4

<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:1-7

- **We believe that Lord’s Day (Sunday) worship is ordained by God and essential for sanctification (made into the likeness of Christ).**

While we believe that all of life is worship, we also believe that God has set aside a day for us to gather as a corporate body (the church) to worship him and experience his presence. We believe that God ordained this day as a Sabbath (a day of rest) when he created the world at the beginning of time.<sup>1</sup> Through the Law (Ten Commandments), he then instructed his people, Israel, to keep this day holy. Once Christ came and was resurrected on the first day of the week, the early church began meeting on this festive day and it came to be known as “The Lord’s Day.” We believe “that the gospel ministry and education for it be maintained,<sup>2</sup> and that, especially on the festive day of rest, we regularly attend the assembly of God’s people<sup>3</sup> to learn what God’s Word teaches,<sup>4</sup> to participate in the sacraments,<sup>5</sup> to pray to God publicly,<sup>6</sup> and to bring Christian offerings for the poor<sup>7</sup> (HC, LD 38).” The preaching of the Word and the sacraments are the primary means of grace that God uses to build faith in the lives of His people. While these means are ordinary, we believe God uses them through the power of the Holy Spirit to teach us and assure us “that our entire salvation rests on Christ’s one sacrifice for us on the cross<sup>9</sup> (HC, LD 25).”

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 2:1-3

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25; I Corinthians 9:12-14; 2 Timothy 2:2; 3:13-17; Titus 1:5

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 12:5-12; Psalm 40:9-10; 68:26; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25

<sup>4</sup> Romans 10:14-17; I Corinthians 14:31-32; I Timothy 4:13

<sup>5</sup> I Corinthians 11:23-24

<sup>6</sup> Colossians 3:16; I Timothy 2:1

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 50:14; I Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 66:23; Hebrews 4:9-11

<sup>9</sup> Romans 6:3; I Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 3:27

- **We believe the Word of God (preaching) is central to Lord's Day Worship**

The preaching ministry is essential in the life of the Christian<sup>1</sup>. "We believe that this true faith, produced in man by the hearing of God's Word and by the work of the Holy Spirit, regenerates him and makes him a "new man,"<sup>2</sup> causing him to live the "new life"<sup>3</sup> and freeing him from the slavery of sin (Belgic Confession, Article 24)." Therefore, we strive to make the preaching of God's Word the highpoint of our Lord's Day worship services and include other elements that support this ministry. We believe in the "redemptive-historical" form of preaching that proclaims who God is, what he has done and how he has revealed himself through Christ.<sup>4</sup> The Word is the primary means by which we know and encounter the Living God.

<sup>1</sup> John 17:17

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17

<sup>3</sup> Romans 6:4

<sup>4</sup> Romans 10:8,17

- **We believe Jesus Christ is the central focus of Lord's Day Worship**

Just as we believe that preaching is central to Lord's Day worship, we believe that Jesus Christ is central to preaching and in all other elements in the worship service. Our worship on earth should reflect the worship that is going on in heaven.<sup>1</sup> We are given a glimpse of this heavenly worship in John's vision of heaven in Revelation 4 and 5. This heavenly worship takes place around the throne and is centered on the one who is seated on the throne – Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. He alone is the one "to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:12, ESV). Therefore, we believe that Lord's Day worship must point to Jesus Christ in all things.

<sup>1</sup> Colossians 3:1-2

- **We believe the gospel is an essential theme of Lord's Day Worship**

If Jesus Christ is the central focus, his finished work is the essential theme in Lord's Day worship. The gospel is an announcement of good news to all of humanity of what God has done through the finished work of Jesus Christ. The gospel is not only the good news that saves us,<sup>1</sup> it is also the good news that sanctifies us as well.<sup>2</sup> We believe the true church can be recognized when it "engages in the pure preaching of the gospel; it makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them; it practices church discipline for correcting faults" (BC, Article 29). We hear the gospel through preaching and song, we see the gospel through the Lord's Supper (Communion) and Baptism, and we experience the gospel through correction or discipline. We also recite the message of the gospel through creeds and confessions such as the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and Canons of Dort.

<sup>1</sup> Romans 10:17

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:1-3

- **We believe in multi-generational worship**

Throughout the Scriptures, from Israel to the early Church, we see multi-generational worship. This is beneficial for the nurture and spiritual growth of the church.<sup>1</sup> Children learn from their parents and the community of faith to which they belong. We believe it is important for people of all ages and life stages to participate corporately in the means of grace (Word and sacrament). Segregation by age, worship style, interests and life stages does happen in other ministries of the church. However, we believe Lord's Day worship should reflect and give us a picture of the "communion of the saints" where first, "members of this community share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts"<sup>2</sup> and second, "that each member consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and cheerfully for the service and enrichment of the other members"<sup>3</sup> (HC, LD, 21).

<sup>1</sup>James 2:4

<sup>2</sup>Romans 8:32; I Corinthians 6:17; 12:4-7; 12-13; I John 1:3

<sup>3</sup>Romans 12:4-8; I Corinthians 12:20-27; 13:1-7; Philippians 2:4-8

- **We believe music is a God-given gift to bring glory to himself**

In the gospel of John, Jesus said to the Samaritan woman that a time will come when we will worship in "spirit and in truth." We see from this passage that worship is a spiritual experience centered in the truth. These two cannot be separated. Jesus made this very clear. Music has the capacity to move us emotionally. The problem is that it can move us emotionally in any context. This can be powerfully deceptive as we think we are worshipping when we are in fact experiencing nothing other than human emotion. We believe music (and any other art form) is a God-given gift used to point us to something greater than itself. We cannot worship in spirit divorced from truth. Likewise, we cannot worship in truth without spirit. Therefore, we strive to use music in a God-glorifying way (revealed in his word) by the following principles:

- ***We are instructed to Sing***

The psalms are filled with imperatives to sing to the Lord! Paul also tells us in the Colossians 3 to "sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." This brings God glory. Therefore, when we gather for Lord's Day worship, music is an important element of our liturgy.

- ***Music must be beautiful and done with excellence***

Our God is a God of beauty and he points us to himself through beautiful things.<sup>1</sup> We see this principle in the Old Testament where God commands his people how the tabernacle and later the temple are to be constructed. The intricate instruction down to the smallest detail shows us that our God is a God of beauty.<sup>2</sup> As with other art forms, music requires artists or musicians with ability who are skilled. God placed the Levites in charge of the music of the temple worship and we see from scripture that they were skilled and taught their craft.<sup>3</sup> Beautiful music done with excellence will point to God's glory and should be done for God's glory.

<sup>1</sup>Pslam 19:1

<sup>2</sup>Exodus 25:1-9; 26; 28

<sup>3</sup>I Chronicles 15:22; 2 Chronicles 34:12

- ***We are instructed to praise God with a variety of instrumentation***  
Psalm 150 makes clear that we are to praise and worship God with all kinds of instruments. We do not believe that one instrument or another is sacred or secular. We believe that God has blessed his church with musicians who possess different skills and musical passions. We believe that it is our responsibility as a local church body to be a good steward of the gifts we are given. Therefore, we use a variety of different musicians and instruments in worship for the building up of Christ's church.
  
- ***We believe style is important but not essential to the essence of worship***  
There is no direct command or forbiddance in scripture concerning musical style. Musical styles have evolved and will continue to evolve over time. These styles inevitably make their way into the church for use in worship. We believe that style is not neutral, for in and of itself it communicates a message. Different styles can invoke different emotional feelings within us and deliver a message without words. Good styles of music, while subjective, still carry within themselves the universal laws of music with integrity: melody, harmony and rhythm. Because of music's influence in human emotion, we believe that worship music (whatever style it is) must be a servant to the words or lyrics. Word and music must be brought together in harmony so that the overall message is carefully communicated with clarity. We believe this can be accomplished through many different styles. Just as in creation, God has given and blessed his people with many styles of music to glorify him and enjoy.
  
- ***We believe the most important aspect of worship music is lyric content***  
As mentioned above, music has the power to affect our emotions in many different ways and contexts. We believe that what distinguishes worship music from other music is truth. Song tunes and lyrics have the tendency to be cemented into the mind. Therefore, we believe that it is important for the majority of songs we use in worship to be theologically rich and Christ-centered as to edify the body and bring glory and honor to our great God.

***Hear truth – Listen to it!***

***Learn truth – Recite it!***

***Know truth – Sing it!***