

Dear friend,

This booklet was designed as an interactive tool to introduce you to the biblical teaching concerning the corporate worship services of this church.

The Bible is the only rule for what we are to believe and how the church is to function. We trust this booklet will demonstrate how our teaching and practice come from the Bible and are not an invention of man.

You will need a pencil (or pen) for this study. This study sets forth scriptural teaching in paragraphs with blank spaces interspersed. The blanks are intended to be filled in based upon the Scripture passages that appear immediately after the teaching. We encourage you to fill in the blanks with the appropriate word from Scripture and then meditate upon how the teaching comes from the Scripture passages.

All quotations from the Bible are in italics and are taken from the English Standard Version.

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## I. What Is A "Corporate Worship Service"?

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The corporate worship service is what occurs ("service") when a Christian congregation assembles together ("corporate") to meet with God ("worship").

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## II. The Goals Of Corporate Worship

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The ultimate goal of corporate worship is to \_\_\_\_\_ God, not to please man.

*All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.*  
Psa. 86:9

In order to glorify God he must enable us to glorify him; therefore, another goal of corporate worship is the benefit of man. God uses the proclaiming of what he has \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ us as the means by which he enables us to glorify him. Having been enabled to \_\_\_\_\_ y God, we praise him for who he is as well as for the many \_\_\_\_\_ he has done, and we learn how we are to show our gratitude throughout our lives.

*Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it; shout, O depths of the earth; break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has re-deemed Jacob, and will be glorified in Israel.*  
Isa. 44:23

*And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today."*  
Luke 5:26

The goal of benefiting man is a goal only so that we can fulfill the ultimate goal of glorifying God.

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### III. The Necessity Of Corporate Worship

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God commanded his people in the Old Testament and the New Testament to \_\_\_\_\_ for worship.

*Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law. Deu. 31:12*

*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Heb. 10:24-25*

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### IV. The Attitude Of Worship

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\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_ must saturate our worship, not only because we are mere creatures whom the holy Creator has called to worship him, but also because we are great sinners whom the righteous One has graciously brought into his presence.

*Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. Psa. 100:1-5*

*Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire. Heb. 12:28-29*

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## I. The Triune God

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Even though God is present everywhere, one of the defining features of corporate worship is God's \_\_\_\_\_ as he brings grace, blessing, and \_\_\_ to his people.

*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* Psa. 16:11

There is only one God who is present in worship, yet each person of the Godhead takes a role in worship: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are given by God the \_\_\_\_\_ to whom we primarily direct our response of \_\_\_\_\_.

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Rom. 1:7

*The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.* John 4:23

The Father gives blessings \_\_ \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ whom we present our response of worship.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.* Eph. 1:3

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* John 14:6

The greatest blessing God gives is himself, which we experience by his \_\_\_\_\_. Our response of \_\_\_\_\_ is empowered \_\_\_\_\_ the Holy Spirit who \_\_\_\_\_ us so that our worship is not merely an earthly event.

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"- so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*  
Gal. 3:13-14

*For we are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.*  
Phi. 3:3

*The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*  
Rom. 8:26

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## II. God's People

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All those whom God has \_\_\_\_\_ ought to worship, but only those who have been \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ truly worship.

*Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!*  
Psa. 100:3-4

*Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*  
John 3:3

Adults with their \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ (children) are to worship.

*Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law*  
Deu. 31:12

## I. Statement Of The Regulative Principle

We are to \_\_\_\_\_ God by keeping his \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore, we are to \_\_\_\_\_ God only in the manner he has prescribed in his Word by direct \_\_\_\_\_ment, obligatory example, or good and necessary inference. We are not to \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ his commands.

*You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.* Exo. 20:4-6

*When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods?- that I also may do the same." You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.* Deu. 12:29-32

All "worship" is \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. worthless and false) that is offered according to man's \_\_\_\_\_s instead of God's.

*This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.* Matt. 15:8-9

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## II. Christian Liberty / Binding One's Conscience

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Worshipping according to God's commands guards our spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ and protects God's people from becoming spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ of man. Only Christ—and no one else—may bind someone's conscience in worship, for we are \_\_\_\_\_ Christ's \_\_\_\_\_ alone.

*For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*  
Gal. 5:1

*For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them... To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.*  
1 Cor. 9:19, 21

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## III. Overseers

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God has appointed \_\_\_\_\_ (we call them "elders") in the \_\_\_\_\_ to ensure that worship occurs \_\_\_\_\_ and in good \_\_\_\_\_, according to God's commands.

*Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*  
Acts 20:28

*But all things should be done decently and in order.*  
1 Cor. 14:40

Since the commands of Scripture direct the corporate worship services, we need to consider how to understand the commands properly, within their covenantal context, particularly commands given in the Old Testament.

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## I. Introduction To The Covenants

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God created humans to live in covenant with him, but the first man rebelled. Happily, God did not leave his people in sin and misery but extended grace. There is one promise of grace to sinful man, but this one promise has two administrations: the first was the Old Covenant (formally given through Moses), which \_\_\_\_\_ replaced with the New Covenant. Even though the principles of worship have not changed with the change in covenant administration, the specific regulations God gave for corporate worship in the Old Covenant have been \_\_\_\_\_d.

*When Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. Heb. 10:5-9*

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## II. Old Covenant "Looked Ahead" To The New

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Old Covenant worship consisted of "pictures" of the reality Christ would bring: the prophecies looked ahead to Jesus' fulfillment; the many sacrifices looked ahead to Jesus' one, complete sacrifice; the Levitical priesthood looked ahead to Jesus' priesthood; the earthly temple looked ahead to Jesus' bringing us into the true presence of God; etc.

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## III. Redemption Accomplished By Christ

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Jesus was ordained by God the Father and anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our complete redeemer: prophet, priest, and king. As prophet, he perfectly reveals to us the

secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance. As priest he has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body and continually pleads our cause with the Father. As king he governs us by his Word and Spirit, and guards us in the freedom he has won for us. The Old Covenant \_\_\_\_\_ looked forward to the \_\_\_\_\_ reality \_\_\_\_\_ brought.

*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”*  
John 4:23-24

*Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*  
John 14:6

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#### IV. The Holy Spirit Poured Out

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Having truly and fully accomplished our redemption by his death and resurrection, Christ poured out the Holy \_\_\_\_\_ upon the church so that believers are joined to Christ and thus share in all his benefits. We have \_\_\_\_\_ to God's real presence, and God truly \_\_\_\_\_s among us.

*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”*  
John 4:23-24

*For through [Christ Jesus] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*  
Eph. 2:18-22

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## I. Worship Distinctions

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Since we are to live all of life by faith before the face of God in grateful obedience to him and for his glory, all of life is living.

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*  
Rom. 12:1

However, God makes distinctions with worship. In the Old Testament this was pictured in that God loved more when his people worshipped together at the temple in Jerusalem than when they worshipped as families in their own houses. The greatest desire of the Psalmist was to be in the temple, which was a picture of God's presence and was where his people would worship as an assembly.

*On the holy mount stands the city he founded; the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob.*  
Psa. 87:1-2

*One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.*  
Psa. 27:4

The New Testament clearly expresses the greater blessing of corporate worship. When believers gather together under the rule of church discipline, in the name of Jesus, Christ by the Holy Spirit is fully active to redeem people of sin and bring them to repentance and faith so that they become children of God.

*Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two*

or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. Matt. 18:18-20

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. Acts 20:28

When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. 1 Cor. 5:4-5

If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. 1 Cor. 14:23-25

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## II. Focus On The Body Not The Members

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As individual members form one \_\_\_\_\_, so each believer is a \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ. They are joined to other believers in the one \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, with Christ himself being the head. Therefore, corporate worship, which involves the assembling of God's people in a particular location, has a focus on the congregation as a whole, not on the individual members of the congregation.

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Rom. 12:4-5

Since the focus is on the body, worship is to \_\_\_\_\_ up the \_\_\_\_\_ body as a whole than to have individuals give expression to their personal experience.

*So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church... If you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

1 Cor. 14:12, 16-19

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### III. Priesthood Of All Believers

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Christ poured out the Holy Spirit on the whole church at Pentecost, causing each Christian to share in his \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore, all New Covenant believers enter into the presence of God in corporate worship (which was a blessing reserved to only a few persons in the Old Covenant). The active role only the Levitical priests were allowed to take in the worship activities of the Old Covenant assemblies is now open to all believers. Each member of the congregation joins in offering spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ to God. Since we are all \_\_\_\_ in Christ Jesus, no believer is to be exalted above the others in the worship assembly.

*You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

1 Pet. 2:5

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Gal. 3:28

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## IV. Officers In Worship

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The priesthood of all believers does not, however, remove all distinctions within corporate worship. God has \_\_\_\_\_ officers to act for him and to act for the congregation. Officers represent God to build up the congregation by \_\_\_\_\_ing and \_\_\_\_\_ing. They represent the congregation in responding to God in \_\_\_\_\_er. God appointed certain men to be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the Gospel, \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ by the ministry of the Word in the corporate worship service. Officers do not act as private individuals but as public officers, either for God or for the congregation.

*For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.*  
1 Tim. 2:7-8

*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*  
2 Cor. 5:20

*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.*  
1 Cor. 4:1

*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.*  
Eph. 4:11-12

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## I. Statement Of The Dialogical Principle

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Worship is a holy dialogue between the participants in worship, namely, the triune \_\_\_ and his \_\_\_\_\_. As with every good dialogue, someone begins \_\_\_\_\_ing and an orderly exchange follows. Corporate worship is similar to the rest of our relating with God in that, like his revealing of himself to us and like his saving of us, the \_\_\_\_\_ initiates and his people \_\_\_\_\_.

*The Mighty One, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting... He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people: "Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice... Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God... Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."* Psa. 50:1-15

*So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.* Exo. 19:7-8

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## II. Active Not Passive

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As with every good dialogue, while someone is speaking the other is listening. Even though someone might not be speaking they are not passive, for they ought to be listening actively and attentively. Worship is active and not passive when we rightly listen and respond to God.

## GOD'S ACTIONS

### I. God's Summons Issued

God summons his people and \_\_\_\_\_s us to begin our worship of him.

*Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God.* Deu. 31:12

### II. God's Blessing Declared

God welcomes us into his worship with a blessing of \_\_\_\_\_.

*To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Rom. 1:7

God also \_\_\_\_\_es us when he closes the worship service.

*Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace." So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.* Num. 6:23-27

### III. God's Word Read

God declares to us his law, which teaches us our \_\_\_\_\_ as well as showing us how to live a life of gratitude in \_\_\_\_\_ce to God.

*What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.* Rom. 7:7

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." Exo. 24:7

God speaks from the \_\_\_\_\_ on which the sermon is based. When the sermon is based upon Christian doctrine, we read a portion of Scripture as well as the portion of Christian doctrine that will be expounded and applied.

*Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.* 1 Tim. 4:13

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#### IV. God's Word Preached

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Christ speaks to us in the \_\_\_\_\_ing of the \_\_\_\_\_, which is the heart of the worship service. God has promised to create \_\_\_\_\_f within us by the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ (Gospel) of Jesus Christ, not by other means.

*I 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, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.* 2 Tim. 4:1-2

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" Rom. 10:13-15

Because God creates saving faith by means of Gospel preaching, the sermon ought not to be only on God's law or biblical teachings but an exposition of Scripture that \_\_\_\_\_s the coming of the Kingdom of God through the person and work of \_\_\_\_\_, calling all to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the Gospel.

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord. 2 Cor. 4:5a

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:14-15

This proclamation of the good news is to be done with \_\_\_\_\_s and not with drama, dance, etc. This proclamation is to be \_\_\_\_\_ so that visible "teaching aids" ought not to be used.

At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison- that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Col. 4:3-4

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## V. God's Gospel Promise Signified And Sealed

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There are two sacraments that God instituted in the New Covenant to show to us and seal to us God's Gospel promise; these are holy baptism and the Lord's Supper (also called Communion). We receive these in \_\_\_\_\_ of God's gracious work of salvation in Christ.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in re-  
membrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Cor. 11:23-26

## OUR RESPONSES

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### I. Repentance And Faith

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Hearing God's Word, each one is responsible to repent of sin and entrust himself to God through \_\_\_\_\_. While not a visible response, God works this inward response in the \_\_\_\_\_ that makes the outward responses with our \_\_\_\_\_ a true dialogue rather than mere \_\_\_ service.

*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

Rom. 10:9-10

*This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*

Matt. 15:8

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### II. Confession

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Together, we make a \_\_\_\_\_ of the Christian faith once for all delivered to the saints.

*Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

1 Tim. 6:12

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### III. Prayer

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We offer up \_\_\_\_\_ of adoration, confession of sins, thanksgiving, and requests.

*Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."*

Mat. 6:9-14

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## IV. Tithes And Offerings

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We give \_\_\_\_\_ (10% of our earnings) and offerings. An offering is an amount beyond a tithe, given as the Lord \_\_\_\_\_s us. Even if we have no income and are \_\_\_\_\_, we should bring something, for we ought not to appear before God \_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_. God collects tithes and offerings from our hands by the deacons; we present them to God by the deacons.

*Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.*  
Mal. 3:10

*On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.*  
1 Cor. 16:2

*Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."*  
Luke 21:1-4

*Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed.*  
Deu. 16:16

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## V. Singing

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God commands that \_\_\_\_\_ing, like prayer, should form part of our corporate response to him.

*Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly!*  
Psa. 149:1

The lyrics of the songs we sing are primarily \_\_\_\_\_s from the Bible, particularly from the book of Psalms, since these are the words God has given his church to sing back to him. We supplement the singing of words from the Bible with songs composed by human authors, which contain words that are faithful to biblical teaching and which focus on God's works performed after the book of Psalms was written; these types of songs are the "\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_" that God commands the church to sing.

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

*Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.*  
Psa. 98:1

When the apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians and Colossians that the church is to sing "\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and spiritual \_\_\_\_\_," the three terms he used ("psalms," "hymns," and "songs") are all terms used in his Greek translation of the book of Psalms for selections that appear within that book (the inscriptions for Psalms 30, 65, 67, 75, 92, etc. speak of "psalm" and "song"; the inscriptions for Psalms 6, 54, 55, etc. speak of "hymn," although "Choir-master" appears in our translation); it is not only "psalms" that appear in the book of Psalms. Since the book of Psalms contains the three types of songs the New Covenant church was commanded to sing, it serves as our primary songbook.

*Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.*  
Eph. 5:19

Having set forth the principles and character of the corporate worship service, we now apply these to questions and issues we face in our context.

## I. "Contemporary" Worship

While there is no definition of "contemporary" worship, churches that claim to have "contemporary" worship often draw attention to having upbeat music and songs as well as their openness to having individuals express themselves during the service. Additionally, churches that advertise "contemporary" worship often replace or supplement the preaching of a sermon with dance, drama, or a more conversational interchange.

A number of influences have brought about what is often called "contemporary" worship. One influence is the rise of Charismatic theology, which promotes encountering God the Holy Spirit by tangible ways, like "speaking in tongues." However, the Bible teaches that we have access to God through a \_\_\_\_\_, someone who "goes between" God and us. This mediator is \_\_\_\_\_.

*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*  
1 Tim. 2:5-6

The Holy \_\_\_\_\_ unites us to Jesus through \_\_\_\_\_ and not through our experience. In this way, true believers are \_\_\_\_\_ with all the fullness of \_\_\_\_\_.

*According to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*  
Eph. 3:16-19

The Holy Spirit creates faith in Jesus within us by the preaching of the Gospel and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments. Therefore, the Bible emphasizes understanding with our \_\_\_\_\_ instead of emotional experience; and the Bible emphasizes \_\_\_\_\_ding \_\_\_\_\_ the congregation with \_\_\_\_\_ion in the faith rather than individuals expressing their personal emotions. Therefore, we reject charismatic "contemporary" worship.

*What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.* 1 Cor. 14:15

*Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.* 1 Cor. 14:16-17, 19

Another influence behind "contemporary" worship is stirring up emotions by music, drama, excitement, etc. rather than being built up by the spoken message from the Bible. Since we believe God has ordained the preaching of the Gospel as the means by which he creates faith, we emphasize Gospel-preaching as the heart of the worship service. Since we believe our singing is a response to God's action instead of an action designed to work upon ourselves, we sing songs designed to have the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ dwell in us \_\_\_\_\_ with lyrics being faithful to the Gospel and with tunes promoting meditation on the words, not simply stirring up emotion.

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

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## II. "Seeker Sensitive" Worship

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The Bible teaches that sinful man does not seek God but that God seeks out sinful man in order to bring glory to himself, and he draws sinners to himself by the preaching of the Gospel. Therefore, the worship of the church, while it ought to be understandable to outsiders, is not designed to please outsiders, and it is focused on what God has ordained to change sinners: the preaching of the Gospel.

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## III. Instruments And Music

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A variety of instruments were used in Old Covenant temple worship, but they were used as accoutrements of temple worship, which Christ fulfilled. Therefore, instruments do not form a part of New Covenant corporate worship. The skillful playing of instruments outside of corporate worship, like the right use of any gift from God (e.g. singing, performing mathematics, cooking), is worship to God, but instrumentation no longer has a role in the church's corporate worship service, only congregational singing does.

However, since most congregations cannot sing well *acappella*, a limited use of instrumentation is useful so long as it has the sole purpose of assisting the congregation in its singing; God commands congregational singing not instrumentation. The instrumentation ought to be performed skillfully but not be showy or distracting from the singing.

The playing of music before and after the worship service as well as during the collecting of the offering does not form part of the corporate worship but is solely intended to minimize distractions from noise. However, because such music occurs in the context of corporate worship, the music ought to be contemplative and promote godly thoughts.

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## IV. Choirs And "Special" Music

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Even though a choir was established in the Old Covenant, it consisted of male Levites serving as officers in the temple, not persons from all Israel. Since the choir was connected

to the priesthood, like the Levitical priesthood it was fulfilled in Christ. Since there is no office of “choir singer” in the New Covenant, having a choir or “special music” in a New Covenant corporate worship service splits the congregation in singing, thereby violating the corporate aspect of the corporate worship service.

As with instrumentation and music, those whom God has gifted with the ability to sing well are encouraged to use their gifts outside of the corporate worship service and to consider such use of their gifts to be worship to God, as we consider the right use of every God-given gift to be worship. However, it is not proper to exercise this gift as an individual in the corporate worship service.

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## V. “Children’s Church”

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When God summons his people to worship, he summons parents and their children, for both adults and children are God’s people and make up the congregation of God’s people assembled for worship. Therefore, “children’s church” goes against the corporate aspect of the service. We encourage parents to train their children so they can worship together with the rest of the congregation.

We have a nursery to accommodate our weakness (both of noisy babies and of easily distracted adults) so that the congregation is not distracted unduly during worship.

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## VI. Decorations

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Even though the Old Covenant place of corporate worship was elaborately decorated, those decorations served the same purpose of the Old Covenant itself: to look ahead to Christ. Since Christ has come and accomplished redemption, and since it is by the preaching of the Gospel that the Holy Spirit works faith within our hearts, every effort should be made to avoid distraction with decorations and to arrange the meeting area so that attentiveness to the preaching of the Gospel is promoted, not hindered.

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## VII. Liturgical Practices

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Liturgical practices (e.g. lighting candles in an advent wreath, etc.) that are not commanded in the Bible violate the regulative principle of worship and should not be done.

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## VIII. Personal Testimonies

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While personal testimonies can be edifying in other contexts, when God speaks to us he speaks from his Word and not our experience. In addition, when we respond to God it is as a congregation and not as individuals.

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## IX. Individual Expressions

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Individual expressions, such as saying “amen” or raising one’s hands, go against the corporate aspect of worship and are discouraged in the corporate worship service.

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## X. “Home” Churches

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While individuals and families are encouraged to gather together for times of Bible reading, prayer, singing, and fellowship, such times must not be confused with the corporate worship service. Those times, based in the connection of earthly blood instead of Spirit, lack God’s command to all the saints in an area to gather under the rule of church overseers where the official proclamation of the Gospel occurs.

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## XI. Attire For Worship

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Because we are in the presence of God, our attire ought to reflect the solemnity of this occasion as well as our awe and reverence for God. Additionally, recognizing that we live in a sinful culture, care must be taken that the excesses and allures of the world are not brought into the assembly of the saints. Care must be taken that attention is not drawn to oneself by how one dresses, either in one’s attire being overly formal, too informal, immodest, etc.

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## XII. Morning And Evening Services

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Because it is only by the preaching of the Gospel that God has promised to work faith within our hearts, we earnestly desire to hear the preaching of the Gospel as much as possible.

God has set aside the first day of the week as the Lord's Day on which we are to rest from our work and leisure so that we can worship God. He did not ordain the Lord's Day as a day for recreational or family activities. Since corporate worship is the highest form of worship, and since we are able to gather together for corporate worship twice on the Lord's Day, we have corporate worship services twice on the Lord's Day, usually in the morning and evening.

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## XIII. Doctrinal Preaching

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Ordinarily, one of the sermons has as its text a specific portion of Scripture; the other sermon has as its text a specific biblical \_\_\_\_\_. This teaching is biblical \_\_\_\_\_, summarized by our doctrinal standards, which draws from the whole of Scripture and is presented as a unified teaching from God's Word.

*I 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, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

2 Tim. 4:1-5

*But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.*

Titus 2:1

Part of the value in doctrinal preaching is that it steps through important doctrines as taught throughout the Bible so that the \_\_\_\_\_ of God is proclaimed and not only what suits the preacher at the time.

*I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.* Acts 20:27

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#### XIV. Services On Days Other Than Sunday

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Because God uses the preaching of the Gospel to create and strengthen faith, it would be wonderful to hear the preaching of the Gospel every day. However, the various callings God has given us in his world often prohibit our gathering together every day. Since our society often has secular "holidays" at various times in the year on which most of the congregation do not have to work as they do on other days (e.g. Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, etc.), we often make use of this opportunity to gather together for corporate worship so that our faith would be strengthened, leading to our serving God better (cf. Heb 3:13).

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#### XV. Liturgy And Ritualism

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We follow a stated order in our worship. This order is a result of prayerful consideration of the principles of worship and how best to employ them in our worship. While various parts are repeated every week (e.g. the reading of the Law) their repetition reflects their importance, and we encourage the congregation to follow the order responsibly and attentively rather than out of custom and mindlessly.

Liturgy is not ritualism but deforms into ritualism when we harden our hearts to the glory of God and his revelation of that glory in Christ, going through the motions of worship rather than worshipping in a hearty manner.

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## XVI. Corporate Preparation And Reflection

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The prelude, postlude, and offertory as well as the time of silence before and after the worship services are intended to provide a time when we together calm our hearts to prepare for and reflect upon God's Word brought to us.

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## XVII. Personal Preparation And Reflection

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We encourage each individual and family to prepare for the corporate worship services by spending time reading and studying the Bible throughout the week, praying, as well as talking about the things of God.

Finishing up one's work and leisure before Saturday evening and then keeping the entire day of Sunday free from earthly concerns and activities that are lawful on the other six days allow us to focus better on the Gospel of God proclaimed to us during the worship services.

We encourage individuals and families to review and discuss the sermons throughout the week so that the benefit of preaching is not limited to the time of its delivery but bears fruit throughout our lives.

## CONCLUSION

We trust that this introduction to the corporate worship services has shown from the Bible how we are to understand and practice worship as a church.

May the Lord be glorified and his people built up spiritually by the proper understanding and practice of our worshiping him.