

THE SERVICE OF WORSHIP

“Worship is why the church exists.”

Robert Saucy, *The Church in God's Program*,” 9

The Worldview of Worship

“The whole world is a theater for the display of the divine goodness, wisdom, justice, and power, but the Church is the orchestra.”

John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms*, Vol. 5, 140

1.

2.

3.

The Fruit of our Forms.

“Liturgies do more than pass on information about God. They form our imaginations and our hearts.”

Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option*, 111

Just what kind of person is this habit or practice trying to produce and to what end is such a practice aimed?

James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 83

1.

2.

3.

4.

Biblical Forms.

“All voluntary worship which we ourselves devise apart from God's commandment is hateful to him.”

John Calvin *The Institutes*, IV.13.2, 1256

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

“Corporate worship reenacts the gospel.”

Tim Keller, *Worship by the Book*, 215

Early Church Forms

[The Christians] maintained that the amount of their fault or error had been this, that it was their habit on a fixed day to assemble before daylight and recite by turns a form of words to Christ as a god; and that they bound themselves with an oath, not for any crime, but not to commit theft or robbery or adultery, not to break their word, and not to deny a deposit when demanded. After this was done, their custom was to depart, and to meet again to take food, but ordinary and harmless food.

Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia, wrote to the emperor Trajan in Rome. A.D. 112,

“Tradition is an argument extended through time.”

Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 30

1. Gather Sunday.
2. Read Scripture and a church official would admonish/ preach.
3. Prayers would be said: both clergy and lay members.
4. Singing.
5. Communion.
6. Offering.

Justin Martyr. 150. *See handout.*

Our Forms

“Because they have not been taught to think of the worship service as having gospel purposes, people instinctively think of its elements only in terms of personal preference: what makes me feel good, comfortable, or respectful.

Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 20

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

SMCC ORDER OF WORSHIP

Every church and every tradition has an order of worship, a liturgy, to use the old formal word. The word liturgy simply means the “service of worship.” It is a good word because it uniquely belongs in the sacred setting.

The service of worship that we follow is doing something to us, whether we know it or not. It is forming our hearts, shaping what we love. It is leading us from being a loosely connected people who, by heroic efforts have made it to church this Sunday, to being the people of God, together, with hearts, minds and hands dedicated to His glory between Sundays.

Preparation

The worship service begins with preparation of our hearts for the act of worship.

Song of praise. The worship service opens with a corporate song of praise that engages us in the theme of the service, which is set by the passage to be preached.

Call to worship. The call to worship is the divine invitation to leave the cares of the world and join the angels of heaven in the worship of the one true God. It involves five parts for us.

- The invitation. “This hour is not like every other hour. In this hour, we gather as the people of God, according to the command of God in order to worship God.”
- The exhortation or charge. The exhortation of the passage at hand is directly introduced so as to engage the hearts of the congregation.
- (The confession). On those days that the exhortation finds us in present sin, we take time for personal and corporate confession. A biblical assurance of pardon may be offered.
- The Scriptural call. A passage of Scripture with a corresponding theme, often a psalm, issues the formal call to engage our hearts in worship. We often use the lectionary Psalm of the day.
- Prayer. The prayer addresses the God spoken to in a Psalm, confesses sin, asks for God to work the aim of the Word in our hearts this day. This is asked in the name of Jesus.

Adoration

Prepared hearts turn to direct acts of worship of the Triune God. We take advantage of wisely designed forms, both ancient and modern, which will support God’s aims in our hearts as a congregation.

Songs of adoration. Songs of corporate worship, both old and new, which are biblically accurate, historically valuable and corporately singable, allow us to worship God in congregational unity.

(Testimony). Testimonies are sometimes engaged to give praise to God for the good that He is doing in our congregation and to celebrate what we want to see more of in maturing believers.

(Reading). Corporate readings from the Heidelberg Catechism, Apostle’s Creed, book of Common Prayer or Book of Common Worship, serve to focus our minds and hearts and to unite them with the church across history.

The Pastoral Prayer. The Pastoral Prayer is offered in praise of this God, on behalf of the needs of our congregation and in preparation for the offering that follows.

Offering. We receive an offering from the congregation as an act of gratitude for what God has provided to our families and so that more good can be accomplished with our pooled monies that otherwise might. Offerings are free will for attenders and expected for church members.

Exhortation

Having prepared our hearts and offered praise to our God, we are ready to hear the Word of God preached to us and to receive it as the Word of God.

Scripture Reading. The day’s Scripture passage is read by a congregant with the following introduction. “Today’s Scripture reading comes from the book of ____, chapter ____, beginning in verse ____.”

Sermon. A expositional sermon, prepared to bring the Word of God to bear on the lives of this local congregation is preached.

(Communion). Communion, or The Lord’s Supper, follows the hearing of the Word on two Sunday’s per month. Our traditional, Free Church, form is to pass plates to one another signifying our belief in the priesthood of all believers. We use words of institution taken from the book of Common Prayer, “The gifts of God for the people of God.” We, then, connect the passage preached with the celebration of the finished work of Christ, believing that every passage leads to the cross of Christ.

Dedication

The service closes and sends us into our daily lives with a dedication to believe what we have heard from the Word of God and obey it at home, at work and in our neighborhoods.

Songs of dedication. These songs pick up the tone of the sermon. If the sermon passage leaves us contemplative or enthusiastic or hopeful, these songs correspond. This leads us to sing our commitment back to God.

Charge. The closing charge serves as a summary reminder of the truth about God we have heard, what that makes us as the people of God in this place and obligation we are now under in having worshipped.

Benediction. The pastor then offers a benediction or traditional blessing from the Word of God. His hands are raised and the congregation reaches theirs out in a receptive posture. The benediction ends with “amen and amen,” the second is joined by the congregation in full voice.