

Worship is what we were created for. Everyone worships something. Christian worship (deriving from “worth-ship”) means declaring the infinite worth and the gracious redeeming work of God. It is glorifying God for who He is and what He has done. That is what is taking place in heaven right now and it is what the Church will do for all of eternity. For this reason, worship is at the center of all that we do. It is what everything else in the life of the church revolves around. We study the Bible so that we can know who God is in all of His wonder and the exceeding greatness of all that His redemption entails and worship Him for it. And we do this as a community being continually shaped by the Gospel.

Worship gives us a place to express the whole range of human emotions – from great joy, to mourning, sorrow over sin, and thankfulness to the God who redeems. God doesn’t expect us to check our emotions at the door. But worship is also primarily a formative experience where God actually shapes our hearts and desires to conform us into the image of His Son.

OUR WORSHIP WILL BE GOD-CENTERED

Worship is about God and His glory. Worship must always be **God-centered**. He is the main actor, the main event. We worship because God is worthy of worship, it is what we were created for (Psalm 19, 148), and because it gives us a foretaste of heavenly worship. (Revelation 4-5). In corporate worship, heaven and earth are united.

THE STRUCTURE OF WORSHIP

The word “liturgy” may make some people feel uncomfortable. It may conjure up ideas of lifeless formality or words without meaning. But the word – “liturgy” – simply means the “work of the people” and refers to an “order of worship”. **Every** church and **every** worship service has a “liturgy”. Some more basic, some more detailed.

There is not just one biblical order for worship. But the question we must always ask is: “Why do we do what we do in worship? Why do we do it *when* we do it? What structures our service and what does the flow communicate?”

At Redeemer, worship is ordered around the **Gospel**.

GOSPEL-CENTERED WORSHIP

What does it mean to order worship around the gospel? It means that weekly corporate worship is a “drama of redemption”. It is the truths of the Gospel lived out before us week by week. Worship is a drama which has actors, a set, and a story or plot line.

The **plot line** revolves around a key theological term – “covenant”. God’s covenant promise runs through the whole Bible – “I will be your God and you will be my people.”

Worship is a weekly covenant renewal ceremony where God assures us of His love, forgiveness, and presence as we trust in His provision of Jesus Christ for us. So in worship, God is seen to be the great Giver. In worship, we receive gifts from God. God is the **main actor** who enters into conversation

with His people. Worship is **dialogical**, which means it is a conversation between God and His people. God, the main actor, initiates this conversation just as He initiates grace in the Gospel of salvation. In worship, God speaks and we respond.

In the **Call to Worship**, the Sovereign Lord summons His people into His presence to worship Him.

In the **Invocation**, God's people ask for God's presence and Holy Spirit to help us worship.

After God tells us who He is, His people hear or sing of God's worth or holiness. We then respond by telling God who we are in **confession of our sins**.

God then assures those who repent of their sins of His pardon and forgiveness. In turn, God's people respond to His grace with gratitude.

God tells of His **provision** and we respond by bringing our **needs** to Him. God gives His Word and we respond to that Word.

OUR WORSHIP WILL BE WORD-CENTERED

God's Word will fill our worship. The "means" God uses to communicate His redemption to us, to give us His grace are His Word, the sacraments, and prayer. Preaching is not just words about God, but **God speaking to us!** The sacraments- baptism and Lord's Supper – are a "visible word" through which God communicates the Gospel in symbols. The sacraments communicate to all our senses.

Preaching is the means God uses to bring life to dead bones and to grow us. Preaching is how God proclaims the Gospel bringing people to faith, repentance, and new life.

The **sacraments** confirm the Gospel and nurture our faith. The Lord's Supper is how God feeds His people with Jesus. In the Lord's Supper, Christ is actually present to our faith. We "taste and see that the Lord is good." The Lord's Supper is one of the primary means God has given for our spiritual growth and so we will celebrate it every week.

The Lord's Supper symbolizes not only **communion with God**, but **with each other**. It reminds us that **we are a body**. Christianity is not a private affair, but takes place in community.

In worship, God re-orientes our hearts through His Word. We are reminded week by week of what is true reality as God speaks to us authoritatively. Therefore, our worship will be saturated with God's Word through Scripture readings, prayers, and songs.

WORSHIP IS A COMMUNITY EVENT

In worship, God REALLY is present. He REALLY meets with His people. And not only adults. The church is a community of all ages. **God wants to meet with our children**. So our goal is to have our children involved in worship as early as possible. Sure, there will be much that they do not fully understand. But worship is not just a place to gather information. It is a place for transformation and covenant renewal and there is much that even children can understand and participate in. God speaks to His people, renews His covenant, calls us to confession, assures us of His grace. Our children need this!

OUR WORSHIP WILL BE INTELLIGIBLE

We will have a formal liturgy and we will use creeds. Our preaching will be deep, theological, and expository. Yet, it should not be unnecessarily difficult for people to understand what is taking place in our worship services. Children, new Christians, and those exploring Christianity should be able to understand what we are doing. Much will be foreign and new. But we need to communicate what we do and why. This does not mean that we will dumb things down, but simply strive to make them accessible. Throughout the Bible, the worship of God's people is supposed to take outsiders into consideration. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul commands that outsiders be able to understand what we are saying.

WORSHIP IS AN EVANGELISTIC EVENT

Worship is one of the main evangelistic opportunities of the church. The technical term for this is doxological evangelism – proclaiming the truth of the gospel through worship.

“Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.” (Psalm 96:3-4 ESV)

In worship, God's people declare in the midst of the nations God's glory, His holiness, and His grace, calling everyone to repentance, faith, and worship.

Worship is at the center of the life of Redeemer. We believe that God really shows up in a way He does not elsewhere. THIS is the place God has said He will meet with His people. This is where God communicates His grace to us. Worship is where God gives us what we need most... Himself. In worship we receive Jesus as He gives Himself to us in His Word and the sacraments. God communicates to us and we respond in songs and prayers of adoration, confession, and praise. Worship pumps the Gospel through the church body week after week, so that we are empowered to love and serve our neighbors and our city.

Our worship should be characterized by both **reverence** and **great joy**.

The primary function of our worship music is to assist the congregation as we together respond to God in various ways through singing. The goal of worship music is corporate singing. Therefore, our music must always *enable*, not detract from, corporate singing. Music should aid and facilitate God's people singing to Him. It is not a show, but rather accompaniment. It should not be overpowering.

Our worship liturgy follows a cycle which takes us through the gospel week by week. Worship is dialogical, which means that it is a conversation, initiated by God, in which He speaks to His people and we respond. The people must always be given a voice to respond. Corporate singing, prayers, and readings give the people a voice to respond. When God calls us to worship, we respond by joyfully praising God for His excellence and worth. When God convicts us of our sin through His law, we respond in confession. When God assures us of His pardon, we respond in grateful and joyful thanksgiving. When God showers His grace upon us through the Word and sacraments, we respond to what He has given us.

The hymnbook which God originally gave to His people was the Psalter. (Since God has given us inspired psalms, we will work to incorporate them into our singing.) The psalms are filled with the whole range of human emotions. God does not expect us to turn off our emotions in worship, but rather to bring them to Him. The psalms, and so all music that we sing, give opportunity for expressing various emotions. Yet the primary function of the psalms is not expressive, but formative. God wants to spiritually shape us and mature us through what we sing. Often we may not feel the things we are singing and might think this is hypocritical. But God puts on our lips the very words He desires to actually shape our hearts and motives *in the process of our worship*.

While worship should be a place where we express our emotions, those emotions must flow from and be a response to various truths about God, His character, His law, our sin, and His grace and His redemption. We should not have to "work up" our emotions. Some tunes can manipulate our emotions and yet be void of any deep theological truths which drive those emotions.

TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

Worship must reflect the **transcendence** – "otherness", holiness – of God. And it must also reflect the **immanence** of God – the fact of His nearness to us in Christ. God is wholly other, but He is also Immanuel – God with us. Since God is holy and awesome, loving, merciful, and kind, we worship Him with both reverence and great joy.

ANCIENT AND INDIGENOUS

Our worship must seek to be both **ancient** and **indigenous**. By **ancient**, we mean that our worship is rooted in the long history of God's people. Through the ages, God has gifted His Church with wonderful hymns. We want to draw on the rich treasures God has given to His Church and find joy in being a part of a long, continuous stream of believers that has been flowing for thousands of years.

By **indigenous**, we mean that our worship must also take into account our particular context – our geographic location and our place in history. God has always contextualized His communication to His people. The Bible was written in the common language of its recipients and took into account the culture in which they lived. The Incarnation of Jesus is the ultimate example of contextualization. God became a man to live among men. He became a Jewish man amongst Jewish people and lived in their culture. The church's worship must take into account the culture in which it finds itself. We must acknowledge our context, the time and place where God has put us to live, and embrace the fact that God is still at work through gifted writers and musicians.

Our worship music will be theologically rich and we will strive for excellence, realizing that our ultimate worth and acceptance is not based on our ability to perform for God, but on the fact that Jesus performed perfectly on our behalf.

- We will draw on rich hymns of the past, including many excellent older hymn texts that have been given new life with newer tunes. We will make use of the great work being done by others, such as Indelible Grace/RUF and Red Mountain Church.
- Redeemer will also seek to incorporate the psalms into our singing.
- We will seek to incorporate the best of the new worship music being produced today that is both theologically true and musically excellent.

INSTRUMENTATION

While we expect our worship music and instrumentation to develop over time, our basic core instrumentation will seek to include acoustic and electric guitar(s), piano, violin, cello, bass guitar, and a drum set (with occasional djembe or congas).