

Trinity Church: A Worshipping Community

The chief task of the church is worship—we are redeemed, in the words of the Shorter Catechism, that we might “glorify God and enjoy him forever.” Worship is the central task of the Christian church. It is what we do that no other institution does.

BROAD BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

What is worship?

1. **We affirm** that worship is the priestly service (*abodah, latreia*) of the church in which we, by the power of the Holy Spirit, out of gratitude to Almighty God as He is revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ, humble ourselves before Him (*shacha, proskuneo*)...by declaring His worth, confessing His lordship over us, and rendering to Him honor and glory, according to His Word.

Worship is...

the quickening of the *conscience* by the holiness of God
the feeding of the *mind* by the truth of God
the purging of the *imagination* by the beauty of God
the opening of the *heart* to the love of God
the devotion of the *will* to the purpose of God

— Archbishop William Temple

We deny that the chief end of worship is the mere satisfaction of human desires or that worship is to be conducted according to the dictates of human reason alone.

2. **We affirm** that worship is the central goal of all of history and of your own personal salvation in particular (John 4:23; Romans 15:8-11; Ephesians 1:10-11; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 5:13, 7:12).

We deny that corporate worship is a peripheral or dispensable element of the Christian life or that it serves simply as hors d'oeuvres before the main dish of the sermon.

3. **We affirm** that worship can and should take place corporately in large gatherings and privately in small gatherings of individuals and families.

We deny that one can have a church-less Christianity. We deny that families should forego a regular pattern and rhythm of family worship (Bible reading and prayer). “God is to be worshipped everywhere, in spirit and in truth; as in *private families* daily, and in secret each one by himself” (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 21:6).

4. **We affirm** that worship which honors God will edify believers (1 Corinthians 14:1-17, 26) and challenge unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22-25).

We deny that seeking the glory of God in worship requires us to ignore the true spiritual needs of worshippers or that it allows us to ignore our obligation to show the love of Christ to fellow worshippers.

5. We affirm that the elements of worship (i.e. the basic acts we perform to honor God) are limited to those that God approves in Scripture, by every way which God reveals His will: precept, illustration, commendation, and commandment, in both the Old and New Testaments.

We deny that people have liberty to devise elements of worship that God has not prescribed or to disallow others to perform elements He has clearly approved.

Particular Distinctives of Worship at Trinity Church

Here are some of the things we aim for in our worship services:

1. ***Worship that is thoroughly blended.*** Our musical style will be a blend of the best of the classical tradition with the best of contemporary music. Thus, our services will not only endeavor to focus on the immanence of God, but also His transcendence. We will cultivate an appreciation for the richness of the church's Reformational heritage with a refreshing vibrancy. We desire to avoid both uncomfortable novelty as well as stuffy formality.

Worship is not a matter of taste. Worship is offering our best to praise our worthy, triune God. "The 'traditionalists' need not be deprived of new expressions of faith and 'contemporaryists' need not be robbed of continuity with the ancient church throughout time" (Marva Dawn, Is It a Lost Cause: Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children, p.72).

2. ***Worship that is both God-centered and seeker-sensitive.*** We attempt to combine a transcendent focus on Jesus Christ with a welcoming attitude toward those who are spiritually skeptical or curious. We design our services expecting non-Christians to be present, believing that the experience of God's presence in our midst will lead many to embrace Christ. We avoid services that either dissolve into entertainment or which are simply 'preaching to the choir.'
3. ***Worship that speaks to the mind and to the heart.*** We attempt to provide services that are both deep and practical, both intellectually challenging and emotionally satisfying. We want informed minds but also enflamed hearts.
4. ***Worship that is celebratory and reflective.*** Our worship must be joyful, hearty, and exuberant because it serves as an anticipation of that heavenly worship that we will enjoy one day forever. However, we are worshipping a holy God which calls for

reverence. ECCLESIASTES 5:1-2: “GUARD your steps as you go to the house of God, and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.”

HEBREWS 12:28-29 ~ “Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire.”

Specific Shape and Elements of our Worship Service

Gathering (The Psalms of Ascent; Drawing Near – Hebrews 4:16)

- Greeting and call to worship
- Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19; Col. 3:16; Mt. 26:30; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:26)
- Confession of Sin/Assurance of Pardon (1 John 1:9; Psalm 15)

The Word ~ There is *hearing from* God, seeing anew what he is worth. The Scriptures are read, heard, and proclaimed in a variety of ways.

- Scripture reading (1 Timothy 4:13)
- Sermon (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 4:1-2)
- Confession of Faith

The worship in the Old Testament involved the use of a question posed by one of the children to the father on several occasions (Ex 12:26-27; 13:11-16; Dt 6:20-25).

- Pastoral Prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-8; Matthew 6:9-13)

John Calvin states that “the chief part of worship lies in the office of prayer.”¹ This means that prayer ought to be given a prominent place in our worship services as well as our devotional lives.

- Giving of Tithes and Offerings (2 Corinthians 8 and 9)

God’s Plan

- A. Approach to giving (9:1-5) – Prepare in advance.
- B. Amount of giving (v.6) – Generous and sacrificial.
- C. Attitude in giving (v.7) ~ Purposeful and pleasurable.

Not painful – reluctantly. The word here is *lupas* – a state of mental pain and anxiety - ‘sadness, sorrow, distress.’

Not pressurized – not under compulsion or pressure of any kind, outer or inner.

But pleasurable – spontaneously/joyfully. Don’t give till it hurts, give till it tickles. The word here is *hilarious*. Example in the O.T. Exodus 34

God’s Promises

- A. He will provide (vv.8,10,11).
- B. People to whom you give will pray (vv.12-14)
- C. You will praise Him (v.15)

¹ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 1979, 3.20.29.

All of the things that we give to God - “whether music or martyrdom - are like the intrinsically worthless present of a child, which a father values indeed, but values only for the intention, not the worth of the gift” (C.S. Lewis, Christian Reflections, “On Church Music” (1949), p.99).

Communion (The Lord's Supper)

- This culminating act of worship is known by several terms in the New Testament: breaking bread, communion, the Lord's Supper, or thanksgiving (Eucharist).
- The Lord's Supper is our covenant meal through which we acknowledge Jesus' kingship and authority over our lives. The Greek words translated "Lord's Supper" may also be translated "Royal Banquet." Christ himself is our host at the Lord's Table, receiving our renewed pledge of loyalty to him and his kingdom.
- The term "Communion" originates in this expression, and refers to the inner unity of believers one with another through their union in Christ. The Lord's Table symbolizes and even brings about that unity: "We, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Cor. 10:17).

Sending

- Final Hymn
- Charge
- Benediction (Numbers 6:24-26)

Making the Most of Worship at Trinity Church

(All of the below suggestions are taken and adapted from Skip Ryan, Park Cities Presbyterian Church in Dallas, Texas.)

Preparing for worship takes some time and thoughtful planning.

1. RECOGNIZE: Corporate worship grows out of personal worship. Therefore, the most fundamental preparation for Sunday worship is that which flows from presenting yourself as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1-2) and having a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:1-10).
DO: Ask God for a heart of worship and brokenness each day.
2. RECOGNIZE: You cannot expect to rush into church after an exhausting Saturday night and “be worshipful.” A late Saturday night may at times be necessary and fun, but if you always get less sleep than you need on Saturday night and are tired in church, can you be alert and attentive to the majesty and presence of the Lord?
DO: Get a good night’s rest before Sunday worship.
3. RECOGNIZE: Conscious acknowledgement of God’s attributes will prepare your heart for coming into His presence.
DO: Before bed on Saturday night, read individually or pray with your family passages of Scripture which remind you of who God is. Pray that even as you sleep, the Lord would prepare you to worship Him (Psalm 127:2).
4. RECOGNIZE: You need an expectant and receptive heart Sunday morning.
DO: Spend a brief time alone with the Lord before coming to corporate worship (Psalm 5:3; 27:3-4).
5. RECOGNIZE: You cannot prepare adequately before worship if you are late.
DO: Plan to be in your seat at least five minutes before the service starts
6. RECOGNIZE: God is in our presence when we gather for worship; He constitutes us as a worshipping assembly (Hebrews 12:23; Genesis 28:17).
DO: Come, conscious that God is present.
7. RECOGNIZE: What you are really doing in worship is joining with the “general assembly and the church of the first born who are in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23). We worship with the whole of God’s chosen people from every time and place – including the angels (Hebrews 12:22)!
DO: As you come to church, imagine the host of brothers and sisters (saints from all ages and the angels) who are waiting to worship with you!
8. RECOGNIZE: There is a healthy balance between greeting friends and being quiet before the service starts.

- DO: Be quiet before worship. Pray and read a Psalm, the prayer at the top of the program, the responsive reading, or the confession of faith.
9. RECOGNIZE: Worship takes as much effort as solving a complex problem in your checkbook or playing a good set of tennis.
DO: Concentrate on each phrase spoken, sung, or prayed. THINK as you worship (Mark 12:30).
 - 10: RECOGNIZE: Worship centers around the Word read, preached, and heard, for the Word is God's living voice speaking His will to us.
DO: Listen carefully to the Word read and preached; give the sermon full attention; pray to learn from it.
 11. RECOGNIZE: Worship is much more than hearing a sermon. The first half of the service is not window dressing or a warm-up to the message.
DO: Concentrate on the meaning of each part of the worship as it occurs.
 12. RECOGNIZE: Worship also centers on the Sacraments – ordinances instituted by Christ for the strengthening of believers.
DO: Participate in the Sacraments and expect Christ to minister to you.
 13. RECOGNIZE: We do not come to worship primarily for what we “get out of it.” We come for what God “gets out of it.” Do not expect to be entertained but to give worship to God.
DO: After the service ask, “How did we do?” rather than “How did it make me feel?”
 14. RECOGNIZE: Worship should change us.
DO: During the closing prayer after the sermon, resolve to do one concrete thing on the basis of your worship (Romans 12:2).