



Philosophy of Music & Worship¹

New Castle Bible Church

Purpose

1. To clarify what the Bible has to say about worship so that our ministry can be examined in light of Scripture.
2. To ensure unity, effective communication, and continuity from one leader to the next through the use of a written statement.
3. To help our church family and those serving in the worship and music ministry to understand our biblical philosophy and its implementation.
4. To supplement the job description of the Associate Pastor of Worship/Music—any potential candidate should understand and agree to support this statement.
5. To support our elders' responsibility to ensure that our worship and music ministry remains biblical via periodic comparison of the actual ministry to the stated principles and applications in this statement.

Definition

- **Worship** is any act of submission before God in a manner and method that is in accordance with His will.² Worship inherently glorifies God, seeking to further His kingdom through our obedience to biblical instructions. Offering our tithes, joyfully serving others, sharing our faith, praying fervently, and singing songs are all ways in which we can worship God. True worship is a whole-person response to the revelation of God. It isn't just a part of your life, it is your life. (Romans 12:1-2; Psalms 29:2, 95:6)

¹This Philosophy of Worship and Music Statement is significantly based on a similar statement produced by the elders of Grace Church of Dupage, IL, and is joyfully used here with their generous permission. We thank God for the faithful ministry of Grace Church of Dupage and their sacrificial willingness to share from their studies for our benefit.

² Definition credited to Dr. Daniel Block

Guiding Principles for our Corporate Worship

1. Because worship is a celebration of God, His works, and His character...

2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Chronicles 15:16; 2 Chronicles 29:30; Psalm 81:1; 92:4

Applications for corporate worship:

Our services should seek, above all, to lead Spirit-led hearts to delight in God, as we worship and proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the only One truly worthy of our worship.

Worship through music and song should be full of authentic emotion in all of its inward and outward expressions—including joy, gratitude, and hope--because worship involves a celebration of God as well as grief and contrition as we acknowledge God’s righteousness and our sinfulness.

2. Because God is always to be the only object of worship, and because He is jealous to receive the sole worship of His creation...

Exodus 20:4-5; Leviticus 10:1-2; 2 Chronicles 5:13; Psalm 50:22-23; Mark 7:7-9; Romans 1:25-26; 1 Corinthians 14:24-25; Philippians 2:3-4; Revelation 22:8-9

Applications for corporate worship:

Our leaders in worship have as their first and fundamental calling an authentic worship of God in their own hearts, and they must avoid posturing for a human audience.

Worship music must point ultimately to and exalt God, not human beings. When testimony songs are utilized, they should contain a strong emphasis on God’s character and gracious acts. Music should leave worshipers with a clear picture of God, drawing worshipful attention to God, not to the leader.

Applause, when it occurs, ought to be the expression and overflow of joy in, gratitude to, and adoration of God.

Many styles can be used as long as they are conducive to the exaltation of and exulting in God himself. Battles over music or worship styles miss the point that worship is to and for God. When worship is driven by “my preferences” or “my desires,” it becomes idolatry. Love for Christ and for others supercede our love for those preferences.

Our corporate worship services are primarily intended as opportunities to see God more clearly, encounter Him more personally, and revere Him more passionately. Therefore, we will seek to minimize, or integrate with wisdom and sensitivity, elements which have potential to distract us from that end, such as an

abundance of announcements or other “business” issues. These more horizontally-oriented aspects of corporate life are not excluded from whole-life worship, but on Sunday mornings our aim is to pursue a vertical orientation in the worship of God.

Our services should be designed to lead believers to worship God in spirit and truth. They should not be designed as “seeker” services for the lost. The best way to evangelize the lost in a worship service is to present “the real God in all His fullness....A profound discovery of God’s reality will subject all one’s personal beliefs and behaviors, priorities and sources of security to serious questioning” (Marva Dawn, “Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Church,” pp. 286, 288).

3. Because corporate worship in Scripture involves training and requirements for singers and musicians...

Training and musical skill: 1 Chronicles 15:22; 23:3-5; 25:6-8;
2 Chronicles 34:12

Set aside for music (dedication and financial support): Numbers 8:24-26;
Deuteronomy 14:27-29; 1 Chronicles 9:33; Ezra 7:24;
Nehemiah 10:39; 12:27; 12:47

Applications for corporate worship:

We should *teach* those involved in our music ministry the importance of their service and use of their musical abilities. When possible, accompaniment for vocalists should be live to allow instrumentalists to use their gifts to worship God.

The heart of a worshiper should not be the only criteria for a musician participating in the corporate worship. There should also be a level of skill and proficiency attached to the use of musicians in service.

We will work with our pastor of music and worship to create a process to *identify* vocalists and instrumentalists with musical skill and then *train* and *develop* them for service.

Since we desire to prioritize congregational singing, special music should be just that -- special. It should have a specific purpose to address or communicate a theme in keeping with the sermon or occasion that coincides.

4. Because biblical worship shows organization and excellence in its production and should be conducted “decently and in order”...

2 Chronicles 5:12-13, 7:6, 29:28; Ezra 3:10; 1 Corinthians 14:1-33, 40

Applications for corporate worship:

We should strive for excellence in our worship services and in our worship music. Worship and music should be led by people who are adequately prepared and organized. Preparation, organization, and execution of the worship service should be viewed as an act of worship as well.

We should pursue excellence and order as an expression of love to God and neighbor. Therefore, we always value authenticity over perfection while we seek to remove all distractions that come from being unprepared or unrehearsed in the music or worship.

5. Because God does not accept worship when sin is unconfessed...

Joshua 7:19-20; 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 51:15-17; Isaiah 1:11-15; Hosea 6:4-6; Amos 5:21-24; Matthew 5:23-24

Applications for corporate worship:

Only the truly saved can offer acceptable worship to God. We should not knowingly allow the unsaved to lead the worship of Christ's church, since God values the heart of worship more than the art of worship.

We must not knowingly allow musicians to minister whose lives do not demonstrate personal holiness.

It is each individual's responsibility not to serve with unconfessed sin. Bringing unknown musicians in to assist our worship is not inherently wrong, but should be *carefully scrutinized* for several reasons:

Only believers worship in spirit and truth.

God does not accept worship when unconfessed, habitual sin is present in the individual's life.

Every person should be encouraged to use their giftedness and talents to serve and worship God in their own local church where they can be held accountable.

6. Because we worship God in spirit (not in a temple)...

In authentic dependence: John 4:21-24; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Philippians 3:3; Hebrews 9:24; 10:19-20; 1 Peter 2:5

In physical expression: Exodus 12:27; Psalm 33:1, 8; 47:1; 95:6; 134:2; 150:3-4

Applications for corporate worship:

Worshipping God includes both biblical truth and deep emotion. They are meant to go together. Worshipping hearts should be moved to feel awe in the transcendent glory of God, sorrow for sin, gratefulness for mercy, and many other emotions including peace, wonder, and confident joy.

We value both devotion and doctrine in our worship. Therefore, we value songs that help us think deeply about God and help us respond with wholehearted emotion and devotion.

While we value pleasing environments that aid our worship, we should not assume that buildings, decorations, and humanly engineered atmosphere “produce” worship.

God-honoring expressiveness in corporate worship begins with clearly seeing the One we worship. Our bodies naturally respond to what affects our souls. So various physical expressions can bring glory to God, including (but not limited to) clapping, singing, bowing, kneeling, lifting hands, shouting, playing instruments, dancing, and standing in awe.

Love’s priority is always to serve others more than oneself. Emotion and expressiveness in worship does have limitations. Humble love never seeks to distract others from focusing on the glory of Christ.

7. Because we worship God in truth...

Psalm 145:18; Proverbs 9:10; Hosea 6:6; John 4:21-24; 16:13; 17:17;
1 Corinthians 2:14; Colossians 3:16;

Applications for corporate worship:

In preparation for worship, we prayerfully ask the Spirit of truth to guide us into all truth.

True worship is always a response to God’s word. The content of our worship will always conform to the truths of Scripture, which is the core of our worship message and the compass directing our worship planning.

We value songs that have substantive, theologically rich, biblically accurate lyrics.

8. Because we worship God in the beauty of holiness...

Psalm 29:2

Applications for corporate worship:

We will strive to be sensitive in our selections of music to avoid needlessly offending some.

We will not elevate the pursuit of “musical excellence” above shepherding people with compassion. We value our people in the church and music ministry more than we value musical excellence.

Those leading in worship and music should maintain an appearance and modesty in dress out of love for their brothers and sisters so as not to draw unwholesome or impure attention to one’s body.

9. Because Christ became relevant to us by becoming a man, and because Paul tells us to be all things to all men...

John 1:14; 1 Corinthians 9:19-22

Applications for corporate worship:

God has designed worship music to be rich in variety and total in scope. We employ music that helps to connect us with our rich heritage – but at the same time communicates the Gospel in ways our culture can understand. God-pleasing music is measured by the message it proclaims -- not its tradition or newness.

Music should be relevant to the congregation. Relevancy does not equal popularity; it means clarity of message. We should use styles and texts that are capable of effective communication, so that the music becomes a tool the people can use in worship, not a hindrance to it. This music should be easily transferable to their daily, personal worship.

CONCLUSION

We believe these basic principles about worship are in accord with God’s revelation to us in Scripture. We want these principles to guide the pursuit and expression of our corporate worship at New Castle Bible Church, and, flowing from our corporate worship, the pursuit and expression of our worship as individuals. May the expressions of our worship be true both to what God has done and to who God is. May our worship be a pleasing aroma to Him. And may we know the goodness and joy of living out the purpose for which we exist, namely, the praise and adoration of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.