

Principles that Guide Our Philosophy of Worship

Music is the language of the heart.

Worshippers cannot sing from the heart using a style of music that is not familiar to them.

The Church has a long tradition of using music that is from the “heart language” of the culture in which it is serving. Martin Luther and John and Charles Wesley are examples of great men in Church history who put good theology and expressions of worship to contemporary tunes.

Music will open or close one’s spirit.

The music used for a particular worship celebration must help worshippers open up their spirit so that they have an ability to offer up praise and worship to God. If they are unfamiliar with the music language, then they are forced to become observers rather than participants.

Music that matches the culture results in spontaneous invitations.

Our worship services are intended to be an “invitation” entry point for the people we are seeking to bring to Christ and His Body, the Church. We are not a “seeker” driven church, where we avoid bold declaration of Biblical truth through music and preaching. But we are worshippers who want to be “sensitive” to those “seekers” who are our “guests” in worship. In other words, if our regular attenders (consciously or unconsciously) believe that the music, message or ministry of our local church would either be awkward, embarrassing, or irrelevant to their prospective guests, they will hesitate or refrain to invite others to attend.

This knowledge suggests that the “right” worship music is dictated by the culture of the current church attendees and of those they are seeking to reach for Jesus Christ. We can use Country, Southern Gospel, Sacred (opera style), Jazz, Big Band, Classical, Hillsong Praise Music, Black Gospel, Contemporary Worship Music (youth/young adult worship songs represented by groups like David Crowder Band), Hymns and Gospel. The worship music should relate to the current time and context of the church, not just today’s “Top 40” Christian worship songs. Just because songs are generally popular doesn’t mean they are the best for a given context.

Multiple services/styles are needed in a diverse community.

We need multiple worship services with unique styles when the church is located in a diverse community.

Each worship celebration service needs to have a primary style of music that is like the “main course” of a meal. And it needs to be enjoyable and helpful to as broad a group as possible. Then a variety of music styles can be added as “side dishes” to the “main course.” Special music by the choir, a soloist or a group can be a means of providing musical “spice” with a message that draws worshippers in and allows them to respond without requiring them to “sing along” in a style that is not their musical “language.”

Worship leaders must facilitate a focus on God.

Worship leaders, praise team and instrumentalists ideally will neither draw attention to themselves nor be a distraction. Instead, they will facilitate a focus on and heart connection with God.

Naturally, it is distracting to have musicians and vocalists who are seeking to impress the “audience” instead of leading in worship. However, the level of musical excellence (sound reinforcement and visual presentation) must be sufficiently good to keep worshippers from being distracted. In a larger church, in an urban setting, the expectations are very high. Special music must be excellent and memorized. Musicians (including sound and tech crew) must be very competent and provide a foundation for clear and confident worship and praise.