



Philosophy of Worship Ministry
Parkway Baptist Church
Dr. John L. Francis, Minister of Worship

0. Preamble and Definition

The following is a statement of philosophy of the worship ministry at Parkway Baptist Church, submitted by the Minister of Worship and to be approved by the pastor, ministerial staff, and church body.

Warren Wiersbe defined worship as “the natural, heartfelt, emotional response to the character, the grace, and the works of God.” We wish to use this as part of our definition to state:

Worship is the natural, heartfelt, emotional response to the character, the grace, and the works of God to the glory of God the Father, Christ the Son, and to the Holy Spirit through music and the ordinances of the church.

The following set of guidelines is subordinate to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

1. Scriptures

The worship ministry of Parkway Baptist Church affirms 2 Timothy 3:16, believing that Scripture is inspired by God and useful in “teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.” Furthermore, it is the belief of this ministry that Scripture is inerrant. Our worship ministry seeks to be guided by a never conflicting combination of Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

History has philosophically identified two opposing views of corporate worship within the realm of Scripture: **The Regulative Principle of Worship** (What is not commanded, is forbidden) and the **Normative Principle of Worship** (What is not forbidden, is permitted). In the 21st century church, operating on one of the two continua either restricts the worshipper into hard legalism (RPW), or leads the church’s worship into a hedonism that has historically corrupted worship (NPW). It is the philosophy of Parkway Baptist Church to operate with the creativity of the Normative Principle of Worship, yet recognizing the important tension that is created by the Regulative Principle of Worship, never betraying the worshipper’s liberty of conscience for the sake of creativity.

2. God

God is triune. To adequately worship God, it is important to have an orthodox understanding and view of who He is. The essence of God’s Trinitarian nature is spelled out in the BF&M 2000. Beyond that, we observe that His nature yields two identifiable perspectives for corporate worship: transcendent and immanent. It is a weekly pursuit of our worship planning and execution to reflect both of these natures.

3. Ordinances

Parkway Baptist Church celebrates the two ordinances of the church: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Communion). Parkway Baptist aligns herself with the Southern Baptist view of these ordinances: they are symbolic and not salvific. That notwithstanding, Parkway Baptist Church endeavors to make much of this symbolism and when possible will celebrate them within the same service. The reason for this is as they are symbolic, the symbolism is heightened when

they are observed together to paint a portrait of the full journey of discipleship: birth (Baptism) through to glorification (the Lord's Supper). This combination adds to the formative value making the sum greater than the two parts.

While their mutual performance is preferable, Parkway Baptist Church is not bound by this and can make exception as the ministry staff sees fit, especially as the Lord's Supper will be celebrated monthly at Parkway Baptist Church.

4. Church Year

While Parkway Baptist Church is a free-worshipping church and not bound by the legalism of the Church Year, our worship ministry finds value in the formative process of the Church Year as is observed by most Protestant churches. This year begins in Advent, and ends on "Christ the King" Sunday. Parkway Baptist Church observes the following Church Year activities:

Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost Sunday, and Christ the King Sunday (Sunday before Advent)

We also observe the American Holidays

Mother's Day, Memorial Day Sunday, Father's Day, Independence Day (God and Country Sunday), Thanksgiving Sunday

5. Liturgy

Liturgy may seem like a formal word. However it is scriptural, used in the description of the ministries (*leitourgia*) found in Hebrews 8:6 and 9:21. Liturgy means the "work of the people." Our Sunday morning worship services are truly a work of many people. Being free-worshippers gives us the freedom to borrow from many sources and to exercise creativity. However, we do try to exhibit order and method to our service as expressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40. In planning worship, we aim to reduce interruptions to allow the worshipper to meditate on the "character, the grace and the works of God." We also know the importance of walking with the worshipper on the journey of worship. We do this by beginning worship very inclusively and corporately, then moving the worshipper to a more intimate moment with the Spirit and the Word.

As this is viewed as a journey, we often use a tabernacle as a pattern for worship planning as it is a "copy and shadow of the heavenly things." (Hebrews 8:5) We try to take the worshipper, metaphorically, from the outer court experience (Prelude) all the way to the "Holy of Holies." (Invitation)

6. Congregational Participation

If our mission in our worship is to "glorify God," we believe that congregational participation is the vehicle that gets us there. We acknowledge that through the ages church music has vacillated on this continuum of performance. This is why we wish to affirm Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:21 which both state that we are to sing "to one another psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." Because this is our main goal, it affects the rest of this document: music selection, instrumentation, choir, and even platform behavior.

7. Music Selection

Parkway Baptist Church embraces a blended music selection. We treasure the hymns of our long faith, and look forward to the Spirit moving today's writers. Our music selection is based upon four elements with the acronym **CAST**: **C**ongregational, **A**esthetic, **S**ubstantive, and **T**heologically Sound.

Congregational: There are many great songs being written today, and also in times past. However, being good sounding, does not necessarily make them congregation-friendly. For instance, an endearing aspect to great modern songs is often an extremely high-ranged solo. In contrast, the working range, or tessitura, of a congregation is only around an octave. Also, while heavy syncopation is enjoyable to listen to, it is often difficult for the average congregation member to sing. The song selection at Parkway Baptist Church must ultimately have the congregation's needs in mind above platform virtuosity.

Aesthetic (attractive): The worship music we select must have musical appeal, both in the writing and in its performance. We also believe that instrumental-only music can speak a higher, and more sublime, language. Therefore, when masterfully performed, instrumental music has the ability to stand on its own.

Substantive: The lyric of Parkway songs are to be rich with language that is clear and biblical. While the English language can be poetic and expressive, it can also be ambivalent. The Gospel message is to be clear, without nuance, in our music. This affects the decision that we make on a weekly basis on what to sing. We must keep in mind that our congregation and visitor pool are multi-national, with many speaking English as a second language. Therefore, our selection of lyric must be straight-forward. While there are plenty of wonderful songs that paint beautiful imagery, sometimes that imagery can confuse the participant in their comprehension of the Gospel. We believe that the church musician is a theologian for the twenty-first century church. As the writer of the great hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy" Reginald Heber once said, "[a hymn] will not be found reprehensible; no fulsome or indecorous language has been knowingly adopted; no erotic addresses to Him whom no unclean lip can approach."

Theologically Sound: Soundness not only points to lack of error, but, the directive of theological soundness also calls us to present a fully-orbed understanding of theology through the music selection at Parkway Baptist Church. It is our desire that within the context of the music selection that the Gospel be well-represented textually, even before the Pastor speaks to the congregation.

As we recognize that funerals and weddings performed in the Parkway Baptist Church facilities are seen as special acts of worship, the above criteria must still apply.

Finally, let it be said that Parkway Baptist Church recognizes that there is great Kingdom music produced from every generation, every nationality, and every genre. We are not beholden to one genre of style and instead joyfully celebrate any music that may fall into the above categories.

8. Instrumentation

Parkway Baptist Church has a great legacy of musical worship. We also have highly trained musicians within our congregation. Our desire for musical instrumentation is to rightly use the talents that the Lord offers Parkway Baptist Church. Our worship ministry is *inclusive*, and not *exclusive*: we seek to equip willing musicians, rather than creating an elite group. While we reserve the right to look for talent outside our walls, we will first search within our own membership. Parkway Baptist Church should be a haven, and a safe place of expression for Christian musicians in St. Louis.

9. Choir

The Choir Ministry is the central and largest ensemble in the worship ministry. While we have the freedom to have choir, as it is mentioned in Scripture, we are not bound by Scripture to have a choir. Our reason for having a choir is to represent the transcendent nature of an Almighty God. It also paints a unique resemblance to the Trinity (multiple persons - yet one).

While we believe that a church can absolutely operate without a choir ministry, we feel that the choir is an important “belonging group” and that through calls of worship, worship leadership, and testimonial songs, their presence is a positive power in our worship, and is a strong source of fellowship that would not be easily replicated.

Any group that stands in front of the choir in leadership, must be part of the choir.

10. Platform Behavior

Dress on the platform is normally semi-formal. Talk from the platform is ALWAYS honoring, taking care not to ever ridicule or be-little anyone. However, as we have very precious little time, there should be very little small-talk on the platform, and verbiage will be directed back to Scripture.

All leadership, ministerial and lay-person, will dress modestly.

11. Education (Discipleship)

Through Children’s Choir and Fine Arts training, our worship ministry seeks to train up the next generation of worshippers and worship leaders. Our worship ministry will also gladly work with nearby colleges, universities, and seminaries to provide possibilities for internships as well.

12. Ancillary Ensembles

Outside of the afore-mentioned groups, there are ancillary ensembles. Their performance must not only meet high platform standards, but must also perform with an understanding of our commitment to congregational singing. We are also highly aware that these are “belonging groups” to those involved and offer *koinonia* in a way that perhaps a less-specific group cannot.

12. Conclusion

Worship ministry has been a strength of Parkway Baptist Church for generations. We take very seriously our heritage and our charge. That being the case, allow this document to serve as our solemn pact with ourselves to declare His praises and to disciple others in worship, “until He comes.”

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