

First Church of God Worship Arts
Pastor of Worship Arts: Ryan Carrell
Philosophy of Worship

Theological Framework:

The organized worship experience of the unified body of believers is the horizontal, physical, and corporate expression of the vertical, spiritual, and individual reality experienced through the Trinitarian work of God.

Mission Statement:

To develop thematic, creative, and inspiring worship experiences; seeking to use artistic expressions of faith that have been developed in our contemporary/modern context, while continuing to explore ways to affirm and learn from the traditions and experiences of the historic church; the goal of which is to create a culturally relevant environment where God is glorified, and the transforming story of His grace is taught, explored, and celebrated.

Key Verse:

“with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” (Colossians 3:16)

Summary:

Though worship is much more than singing, this verse which reminds us that the “spiritually robust church will have all three [types of singing]: ... songs that express the soul, songs that stretch the mind, and songs that rejoice the heart.”¹ It is the goal in corporate worship experiences to reflect this understanding, in all of the arts, as we worship God; to be purposeful in incorporating elements of worship that express the soul calling out to God, stretch the mind that is exploring for answers to our deepest questions, and help us rejoice in the story of salvation. With all this in mind, our times of worship should be thematic and cohesive, purposefully uniting these various elements of worship, leading to an environment where the participants become fully engaged in discipleship through worship.

Ministry Goals:

- ✦ *Establish a teaching, mentoring, and shepherding environment, where future leaders gain experience and skill and our given opportunities to learn and grow.*
- ✦ *Create an environment where the connection of art and worship is realized for the purpose of glorifying God; being purposeful in using the gifts of artists from the local congregation.*
- ✦ *Develop and oversee a creative, skilled, dedicated, and passionate ministry team who are integral in the production and design of worship experiences*
- ✦ *Continually seeking to expand the various worship ministry teams, utilizing individuals who can contribute to the worship experience in a variety of ways, and who are representative of the multiplicity of the Kingdom of God.*

First Church Worship Venues:

A unique element to First Church of God is the use of multiple venues for worship, allowing us to build bridges in multiple ways. Both venues feature worship bands at all three services and sing many of the same songs. However, our life center is a multi-use space aimed that those seeking a less traditional space, while our sanctuary has features such as stained glass that connect to those more traditional church elements. The life center is mainly a band-led service. The sanctuary service, also band-driven, includes a full adult choir and periodically features the organ.

¹ Stafford, Gilbert W. 1996. *Theology for Disciples*. Anderson, IN: Warner Press.

Key questions about worship services:²

1. *Is Jesus the dominant presence in our services, or do we get in the way*
2. *Is the past honored as the story of faith in which we, too, become participants?*
3. *Is Christ's salvation at the center of every gathering?*
4. *Is the corporate reading of Scripture made a part of the service?*
5. *Are believers called, and drawn, into the time of worship?*
6. *By participating, are believers renewed in their life in Christ?*
7. *Are we connecting the story of God to our culture today?*
8. *Is attention drawn to the hope that is in Christ for the coming of the Kingdom in us?*
9. *Is worship a time of praise, gratitude, and thanksgiving for God's grace?*
10. *Does worship lead to participation in Christ's mission (go forth and make disciples)?*

Critical questions for song inclusion in corporate worship:

1. *Are the lyrics theologically orthodox? Secondly, do they agree with the Wesleyan/Holiness concepts? Do they inform or confirm the Church of God theological heritage?*
2. *Do the lyrics flow in such a way to be comprehended while singing?*
3. *Is the melody and synchronization "sing-able" by the congregation?*
4. *Is the song relevant? Does it connect with those present in the congregation?*

A question about using visual art:

1. *Does it engage our senses, leading to spiritual reflection?*
2. *When attempting to reveal theological truth, does it agree in orthodoxy?*

The generational gap in worship:

1. *We sing, read, and view the best of all generations that thematically incorporates into the worship experience.*
2. *While arrangements may be made relevant to the congregation, we learn from those who came before us.*
3. *While arrangements may be made relevant to the congregation, we learn from those today.*
4. *God inspired, continues to inspire, and will inspire individuals in their contributions to the worshipping church.*
5. *The challenge of future worship is to identify those [modern songs] that have lasting value, to retain the music from the past that is characterized by depth and a lasting power for all generations, and to combine these into an order of worship that remembers, proclaims, enacts, and celebrates the story of salvation in such a way that connects with who we are as the people of God, while continuing to engage our culture.*

A note about cultural media elements in worship:

1. *Culture asks questions and makes faith statements, through media, that challenges the church, reveals spiritual truth, and inspires response. These elements may add to the pedagogical element of worship, though discernment must be used before inclusion, and theological reason for use must be understood.*

The ultimate question:

1. *Is God glorified in all that we do in our time of worship?*

² Some key questions found in: Stafford, Gilbert W. 1996. *Theology for Disciples*. Anderson, IN: Warner Press.