

A Walk through the Worship Service, Part I

Whether you are new to Covenant or a long standing member it is important to know why we worship God the way we do and what each element of the service represents. The following begins a guided tour of Covenant's Sunday morning worship service.

Preparation for Worship

About 10 minutes prior to the service, music is played that encourages members and friends to find their seats in the sanctuary. The selections are typically the hymn tunes for that day's service, which help prepare God's people for singing His praise.

Welcome and Announcements

After extending a warm welcome to all in attendance, announcements are offered from the floor level before the official start of the service. This serves an important communicational role in the life of our church, while allowing us to maintain our primary focus on God and His Word during the service.

Prelude

The prelude is a musical interlude that allows the people of God to focus their attention upon Him. It offers an opportunity to seek His blessing in the coming service, to pray for those leading the service, and to pray for those around them that they, too, might be blessed through the ministry of God's Word.

Call to Worship

One of the intentional designs of our order of worship is that God's Word features prominently throughout the entire service. Through His Scriptures, God has the first, middle, and last word! Our opening call to worship is typically taken from a Psalm, read responsively, through which God calls His people to worship and through which we respond in joy and reverent obedience.

Invocation

While God is always present everywhere, it is fitting to begin the service with a humble request for His Divine Presence to attend the gathering of His people in a special way. It is an opportunity to confess our great need for a Savior and acknowledge His great provision of that Savior in Jesus Christ. During the invocation we reaffirm the essential truth that He alone is God and ask Him for his merciful grace to focus our attention, free us from distraction, and work effectively in our hearts through His blessed Holy Spirit.

Hymns

Typically, three hymns are sung during the worship service. The first is a general hymn of praise to our Triune God. The second often focuses on some aspect of our redemption in Christ. The third is commonly a parting hymn of thanksgiving that includes a request for God's protection and guidance in the week ahead. As with the other elements of the worship service, the second and third hymns are keyed especially to the theme of that morning's sermon. They provide a unified flow to the service that reinforces the main theme of the day, often serving as sung prayers to God. The substantive lyrics of well-composed hymns address the current needs of God's people and provide a meaningful connection to our brothers and sisters in Christ from the past.

In Part II we will look at the elements of the service beginning with the Prayer of Confession and continuing through the Doxology.